



Veterans in custody and community in the NOMS CFO Regions of; West Midlands and London.

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1. Context

The overall aim of the National Offender Management Service Co-Financing Organisation (NOMS CFO) programme is to improve offender education, training & employment opportunities and increase access to existing resettlement provision. Rather than deliver education and training programmes directly, the NOMS CFO Programme is designed to motivate participants and remove barriers that prevent them from progressing into mainstream provision delivered by other agencies such as Jobcentre Plus employment services, Offenders' Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) funded provision or further education/training. Not all these services are directed specifically at offenders and NOMS CFO links into services in prison/community for offenders and those available to everyone. Effective engagement with offenders in custody or in the community will also more adequately prepare them for employment, training, education and other mainstream activities. The provision of NOMS CFO enhances existing activity within prisons and the community by identifying the gaps in delivery for the harder to help groups, which includes prisoners serving short term sentences. NOMS CFO aims to complement existing CFO activity by bridging the service gaps experienced by offenders.

It has become apparent, throughout the delivery of the NOMS CFO programme, that there are certain groups of offenders that require specialised resettlement provision in order to eliminate the barriers that are pertinent to these hard to reach groups when accessing education, training and employment opportunities. Although NOMS CFO works closely with the awarded prime contracts, in terms of delivering specialised provision, those organisations contracted (providers) are somewhat dependant on the expertise of sub contractors, third party organisations and charities to develop offenders' employability.

Ex-forces personnel or 'veterans', as referred to in this report are defined by the Government as; 'everyone who has performed military service for at least one day and drawn a days pay'. Veterans have been identified as a hard-to-reach sub group within the NOMS CFO programme due to not only the pertinent barriers faced by these individuals, but also the inability to accurately record those within custody and on Probation. Recording an accurate representation of ex-offending veterans has proved challenging due to the dependence of the individual to identify themselves to either; their personal officer (custody), Veterans in Custody Support Officer (VICSO) or Probation Officer. In some cases, due to embarrassment, being in denial of needing help, or simply wanting to repress such memories, veterans decide against declaring their service history; thus not enabling NOMS and relevant organisations to generate a precise figure of veterans incarcerated or on community orders. Therefore a vital opportunity is potentially missed in assisting veterans in areas where provision does not address their employability. Harry Fletcher, General



Secretary of NAPO¹ depicts why; “by seriously underestimating the size of the problem, it is extremely difficult to give proper attention to solutions”.

To help portray the inability to produce an exact figure of veteran offenders throughout the U.K, it can in some way, be evidenced by the following conflicting estimates;-

The Ministry of Defence has estimated that 3.5% (2,820) of the prison population are ex-service personnel; however research carried out by NAPO (Probation Officer’s Union, 2009) suggested that there were 8,500 veterans in prisons across the UK and 12,000 on Probation. The figures are drastically different, providing some evidence that there is currently no system in place to determine the precise figure of offending ex-forces personnel. Additionally, those offenders harbouring pertinent resettlement barriers which have been detected amongst veterans, (which will be examined in the results section of this report) are at risk of their resettlement needs going undetected.

One area of particular interest and one of which is indicative of possessing a greater identification rate of veterans due to the high number of offenders within custody and within the community, is the NOMS CFO West Midlands region. It is this region which will formulate the majority of this evaluation and as such the results in the West Midlands will be compared to other regions across the UK in order to identify any differences in resettlement needs regionally and to establish any similarities or differences in the delivery of the programme. To provide a comparison to another NOMS CFO region, the results derived from research carried out in the West Midlands will be compared to those results gained from the NOMS CFO London region.

The awarded prime provider for the West Midlands CFO region is Pertemps People Development Group (PPDG) which delivers a range of innovative programmes to help aid and develop offenders’ employability skills. One of PPDG’s sub-contractors is a social enterprise company; *Ubique Partnerships Limited*, which delivers the ‘*New Leaf Project*’ to offenders being supervised by Warwickshire Probation Trust Area or within custody, (dependant upon prison) throughout the West Midlands. The implementation and delivery of this programme will be explored throughout this report. Due to the provision available for veterans being more prevalent in both of these regions, an additional provider, the prime provider for the NOMS CFO London region will help form a comparison.

Working Links has benefitted from the support and expertise of the Regular Forces Employment Agency (RFEA) when addressing the resettlement barriers faced by veterans. RFEA was sub-contracted by Working Links after the Charity had particular success on the NOMS CFO Programmes in the East and South East of England. It lends its charitable status to benefit those identified as veterans within the Criminal Justice System. Part of this project consists of employing a ‘Veterans in Custody Specialist Employment Consultant’ (VIC SEC). The VIC SEC will then assist in the referrals to specialist organisations to aid the overcoming of individual hindrances amongst ex-forces personnel; as Ubique Partnerships Ltd seeks to do. To evidence a degree of the projects’ success in Round 2 of the ESF funding, RFEA have provided a success rate of approximately 40% of participants having gained employment as a result of the provision.

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Within prisons across not only the West Midlands and London regions, but across the UK, there is the 'Veterans in Custody Support' programme (VICS). The VICS programme's aim, developed by Nick Wood (HMP Everthorpe) is to identify offenders (veterans) at the earliest possible opportunity in order to refer them to the relevant organisations that are somewhat more knowledgeable and experienced in addressing veterans' needs with regard to offering essential resettlement assistance. The support is available to all ex-forces personnel within select prisons throughout the U.K, with the intention of enhancing the employability of identified veterans. Suitable opportunities and interventions are explored to assist the overcoming of barriers to sustainable work or training. Supplementary implementation, delivery and essential resettlement support is provided via further specialist charities and organisations by which the VICSO or veteran representative (inmate) will be able to signpost each offender to, according to their needs.

The ex-forces specific organisations and charities which are included in the signposting process for veteran offenders are; The Royal British Legion/Civvy Street, SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association), SPVA (Service Personnel and Veterans Agency), Combat Stress and RFEA (Regular Forces Employment Association). These organisations work in conjunction with the Criminal Justice System and community/Probation services to help continue the support whilst in custody and upon release.

What this report will examine are the ways in which the NOMS CFO programme, as well as its formed partnerships with other organisations, is addressing the needs of this hard to reach group and improving the provision available to increase the employability and learning opportunities for all ex-forces personnel.

The main findings of the report will focus on the following two key research aims:-

1. To explore the implementation and delivery of the sub projects within the NOMS Co-Financing programme – to show good practice, areas of development and lessons learned.
2. To explore differences in resettlement needs and how they have been addressed by the provider – looking at activities carried out and outcomes achieved.

2. Approach

To ensure that the findings generated as a result of the conducted research are not only dependable in answering the above research aims, but importantly consistent throughout, this report is based on the exploration of two data collection methods; those being qualitative and quantitative.

Quantitative data

This method of data collection was employed by analysing the Case Assessment and Tracking System (CATS), which is utilised by NOMS CFO and its prime providers with the aim of maximising the employability of participants and providing opportunities for training and achieving qualifications. The information extracted from CATS was in relation to ex-forces personnel in the West Midlands region which was then analysed to understand; how many participants were on certain contracts, what their resettlement needs were and the



outcomes gained (education, employment). The extracted data was only in relation to those identified as veterans and of which are currently assigned to the sub-project. The data obtained was in relation to all those assigned to sub-projects, to the present date, January 28th 2014 (when data was collected).

Qualitative data

Qualitative data enabled the acquisition of a far greater comprehension of the work carried out. This ensured a more accurate representation of the way in which stakeholders benefit from the provision available or, if applicable, hindered veterans chances of improving their employability. The information collected was possible as a result of meetings, semi-structured interviews and via telephone/email communications and written reports which were provided by an array of prisons and organisations. These were held with delivery and implementation staff and importantly, by obtaining the essential information from participants (veterans) within custody and on community orders. It was fundamental to the report's findings that an accurate response from both aspects of the delivery of the project was established and from the stakeholder's experience in order to correlate the findings with that which was produced by the CATS application.

Discussions and semi-structured interviews were conducted with the following members of staff within custody and the community, and also a selection of participants (veterans):-

HMP Featherstone. Officer Matt Beaumont (VICS Officer), Debbie Evans, the prison's resettlement officer. Participant 1 (Veteran's representative inmate), and Participant 2 (Veteran inmate)

HMP Birmingham. Officer Ian Allen (VICS Officer) and Tony Birch (Community engagement officer)

Veteran's Contact Point – Len Hardy (Director)

Ubique – Ian Henshaw (Director) and Debbie Clarke (Case worker). Participant 1- Veteran and volunteer at centre. Participant 2- Veteran and volunteer at centre.

Being able to obtain a vast quantity of written reports detailing the provision available to all ex-forces personnel has been particularly beneficial in understanding differences and similarities with regard to the delivery and implementation of programmes across the NOMS CFO regions within the U.K. The following listed prisons have all provided written responses in order to add weight to the results section; HMP Birmingham, HMP Brinsford, HMP Brixton, HMP Dovegate, HMP Drake Hall, HMP Exeter, HMP Kirklevington, HMP Liverpool, HMP Northumberland, HMP Stoke Heath, HMP Wandsworth, HMP Wealstun, and HMP Whatton.

Further accounts of the work being conducted to improve learning opportunities and employability of veteran offenders were made available by the following community based organisations; PPDG, RFEA, Northern Learning Trust, SSAFA, Tribal and Working Links.

3. Results

This section of the thematic report will look at answering both mentioned research aims. It is intended as a training enhancement mechanism for NOMS CFO, ESF and for the organisations/ agencies working collaboratively in order to provide such valuable provision



for ex-forces personnel. The aim of the results section is to provide a sufficient level of comprehension to the mentioned contributors, with regard to the delivery and implementation of specific sub-group programmes. Thematically, it will seek to identify any areas that have been developed further due to lessons learned throughout the delivery of certain programmes by the individual organisation.

To begin the results section, the first of the two research aims will be discussed, focusing on the available provision within the West Midlands and by comparing/contrasting to other CFO regions.

- To explore the implementation and delivery of the sub projects within the NOMS Co-Financing programme – to show good practice, areas of development and lessons learned.

'Issues with current available independent support for Veterans'

Within custody there is currently no obligation to execute a programme dedicated to improving the employability or furthering learning opportunities for this group of offenders. Although there is the Veterans in Custody Support (VICS) programme available to veterans in the West Midlands, and which is in operation in the majority of prisons across the U.K, there is no obligation for prison Governors to utilise the programme within their establishment; perhaps as the onus has been deposited on third party organisations available to the Prison Service, which are funded by additional means. As a result, the VICS project is only available to offending veterans if the prison in which the veteran resides is delivering such provision.

Within the establishments where this project has been deployed, there is a Veterans in Custody Support Officer (VICSO) who oversees the implementation and works as the essential link between the veterans in custody and specialist organisations; however this role is independent of CFO provision. It is the dedication of the VICSO that drives the programme and makes it beneficial to veterans. A vast majority of them are ex-forces personnel themselves and are giving up their free time or, in fact, are carrying out the role on top of their main custodial duties (day job). It could be suggested that the dedication involved when addressing veterans' resettlement needs is due to the VICSO's own experience who as such, can relate emotionally to the needs of the individual post service.

A business case, designed to secure a designated day or allocated resource in order to provide this service, has since been rejected in HMP Featherstone. As a result, the dedication and work intended for veterans is being conducted (if feasible) in the VICSO's own time. This places a considerable amount of strain on VICSO's other day to day duties. This was additionally noted as being problematic in HMP Birmingham and HMP Wandsworth.

Having spoken with the delivery staff and the participants via written communications or face to face interviews, it is apparent how beneficial such support is to those in need of specialised assistance so as not to further hinder their employability by overlooking resettlement issues. The veteran participants, who were spoken to as part of this report, were benefiting from the dedicated support of their VICSO. They have all shown increased



motivation to gain employment or further learning opportunities since receiving this additional support. The results begin to highlight the dedicated work of the VICSO's and consequently provide a case for consideration to be made for creating a dedicated resource of this kind in all establishments for ex-forces personnel.

'Exclusive provision within custody'

Those prisons based in the London region benefit from the exclusive support of the military charity Regular Forces Employment Agency (RFEA) who support veterans in custody by helping them overcome individual barriers. This provision has been rolled out contractually across eight London prisons; HMP's Wandsworth, Brixton, Pentonville, Belmarsh, Wormwood Scrubs and HMP/YOI's Isis, Feltham and Holloway.

The RFEA employs the Veterans in Custody Specialist Employment Consultant (VIC SEC). Similar to the VICSO's, the VIC SEC provides support with signposting and offering general advice, as well as advice in regard to employment, education and training to veterans. 90% of veterans that RFEA have engaged with in prisons have required additional interventions other than employment; for example housing, health etc. To overcome this, RFEA are able to signpost veterans to other military charities and organisations. RFEA are in a sense, eliminating the time constraints some VICSO's (previously mentioned) have experienced difficulty with as they have this exclusivity.

RFEA were contracted by Working Links to provide support to all of the London prisons. The VIC SEC works closely with Education, Training and Employment (ETE) providers and resettlement teams to help support veterans back into employment and or training. In addition to providing this, RFEA are in the process of contacting new businesses in order to encourage them to employ ex-offenders (veteran specific); thus increasing opportunities for ex-forces personnel. Volunteer positions for veterans are also secured, which can help support further paid employment. It should also be noted that the RFEA have previously worked with SERCO as part of the Job Deal project; which is the CFO programme running in the South East and East of England. Although the provision differs to that experienced on the Working Links project, the RFEA support on the Job Deal programme was extremely successful.

Lessons learned from this programme are in relation to the engagement of veterans and identification processes. It was noted that whilst delivering this programme, veterans respond well to the programme quite possibly as a result of the delivery staff also having a forces background. Rather than a resettlement organisation or charity aiding the resettlement needs of veterans, military charities encompass the experience and knowledge of barriers faced. This has been identified throughout the feedback gained from prisons across the U.K and also amongst community based programmes. The issue of identification, as within other areas not just London, is problematic.

'Identifiable experiences, specialist knowledge and appreciation of individual hindrances'

As veterans, of whom are incarcerated or on community based projects, are classified as being 'hard to reach' offenders, it is fundamental that NOMS CFO along with its array of



partnerships, comprehend the factors associated with the labelling of this particular group and what contribute to its classification. As a result of speaking with a number of veterans across the West Midlands within custody, or those benefiting from the support of PPDG's sub contractor; Ubique Partnerships Ltd, it was evident that in order to provide the essential support for ex-forces personnel that those providers supporting veterans understand and appreciate the barriers faced by veterans and have knowledge of how to overcome them.

Ubique Partnerships Ltd is a dedicated support system based in the West Midlands, delivering provision to ex-offending veterans within the community and custody via the New Leaf project. This organisation benefits from not only being a sub-contractor of PPDG, therefore gaining provision via the prime contract for the West Midlands, but the organisation's Directors both have experience of being ex-forces themselves. The level of knowledge and experience from both the implementation and delivery staff supportively builds confidence in the programme, but what is of further importance, is the way in which it builds the trust in those who are in need of this support. This appreciation of specific barriers is essential in the improvement of employability and further learning. It helps create a bond between provider and recipient and aids the transition into civilian life following a life of structure and discipline which staff at Ubique can relate to.

The pre-requisite for being appointed as a VIC SEC under RFEA's provision, is both a military background with either a Police or Probation background. This will not only lend itself to understanding the needs of ex-forces personnel, but will also provide an understanding of the needs of an offender. As well as the delivery and implementation, staff encompass a history of service within the Armed Forces, as do a selection of the volunteers within the organisation. Two of the participants benefiting from the service, who were interviewed for the current report at Ubique, were also volunteers at the centre in Nuneaton.

Participant 1 made contact with a Ubique case worker while serving a custodial sentence. Whilst interviewing the participant, it was stated that the project had encouraged learning opportunities due to the environment being more welcoming than the Justice Centre. Similarly, the way in which they are able to relate to others aids the understanding of the barriers faced amongst ex-forces personnel; there is also the feeling of being more at ease with regard to the aspect of learning alongside other veterans. More often than not, issues such as tolerance and lack of understanding are prevalent amongst veterans and the wider population when it comes to being in a learning environment, and as such, veterans depend on projects such as this to overcome these obstacles. The extensive array of information which is readily available at the centre is aided by the fact that staff have the ability to signpost particular veterans according to their personal barriers to the relevant organisations/charities. Not only is this beneficial but so to are the relationships formed between the delivery staff and the specialist organisations and charities available to veterans on the project. Motivation since starting on the project had increased for participant 1. At the start of the programme the participant had reported a motivation level of 1/10; this has since increased to 8/10. This has left the participant with a degree of optimism in regard to other barriers faced and states they are able to witness the progression achieved so far. The only referenced opportunity for improvement in this particular case would be to have a more extensive variety of courses available.



Participant 2 has been helped by Ubique in terms of gaining funding for relevant courses and opportunities to attain essential qualifications for particular types of employment. Although there is assistance with the costs of transport to get to and from interviews, it was suggested that perhaps as an alternative, there be in place a minibus/means of transportation that attends a selection of areas to pick up veterans and bring them to the centre, to interviews and so on. It was noted that this could be cheaper than covering the costs of individual train fares. The motivation of participant 2 had also increased. From the start of the programme participant 2 had reported a motivation level of 3/10, increasing to 6/10 whilst utilising the project's services; the small increase was because the participant felt let down by employers not providing regular work when appointed. When asked what the participant would be doing or would have done without the assistance of the project, the participant made it clear that without this project being in place, they would more than likely have re-offended, possibly even be dead (in one case) due to reverting back to drug and alcohol dependence. The project was referred to as being; "a life saver" for this particular participant. It was suggested that this was due to the understanding of veterans and the identifiable experiences of the delivery staff.

With regard to understanding the barriers faced by ex-forces personnel, it was brought to light when interviewing the Directors of Ubique that there is a lack of understanding and sympathy in relation to the needs of veterans, including; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), employment and education that has derived from the older generation of charities. One charity; SSAFA, although beneficial in aiding and supporting veterans, are seen to fall short where Ubique triumphs by understanding the individuals' concerns and sequentially providing a signposting service to the relevant organisations for each specific barrier. The older generational support unfortunately creates the inevitable cycle of; not understanding the reasons behind the committal of offence, not being able to address these reasons effectively due to lack of knowledge in the particular field, and subsequently leading to the likelihood of recidivism.

'Education amongst implementers and delivery personnel'

The hindrances discussed in the previous segment with reference to not being able to relate to barriers pertinent to ex-forces personnel have been rectified within the NOMS CFO's regions of South West and Cornwall. The community based organisation; Tribal Education Limited, another of NOMS CFO's prime contractors, have begun to ensure education is key amongst case workers when seeking to maximise employment and education opportunities amongst veterans.

It has been noted that in order for veterans to work on improving specialist provision, there should be an element of education amongst fellow charities and organisations. This would allow each to learn from, and adopt certain methods to ensure full potential in the delivery and implementation of programmes for ex-forces personnel. RFEA are in support of this approach by stating, in regard to the provision available in London, "...we always aim to adopt a collaborative approach with other charities, drawing on each other's strengths". This approach will benefit ex-forces personnel by way of having close links to other organisations that assist in the signposting process, thus, increasing opportunities for veterans.



Tribal Education Limited have begun to ensure that all case managers be educated in regard to the specific barriers faced by this hard to reach group. This particular organisation has gained an understanding and recognised the importance of addressing barriers and has approached the specific subject matter by seeking the essential care from the established relationships amongst the veteran specific referral agencies. It was stated by Julie Welch of Tribal Education Limited; "case managers are, after all, the main engagement point for the programme...". To ensure this was principle in meeting the needs of veterans, specific training was delivered to the future case managers within Tribal Education Limited, via the expertise of staff from Ubique Partnership Ltd.

Not only do Ubique provide assistance within the community, but they also lend their expertise to offenders and staff within a selection of prisons. Ubique currently work alongside the VICSO's in prisons across the West Midlands region. HMP Birmingham has recently given approval for Ubique to be given their own set of prison keys and have the advantage of being given their own office within the establishment. This will not only ease the pressure from the current VICSO who works independently to support ex-forces personnel, but will aid the progression of the relationship between custody and community with regard to veteran offenders and the existing barriers. Although this has been developed in most prisons in the West Midlands, Ubique are still unable to gain access to some. One of these establishments, HMP Featherstone has highlighted reasoning for such. Due to a recent business case that was rejected and the discussed time constraints, there is currently no opportunity to invite Ubique to the prison and therefore HMP Featherstone are perhaps missing this vital opportunity.

HMP Northumberland has sought opportunities to educate with regard to signposting processes amongst the veteran population within the establishment. The VICSO for this establishment brokered a financial arrangement with an external military organisation in which their company delivered a 12 week Veterans in Custody Peer Mentoring course to 14 veterans. The veterans are now able to signpost other ex-forces prisoners to the right external agencies which are linked to the resettlement pathways, i.e. housing, employment, PTSD and alcohol/drug issues. This increased the capacity to provide advice amongst veterans and overlook issues such as time constraints, taking the pressure off the main VICSO. The attendance of the Royal British Legion is also aiding staff within HMP Northumberland by delivering in-house training for more Officers to become veteran caseworkers.

'Identifications at induction and throughout sentence'

At the outset of this report, it was suggested that there is a reluctance amongst veterans to identify themselves as ex-forces personnel. Concerns amongst veterans, such as; embarrassment of conviction or service, being in denial of needing further support and even worries surrounding the security of pensions have come to light when interviewing delivery staff. Further to this, the monitoring of veterans has become somewhat problematic due to some staff not being able to smoothly relay information between custody and the community.

Community based interventions, for example, Probation services and those assigned to the NOMS CFO contract will benefit from having access to CATS, as stated previously in reference to RFEA's provision, as it will enable staff to monitor those identified as veterans



within Prisons/community based projects and, as a result, assist in the comparisons of regional statistics. Additionally, this could act as a feedback or training mechanism to ensure all opportunities are explored with regard to aiding and improving veterans' employability. Officers at HMP Birmingham expressed a great deal of interest in gaining access to CATS and claimed it would benefit staff that weren't primarily associated with the delivery of specific provision; this would facilitate the data sharing of the facts associated with individual care plans.

One case worker at Ubique Partnership Ltd had expressed their interest in wanting to help aid the number of veterans within each establishment. By having access to CATS, Ubique are able to calculate the proportion of identified offenders within certain establishments and offer assistance to that prison. Without the commitment and authorisation of the prison, meetings, or regular attendance of specialist organisations in order to meet those identified as veterans, and increase the awareness of the provision, this opportunity is being missed. A possible solution, which is already being used in some establishments, is the provision of an exit pack on release detailing the support available to ex-forces personnel. This could overcome the problem of prisoners not identifying themselves as ex-forces whilst in custody and veterans would therefore be able to benefit from the assistance of organisations such as Ubique and SSAFA.

During the process of induction, offenders are asked, "have you served in the armed forces?". Although you could be inclined to assume such a question will aid the estimation of veteran numbers in custody, and from this generate regional figures, it is simply not the case due to some veteran's reluctance to declare their service. The way in which the induction process offers advice and information regarding ex-forces support differs regionally, although asking the above question on entry remains equally as important nationally. It was noted that, from speaking to the participants and by gathering responses from custody staff, veterans choose to identify themselves at a later date and not on entry.

HMP Featherstone offers advice via the facilitation of the VICSO, as do HMP Birmingham, however, HMP Featherstone have limited visible information available and rely on the VISCO or the veterans representative (inmate) to relay information as well as identify those who are ex-forces. HMP Birmingham, a private prison run by G4S benefits from an electronic booking/information apparatus situated within the wings of the prison. This enables inmates to not only book visits and meals but to have access to prison information such as the support available if you are ex-forces. Due to the time constraints apparent within certain establishments, these prisons are heavily dependant on the VICSO to hold regular meetings; this differs drastically within the NOMS CFO London region. As an example, HMP Brixton has regular, weekly attendance from SSAFA to help aid ex-forces personnel. The visibility of such an organisation and the acknowledgement of such by fellow inmates could help improve the number of veterans that are identified, thus increasing provision available to individuals. HMP Kirklevington holds veteran meetings only once every two months; this could possibly withhold veterans from identifying themselves between meetings and may also result in the individual veteran inmate being denied the help and support they require. Prisons within the Yorkshire & Humberside NOMS CFO region currently have no specific provision available within their establishments to identify veterans, neither do HMP Liverpool and HMP Drake Hall, but gain support from SSAFA in regard to addressing veterans' needs if they declare their forces history.



'False claimants'

There is an element of miscalculation when estimating the number of offending veterans nationally, as HMP Birmingham, HMP Featherstone and HMP Wealstun have each expressed. Within each of these prisons, possibly amongst other regions' prisons also; there have been occasions whereby false claimants have come to light for an array of reasons.

HMP Wealstun has stated that the one (out of five known veterans) false claimant currently listed within the establishment claims to be ex-forces personnel due to unrelated mental health issues. An instance such as this can therefore damage the overall representational figures of veterans within custody nationally.

The reasons for this, suggested by HMP Birmingham and Featherstone could be due to the individual offender seeking personal attention and the misconception of gaining additional benefits by claiming to be a veteran amongst a minority of offenders. Many establishments have fairs/market places, whereby external agencies will visit to offer support to veteran offenders. The intention of such is to improve the awareness of the support offered by external agencies that can be provided within custody and the community. The majority of prisons that were spoken to or visited as part of the current report, have each stated the benefits of having further involvement of external Charities, something which HMP Dovegate will be seeking to improve throughout 2014. The visibility of the additional support for veterans could infer reasons as to why false claims are made.

To overcome this, the VICSO within HMP Featherstone was able to liaise with a contact at the Ministry of Defence and subsequently determine whether the claim was false or not, by having the name matched against Ministry of Defence's records. This method of data matching was discovered within other establishments via the formed NOMS partnerships and charities such as; Royal British Legion organisation. If a VICSO/ VIC SEC suspects that a claimant is not from a forces background, they can liaise with the above agencies to confirm the validity of the declaration.

Unfortunately, there is a reluctance to ask those who identify themselves as veterans as to whether or not they are being truthful in their declaration as there is the fear of causing offence, thus losing the motivation of the offender and subsequently, have the veteran decide against accepting the available support to improve their employability. As most of the VICSO/ VIC SEC's have the knowledge and experience of being ex-forces personnel themselves, they claim to be able to identify someone that is not a legitimate claimant veteran. If such suspicion should arise, the officer can gain confirmation within 24-48 hours via communicating with the relevant ex-forces Charities and organisations.

Now that an understanding surrounding the implementation and delivery of the provision available for this hard to reach group of offenders has been drawn upon, what will follow on from this section, is the exploration of the themes pertinent to answering the second of the two research aims ;-



- To explore differences between West Midlands' and London's resettlement needs and how they have been addressed by the provider – looking at activities carried out and outcomes achieved.

Although the emphasis is on the differences and similarities of both NOMS CFO regions, West Midlands and London, in addition to this, other NOMS CFO regions will be discussed to provide a greater comparison of the resettlement issues faced by veterans throughout the U.K. The statistics highlighted throughout this section have been derived from exported CATS data. This data was obtained on the 27th January 2014 and as such will only correspond with the information entered into CATS up until this date. The following statistics were generated through analysis of participants who had answered “yes” to having previous service history included in the initial assessment as opposed to the specific outcome tag for veterans; this was done to maximise capture.

Table 1: Shows the difference in resettlement needs of veterans assigned to Ubique Partnerships Ltd's NOMS CFO Programme in the West Midlands compared to the rest of the veteran cohort in WM area.

(n=125, WM main cohort =176) *Needs highlighted are those prevalent to veterans in the WM.

West Midlands

Resettlement Pathway	Ubique (exc. PPO)			All Other Veterans		
	No Need	In Need	% in Need of provision	No Need	In Need	% in Need of provision
Alcohol	101	24	19%	141	35	20%
Attitude & Life Skills	85	40	32%	39	137	78%
Drugs	105	20	16%	146	30	17%
Education	5	120	96%	18	158	90%
Employment & Training	0	125	100%	0	176	100%
Financial Status	79	46	37%	110	66	38%
Health	61	64	51%	139	37	21%
Housing	55	70	56%	137	39	22%
Relationships	82	43	34%	132	44	25%

The mean age of male veterans assigned to the Ubique programme is 37. Similarly, for the rest of the cohort it is 35. 96% assigned to Ubique are White-British, compared to 84% of the rest of the cohort at. Although there was one female assigned to Ubique's programme, the results are only in relation to the male population to ensure continuity throughout the results. The outcomes discussed have been claimed by at least 20 participants in their respective area.



The resettlement pathways highlighted are those either most prevalent amongst this hard to reach group, or simply highlighted due to their unmistakable differences between those assigned to a programme and those who have been (or currently) worked with in the community. The themes addressed in the segment below will lend itself to further explanation in response to the above statistics. To determine validity in the differences, Pearson's Chi-square significance test with Yate's correction for continuity will assist in assessing whether they are statistically significant.

'Attitudes and life skills'

The enhancement of motivation amongst veterans is fundamental when trying to overcome barriers prevalent to this hard to reach group. When examining the results shown in the above table, those participants on Ubique's caseload with a need in relation to 'attitudes and life skills' is 32% compared to 78% not on the programme. The need is greater for those not benefiting from the interventions available. To be confident in such a statement, Pearson's Chi-square with Yate's correction for continuity test was employed when analysing the results. The outcomes gained as a result of Ubique in relation to attitudinal skills is currently 20%, compared to 10% for the rest of the West Midlands cohort. Outcomes gained in relation to 'self esteem/confidence building' for those that are on the project is 86%, compared to 15%. This difference was conveyed by the participants that were spoken with, stating that self esteem and confidence increased dramatically when learning with other veterans. These participants have become optimistic with regard to other barriers faced, due to the increased levels of motivation. Similarly, 'Confidence and Self belief' was gained by Ubique participants, at an outcome of 80%, compared to 14% amongst veterans in the West Midlands veterans cohort.

One case worker for Ubique Partnerships Ltd expressed that the lack of motivation and attitudes toward specialist interventions could possibly be due to the fact that ex-forces personnel are under the assumption that they should not be entitled to such privileged assistance. There was reluctance from the delivery staff to pressure ex-forces personnel into benefiting from the provision available, due to concerns surrounding attendance at veteran specific meetings and arranged employment interviews. This was also noted by the prisons that were visited. It was essential that an overburden regarding the support available not be placed on those who have identified themselves as veterans and to simply ensure awareness of the provision was available.

'Employment and Training and Education'

Education, employment and training are collectively, the most prominent barriers amongst ex-forces personnel, both assigned to Ubique Partnerships Ltd and the rest of the West Midlands cohort of this hard to reach group. What was pertinent amongst veteran participants was the support available in helping secure jobs that would create a degree of satisfaction. The funding of courses for particular types of employment was provided, as was the help to gain the essential qualifications. Both those participants benefitting from Ubique's provision and those within the rest of the cohort, are collectively at 100% in need of support in relation to Employment and Training and Education (no significant difference).



It should be noted that the outcomes for interviews secured, are of similar conclusions; Ubique has 13% gained outcomes, as does the rest of the cohort. It is clear to see that even though confidence and motivation outcomes reveal a tremendous difference and improvement in relation to Ubique's delivery, securing an interview remains equal in both areas. Do motivation and a change in attitude necessarily infer that an interview will be secured? It would appear, statistically, that this is not the case. What was commemorated and portrayed to be immensely beneficial for the participants, as a result of the provision available via Ubique, was the way in which travel (to and from interviews) was reimbursed. It was noted that other support for example, from Job Centre Plus, would not facilitate this. The veterans are therefore less concerned financially.

Full time employment gained as a result of Ubique's support is shown as 4%, in comparison to 11% for all other veterans in the West Midlands. Education and Training outcomes were found to be 11% for Ubique veterans compared to 27% for non-Ubique veterans. What is unusual is the 92% gained outcome derived from Ubique, in relation to career information. Perhaps this contradiction of high levels of career advice and low levels of employment gained is due to Ubique's support and desire to help veterans gain the employment they can benefit from (personally), as opposed to putting someone in employment whereby their levels of motivation and self confidence will decrease.

'Health'

Health appears to be a concern for just over half of those assigned to Ubique at 51%, compared to a 21% need amongst those within the West Midlands cohort of veterans. Using Pearson's Chi-square with Yate's correction for continuity, a statistical significance was found with regard to Health barriers for those on the Ubique project suggesting they have a greater need for help with this. The reason for this difference is unknown, however, of those interviewed within custody and the community, the levels of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder was considerably more prominent amongst ex-forces personnel.

Ubique are able to address these needs by signposting those who are symptomatic of PTSD to the relevant statutory bodies, Charities and organisations. Some veterans may not be aware that such provision is available as it is currently not available in all prisons. The delivery is not possible without the agreement of each prison's Governor. This could have an effect on the increased levels of those in need of help to address certain health barriers. Those participants interviewed in HMP Featherstone and the veteran representative (inmate) had expressed their concerns regarding PTSD. There is reluctance by prison Doctors to diagnose this and to simply address this health barrier with medication (anti-depressants) rather than addressing the root causes. HMP Featherstone currently has no support from Ubique due to the VICSO's time constraints and thus, not able to allocate sufficient time for supervised visits. Those within HMP Dovegate have regular NHS attendance to address the problems associated with PTSD and HMP Birmingham benefits from the VICSO also working as a Healthcare Officer.

Further health barriers discussed with participants are; alcohol and drug abuse. It was claimed, that if it were not for the support and guidance delivered by Ubique, then two of the participants spoken to fear they would have reverted back to being dependent on such substances and would therefore be at risk of re-offending.



'Housing'

When preparing for release from prison or whilst on Probation, the issue of gaining and securing accommodation has been illustrated by those on the delivery side and by those benefiting from such provision, that this is a concern for the majority of veterans. If housing isn't secured it could have an impact on individuals gaining employment, which, after all, is the main focus and concern for all NOMS CFO Providers. Those assigned to Ubique, according to the exported CATS data are, 56% in need of assistance with regard to accommodation. This is compared to 22% in need from the main cohort. Using, Pearson's Chi-square with Yate's correction for continuity test, there is significant statistical evidence to show that participants assigned to Ubique are more likely to require accommodation assistance.

Ubique help tackle such barriers as accommodation by helping to fund rent deposits for accommodation. Whilst interviewing participants within custody, it was brought to light that Probation services do not take into account the area in which they house their offenders. There is a lack of referrals to veteran specific housing and instead, offenders feel they are reliant on council accommodation as Probation services do not help veterans secure private housing. With this, the fear of being housed in vulnerable, high risk areas was mentioned when interviewing participants in HMP Featherstone. With the aid of the VICSO, the veterans can be signposted to RFEA's support and in turn, assist in the re-location when released from prison. Veterans have pointed to the benefits of being in close proximity of family/friends when released from custody and not in the area in which they are/have been incarcerated. Without the essential support of family and friends the possibility of recidivism remains.

A small number of veteran specific housing is obtainable via Ubique's signposting process and by Resettlement Officers liaising with the relevant organisations. Stonham Home Group offers specialist housing support to meet a wide range of needs (veteran specific) and also delivers an individually tailored support plan. However, there is an eligibility criteria system which decides access to this support. Those who harbour mental illnesses are not able to benefit from such support, which affects those veterans suffering from PTSD.

Table 2: Shows the difference in resettlement needs of veterans assigned to Working Links' veteran sub-programme in the London Region to the rest of the veteran cohort in London area assigned to Working Links.

(n=48, London main cohort =138) *Needs highlighted are those prevalent to veterans in the London.



London

Resettlement Pathway	Working Links Veteran Sub-programme			All Other Working Links Veterans		
	No Need	In Need	% in Need of provision	No Need	In need	% in Need of provision
Alcohol	45	3	6%	113	25	18%
Attitude & Life Skills	11	37	77%	39	99	72%
Drugs	41	7	15%	106	32	23%
Education	10	38	79%	32	106	77%
Employment & Training	0	48	100%	0	138	100%
Financial Status	34	14	29%	98	40	29%
Health	38	10	21%	105	33	24%
Housing	33	15	31%	90	48	35%
Relationships	38	10	21%	98	40	29%

The mean age of male veterans assigned to the Working Links veterans sub-programme is; 34, similarly, for the rest of the Working Links cohort it is; 37. 33% assigned to Working Links veterans sub-programme are White-British, compared to 51% of the rest of the cohort.

The demographic data depicted above compared to the West Midlands region data are similar in regard to age, but differ in terms of ethnicity. The resettlement pathways highlighted are the most prevalent amongst this hard to reach group. The data represents those assigned to a programme and those who have been (or are currently) worked with in the community. The themes addressed in the following segment will lend itself to further explanation in response to the above statistics. To assess validity, Pearson’s Chi-square significance test with Yate’s correction for continuity test will assist in determining whether or not there is a significant statistical difference. The outcomes discussed are claimed by at least 20 participants in their respective area.

‘Attitude and Life Skills’

The needs, in relation to attitudes and life skills are greater amongst those assigned to Working Links veteran sub-programme. Those assigned to such provision available via Working Links are 77% in need of support which is compared to 72% within the rest of the Working Links cohort. It would suggest that those assigned to programmes in the London region have either, less motivation perhaps as a result of working with the relevant organisations, or, simply harbour different attitudes for an array of personal reasons, thus, preventing the benefits of such interventions.

When analysing the data exported from CATS in relation to outcomes achieved in the London region, 79% assigned to Working Links veteran sub-programme have achieved outcomes in attitudinal skills. Similarly, 72% was achieved amongst the main London cohort.



There is a lower rate in relation to personal skills achieved, 44% via Working Links' provision and a higher rate of 64% was achieved amongst the main cohort. Although there is a difference in the figures, RFEA signpost veteran offenders to independent specialist self empowerment courses such as; The RBLI Lifeworks course, The Remount Course and the Warrior Programme. Offenders within custody have also benefited from these motivational courses, in particular, the Warrior programme. The Warrior Programme is a 3 day motivation and training programme with 12 month structured support and signposting for veterans.

'Employment, Education and Training'

As the main emphasis of the NOMS CFO programme is to improve offender education, training & employment opportunities, and increase access to mainstream resettlement provision, this area is of particular interest when analysing resettlement needs and the outcomes gained in relation to such barriers.

Education requirements of those assigned to Working Links veteran sub-programme is at a rate of 79%, compared to 77% for the rest of the cohort. 19% have achieved an 'Education and training' outcome by interventions provided by Working Links veteran sub-programme, compared to that of 15% amongst the rest of the London Cohort. There is no statistical evidence to show a difference in Education and Training requirements and outcomes. We therefore cannot make claim to provision being more effective for those assigned to Working Links.

Employment needs are at a rate of 100% for both, those assigned to the Working Links programme and those of the rest of the London veteran cohort (again, no significant difference). Full time employment has been acquired by 19% of Working Links participants, compared to 10% of those not on a project. It could be suggested that perhaps, without the aid of the sub-project provided by RFEA, and the Veterans in Custody Specialist Employment Consultant (VIC SEC) having access to all London based prisons, these figures may not have been achieved. As an example of RFEA's interventions, one Working Links veteran participant was granted £966 to complete a Construction Industry Scaffolders Record Scheme scaffolding course. Training courses like these will aid employment opportunities for offenders. Self employment is a further option and in some cases, the preferred option for veterans. RFEA and Working Links also offer support to veterans applying for personal loans.

To compare the differences in the provision available between both of the discussed NOMS CFO regions, the 'Attitudes and Life Skills' barriers helps to support the assumption that needs are greater in the London region. The levels of those in need of support on the Ubique programme are relatively low, yet those worked with amongst the rest of the cohort in the West Midlands is considerably higher. When analysing the results of those assigned to Working Links' provision, the results appear similar in both; veterans assigned to the sub-programme and the remaining cohort; 78% compared to 72% (significance previous shown).

4. Conclusion

Although there are specific sub-group programmes available to ex-forces personnel to improve education, training & employment opportunities, emphasis should be put on the fact



that such provision is not readily available to the entire cohort of identified veteran offenders. It is apparent, from the conducted research that veterans within London-based prisons are at an advantage of having access to regular visits/meetings courtesy of RFEA and their VIC SEC's. In comparison, in the West Midlands, the onus is primarily on the VICSO to address the needs of their veteran population and subsequently arrange visits from the social enterprise intervention; Ubique Partnerships Ltd and other relevant organisations/charities, whereby access is granted by the prisons and time constraints are eliminated. Case workers and participants have expressed a need for increased access to prisons, as well as those dedicated in helping veterans to be given an allocated time or day(s) dedicated to providing effective interventions for veterans. This could overcome problems faced with regard to veteran offenders not having sufficient access to provision in relation to PTSD, as expressed amongst those within prisons across the WM.

Organisations involved in the implementation and delivery of sub-group projects have begun to seek opportunities to learn from, and consequently employ such interventions and expertise from relevant Military Charities within their areas. One method regarding educating others, demonstrated within HMP Northumberland, puts an element of responsibility and trust amongst the veteran inmate population as they were seen to be more educated when it came to veteran support than the staff. This could be employed throughout other NOMS CFO regions to diminish time constraints experienced by delivery staff.

All participants who were interviewed face to face, or provided written feedback to identical questions, understood the purpose of the projects in place in both regions. Each was reliant on the support for most of the specified barriers. It was mentioned via the providers of RFEA's support, that there is optimism surrounding taking RFEA to Round 3 of the NOMS CFO programme. The results explored in relation to the gaining of employment (approximately 40%), will help build confidence in the NOMS CFO sub-programme. Without the support from these specialist organisations sub-contracted to the NOMS CFO programme and those which are included in the signposting process (Military Charities) it would be difficult to address the pertinent barriers faced by this hard to reach group. The possibility remains, as expressed personally by participants and via the results shown in relation to an increase in motivation, that recidivism is likely amongst veterans; especially in the West Midlands without such provision being readily available within custody and the community. With more ex-forces-specific organisations becoming involved in the implementation and delivery of such provision, it could have some influence on the recording of an accurate representation of ex-offender veterans across the U.K, which will assist not only NOMS, but relevant partners and stakeholders.

5. Recommendations

As veterans are a minority amongst the overall cohort of offenders within custody and the community, and harbour an array of pertinent barriers specific to ex-forces personnel, it is difficult to employ just one sub-group project to aid all those within this hard to reach group. The reliance of other organisations' expertise is essential in maximising the potential of educational and employment opportunities amongst veterans. If a specific project in either region is to be conducted in the future, the following recommendations have been made regarding its implementation and delivery.



- An enhancement in motivation could continue by making dependable support standard practice across the Prison Service. Made apparent was the fact that West Midlands' establishments rely on the VICSO (if available within custody) to provide the necessary signposting service to relevant organisations and Charities as opposed to the London region benefiting from RFEA's constant visitation and guidance. To provide an adequate service to veterans it is recommended, by both recipient veterans and delivery staff, that West Midlands embrace a constant support system dedicated to helping veterans.
- To increase awareness of the support available to veterans it was suggested by one case worker that on release from prison (whether identified to the prison or not) that a leaving pack be provided to all offenders exiting custody. Within this pack there should be useful contact details of military organisations/charities for veterans to gain further comprehension regarding their specific services.
- A suggestion made by participants benefiting from the provision available via the VICSO at HMP Featherstone was with regard to having constant available support. Due to time constraints discussed, the VICSO at Featherstone (and other establishments) is unable to dedicate a substantial amount of time to veterans. The participants suggested having a 24 hour 'call out' service made possible by the veteran's representative (inmate) within custody. This would take the strain off of the VICSO and subsequently improve the awareness and advice available to inmate veterans.
- The introduction and utilisation of CATS into community based programmes and custodial programmes have been widely discussed as being beneficial for both veterans and delivery staff. This would help in identifying further veterans; thus, improve the provision available to individual ex-forces personnel.