Armed Forces Charities' Support for Families

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Armed Forces Charities' Support for Families

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Foreword

For many, the armed forces community is defined by someone in uniform, but families are a key part of this community. Armed forces families face unique challenges due to Service life. We recognise that many of these issues are also faced by civilian families, including securing school places, maintaining employment or accessing healthcare. However, factors such as the high levels of mobility and separation, which are key features of Service life, can make these aspects of family life much more challenging. Therefore, the support that families receive is important not just for them but also to enable serving personnel to successfully fulfil their role and contribute to society.

Service leavers and their families often require holistic support as they transition into civilian life. This support is not just around issues such as employment, housing or finance but also the softer elements of transition for families that are often overlooked, including the emotional and social impact of leaving the military community and joining a civilian one.

This report, which seeks to provide an objective overview of the work that the armed forces charity sector does in support of families, is timely. It comes shortly after the formation of the new Office for Veterans' Affairs, the publication of the landmark report Living in Our Shoes by Andrew Selous MP, and a renewed Ministry of Defence focus on the importance of supporting armed forces families and finding the best way to address their needs. The report furnishes those of us working in this sector with information and recommendations to ensure that we continuously improve both our service provision and advocacy.

We welcome the recognition of the need for further collaboration among armed forces charities and the increased level of support that this can offer to serving and ex-Service families. The support that the Naval, Army and RAF Families Federations provide to families cuts across many areas. This fragile ecosystem often needs collaborative working between organisations – both within and outside the armed forces charity sector.

Understanding who our beneficiaries are and whether our support is effective is crucial. Therefore, we endorse the recommendations on both identifying our beneficiaries and the importance of measuring impact. We need to ensure that we reach out to all those affected by Service life: families who are unmarried, people who live in their own homes perhaps far away from their home unit and individuals who are transitioning from Service life, as well as veterans' families and those for whom Service life came at the greatest cost of losing a partner or parent. While the measurement of impact is complex, it is essential to ensure that the sector is effectively supporting the families that we have identified and who need our help.

Even though support to the veteran community is important, the report highlights that there appears to be more support for families of ex-Service personnel than for families of those who are currently serving. We agree with the recommendation that further research is required to understand the balance of need across the whole of the armed forces families' community.

The three Families Federations welcome this report and its focus on the assistance that armed forces charities provide to families. We are grateful to the Directory of Social Change and Forces in Mind Trust for highlighting the challenges that our armed forces families face, the sacrifices they make and their need for effective support.

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Collette Musgrave, Chief Executive, Army Families Federation

Maria Lyle, Director, RAF Families Federation

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Before joining DSC, Rhiannon volunteered for a range of charities including NDCS and Oxfam.

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Stuart is Research Development Manager for DSC's Armed Forces Charities research project, on which he has co-authored many of DSC's sector-leading reports, including the *Focus On: Armed Forces Charities* series.

Before joining DSC, Stuart held an academic post in public health research, working on projects in partnership with the World Health Organization, Alcohol Research UK and the NHS. Stuart's work focused on violence, traumatic injury and alcohol consumption.

Stuart holds a BA (Hons) in Psychology and Sociology, an MSc in Applied Psychology and a PGCE in Psychology. He is a qualified teacher and taught for five years before moving into applied research.

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Acknowledgements

About the Directory of Social Change

At the Directory of Social Change (DSC), we believe that the world is made better by people coming together to serve their communities and each other. For us, an independent voluntary sector is at the heart of that social change and we exist to support charities, voluntary organisations and community groups in the work they do. Our role is to:

- **provide practical information** on a range of topics from fundraising to project management in both our printed publications and e-books;
- **offer training** through public courses, events and in-house services;
- **research funders** and maintain a subscription database, Funds Online, with details on funding from grant-making charities, companies and government sources;
- **offer bespoke research** to voluntary sector organisations in order to evaluate projects, identify new opportunities and help make sense of existing data;
- **stimulate debate and campaign** on key issues that affect the voluntary sector, particularly to champion the concerns of smaller charities.

Since 2014, Forces in Mind Trust has commissioned DSC to produce research aimed at illuminating the armed forces charity sector. Now in its seventh year, the project has grown to include three *Sector Insight* (2014, 2016, 2020) reports and a searchable online database of armed forces charities, which are free resources for members of the public.

DSC has also published six *Focus On* reports on a range of topics: mental health (2017), education and employment (2017), physical health (2018), housing provision (2018), criminal justice (2019) and sector trends (2019). These are intended as short, easily digestible reports to inform those who work within the charity sector, policymakers, media professionals and members of the public who are interested in the work of armed forces charities. Building on these existing publications, this report focuses on armed forces charities' support for families.

For details of all our activities, and to order publications and book courses, go to **www.dsc.org.uk**, call **020 7697 4200** or **email cs@dsc.org.uk**.

For details of our research, go to **www.dsc.org.uk/research** or email **research@dsc.org.uk**.

For more information on DSC's Armed Forces Charities project, or to download the reports, visit **www.armedforcescharities.org.uk**.

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Executive summary

Families are an important and sizeable part of the armed forces community. While their needs generally reflect those of civilian families, aspects of military life can present unique challenges for armed forces families. Therefore, having support in place to understand and respond to armed forces families' needs is vital and the armed forces charity sector plays an important role in providing necessary support.

The purpose of this report is to hold an objective mirror to the armed forces charity sector and – for the first time – provide a comprehensive account of the provision it offers to armed forces families. It is intended to be a resource for those involved with or interested in the armed forces charity sector, such as charity workers, policymakers, the media and the public.

To address this remit, DSC devised the following research questions:

- How many armed forces charities deliver support for families and how many beneficiaries do they support?
- What types of support are delivered to armed forces families and to which family members?
- What examples of collaboration and impact measurement exist?
- What challenges do charities face in supporting armed forces families?

KEY FINDINGS

268 armed forces charities support families

There are 268 armed forces charities that support armed forces families, comprising around 14.8% of the armed forces charity sector (approximately 1,800 as of July 2020).

This finding reinforces DSC's previous findings: when the armed forces charity sector is broken down by topic of support, relatively small groups of charities are serving beneficiaries through highly directed support (see Cole et al., 2017; Doherty et al., 2017, 2018a, 2018b; Robson et al., 2019).

Survey respondents supported 89,000 beneficiaries

The respondents to DSC's survey supported 88,921 beneficiaries – that is, individual family members – in the year prior to July/August 2020. This is based on data for 49 of the survey respondents; the total for the 268 armed forces charities that support families is likely to be greater.

Survey respondents spent £68.5 million supporting families

The respondents to DSC's survey spent approximately £68.5 million during the year prior to July/August 2020. This is calculated using data for 63 of the survey respondents; it is likely that the total for the 268 armed forces charities that support families is greater.

Armed forces charities support multiple beneficiary types

Survey respondents are most likely to provide support to spouses or partners (69.6%), followed closely by children (66.7%), widows (60.9%) and adult dependants (43.5%). Almost half of the survey respondents (48.2%) provide some form of support to all four types of family member.

Charities in DSC's survey are more likely to support families of ex-Service (89.9% of survey respondents) than serving (72.5%) personnel. Those supporting one of these beneficiary groups exclusively are almost three times as likely to support the families of ex-Service than serving personnel.

Furthermore, in terms of support provided during three key stages of military life – transition, deployment and relocation – most charities (51.4%) provide support during all three stages. However, 90.9% of the charities that support families during only one stage do so during transition. These findings indicate that there are more charities which focus on supporting ex-Service than serving families.

Armed forces charities provide wide-ranging support to families

Collectively, the charities in DSC's survey provide support to armed forces families across a wide range of areas. The three most common areas of support – social groups, mental health support and education support – are each delivered by over 40% of the survey respondents. While other areas are less common, substantial proportions of respondents provide support for domestic violence (20.3%), childcare (15.9%) and criminal justice (14.5%).

66.1% of the respondents provide more than one area of support to armed forces families, with more than half (51.7%) providing between two and six areas of support. Except for education support, which is most commonly provided to children, all other areas of support are most commonly provided to spouses or partners.

Over half of the survey respondents measure impact

54.2% of the survey respondents measure the impact of their support on families. This rate is slightly greater than has been found in DSC's previous research on other topics of support within the armed forces charity sector (see Doherty et al., 2017, 2018a, 2018b; Robson et al., 2019). This demonstrates a commitment to understand how their support affects beneficiaries – an important part of how charities can improve their provision and beneficiaries' outcomes.

However, the percentage of the survey respondents which measure impact is less than previous research has found for the charity sector more broadly, which is estimated to be 75% (Ógáin et al., 2012). Furthermore, among DSC's survey respondents the rates of impact measurement are lower for micro charities (with incomes under £10,000) and small charities (with incomes between £10,000 and £100,000) than for their larger counterparts.

Supporting families involves substantial collaboration

71.0% of the survey respondents work in partnership with at least one other organisation – and the majority of respondents (65.2%) reported benefits from collaboration. On average, charities undertaking partnerships collaborate with four different types of organisation, such as non-Service charities, Armed Forces Covenant signatory organisations and statutory services. This provides evidence of substantial collaborative links both within and outside the subsector.

Identifying beneficiaries is a key challenge

The most common challenge, described in over one-third (36.7%) of charities' qualitative responses, is identifying beneficiaries. Funding and finance (18.4%) and meeting the intensity, prevalence and diversity of beneficiaries' needs (18.4%) are also common challenges.

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Impacts of COVID-19 are widespread and overlapping

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are widespread, affecting over two-thirds of the charities surveyed (69.6%). Further, the respondents experienced, on average, three different impacts, indicating that the impacts are overlapping.

The four most common impacts were a change in methods of service delivery (49.3%), a drop in fundraising or donated income (47.8%), having to pause some services (39.1%) and having depleted reserves (39.1%). Charities also reported new areas of need emerging, staffing changes (such as using the furlough scheme or making redundancies), and increased demand for financial assistance from their beneficiaries.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Furthering commitment and reducing barriers to measuring impact

Measuring impact is a key part of assessing and improving support. This report finds that 54.2% of respondents measure the impact of their support on armed forces families and that smaller charities are less likely to do so. More widespread and extensive impact measurement could therefore improve charities' support and, ultimately, beneficiaries' outcomes.

Impact measurement should be further promoted among charities that deliver support to armed forces families as a whole. However, more work may be needed to reduce potential barriers to measuring impact for small and micro charities in particular.

Improving processes for identifying beneficiaries

Identifying beneficiaries was highlighted as the most common challenge faced by charities supporting armed forces families in this report. Overcoming this is important because beneficiaries' needs can become more complex when there are delays in reaching them, and many potential beneficiaries may not be reached.

Further research

With respect to the previous recommendation, more in-depth research is required to fully understand the processes by which armed forces charities currently identify potential beneficiaries and explore ways of improving beneficiary engagement.

Another instructive area for further research concerns levels of specialist support for families of serving and ex-Service personnel. This research found that more charities provide support to families of ex-Service than serving personnel – and more charities reported exclusively supporting families of ex-Service than serving personnel. A deeper understanding of whether the current offering is meeting the needs of these distinct beneficiary groups could better inform provision of support.

Finally, a longitudinal investigation of the subsector would illuminate how support provided to armed forces families evolves over time. This is particularly salient due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which is likely to affect several aspects of support for families, especially given that its effects are still unfolding.

Introduction

CONTEXT

Families of serving and ex-Service personnel constitute a large and important part of the armed forces community. While the overall size of the UK's armed forces community remains relatively unknown, the most recent estimates indicate that there are just over 2 million adult dependants, including (ex-)spouses, (ex-)partners and adult children, and just under 1 million dependent children of ex-Service personnel in the UK (Royal British Legion and Compass Partnership, 2014).

The most recent data from the Ministry of Defence (MOD) provides some insights into the characteristics of serving families, revealing that just over one-half (53%) of service personnel are married or in a civil partnership and that over three-quarters (79%) of these families have children (MOD, 2020a, p. 2). Furthermore, over one-fifth (22%) are in a long-term relationship (MOD, 2020b, p. 21). This highlights that modern armed forces families come in a variety of shapes and forms, having moved away from traditional notions of the nuclear family.

As evidenced in the recent *Living in Our Shoes* report, the needs, concerns and experiences of armed forces families often reflect those of families in the civilian population; nevertheless, being a member of the armed forces community can present distinct 'stressors' (Walker et al., 2020a, p. 5). It is beyond the scope of this report to address every challenge experienced by serving and ex-Service families. Nevertheless, this introduction briefly discusses some key themes which feature prominently in the wide body of literature on armed forces families: housing, employment, children's education, health and wellbeing, and family relationships.

Housing

Housing was identified by Walker et al. (2020a, p. 10) as the most frequently mentioned issue in their research with serving families. According to the most recent tri-Service Families Continuous Attitudes Survey (FamCAS), over half of serving families live in Service Family Accommodation (SFA) (MOD, 2020a, p. 21).[1] Key issues raised by families living in SFA included the quality of the housing, the timeliness of repairs, a slow complaints-logging process and the inability to make positive aesthetic changes to properties (Walker et al., 2020a, pp. 11–12). Furthermore, families consisting of unmarried couples can often struggle to secure SFA housing as priority is given to Service personnel who are married or in civil partnerships (MOD, 2020c).

For families adjusting to life after service, housing can be a challenging aspect of transition. Recent tri-Service research suggests that for families in SFA who do not own a property upon leaving, finding and funding accommodation quickly can be difficult and families are not always fully informed about eligibility requirements for social housing (AFF, 2018, p. 24). Furthermore, local authorities' local connection requirements may present a barrier for armed forces families who frequently relocate (Ashcroft, 2017).

Employment

The employment rate for spouses and partners of serving personnel is similar to that of the general population (MOD, 2020a, p. 17). Nevertheless, 57% of spouses of serving personnel

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[1] There is considerable variation between Services, with over two-thirds (69%) of army families living in SFA, compared to just under one-half (49%) of RAF families and just under one-third (32%) of Royal Navy and Royal Marines families (MOD, 2020a, p. 21).

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report the effect on their career as a negative part of Service life (MOD, 2020a, p. 9). Indeed, research suggests the military lifestyle can create barriers to employment and career progression for armed forces spouses and partners.

One of the most pertinent barriers to employment for armed forces spouses and partners is caring responsibilities (Lyonette et al., 2018; MOD, 2020a, p. 18). Research conducted by the Army Families Federation (AFF, 2020a) revealed that the cost of childcare was a significant issue for serving families, who often live too far away from their family and friends to take advantage of unpaid childcare.

Geographical mobility can also have a significant impact on spousal employment (Walker et al., 2020a). The most recent FamCAS survey indicated that 31% of army families had relocated for Service reasons in the preceding year, compared to 23% of RAF families and 13% of Royal Navy or Royal Marines families (MOD, 2020a, p. 3). Challenges associated with relocation include gaps in employment history and difficulties accessing or completing training – problems particularly acute for personnel on overseas postings (Lyonette et al., 2018, p. 39).

Spousal employment is an important part of a successful transition to civilian life for ex-Service families. A recent survey found that a considerable proportion of Service leavers – 53% of Royal Navy or Royal Marines, 32% of army and 43% of RAF respondents – reported not having secured employment at their time of departure (AFF, 2018, pp. 28, 30).

Education

The mobility associated with Service life and transition can create educational disruptions for children in armed forces families (Walker et al., 2020a). Moving to a new school or college may result in discontinuity between local curriculums (for example, repeating some learning and/or missing out elsewhere), having to adjust quickly to requirements of different exam boards and (re)building relationships with peers and staff (Hall, 2019).

Educational challenges can be particularly acute for families with children who have special educational needs or disabilities – relocation can make it especially difficult to secure appropriate school places for such children (Walker et al., 2020a, p. 7). Research by The Children's Society (2017) further suggests that children in armed forces families who are classified as young carers may face additional barriers to education.

Overall, the empirical evidence on the effect of military life on children's educational attainment is inconclusive (Walker et al., 2020a, p. 10). Despite armed forces children facing unique challenges, qualitative research both within and outside the educational context shows that they exhibit a considerable degree of resilience and coping (Children's Commissioner, 2018).

Health and wellbeing

The stressors presented by military life may affect the health and wellbeing of family members. International evidence on the impacts of military life on children's mental health is mixed (Cramm et al., 2019) and may be related to its effects on parental mental health (Farero et al., 2020; King and Smith, 2016).

However, findings from research in the UK context on the relationship between paternal deployment and childhood emotional and behavioural wellbeing indicated that, on average, paternal deployment did not have a significant impact on the emotional and behavioural wellbeing of children (Fear et al., 2018; see also Williamson et al., 2018).

With regard to the wellbeing of military spouses and partners, a study by Gribble et al. (2019) found that female armed forces spouses and partners were approximately 2.5 times more likely than women in the general population to be classified as suffering from depression or hazardous alcohol consumption. Mobility can also affect the wellbeing of spouses and partners by limiting opportunities for social connection, which can lead to isolation and disconnectedness (Gribble, 2017).

There is also evidence to suggest that family members caring for wounded, injured or sick ex-Service personnel may experience impacts on their own mental health and wellbeing (Engward et al., 2018).

Relationships

Relatedly, the stressors of military life may affect family relationships. Keeling et al. (2015) found that while the rate of reported relationship difficulties among military personnel is low, deployments lasting longer than MOD Harmony Guidelines recommend have a negative impact on relationships between spouses and partners. Time away during non-operational deployment may result in spouses and partners perceiving 'an unequal distribution of family responsibilities', resulting in stress on relationships (Gribble and Fear, 2019, p. 2).

Military life can also increase stress on parent–child relationships. The serving parent may experience time away from the family on deployment, possibly leading to emotional impacts on children such as confusion and worry (McConnell et al., 2019). Relationships between the non-deployed parent and children, and between siblings, may also become fraught (Children's Commissioner, 2018). Parental deployment may additionally lead to adjustment for older children, whose roles within the household may change (Gribble and Fear, 2019).

Research suggests that victims of domestic violence within the armed forces community can face unique barriers to accessing support (William and Matolcsi, 2019). Examples include economic dependence, relocation resulting in isolation from support networks, fear of loss of housing, military rank structure and the close-knit nature of military communities (Williamson and Matolcsi, 2019). Many of these factors are recognised by the MOD (2018) in its Domestic Abuse Strategy 2018–2023.

Overview of the context

As highlighted in this introduction, the needs of armed forces families often mirror those of civilian families, particularly with respect to securing housing, employment and education, and maintaining health, wellbeing and positive family relationships. Nevertheless, armed forces families can face unique challenges related to Service life.

However, it is important to note that families' experiences of Service life are distinct, owing to their personal circumstances. For instance, significant factors include whether armed forces families are currently serving or previously served, whether they are in the process of deployment or transition, or whether their Service is the army, RAF or navy. These differences have significant bearing on the potential challenges they face. Similarly, each family is distinct in the number and types of family members, their ages, their employment status and their health. As such, it is crucial to recognise the diversity of armed forces families that charities serve and the tailored support that is therefore required.

FOCUS OF THE REPORT

This report aims to illuminate a subsection of the armed forces charity sector that provides support to families within the armed forces community. To date, relatively little data has been gathered on forces charities' support for families. This report aims to address this gap in knowledge by examining a range of topics which can deliver new insights into the work of armed forces charities.

The report includes an examination of the number of armed forces charities providing support to families, the number of beneficiaries supported and the amount spent on supporting families. In addition, it explores the areas in which support is provided, which family members are supported, how charities collaborate inside and outside the charity sector, and the types of challenges they experience.

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Additionally, this report does not make comments or value judgements on the effectiveness of current provision by charities. Instead, its purpose is to hold an objective mirror to this subsection of the armed forces charity sector.

Undoubtedly, armed forces families may seek support elsewhere, for instance from the wider charity sector or from statutory bodies. However, this report focuses exclusively on those charities whose main purpose is to serve the armed forces community and that therefore meet DSC's definition of an armed forces charity, as outlined on page xiii.

TERMINOLOGY

Although charities may use their own definitions, in keeping with the language used in DSC's *Sector Insight* reports (Cole et al., 2020; Cole and Traynor, 2016; Pozo and Walker, 2014), in this report the term 'ex-Service personnel' refers to any person who has served in the UK armed forces (for at least one day) and 'serving personnel' refers to individuals who are currently employed in the armed forces.

The term 'families' refers to spouses or partners, widows, children and adult dependants of both serving and ex-Service personnel.[2] The term 'spouses or partners' refers to those who are married to, in a civil partnership with, or in a long-term relationship with serving personnel or ex-Service personnel – and also includes divorced and separated spouses and partners. The term 'widows' refers to those whose late spouse or partner was a serving or ex-Service personnel. The term 'children' refers to dependants of serving or ex-Service personnel under the age of 18, while 'adult dependants' refers to the children of serving and ex-Service personnel over the age of 18.

When referring to all of the above (ex-Service personnel, serving personnel and their families), the term 'armed forces community' is employed.

DSC CLASSIFICATION OF ARMED FORCES CHARITIES

This report follows the definition of an armed forces charity originally developed for DSC's 2016 *Sector Insight* report:

[Armed forces charities are] charities that are established specifically to support past and present members of the armed forces and their families (the armed forces community). In this context, an armed forces charity must be able to apply this definition to their beneficiaries.

(Cole and Traynor, 2016, p. 24)

As of July 2020, DSC's data indicates that the total number of armed forces charities operating in the UK is approximately 1,800.

It is important to note that there are other charities supporting the armed forces community that do not meet DSC's definition of an armed forces charity. These charities provide valuable support and often work alongside forces charities, sharing their expertise and resources. While beyond the scope of this report, analysis of the support delivered by mainstream charities would be an interesting and useful topic of further research.

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[2] For brevity, DSC's survey makes reference to 'widows' rather than 'widows/widowers'. The term 'widows' should be taken to include widowers in addition to widows.

METHODOLOGY

The process by which DSC identified the subset of armed forces charities that provide support for families can be described, broadly, in three stages. This process involved:

- undertaking systematic searches of the charity regulators' databases to identify charities with relevant keywords in their objects;
- using charities' accounts, reports and websites to determine which charities showed evidence of supporting armed forces families; and
- gathering information directly from charities themselves through means of a survey.

DSC maintains a database containing information on approximately 1,800 armed forces charities. On 28 July 2020, email requests with a link to access DSC's online survey were sent to all armed forces charities in this database which had a publicly available email address (N=1,312).

Alongside this, DSC identified charities which included keywords relevant to support for families in their charitable objects (N=642). A systematic keyword search was undertaken on the armed forces charities in DSC's database, using data exported from the websites of the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (CCNI) and Cobseo (The Confederation of Service Charities). In addition, the computer programming software Python was used to conduct searches on data from the Charity Commission for England and Wales (CCEW) database, which can only be accessed via SQL.

Using this list of charities with relevant keywords in their charitable objects, on 14 August 2020 DSC sent targeted emails to charities with publicly available email addresses (N=464). Following this, final reminders were distributed. In previous research, DSC distributed and followed up survey invites via telephone and mail correspondence. However, because the COVID-19 pandemic had displaced charity employees from their offices, this was not possible in this case.

When the survey closed on 28 August 2020, DSC had received a total of 69 valid responses from armed forces charities that support families. Responses from charities with duplicate responses and charities later discovered not to support families were excluded.

All charities with relevant keywords in their objects (N=642) were examined on a case-by-case basis for evidence (beyond their official charitable objects and regulator classifications) of supporting families. This involved analysing charities' annual reports, annual accounts, and websites for specific references to programmes and services available to families, funding for other organisations that deliver these services on their behalf, or grants to family members in the armed forces community.

DSC's previous research suggests that there are many more charities which state in their objects that they make grants than those which actually do so in practice (Traynor and Walker, 2015). Hence, charities were only included where their grant-making to support families was evidenced explicitly in their financial accounts.

It is important to note that association branches are not included in the total count of charities supporting armed forces families, unless they completed the survey. Instead, they are represented through their respective corporate bodies. This decision was made for methodological reasons; the information available in association branches' charitable accounts and websites was limited and sometimes inconsistent. This is not to suggest that these charities do not support armed forces families.

Through this case-by-case examination, DSC identified 268 armed forces charities that support families. DSC is confident that the data on charities presented in this report is comprehensive and accurate as of the final data-collection and refinement date (September 2020).

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ABOUT THE SURVEY DATA

As noted above, DSC undertook a survey to find out more about how armed forces charities support armed forces families. This subsection explores the extent to which the survey data is representative of all armed forces charities identified by DSC as supporting families with respect to charity regulator registration and size.

Data was collected using an online survey, which opened on 28 July and closed on 28 August 2020. There were 69 respondents to this survey, representing 25.7% of the 268 charities identified by DSC as supporting armed forces families.

Charities can be registered exclusively with CCEW, OSCR or CCNI. However, some charities are registered with both CCEW and OSCR and are therefore classified as cross-border charities.

For both the survey data and all armed forces charities identified by DSC as supporting families, figure 1 shows the percentages of charities registered with each charity regulator and those which are cross-border. The left-hand panel relates to the survey data. It shows that: 81.2% (N=56) of the respondents are registered solely with CCEW; 8.7% (N=6) are registered solely with OSCR; 10.1% (N=7) are cross-border; and none are registered solely with CCNI. The right-hand panel relates to all armed forces charities identified by DSC as supporting families. It shows that: 82.1% (N=220) of these charities are registered solely with CCEW; 9.3% (N=25) are registered solely with OSCR; 5.6% (N=15) are cross-border; and 3.0% (N=8) are registered solely with CCNI.

This comparison indicates that the composition of the registration locations of the survey respondents is broadly similar to that of all armed forces charities identified as supporting families. Similar proportions are registered with CCEW and OSCR and there is a slight overrepresentation of cross-border charities among the survey respondents. A notable difference is that there are no CCNI charities represented in the survey data.

Figure 1
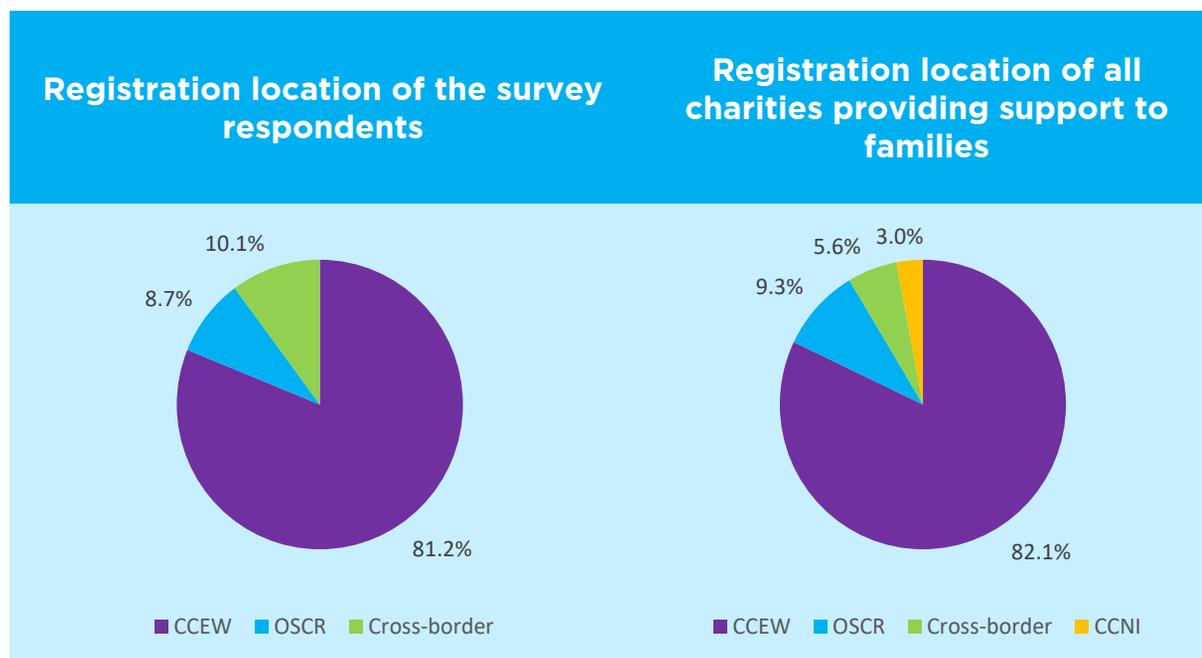
Note: Left-hand panel calculated using total respondents to DSC's survey (N=69); right-hand panel calculated using total number of charities identified by DSC as providing support to families (N=268).

A useful way to assess a charity's size is to look at its income. Charities can be grouped into six size categories, with corresponding income brackets, as set out by CCEW (2018) and NCVO (2020). These six categories are shown in table 1.

Table 1

Charity size classifications and income brackets	
Charity size	**Income bracket**
Super major	Over £100 million
Large	£5 million to £100 million
Upper medium	£500,000 to £5 million
Lower medium	£100,000 to £500,000
Small	£10,000 to £100,000
Micro	£0 to £10,000

Source: CCEW (2018); NCVO (2020). Note that there were no super major charities that responded to DSC's survey, so this category does not appear in the remainder of the report.

Applying the categories outlined in table 1, DSC calculated the percentages of charities in each size category for both the survey respondents and all charities identified as supporting families. Figure 2 compares the percentages of each size category for the survey data and the total number of charities identified by DSC.

The percentages of micro and large charities are very similar between the survey respondents and the charities as a whole. There is a slight overrepresentation of upper medium charities in the survey respondents, and a slight underrepresentation of small, lower medium and super major charities. In short, there are no major discrepancies with respect to charity size between the survey data analysed in this report and the wider population of armed forces charities supporting families.

Figure 2

Charity size composition of the survey respondents and all charities supporting armed forces families
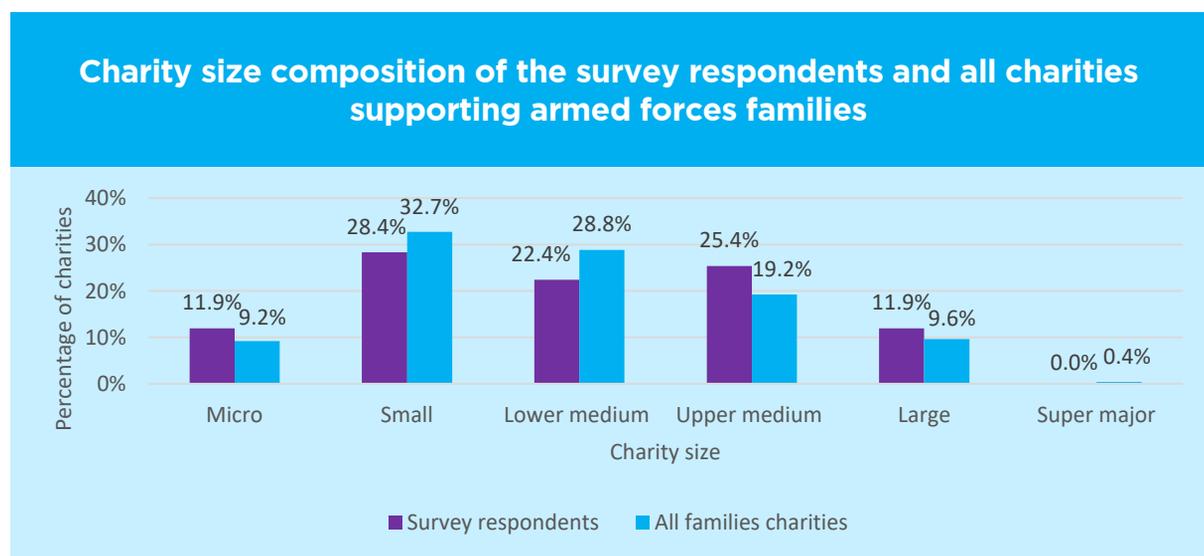
Note: Based on charities' most recent available financial records as of July 2020. Percentages for survey respondents calculated out of all survey respondents with available financial data (N=67). Percentages for all families charities calculated out of all charities that support families with available financial data (N=260).

Finally, it is important to note that this survey data is used to inform the analysis throughout the rest of the report. Where information has been gathered from other sources, this will be clearly noted.

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CHAPTER ONE

An overview of armed forces charities' support for families

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides information and analysis on the extent and characteristics of UK armed forces charities' support for families. It first explores how many individual family members access support from armed forces charities, before turning briefly to some of these beneficiaries' characteristics. It then provides an estimate of the amount of expenditure dedicated by armed forces charities to supporting armed forces families.

The chapter is divided into the following sections:

- Number and types of beneficiary accessing support
- Charitable expenditure
- Chapter summary

1.2 NUMBER AND TYPES OF BENEFICIARY ACCESSING SUPPORT

1.2.1 Number of beneficiaries accessing support

DSC's survey asked respondents to specify the number of beneficiaries they had supported in the past year (the year to July/August 2020). Here, the term 'beneficiaries' refers to the number of individual family members, as opposed to the number of families. The survey responses indicate that the number of beneficiaries accessing support was 88,921 for the year to July/August 2020.

Members of the armed forces community may access more than one charity for support and it is not possible with current figures, or through current service providers' record-keeping, to control for the potential overestimate in beneficiary numbers due to such overlaps. Further research on the beneficiary community is needed to better account for multi-service usage.

Nevertheless, there are methodological reasons to consider this a conservative estimate of the number of beneficiaries supported. The estimate is derived from charities which provided responses to this question in DSC's survey. These charities represent approximately one-fifth (19.4%, N=49) of the total number of charities identified by DSC as supporting armed forces families (N=268). Furthermore, where charities provided an estimated range rather than an estimated number of beneficiaries, DSC took the average of the minimum and maximum of these.

For charities which provided data (N=49), the typical number of beneficiaries supported is between 30 and 600 (that is, between the first and third quartiles). That the mean average number of beneficiaries supported (1,814) is much greater than the median (140) indicates that a few charities are supporting a comparatively very large number of beneficiaries. Indeed, a small number of outlier charities (N=9) provided support to between 1,500 and 40,000 beneficiaries each; collectively, this small number of charities supported 92.2% of the

total number of beneficiaries, suggesting a high degree of concentration within the subsector of armed forces charities supporting families.[3]

Breaking down beneficiaries supported by region, a similar but less dramatic picture emerges. Of the 88,921 beneficiaries supported, 70.3% were supported by cross-border charities (N=62,524), 22.0% were supported by charities registered exclusively in England and Wales (N=19,592), and 7.7% were supported by charities registered exclusively in Scotland (N=6,805). That most beneficiaries were supported by cross-border charities in DSC's survey data may partly be explained by these charities being, on average, approximately five times larger with respect to income (£7.8 million versus £1.1 million for those registered exclusively with the Charity Commission for England and Wales and £1.6 million for those registered exclusively with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator).

1.2.2 Types of beneficiary accessing support

In this report, beneficiary type relates to the distinction between families of serving personnel and families of ex-Service personnel, in addition to the specific type of family member supported (i.e. spouses or partners, children, widows and adult dependants).

Turning first to the distinction between serving and ex-Service personnel, figure 1.1 shows that, out of all survey respondents (N=69), 72.5% (N=50) make provision for the families of serving personnel, while 89.9% (N=62) make provision for the families of ex-Service personnel.

That there is greater support for the families of ex-Service personnel reflects DSC's previous research in the areas of housing (Doherty et al., 2018b), mental and physical health (Cole et al., 2017; Doherty et al., 2018a), and education and employment (Doherty et al., 2017). It is likely that this reflects the larger population of the ex-Service community compared to the serving community: while estimates of the size of the armed forces community are limited, research suggests that there are approximately 261,000 dependants of serving personnel and 3.1 million dependants of ex-Service personnel (Cole et al., 2020, pp. 3–5).

Figure 1.1
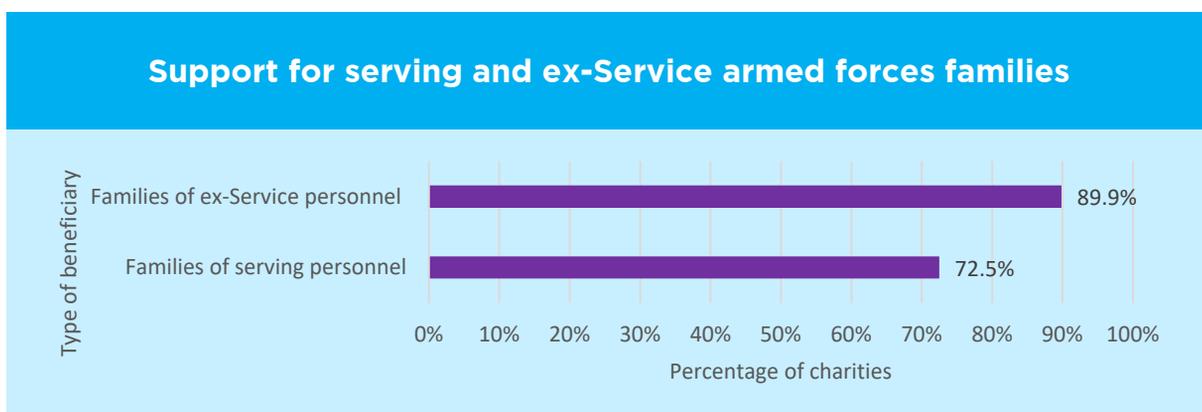
Support for serving and ex-Service armed forces families

Note: Respondents could select more than one of the items in this question; therefore, the percentages do not sum to 100%. Each percentage is calculated using the total number of survey respondents (N=69).

The percentage of respondents supporting *families* of serving personnel (72.5%) is substantially greater than previous findings for the percentages of respondents supporting *serving personnel* in the areas of housing (32.1%; Doherty et al., 2018b, p. 3), physical health (49.6%; Doherty et al., 2018a, p. 3), and education and employment (62.1%; Doherty et al., 2017, p. 3). However, it is similar to the finding for mental health (71.1%; Cole et al., 2017, p. 3).

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[3] Charities which are outliers with respect to beneficiary numbers are those which support more than 1,455 beneficiaries: that is, the upper quartile (600) plus 1.5 times the inter-quartile range (855) (Agresti and Finlay, 2009, p. 54).

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As highlighted in the introduction, support for families can be required throughout the stages of military life; the relatively high level of provision for serving families is likely to reflect this.

Figure 1.2

Detailed analysis of support for serving and ex-Service armed forces families

10.1%

27.5%

62.3%

- Families of serving and ex-Service personnel
- Only families of ex-Service personnel
- Only families of serving personnel

Note: Calculated as a percentage of respondents to this survey question (N=69). The percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

To some extent, this is supported by more detailed analysis, illustrated in figure 1.2. This shows that 62.3% (N=43) of respondents provide support to families of both serving and ex-Service personnel, suggesting that most charities support armed forces families throughout military life. However, while 27.5% (N=19) provide support only to families of ex-Service personnel, only 10.1% (N=7) provide support to families of serving personnel.

These findings suggest that there may be more support for ex-Service than serving families, and more support for ex-Service personnel from charities that specifically focus on their needs. Alternatively, it may be that whilst they are fewer in number, the charities serving only families of serving personnel provide a higher level of support. Moreover, there are demographic differences related to need: the UK's ex-Service population is considerably larger than the serving population (approximately 2,148,000 versus 190,000, excluding family members; MOD, 2019; MOD 2020d) and typically consists of older individuals (Royal British Legion and Compass Partnership, 2014).

Turning now to the specific types of family member supported, figure 1.3 shows the percentages of all survey respondents (N=69) supporting each different type of family member. Spouses or partners are the most common type of family member supported (69.6%, N=48 of respondents). Widows are supported by 60.9% (N=42) of respondents, making support for widows noticeably less common than support for spouses or partners. At 66.7% (N=46), children are supported almost as frequently as spouses or partners – and substantially more than adult dependants, who are supported by under one-half (43.5%, N=30) of respondents.

Figure 1.3

Percentages of charities which support different types of family member

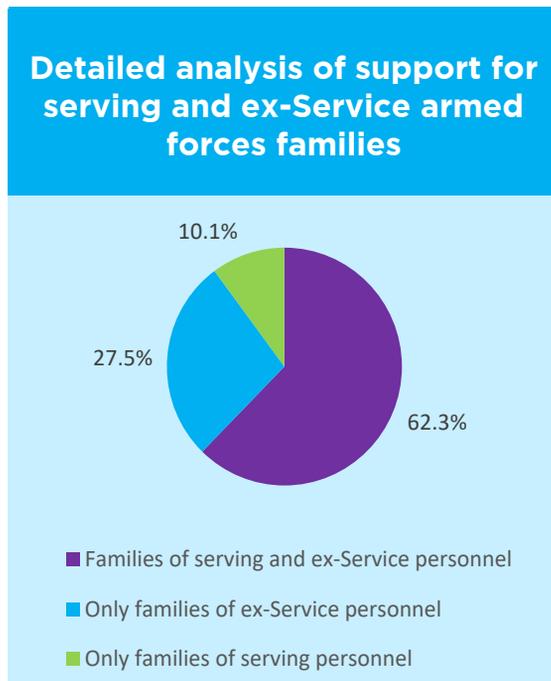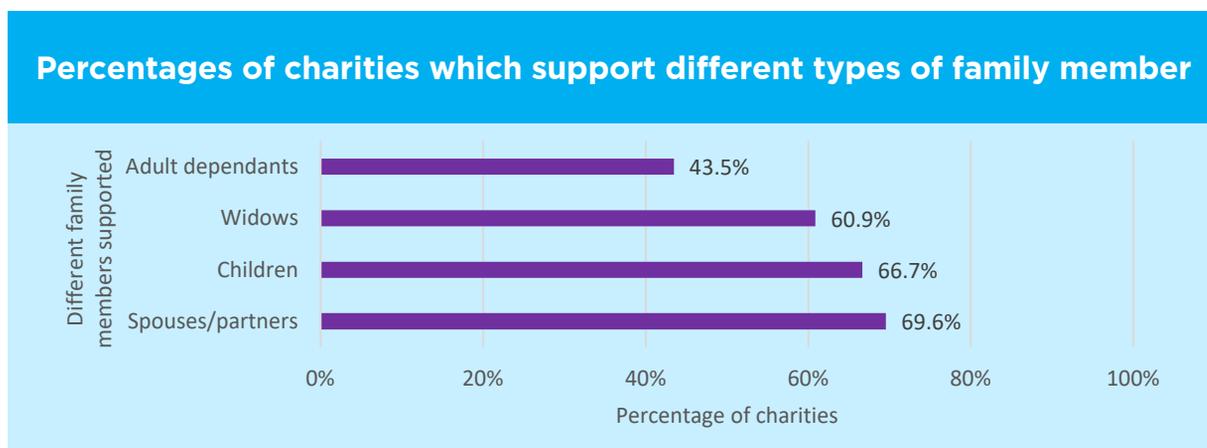| Different family members supported	Percentage
Adult dependants	43.5%
Widows	60.9%
Children	66.7%
Spouses/partners	69.6%

Percentage of charities

Note: Respondents could select more than one of the items in this question; therefore, the percentages do not sum to 100%. Each percentage is calculated using the total number of survey respondents (N=69).

A good example of a charity which provides support for widows within the armed forces community is the Army Widows' Association. Details of this charity and the support it provides can be found in case study 1.

Case study 1:
SPECIALIST SUPPORT FOR WIDOWS
Army Widows' Association

The Army Widows' Association (AWA) was founded in 2004 by a group of army widows who felt that a specific organisation was needed in order to understand, represent and support their needs (AWA, 2020a).

Membership of the AWA is open to individuals over 18 years of age who are a widow, a widower, or a recognised partner of a deceased spouse who served in the army. The AWA reports that it brings together members of all ages who have been widowed due to a variety of causes, not only conflict (AWA, 2020b).

Alongside its annual general meeting and visit to the National Memorial Arboretum, the AWA holds respite weekends which provide an opportunity for members to socialise in a secure and safe environment with like-minded people. The third major annual event is the Remembrance weekend in London. Members take part in the march past the Cenotaph, at which a wreath is laid in memory of their late partners (AWA, 2020a).

In addition to these larger events, the AWA facilitates a wide range of regular activities for members – from coffee mornings and cookery courses to, more recently, online quizzes and bingo (AWA, 2019). These events are intended to foster a network of solidarity and mutual support between members.

This mutual support is an important part of the AWA's offering (AWA, 2020a). Another way this is brought about is through a private Facebook group in which members can access information and support from a network of other individuals in similar situations or with similar experiences. Alongside this informal mutual support, the AWA also provides professional counselling (AWA, 2019).

The AWA's website contains free-to-access online support pages produced by members. They cover issues which, from members' experiences, are particularly relevant to widows, such as benefits, pensions, resettlement, employment, counselling, children's education and discount cards (AWA, 2020c). Each page includes information on these issues and signposting to other organisations for direct support and advice.

Note: Some of the information in this case study was gathered via interviews and/or correspondence with charity representatives.

Figure 1.4

Number of types of family member supported by armed forces charities
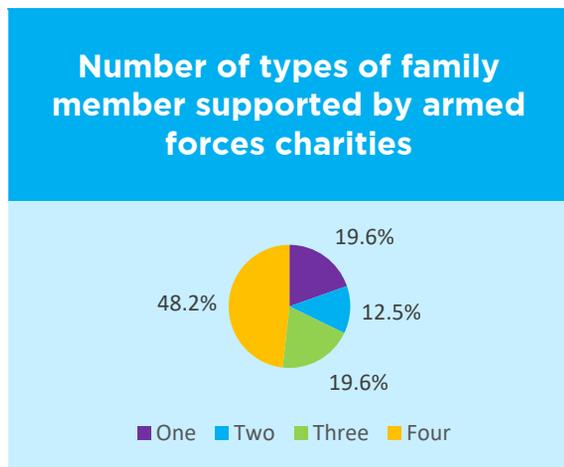
Note: Calculated as a percentage of respondents to this survey question (N=56). The percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

As noted above, support may not be limited to only one type of family member; the survey respondents support between one and four of the types of family member specified in figure 1.3: spouses and/or partners, widows, children and adult dependants.

As shown in figure 1.4, out of the respondents that indicated supporting one or more types of family member (N=56), 19.6% (N=11) support one type while 12.5% (N=7) support two types and 19.6% (N=11) support three types. Almost half (48.2%, N=27) provide support to all four types of family member.

For charities which support only one type of family member (N=11), this is most commonly spouses or partners (45.5%, N=5), followed closely by support for children (36.4%, N=4).

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Very few charities support only widows or adult dependants (9.1%, N=1 for each). This suggests that more charities specialise in providing support for spouses or partners and children than for widows or adult dependants.

Case study 2 provides an example of a charity, Scotty's Little Soldiers, which specialises in providing bereavement-related support to children and young adults.

Case study 2:
SPECIALIST SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN
Scotty's Little Soldiers

Scotty's Little Soldiers was registered in 2010 to provide support to children and young people who have been bereaved of a parent who served in the armed forces. Since then, Scotty's Little Soldiers has built up four distinct streams of work to relieve children and young people of the effects of bereavement (Scotty's Little Soldiers, 2020a).

At the centre of the charity's work is the Smiles programme. This is designed to provide fun activities for children, young people and their families to engage in – while opening the door for families to ask for and access other forms of help (Scotty's Little Soldiers, 2020b).

In 2019, examples of work in the Smiles programme included the provision of 751 vouchers and 769 personalised gifts. These were given at times that can be especially difficult for bereaved children and young people, including Remembrance, Christmas, birthdays and the anniversary of their parent's death. In addition, 171 Scotty's Little Soldiers members attended a Christmas party on a boat on the river Thames. The event provided an opportunity to forge friendships, provide mutual support and access information about other available sources of support.

Indeed, to provide more in-depth wellbeing support, the charity has a specific Support programme (Scotty's Little Soldiers, 2020c). The charity has a dedicated Support team to speak to families and direct them to additional help where necessary, for example through referrals to the bereavement charity Winston's Wish or to NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for specialist support (Scotty's Little Soldiers, 2020d). In 2019, the charity opened 175 family support cases.

Scotty's Little Soldiers has also developed two programmes – Strides and Springboard – which aim to help bereaved children of Service personnel fulfil their potential. These programmes provide guidance and opportunities around education, vocational training and employment, in addition to encouraging the development of life skills to more generally support the children and young people's transition into adulthood and independence.

The Strides programme is for individuals aged 18 and under. In 2019, it provided 133 grants to support members with their development and education, 9 grants for higher education, 11 grants for driving lessons, and various small grants for everyday activities including music lessons and sports clubs.

The Springboard programme was developed in 2020 with the intention of extending support to young adults aged between 19 and 25. This programme focuses on providing mentoring and career placement opportunities.

Alongside this direct support for children and young people, Scotty's Little Soldiers provides an online forum where parents and guardians can connect and communicate.

Note: Some of the information in this case study was gathered via interviews and/or correspondence with charity representatives.

1.3 CHARITABLE EXPENDITURE

1.3.1 Total expenditure on families

It is often the case that charities provide support across multiple areas of need. As such, their resources are spread out across several different areas of provision. Therefore, ascertaining a charity's expenditure in a particular area – such as on families – is methodologically challenging: the level of detail required to do so is not generally available or necessary in charities' published financial information.

To overcome this problem, DSC asked survey respondents to estimate the percentage of expenditure that they had dedicated to supporting families in the past year. Using this information alongside the charities' most recent published financial data, it was thereby possible to calculate how much each charity typically spends supporting families. Of those charities for which financial data and responses to this survey question were available (N=63), the most recent data was for financial years 2018–19 (66.7%, N=42) and 2017–18 (33.3%, N=21).

Following this methodology, DSC calculated that survey respondents spent £68.5 million on support for armed forces families in the year prior to the survey. This can be regarded as a conservative estimate for armed forces charities that support families more broadly as it is calculated using data from 23.5% (N=63) of the total number of charities identified by DSC as providing support to families (N=268).

A more granular analysis investigated how much of their expenditure respondents dedicate to families. Out of the respondents who provided an estimate (N=65), 43.1% (N=28) spent between 76% and 100% of their income on families, making this the most common range of expenditure. This was followed by 23.1% (N=15) spending between 51% and 75% of their income on families. It was less common for respondents to allocate either 1–25% or 26–50% of their expenditure to families (16.9%, N=11, for each).

Further analysis investigated whether the percentage of expenditure dedicated to supporting armed forces families varies by charity size. DSC calculated the average expenditure dedicated to families for each of the five income-based categories (see the introduction for an explanation of this grouping). This showed that the percentage of expenditure dedicated to families tends to increase with charity size. The smallest income group, micro charities, dedicates 46.0% of their income to supporting families, on average, while large charities dedicate 73.8% of their income to supporting families, on average.

1.3.2 Expenditure by topic

Expenditure data ascertained from DSC's previous research enables a comparison of armed forces charities' expenditure by topic. Figure 1.5 shows the estimated expenditure dedicated by armed forces charities to each topic of provision (during the financial years most recent to when each report was published; see Cole et al., 2017; Doherty et al., 2017, 2018a, 2018b; Robson et al., 2019).

The amount armed forces charities dedicate to supporting armed forces families (£68.5 million) is substantially greater than the amounts dedicated to housing and homelessness (£40 million; Doherty et al., 2018b, p. 5), mental health (£28 million; Cole et al., 2017, p. 7), education and employment (£26 million; Doherty et al., 2017, p. 4), and criminal justice (£4.5 million; Robson et al., 2019, p. 4). However, it remains less than the greatest amount of expenditure, which is allocated to physical health support (£103 million; Doherty et al., 2018a,

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p. 6). While there are some limitations to this comparison, it provides an interesting insight into the sector's relative spending priorities.[4]

Figure 1.5

Annual expenditure by topic
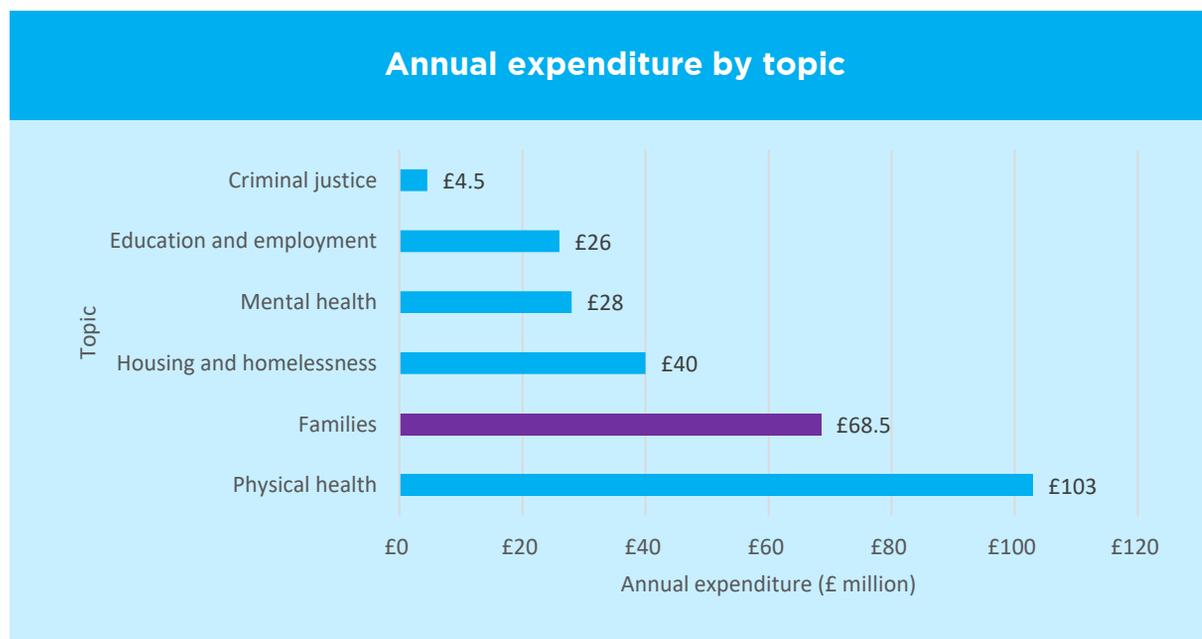
Source: Cole et al. (2017); Doherty et al. (2017, 2018a, 2018b); Robson et al. (2019).

1.4 CHAPTER ONE SUMMARY

1.4.1 Provision of support for armed forces families

DSC identified 268 armed forces charities which provide support to armed forces families. This represents 14.8% of all armed forces charities identified by DSC as of July 2020 (approximately 1,800). This finding suggests that there is only a relatively small subset of armed forces charities that provide support to families. This is in line with DSC's previous research on particular topics and suggests that armed forces charities provide highly directed support, not only in particular areas of need (such as criminal justice and employment) but also with respect to beneficiaries.

1.4.2 Beneficiaries

DSC's survey data shows that at least 88,921 individual family members were supported by armed forces charities during the year prior to the survey.

The survey respondents are more likely to support families of ex-Service (89.9%) than serving (72.5%) personnel. This is unsurprising as support for families can be required throughout military life. Indeed, almost two-thirds (62.3%) of charities provide support to families of both serving and ex-Service personnel. Of those who only support one or the other, approximately three times more support families of ex-Service rather than serving personnel.

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[4] These figures were calculated using the same methodology as in this report. Hence, they too are conservative estimates based on data specified by survey respondents or in annual accounts. Furthermore, there may be overlap between the figures as previous expenditure includes spending on the families of serving and ex-Service personnel.

Most commonly (48.2%), the survey respondents reported supporting all four types of family member specified in the survey: spouses or partners, widows, children and adult dependants. Only approximately one-fifth (19.6%) of charities support one family member and the majority (81.9%) of these charities support either spouses and partners or children.

1.4.3 Charitable expenditure

The survey respondents' annual expenditure on support for families totals £68.5 million. This can be considered a conservative estimate for the wider body of armed forces charities identified as supporting families: the figure accounts for 23.5% (N=63) of armed forces charities that support families (N=268).

In the context of DSC's previous research on specific areas of support, support for families is the second-largest area of support in terms of charitable expenditure.

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CHAPTER TWO

How charities support armed forces families

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter firstly explores which areas of support are provided to families by armed forces charities – and to which types of family member. Analysis of DSC's survey data indicates that support to armed forces families is provided across a wide range of areas and charities commonly provide more than one area of support. Secondly, this chapter turns to the methods through which charities deliver support to beneficiaries.

The chapter is divided into the following sections:

- Areas of support
- Service delivery
- Chapter summary

2.2 AREAS OF SUPPORT

2.2.1 What areas of support are delivered?

As noted in the introduction, support for families can take myriad different forms in order to address the challenges that armed forces families may face. These challenges may be unique to their experiences as armed forces families or in common with those in the civilian population.

DSC's survey asked respondents to specify whether they delivered support in one or more of ten areas. These areas were:

- Social groups
- Mental health support
- Education support
- Financial support
- Physical health support
- Housing support
- Employment support
- Domestic violence support
- Childcare support
- Criminal justice support

The percentages of all survey respondents (N=69) that deliver each of these areas of support are detailed in figure 2.1 and described below. Overall, the responses show that charities supporting armed forces families collectively provide support to families across all ten of the above areas.

Figure 2.1
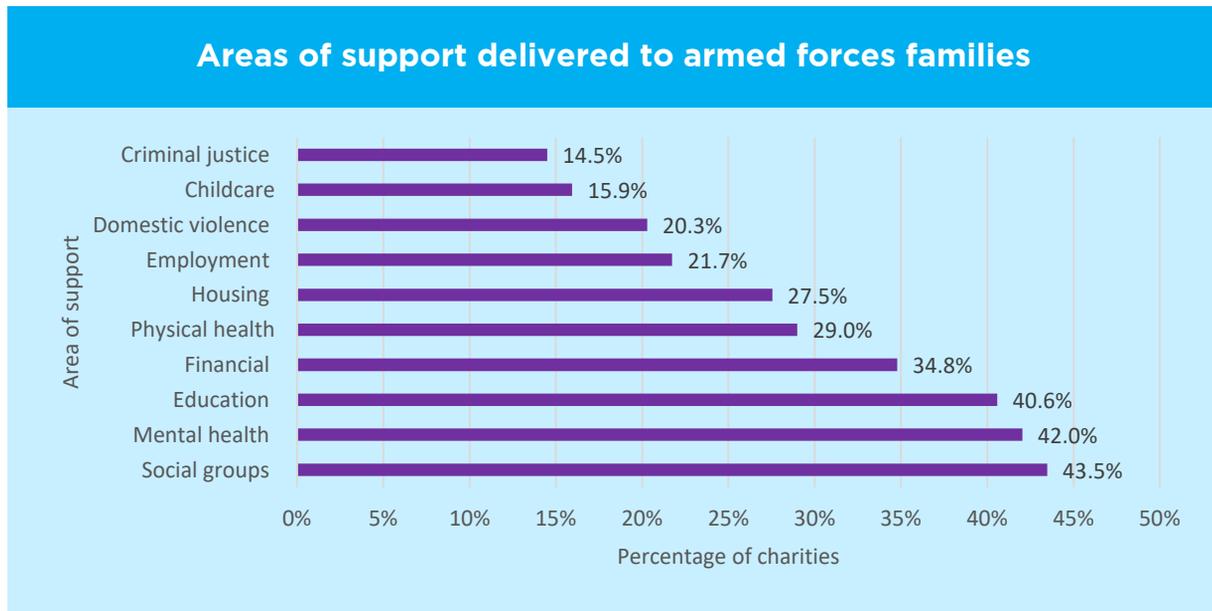
Areas of support delivered to armed forces families

Criminal justice — 14.5%
Childcare — 15.9%
Domestic violence — 20.3%
Employment — 21.7%
Housing — 27.5%
Physical health — 29.0%
Financial — 34.8%
Education — 40.6%
Mental health — 42.0%
Social groups — 43.5%

Area of support / Percentage of charities

Note: Respondents could select more than one of the items in this question; therefore, the percentages do not sum to 100%. Each percentage is calculated using the total number of survey respondents (N=69).

The most common area of support provided to armed forces families is social groups. This is provided by 43.5% (N=30) of the survey respondents. Social groups can take a number of different forms but aim to alleviate isolation and loneliness through organised activities. Some specific examples from survey respondents include breakfast clubs, mutual support groups and drama groups.

The second most common area of support is mental health (42.0%, N=29). Meanwhile, the percentage of charities supporting families with physical health is notably lower (29.0%, N=20). This reflects DSC's previous findings that armed forces charities supporting mental health were more likely than those supporting physical health to provide support to spouses/partners or children/dependants (see Cole et al., 2017; Doherty et al., 2018a). It may further reflect the ways in which military life affects families' mental health and wellbeing more than their physical health, as can be seen from the context to this report (see the introduction).

A good example of a charity which delivers support with respect to both mental and physical health is the Defence Medical Welfare Service, detailed in case study 3.

**Case study 3:
MEDICAL WELFARE SUPPORT
Defence Medical Welfare Service**

The Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS) was originally formed from the Joint War Committee of the Order of St John and the British Red Cross in 1943. In 2001, the organisation became an independent charity, changing its name to the Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS, 2018). Over the past three-quarters of a century, DMWS has provided medical welfare services to over 1 million personnel and their families (DMWS, 2020a).

Medical welfare services include a range of practical and emotional support, such as bedside visits and telephone calls, accompanying beneficiaries to appointments, help resolving medical care issues and understanding treatment, providing toiletries and clothing, and helping to ensure support and services are in place when a person leaves hospital (DMWS, 2020b).

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These services are available to serving and ex-Service personnel and their immediate families when they are in hospital, and they are provided by professionals with backgrounds in the military, healthcare, social work and counselling. Through these services, DMWS aims to ameliorate isolation, stress and worry, which can be barriers to restoring health (DMWS, 2020b).

DMWS recently began a project titled Families & Carers Wellbeing Support, funded through the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's Removing Barriers to Family Life programme (Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, 2020a). The project aims to deliver an integrated pathway of support to families of ex-Service personnel. It seeks to address barriers to recovery, good health and wellbeing; improve family life; build resilience; reduce isolation; and help ex-Service personnel and their families to navigate through health services and other local support.

Throughout this programme, a family welfare officer acts as a single point of contact for ex-Service personnel and their families or carers who have been admitted to or are receiving treatment in acute or mental health services. The officer helps to identify families that require specialised family support or who would benefit from specialist activities, such as nature-based therapy with The Cart Shed in Herefordshire.

Indeed, the programme is undertaken in partnership with statutory and third-sector organisations, which can provide longer-term support where necessary. By working in partnership on this programme, DMWS has, for example, liaised with the local council, GPs and mental health services in order to further a veteran's social housing application such that they could access suitable housing and move closer to their family support network.

Note: Some of the information in this case study was gathered via interviews and/or correspondence with charity representatives.

Returning to the percentages of survey respondents which provide support in each area, the results indicate that education support is provided by approximately two-fifths of respondents (40.6%, N=28).

After education, the next most common area of support is financial support. This is provided to families by just over one-third of respondents (34.8%, N=24). Next, housing support is provided by just over one-quarter (27.5%, N=19). This is a somewhat surprising finding given the prominence accorded to housing as an area of concern for armed forces families (see Walker et al., 2020a). However, this may be due to housing being of greater concern for serving families, who, as noted previously, make up a smaller proportion of the beneficiary population.

With respect to employment support, just over one-fifth (21.7%, N=15) of the survey respondents provide support in this area. Case study 4 focuses on an employment-focused aspect of the Naval Families Federation's support for armed forces families.

Case study 4:
EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT
Naval Families Federation

The Naval Families Federation's (NFF) mission is to speak up for all uniformed (Regular and Reserve) Royal Navy and Royal Marines families. The charity achieves this through listening to and gathering information from naval Service families and relaying this information to those in positions of power, such as central and local government, the Royal Navy and civilian service providers. In this way, the charity aims to achieve positive policy changes. In addition, the charity provides information, support and advice to naval Service families (NFF, 2020a).

The NFF also offers a wide range of more specific programmes of support for naval Service families. One such example is the Barclays Spousal Employment Programme, run

in partnership with Barclays as part of its Veterans' Employment Transition Support (VETS; Walker et al., 2020b, p. 192). The programme, which aims to help spouses into employment, was piloted as a two-week course in October 2019, attended by 13 participants – 12 non-serving partners and one partner of a veteran (Walker et al., 2020b, p. 192).

The first week of the course was focused on building participants' confidence, with different trainers and exercises each day (NFF, 2019, p. 35). Part of the aim was to raise participants' awareness of how the skills they have already developed as part of military life are important and can be transferred to the workplace (NFF, 2019, p. 35).

The second week of the course turned attention to CV writing and interview skills. The NFF reports that the sessions were focused on providing participants with the skills and understanding to work on their CVs independently, and to develop an awareness of factors such as body language in interviews. The VETS team also provided follow-up support to help participants develop CVs and build profiles on the business networking site LinkedIn (NFF, 2019).

The NFF highlights the success of the pilot programme: as of November 2020, all of the participants had successfully moved into employment or further education (to gain the qualifications needed to get them into a new career) or had even started their own business. In addition, the participants have drawn attention to the important mutual support which emerged from developing friendships during the course, as well as how the course elevated their confidence (Walker et al., 2020b, p. 193).

Note: Some of the information in this case study was gathered via interviews and/or correspondence with charity representatives.

Approximately one-fifth (20.3%, N=14) of armed forces charities provide domestic violence support to armed forces families. Case study 5 provides an example of some of the important work undertaken to support families experiencing domestic violence, provided by the SSAFA – The Armed Forces Charity.

Case study 5:
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT
SSAFA – The Armed Forces Charity

SSAFA – The Armed Forces Charity is an international armed forces charity which has been supporting the armed forces community for over 135 years. It is the UK's longest-standing tri-Service charity, established in 1885 (SSAFA, 2020a).

SSAFA provides a broad range of direct support to armed forces families, including specialist adoption services, bereavement support groups, provision of household goods, and short breaks for families who have a child with a disability (SSAFA, 2020b).

The charity also provides supported housing exclusively for women and children of the armed forces community via its Stepping Stone home (SSAFA, 2020c). This accommodation is available for women who have served and those whose (ex-)spouse or ex-partner have served.

Stepping Stone aims to provide those experiencing relationship difficulties or domestic abuse with a safe place to stay, in addition to providing a support network for the individuals who reside there (SSAFA, 2020d). Outcomes for residents are monitored through a range of wellbeing measures, including health, access to training and education, safety, and positive contribution to the community (SSAFA, 2020d).

Stepping Stone is funded by central government through a contract with local government. In 2019, Stepping Stone housed a total of 29 women and 37 children.

Childcare support is delivered by 15.9% (N=11) of charities, and finally the area of support which is provided by the smallest number of charities overall is criminal justice (14.5%, N=10).

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This is an unsurprising finding: out of the topics covered in DSC's previous *Focus On* reports, this area of support has the lowest estimated number of beneficiaries and overall expenditure (Robson et al., 2019).

## 2.2.2 Variations in areas of support by type of family member

In chapter 1, figure 1.3 shows the percentages of armed forces charities which provide support to each different type of family member. To recapitulate, 69.6% support spouses and/or partners, 66.7% support children, 60.9% support widows and 43.5% support adult dependants. Therefore, we might expect each area of support to be most commonly provided to spouses and partners, followed by children, widows and then adult dependants.

To investigate whether this is the case, DSC broke down the ten areas of support discussed above by family member. Figure 2.2 shows four bars for each area of support. These show the percentages of charities providing support to spouses or partners, children, widows and adult dependants, respectively. The figure provides an overview of how types of support provided may vary between family members.

Social groups and domestic violence support are both provided most often to spouses and partners, followed by children, widows and adult dependants. Hence, the general pattern is only observed in two areas. Indeed, breaking down the data in this way highlights that widows are the second most common recipient of support in six areas: mental health, financial, physical health, housing, employment and childcare.

It can also clearly be observed that the general trend is not followed for education support. The survey results suggest that education support is the only area in which support is most commonly provided to children (30.4%, N=21), followed by spouses or partners (23.2%, N=16).

Figure 2.2
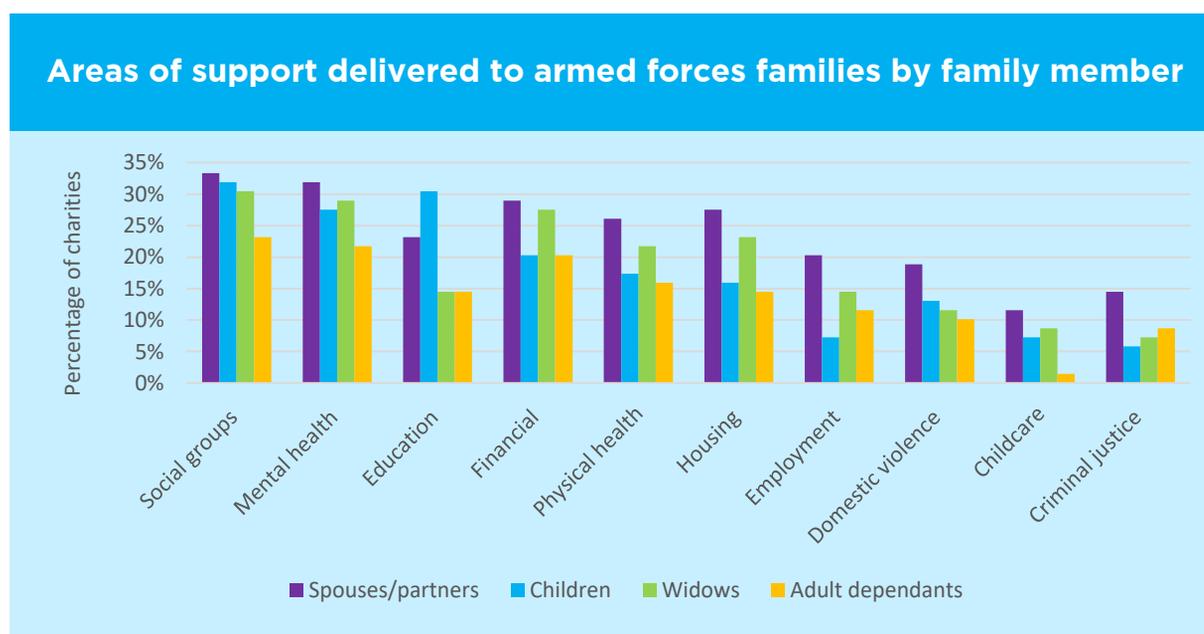
Areas of support delivered to armed forces families by family member

Note: Respondents could select more than one of the items in this question; therefore, the percentages do not sum to 100%. Each percentage is calculated using the total number of survey respondents (N=69).

In addition, this analysis reveals that social groups are the most commonly provided area of support for all types of family member. At the other end of the scale, out of all potential areas of support, spouses or partners and adult dependants are least likely to receive childcare support, while children and widows are least likely to receive criminal justice support.

2.2.3 How many areas of support are delivered?

It is possible that individual charities provide support for between one and ten of the areas included in DSC's survey. For all charities that responded to this survey question (N=56), figure 2.3 shows the numbers of different areas in which support is provided (ranging from one to ten) and the percentages of charities which provide that many areas of support.
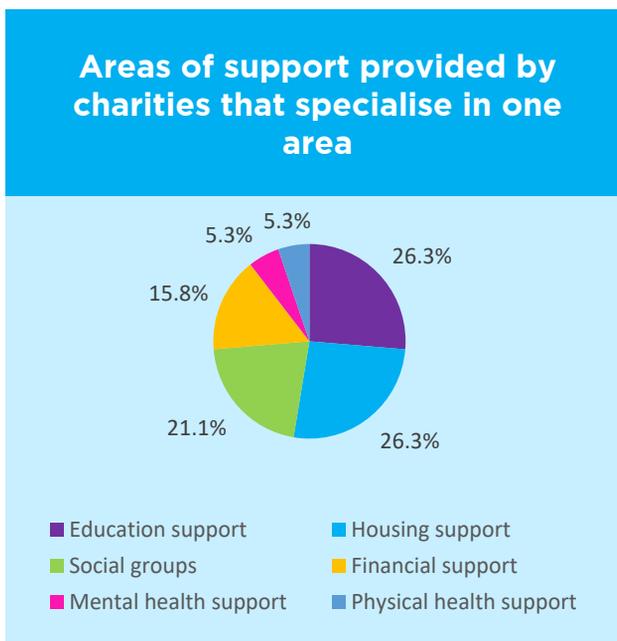
The data suggests that it is common for armed forces charities to provide more than one area of support for armed forces families. Approximately one-third (33.9%, N=19) of the survey respondents provide support in one area, while two-thirds (66.1%, N=37) provide support in more than one of the specified areas. Those who provide more than one area of support tend to provide between two and six areas (51.8%, N=29), with few charities providing between seven and ten different areas of support (14.3%, N=8).

Figure 2.3

Number of different areas of support provided by individual charities
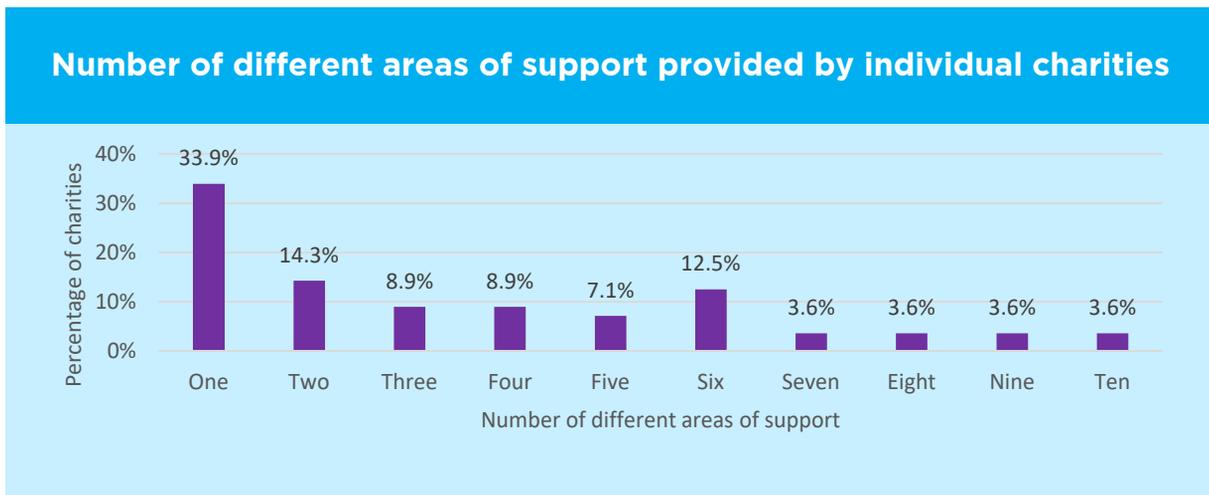
Note: Each percentage is calculated using the number of respondents to this survey question (N=56).

Figure 2.4

Areas of support provided by charities that specialise in one area

- Education support
- Housing support
- Social groups
- Financial support
- Mental health support
- Physical health support

Note: Calculated as a percentage of survey respondents who provide one area of support (N=19). The percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

The charities which provide one particular area of support to families (N=19) were analysed more closely in order to better understand the areas in which charities specialise in providing support to armed forces families. This analysis revealed that there are six areas in which charities specialise, shown in figure 2.4.

Respondents providing support in one area are most likely to support armed forces families with either education support (26.3%, N=5) or housing support (26.3%, N=5). These areas are followed closely by charities providing only social groups (21.1%, N=4) or financial support (15.8%, N=3).

One charity specialises in providing support for mental health and one for physical health. Meanwhile, no charities provide only support with childcare, criminal justice, domestic violence or employment.
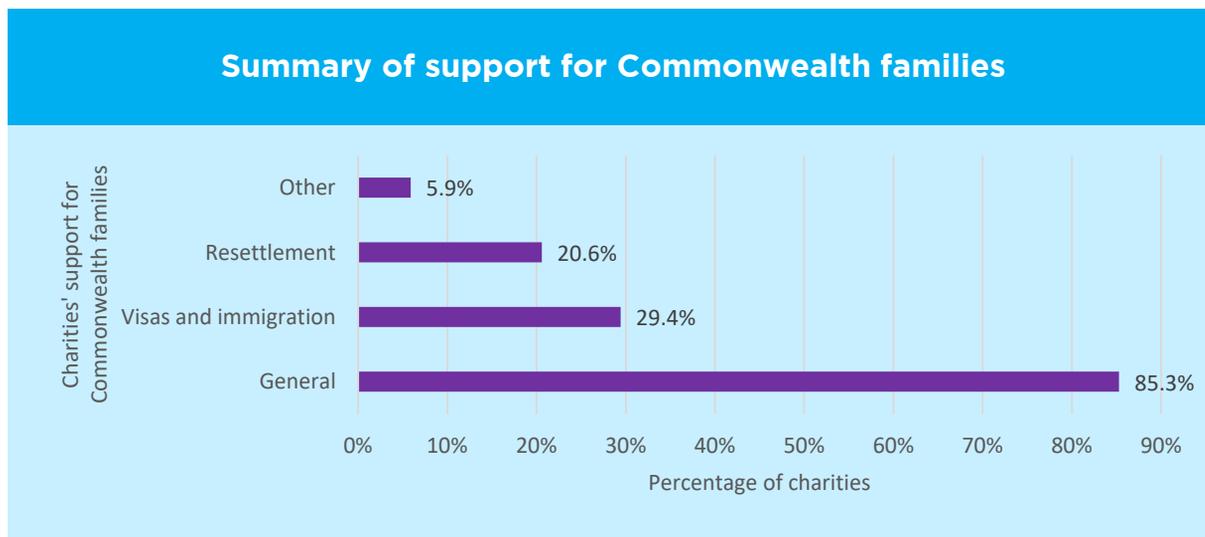
2.2.4 Support for Commonwealth families

Commonwealth families in the armed forces community can face the same challenges as their counterparts, alongside particular challenges that are unique to their situation – such as immigration, settlement and visas – because they are classified as foreign nationals by the British armed forces (Pearson and Caddick, 2018).

DSC's survey asked respondents whether they provide support to Commonwealth families generally (i.e. in the same way that they provide support to non-Commonwealth families) and also whether they provide more specific support with the process of applying to live in the UK (i.e. with visas and immigration) and with moving (i.e. resettlement).

Just over one-fifth (21.7%, N=15) of the respondents specified that they do not provide support for Commonwealth families. Figure 2.5 shows the percentages, out of the respondents who specified providing support to Commonwealth families (N=34), of charities providing support in these areas (a further 20 respondents did not respond to this question).

Figure 2.5

Summary of support for Commonwealth families

Charities' support for Commonwealth families

- Other: 5.9%
- Resettlement: 20.6%
- Visas and immigration: 29.4%
- General: 85.3%

Percentage of charities

Note: Respondents could select more than one of the items in this question; therefore, the percentages do not sum to 100%. Each percentage is calculated out of the survey respondents who provide support to Commonwealth families (N=34).

The vast majority (85.3%, N=29) of respondents who support Commonwealth families provide general support, while 29.4% (N=10) provide support with visas and immigration and 20.6% (N=7) provide support with resettlement. Two (5.9%) charities also provide support in 'other' ways: with information (N=1) and physical and mental health (N=1).

Several charities also provided additional information in an optional open-ended survey question (N=16). Analysis of these responses indicated that charities often make provision for Commonwealth families if their general eligibility requirements are met (N=11).

Case study 6 provides a good example of a charity, the Army Families Federation, which provides specialist support for Commonwealth families.

Case study 6:
SPECIALIST SUPPORT FOR COMMONWEALTH FAMILIES
Army Families Federation

The Army Families Federation (AFF) is a worldwide charity, founded in 1982, which supports the families of those currently serving in the army (AFF, 2020b). AFF provides

comprehensive information, advice and support on wide-ranging aspects of Service life and advocates for army families' concerns (AFF, 2020c). It also publishes regular reports on the areas in which army families seek support – in addition to in-depth surveys on particular issues – to influence policy through key decision makers (AFF, 2020d, 2020e).

AFF has become a leading advocate for foreign and Commonwealth (F&C) families; one-fifth of the enquiries it received in 2019 were on issues particular to F&C families, making this the charity's second most common area of enquiry (AFF, 2020f, p. 1). The F&C specialist at AFF is also the co-chair of the Non-UK Cluster at Cobseo.

The charity reports that the most significant issue for F&C armed forces families is the lack of clear information on their unique immigration rules, and the costs and processes involved. Their immigration status has a considerable impact on their lives, both as serving and as ex-Service families.

As part of its specialist support, in 2019 AFF contributed to a significant court case on the minimum income requirement which applies to visa applications. AFF's armed forces benefits calculator was successfully used to evidence that the soldier's income calculation should incorporate the additional benefits (for example, subsidised accommodation) advertised during recruitment. The charity is continuing action on this issue within the judicial system as well as through engaging with key decision makers (AFF, 2020f, p. 5).

As an advocate for F&C families, AFF has achieved significant policy changes. AFF has set up a process with contacts at the Home Office which refunds families who paid the health surcharge when it was not needed.[5] The charity has also arranged for free visa corrections when armed forces rules have not been followed, saving each family involved over £3,000 in unnecessary costs.

As with all armed forces families, F&C families also face challenges encountered by non-military families. One such issue is domestic violence. After receiving a grant from Lloyd's Patriotic Fund, AFF provided targeted support with applications for settlement in the UK for victims of domestic violence (AFF, 2020d, p. 5).

Going forward, AFF aims to continue advocating for increased information and support for F&C families throughout their Service life: during recruitment, while serving and through transition (AFF, 2020f, p. 5).

Note: Some of the information in this case study was gathered via interviews and/or correspondence with charity representatives.

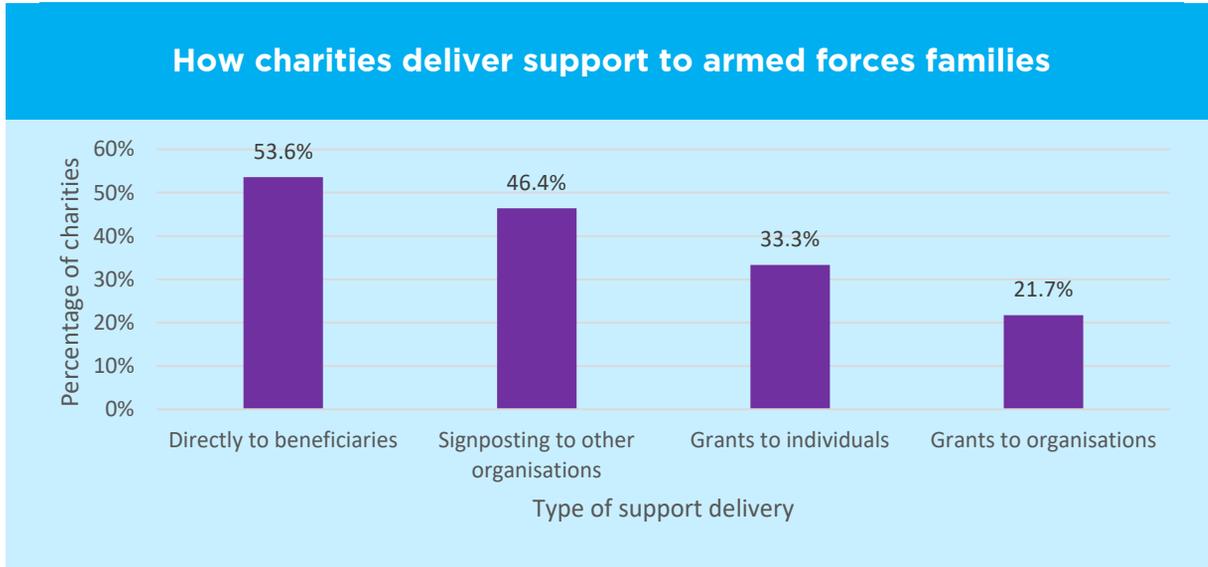## 2.3 SERVICE DELIVERY

2.3.1 How charities deliver support

In addition to providing different areas of support, charities provide support for armed forces families in a number of different ways. DSC's survey asked armed forces charities to specify how they deliver support to armed forces families. Figure 2.6 shows the percentages of survey respondents who deliver their support in each different way.

Most commonly, the survey respondents provide support directly to beneficiaries. This was specified by over half of the survey respondents (53.6%, N=37). A good example of a charity which delivers services directly to armed forces families through theatre groups is Stand Easy, detailed in case study 7.

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[5] The immigration health surcharge is an additional payment made during the visa and immigration application process (Gov.uk, 2020).

ARMED FORCES CHARITIES

Figure 2.6

How charities deliver support to armed forces families

Percentage of charities (y-axis): 0% to 60%

- Directly to beneficiaries: 53.6%
- Signposting to other organisations: 46.4%
- Grants to individuals: 33.3%
- Grants to organisations: 21.7%

Type of support delivery (x-axis)

Note: Respondents could select more than one of the items in this question; therefore, the percentages do not sum to 100%. Each percentage is calculated using the total number of survey respondents (N=69).

Case study 7:
DELIVERING SUPPORT DIRECTLY TO BENEFICIARIES
Stand Easy

Stand Easy was established in 2014 with the aim of using theatrical arts to aid the recovery of wounded, injured, and sick serving and ex-Service personnel, along with their family members. This includes those with physical and mental health issues (Stand Easy, 2020a).

Stand Easy uses theatre and theatre skills as the mechanism through which to support its beneficiaries. Theatre projects are designed to be open to participants regardless of whether they have previous experience in drama or the theatre (Stand Easy, 2020a).

Each year, the charity brings together serving and ex-Service personnel and their families alongside professional staff and student volunteers. Together, they create and perform plays which provide insight into personal experiences related to military life. The plays are conceived and put together entirely by the participants and Stand Easy staff and volunteers, in a challenging but supportive environment (Stand Easy, 2020a).

The charity's most recent completed project was *Operation Resilience*. This project explored the experience of stress and the importance of seeking and receiving help. In particular, the project sought to illuminate how resilience may be understood as a barrier to contending with mental health problems (Stand Easy, 2020b).

These plays are showcased to the public at four-week performance projects which include tours of community centres and armed forces charities, such as Poppyscotland. In 2019, Stand Easy also took its 2018 play, *The Dandelion Patch*, which focuses on the effect on the whole family of living with a veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder, to the Edinburgh Festival.

The aim of these activities is not only to build 'self-awareness, confidence, motivation and self-esteem' for those involved but also to foster a better understanding and raise awareness of the experiences of serving and ex-Service personnel and their families among audiences (Stand Easy, 2020a).

In addition to the annual production, Stand Easy runs weekly drama and social workshops for ex-Service participants and their families (Stand Easy, 2020c). These workshops aim to provide support to whole family units. Stand Easy reports that these workshops include

a range of activities, from short, fun drama games to intense improvisations. Throughout, participants are encouraged to listen to each other's feelings through a 'check-in' and 'check-out', and engage in creative challenges with the help of humour to relieve anxiety and enable them to 'be themselves'.

Note: Some of the information in this case study was gathered via interviews and/or correspondence with charity representatives.

Just under half of the survey respondents signpost beneficiaries to other organisations (46.4%, N=32). With respect to grant-making, one-third (33.3%, N=23) provide support through delivering grants to individuals, while just over one-fifth (21.7%, N=15) provide grants to other organisations.

In addition, in the open-ended part of this survey question, two charities specified that they provide advocacy on behalf of armed forces families. Case study 8 provides a good example of a charity, the RAF Families Federation, which provides advocacy for armed forces families.

Case study 8:
ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF ARMED FORCES FAMILIES
RAF Families Federation

The RAF Families Federation provides an independent voice for all personnel and their families in order to improve their quality of life – through providing support and advice, and advocating for change with policymakers in the chain of command and in government (RAF Families Federation, 2020a).

Research has found that armed forces families are becoming increasingly geographically dispersed (Rodrigues et al., 2020). Using funding through the Libor Fund, in 2017 the RAF Families Federation began working on the Dispersed Families Project.[6] The project sought to gather evidence on the experiences of and issues faced by geographically dispersed RAF families to better address these issues (RAF Families Federation, 2020b).

The federation undertook online surveys and interviews with families and stakeholders. This research identified five key commonly shared issues: impact on family relationships, access to military facilities, communications and welfare support, local community integration, and health and wellbeing (RAF Families Federation, 2020c).

This research also highlighted two specific areas where further evidence was needed. Firstly, many overseas family members contacted the federation to highlight issues distinct to overseas service that were not captured in the Dispersed Families Project. In response, a separate project was undertaken to survey this group (RAF Families Federation, 2020d). This led to an additional post at the federation to deliver bespoke information resources for overseas families.

Secondly, further survey research was carried out regarding access to military bases where the serving spouse or partner is based. This research showed that if security policies made the base inaccessible, spouses or partners could not always access facilities and felt unsupported and disconnected from the military (RAF Families Federation, 2020e). This work was used as evidence to influence policy at the Ministry of Defence – fair access to bases will form part of the forthcoming Families Strategy. This work demonstrates the federation's role in giving RAF families a voice and advocating on their behalf.

Note: Some of the information in this case study was gathered via interviews and/or correspondence with charity representatives.

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[6] The Libor Fund comes mainly from fines levied on banks by the Financial Conduct Authority between 2012 and 2015. The government committed this funding to support armed forces and emergency services charities (National Audit Office, 2017).

Charities may deliver their support through any number of the four methods described above (directly to beneficiaries, signposting to other organisations, making grants to individuals or making grants to organisations). Thus, further analysis was undertaken on the responses that indicated any any of the above ways of providing support (N=55).

This analysis revealed that, out of the four options, it is most common for charities to deliver support to beneficiaries in one way (40.0%, N=22). Of these charities, over half (54.5%, N=12) deliver support directly to beneficiaries, 18.2% (N=4) deliver support through grants to individuals, 13.6% (N=3) deliver support through grants to organisations and 13.6% (N=3) deliver support through signposting.

Meanwhile, over a third (34.5%, N=19) of respondents to this question deliver support in two ways. It is less common for charities to deliver support in three ways (16.4%, N=9) or four ways (9.1%, N=5). This suggests that, while it is common for charities to deliver support through more than one of the ways described above, charities that provide support in more than one way are most likely to make use of two methods.

An example of a charity which uses two of the above ways of delivering support is the Armed Forces Education Trust, a charity that makes grants to both individuals and organisations to support armed forces children's education. This charity is detailed in case study 9.

Case study 9:
GRANT-MAKING: EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN
Armed Forces Education Trust

The Armed Forces Education Trust (AFET) dates back to 1855, when the Soldiers' Daughters' Home was set up in Hampstead to support orphaned daughters of soldiers during the Crimean War. Ninety years later, in 1944, the home became an independent school, the Royal Soldiers' Daughters' School.

In 1987 this school became the Royal School Hampstead, and over time the number of Service children attending declined. However, in its place, a trust was set up in 2012, called the Armed Forces Education Trust. The AFET aims to help fund the education of children who have been disadvantaged by their parents' service, past or present, aiming to ensure their education is not compromised. It works towards this goal by making grants to both individuals and schools (AFET, 2020a).

Individual grants are awarded to children who are at risk of having their education disrupted by their parents' service. Applications are made to AFET and these are assessed and awarded four times per year (with some flexibility in case of emergencies). Grants are awarded through a combination of means testing – that is, making an assessment of the family's finances – and a broader in-depth assessment of the family's circumstances. As noted in the introduction to this report, lack of educational continuity is a potential challenge for armed forces children. Therefore, the AFET's grants are typically awarded to support a period of education, such as up to the end of Key Stage exams (AFET, 2020b).

Collective grants are awarded to educational providers, either schools or local educational authorities. Grants are used to fund specific interventions or staff members who support Service children directly. Recent examples have been emotional first aid training, which promotes the recognition of distress and the development of strategies for prevention and early intervention; the Numbers Count programme, which enables 'intensive support' to build skills and confidence in mathematics; and a service pupil support officer role, which aims to increase emotional stability, promote life skills and improve educational outcomes (AFET, 2020c).

In the financial year 2018–19, the AFET provided 19 individual grants totalling approximately £74,000 for the purposes of assisting with new provision or sustaining existing provision of education. Additionally, it awarded ten collective grants to state schools and local educational authorities which summed to approximately £290,000. The

> AFET also reported an increase in the number of collaborative applications, where support was needed for an individual Service child in a state school (AFET, 2020d).
>
> Going forward, the AFET aims to increase the number of Service children who benefit from its awards. It also intends to develop a more informed understanding of the impact its awards have on Service children by collecting high-quality feedback and outcome assessments (AFET, 2020d).

2.3.2 Identifying beneficiaries

There are a variety of ways in which charities can identify beneficiaries in need of support. DSC's survey asked respondents whether one or more of the following ways to identify beneficiaries described their charity's approach:

- 'They approach us'
- 'They are referred to us from other organisations'
- 'We search for them (advertising, outreach)'

Figure 2.7 shows the percentages of total survey respondents (N=69) who selected each of these ways to identify beneficiaries. Approximately three-quarters (75.4%, N=52) are approached by beneficiaries themselves, making this the most common way to identify beneficiaries. However, this is closely followed by referrals from other organisations, which was selected by two-thirds (66.7%, N=46) of respondents. At a rate of just less than one-third (30.4%, N=21), notably fewer respondents search for beneficiaries themselves, such as through advertising or outreach.

Of those who specified another method through which beneficiaries are identified (7.2%, N=5), the methods were social media (N=2), word of mouth (N=1), Cobseo (N=1) and a regimental network (N=1).

Figure 2.7
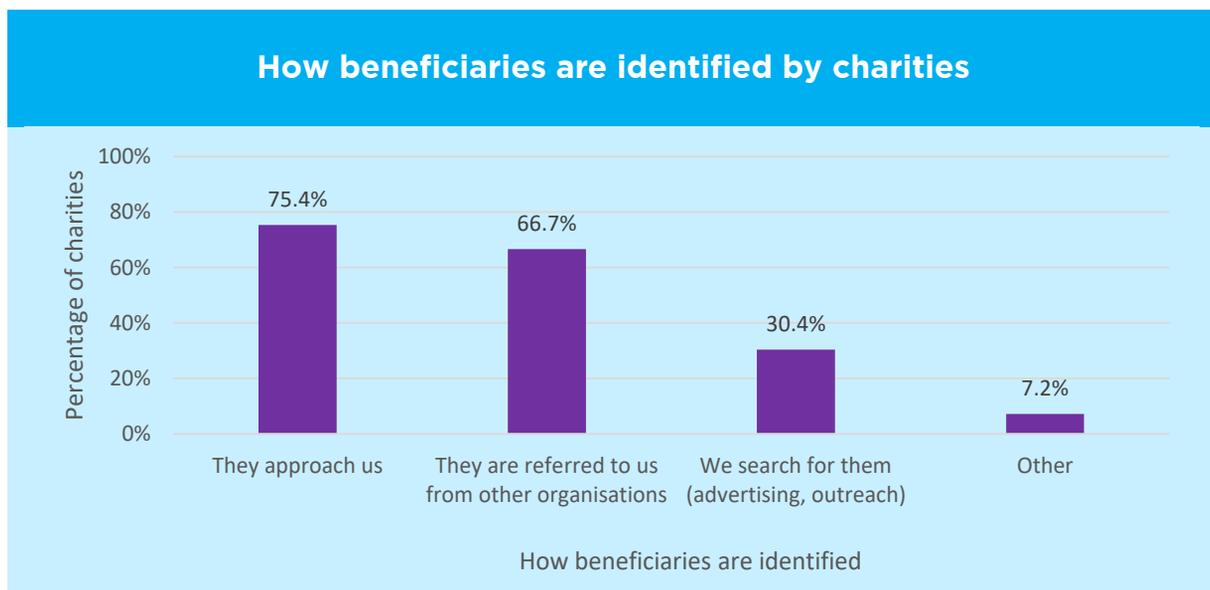
How beneficiaries are identified by charities

Note: Respondents could select more than one of the items in this question; therefore, the percentages do not sum to 100%. Each percentage is calculated using the total number of survey respondents (N=69).

A more granular analysis of those charities that reported any of the above ways of identifying beneficiaries (N=58) reveals that approximately one-quarter (24.1%, N=14) identify beneficiaries in one way, while three-quarters identify beneficiaries in more than one way: more specifically, 46.6% (N=27) make use of two methods, while 29.3% (N=17) make use of three. This suggests that charities supporting armed forces families generally engage in more than one way of identifying beneficiaries.

2.3.3 Stages at which support is delivered

DSC's survey asked charities whether they support beneficiaries during three important stages of military life which are frequently cited within the literature on armed forces families: deployment (Thandi et al., 2017; Walker et al., 2020a), relocation (Centre for Social Justice, 2016; Walker et al., 2020a) and transition (AFF, 2018; Gordon et al., 2020; Sondergaard et al., 2016).

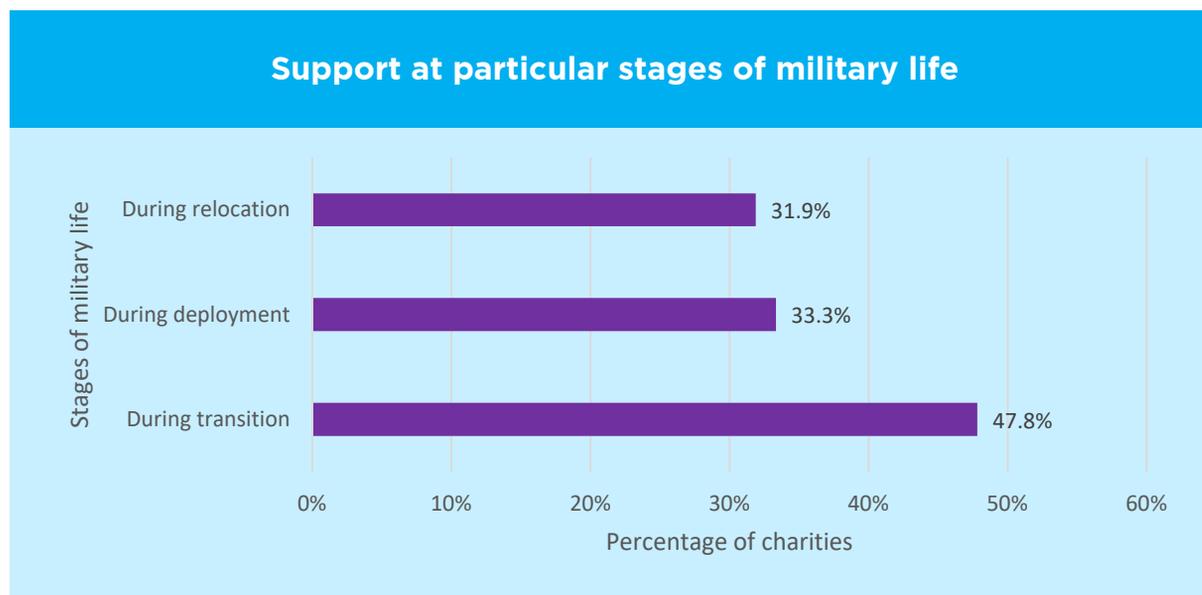Definitions of each stage as are follows:

- Deployment is a period of active duty which occurs when Service personnel are posted on a new assignment or new phase of an ongoing assignment.
- Relocation is the process of moving to a new geographical location as a result of deployment.
- Transition is the process of reintegrating into civilian life following a period of military Service.

DSC's survey asked charities whether they support armed forces families at any of these three important stages of military life. The results, in figure 2.8, show the percentages of all survey respondents (N=69) who deliver support at each of the specified stages.

The most common stage at which survey respondents reported supporting armed forces families is during transition 47.8% (N=33). As transition generally includes life after Service, this is unsurprising – and reflects this report's previous finding that most charities (89.9%) support ex-Service families (see figure 1.1).

Similar percentages of charities support armed forces families during deployment (33.3%, N=23) and relocation (31.9%, N=22).

Figure 2.8

Support at particular stages of military life

During relocation — 31.9%
During deployment — 33.3%
During transition — 47.8%

(Stages of military life / Percentage of charities; x-axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60%)

Note: Respondents could select more than one of the items in this question; therefore, the percentages do not sum to 100%. Each percentage is calculated using the total number of survey respondents (N=69).

To better understand whether charities tend to provide support at one or more stages, DSC undertook further analysis of the charities which indicated that they provide support at any of the above stages (N=35). Just over one-half of the respondents support families at all three stages of military life included in the survey (51.4%, N=18).

This suggests that most charities do not specialise in support at any one particular stage. An example of a charity which provides support throughout all stages of military life is RCET: Scotland's Armed Forces Children's Charity, detailed in case study 10.

Case study 10:
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ORGANISATION
RCET: Scotland's Armed Forces Children's Charity

RCET: Scotland's Armed Forces Children's Charity was founded more than 200 years ago when, in 1808, the Highland Society of London appealed to raise money for the accommodation and education of Scots children who had been orphaned during the Napoleonic Wars (RCET, 2020a).

RCET was originally established as a boarding school; however, in 1995, after a period of educational reforms and falling intake, it was decided that RCET's objectives would be best pursued as a grant-making charity (RCET, 2020a). Today, RCET's work has broadened significantly and includes five specific streams: family support, education, youth participation, policy and wellbeing (RCET, 2020b).

RCET reports that it is the only charity in Scotland whose sole purpose is to support armed forces children (RCET, 2020a). Since 2019, RCET has adopted a children's-rights-based approach to its work (RCET, 2020a). As such, its work is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Article 12 of which states that children have the right to be heard and taken seriously in decisions affecting their lives (United Nations, 1989). RCET's focus on upholding the UNCRC is evidenced in several areas of its work.

As part of its Education Programme, RCET undertakes research informed by children and young people's perspectives and experiences (RCET, 2020c). Teen Talks, a research project funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund, generated a glossary of terms which explains unique words and phrases used in the armed forces community to help practitioners learn what they mean and effectively communicate with armed forces teens. RCET has also created a series of top tips for the families, schools and communities it supports (RCET, 2019, 2020d).

Furthermore, the Youth Participation Programme, launched in 2018, aims to increase young people's confidence, skills and ability to have their say about decisions, policies and services that affect them (RCET, 2020a). Across Scotland, this programme has developed seven local forum groups in addition to a national forum called Military Youth Voice Scotland (RCET, 2020e). Through this forum, in 2020, over 450 young people were consulted and over 550 professionals subsequently heard about their experiences via a series of conferences (RCET, 2020f).

RCET's consultation with young people has directly informed the development of the Your Mind Matters wellbeing project, conducted in partnership with the Scottish Association for Mental Health. The project aims to work with young people to create a model of best practice so as to support them with their mental health and wellbeing. It will involve creating a digital wellbeing tool and directly supporting young people.

Finally, RCET's policy work seeks to affect law, policy and practice. This is achieved through working with members of the Scottish and UK parliaments, engaging with consultations, and producing briefings informed by children and young people's experiences. RCET contributed to a campaign which successfully led to legislating the UNCRC in Scottish domestic law and enabled the inclusion of evidence from armed forces children in Together's *State of Children's Rights in Scotland* report (2019).

Note: Some of the information in this case study was gathered via interviews and/or correspondence with charity representatives.

Several charities expressed in the optional open-ended question that their support is provided irrespective of the stage of military life (N=4) or in response to a particular need or event (N=12), such as bereavement (N=5). On the other hand, several charities expressed that their support is provided during later life or retirement (N=7). Example responses are reproduced (right).

ARMED FORCES CHARITIES

Does your charity support family members during any of the following stages of military life?

'At any stage as long as the military or ex-military member meets the charity's object.'

'When in need.'

'Often it is after a solider has died.'

'In retirement and with long-term health issues.'
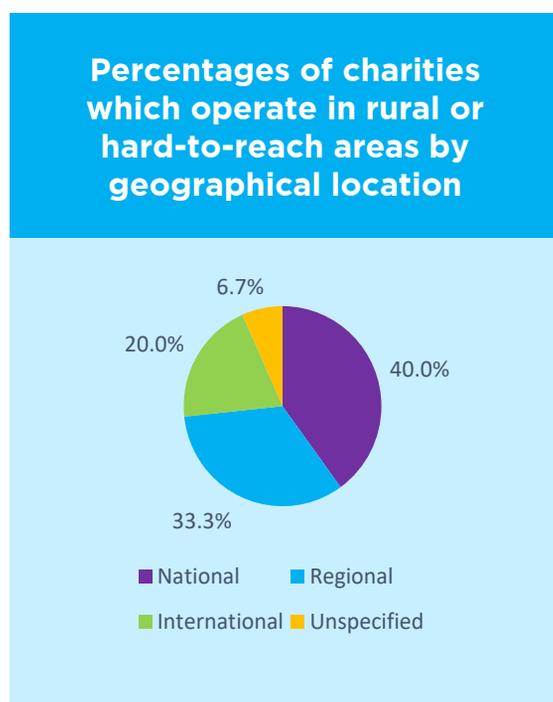
'During illness.'

Survey respondents

Note: Quotes are for illustrative purposes only and the views expressed by respondents are not endorsed by DSC.

Nevertheless, of those that indicated providing support at any of the above stages, 17.1% (N=6) provide support at two specific stages of military life. Of these, three combine deployment and transition, two combine deployment and relocation, and one combines relocation and transition. Furthermore, 31.4% (N=11) provide support at one particular stage; of these, 90.9% (N=10) provide support during transition – only one charity provides support solely during relocation and none provide support only during deployment. These results may suggest a lack of specialist support for families during stages of military life associated with serving families.

2.3.4 Support in hard-to-reach or rural areas

Figure 2.9

Percentages of charities which operate in rural or hard-to-reach areas by geographical location

- 40.0% National
- 33.3% Regional
- 20.0% International
- 6.7% Unspecified

Note: Calculated as a percentage of total survey respondents who specified making provision in rural or hard-to-reach areas (N=30).

DSC asked survey respondents whether they support families in any rural or hard-to-reach areas.[1] Just under one-third (31.9%, N=22) of all survey respondents indicated that they did not. Researchers analysed the open-ended answers from respondents who specified that they did operate in rural or hard-to-reach areas (43.5%, N=30) and grouped them into geographically defined categories: national, regional and international. [1]

The first category, labelled 'national' in figure 2.9, refers to charities that support families in rural or hard-to-reach areas across more than one of the four countries within the UK: that is, in two or more of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This is the most common category, applying to two-fifths (40.0%, N=12) of charities.

The second category, labelled 'regional' in figure 2.9, applies to one-third (33.3%, N=10) of charities. This refers to charities that support families in rural or hard-to-reach areas within one particular country of the UK: that is, in only one of England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. For example, one respondent stated that they provide support in the 'North East of the UK

The final category, labelled 'international' in figure 2.9, refers to charities that support families in rural or hard-to-reach areas in the UK and overseas. Often, this refers to military bases abroad: for example, one respondent explained that their charity operated in 'all UK and overseas BF [British forces] locations'. This category is applicable to one-fifth (20.0%, N=6) of charities.

An additional 6.7% (N=2) of charities that operate in hard-to-reach or rural areas were not categorised as additional information was not provided.

2.4 CHAPTER TWO SUMMARY

2.4.1 Areas of support

Respondents to DSC's survey support armed forces families across a range of areas of need. All ten areas of support detailed in the survey are provided to armed forces families, but there is variation in the percentages of charities providing support in each area.

The three most common areas of support are social groups (43.5%), mental health (42.0%) and education (40.6%). The three least commonly provided areas of support are domestic violence (20.3%), childcare (15.9%) and criminal justice (14.5%). With the exception of education, which is most commonly provided to children, all areas of provision are most commonly provided to spouses or partners.

Approximately two-thirds of charities provide more than one area of support, ranging from two (14.3%) to all ten (3.6%). Of those charities specialising in one area of support, this is most likely to be education support (26.3%) or housing support (26.3%).

With respect to support for Commonwealth families, 21.7% reported that they do not provide support for Commonwealth families. Out of those who do support Commonwealth families (N=34), respondents most commonly provide general support (85.3%), followed by support with visas and immigration (29.4%), and resettlement (20.6%).

2.4.2 Service delivery

DSC's survey shows that charities most commonly deliver support directly to beneficiaries (53.6%). This is followed by a substantial proportion of charities that signpost to other organisations (46.4%). One-third (33.3%) deliver grants to individuals, while just over one-fifth (21.7%) provide grants to other organisations. In addition, two charities provide advocacy. Three-fifths of the respondents utilised two or more methods of providing support.

With respect to identifying beneficiaries, 75.4% of the respondents are approached by beneficiaries, 66.7% receive referrals from other organisations and 30.4% search for beneficiaries themselves. Approximately three-quarters (75.9%) of the respondents use more than one method to identify beneficiaries.

The respondents most commonly support armed forces families during transition (47.8%), followed by deployment (33.3%) and relocation (31.9%). While most charities support families at all three stages, 17.1% provide support at two stages and 31.4% provide support at one stage. Charities which provide support at one stage almost unanimously do so during transition, the exception being one charity that provides support only during relocation.

Of the charities which specified that they deliver support in rural or hard-to-reach areas (43.5%, N=30), 20.0% make provision internationally; 40.0% make provision nationally, meaning in more than one country of the UK; and 33.3% make provision regionally, meaning in only one country of the UK. Approximately one-third (31.9%, N=22) do not provide support in rural or hard-to-reach locations.

ARMED FORCES CHARITIES

CHAPTER THREE

Collaboration, impact measurement and challenges

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Using DSC's survey research, this chapter explores how charities collaborate both within and outside the armed forces charity sector and how they evaluate the impact of their support on armed forces families. It then turns to the practical challenges armed forces charities face in helping families; the impact of one of these challenges, COVID-19, is explored in detail.

The chapter is divided into the following sections:

- Partnership and collaboration
- Impact measurement
- Challenges
- Chapter summary

3.2 PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

3.2.1 Types of organisation charities partner with

DSC's previous research has shown a considerable degree of collaboration between charities within and outside the armed forces charity sector, in addition to other organisations outside the charity sector (Cole et al., 2017; Doherty et al., 2017, 2018a, 2018b; Robson et al., 2019). For the present report, DSC asked survey respondents whether they partnered with the following organisations:

- Other Service charities
- Ministry of Defence (MOD) welfare services
- Other (non-Service) charities
- Armed Forces Covenant signatory organisations
- NHS services
- Social services
- Government initiatives
- Housing associations

Figure 3.1 shows the percentages of all survey respondents (N=69) which partner with these different types of organisation. The results indicate that almost two-thirds (65.2%, N=45) of the survey respondents partner with other Service charities, making this form of partnership the most common. A good example of a collaboration between Service charities is detailed in case study 11, which describes the Forces Families Jobs initiative, a product of collaboration between several tri-Service families federations – the Army Families Federation, the Naval Families Federation and the RAF Families Federation.

In line with previous research conducted by DSC, partnerships with other Service charities are substantially more common than collaborations with other non-Service charities (see Doherty et al., 2018b; Robson et al., 2019). Yet, more than one-third (37.7%, N=26) of

respondents collaborate with non-Service charities, demonstrating a significant level of cross-sector collaboration.

Case study 11:
COLLABORATION TO SUPPORT ARMED FORCES FAMILIES
Tri-Service Families Federations

As explored in other case studies in this report, the Army Families Federation, Naval Families Federation and RAF Families Federation are all independent organisations which listen to the needs of forces families and advocate on their behalf to those in positions of influence, such as the government or the chain of command (AFF, 2020c; NFF, 2020a; RAF Families Federation, 2020a).

Each of the federations serves the distinct needs of its respective Service community. But there are commonalities across the Services which are best addressed through collaborative working. One such area regards employment for spouses and partners of serving personnel: recent research highlights the barriers to employment for spouses and partners that can be posed by military life – and a lack of awareness and engagement with support (Lyonette et al., 2018).

To improve outcomes for military spouses and partners, this research recommended the creation of an online one-stop shop jobs platform for spouses and partners (Lyonette et al., 2018). In direct response to this, the three federations collaborated to create a central portal, available free of charge, to connect spouses and family members to employers and training providers. This is known as the Forces Families Jobs website (NFF, 2020b).

Forces Families Jobs can be divided into two main sections. The first is the 'Jobs' section, which enables 'Forces Friendly' employers to advertise jobs to family members of serving personnel (NFF, 2020c). More specifically, to advertise on Forces Families Jobs, employers must be a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant (Forces Families Jobs, 2020a). This aims to ensure that employers do not discriminate against military spouses or partners – an experience reported by 45% of interviewees in Lyonette et al.'s (2018) research.

The second section, 'Training and Career Development', aims to bring together in one place current programmes available to serving families from a range of organisations, with the intention of making it easier for spouses and partners to navigate options and find a suitable programme (NFF, 2020c). The site provides information regarding 'training courses, business start-up programmes, funding, career events, insight days and discounted training' (Forces Families Jobs, 2020b).

At the time of writing, there were approximately 2,500 jobs advertised on the Forces Families Jobs platform and, to date, over 2,400 applications had been made by candidates. Further, the platform had attracted the registration of 48 training providers, over 600 employers and over 2,600 candidates.

Note: Some of the information in this case study was gathered via interviews and/or correspondence with charity representatives.

Overall, over half (56.5%, N=39) of the survey respondents partnered with organisations outside of the (Service and non-Service) charity sector.

Approximately two-fifths (40.6%, N=28) of the respondents partner with MOD welfare services. This includes, for example, the Veterans Welfare Service (VWS), which supports veterans and families with help, guidance, and assistance with matters such as pensions and benefits. The VWS also signposts beneficiaries to social services and voluntary organisations, including armed forces charities themselves (MOD, 2020e).
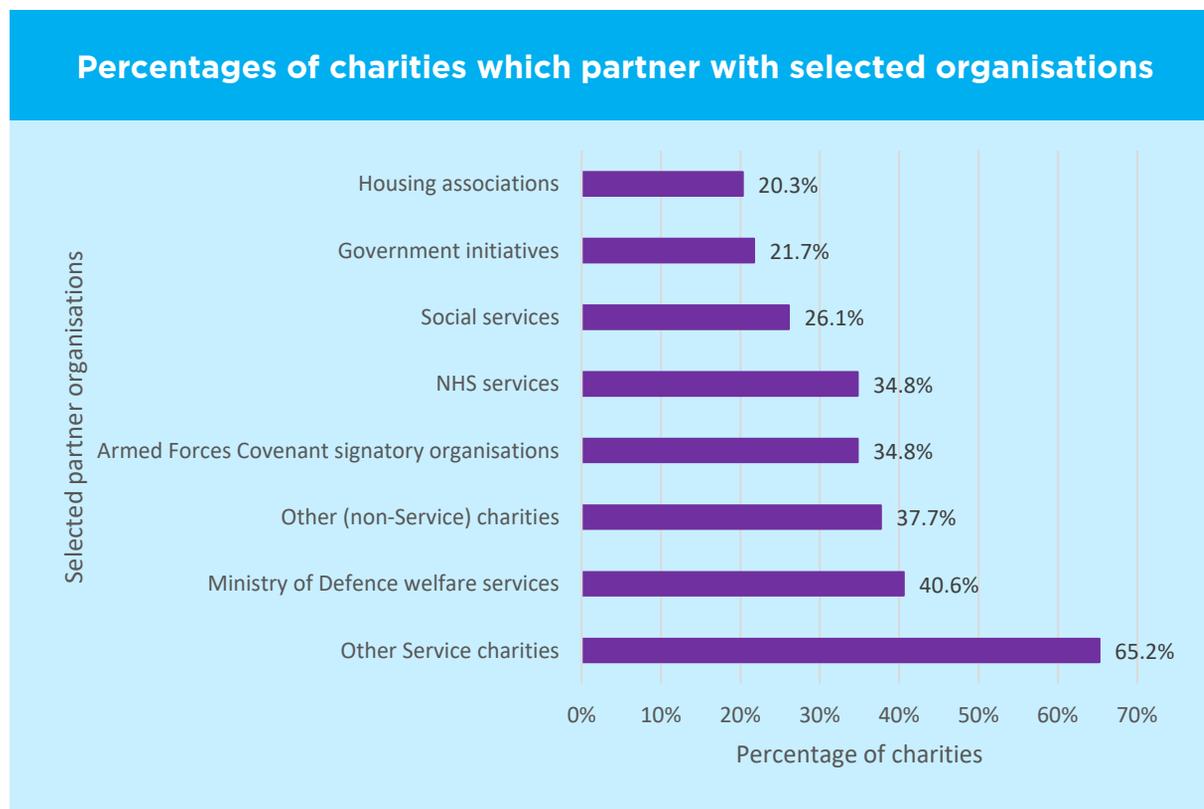
Just over one-third (34.8%, N=24) of the charities surveyed reported partnerships with Armed Forces Covenant signatory organisations. These are wide-ranging organisations – including businesses, local governments and charities – that have formally recognised their

commitment to treating serving and ex-Service personnel and families with fairness and respect (Armed Forces Covenant, 2020).

Similarly, 34.8% (N=24) of the charities partner with NHS services. Meanwhile, just over one-quarter (26.1%, N=18) reported partnering with social services, while 21.7% (N=15) indicated that they partner with government initiatives and 20.3% (N=14) reported partnering with housing associations.

In addition, in the open-ended part of this survey question, two charities specified alternative organisations that they partner with: other statutory organisations (N=1), universities (N=1) and Armed Forces Covenant groups (N=1).

Figure 3.1

Percentages of charities which partner with selected organisations

Selected partner organisations	Percentage of charities
Housing associations	20.3%
Government initiatives	21.7%
Social services	26.1%
NHS services	34.8%
Armed Forces Covenant signatory organisations	34.8%
Other (non-Service) charities	37.7%
Ministry of Defence welfare services	40.6%
Other Service charities	65.2%

Note: Respondents could select more than one of the items in this question; therefore, the percentages do not sum to 100%. Each percentage is calculated using the total number of survey respondents (N=69).

3.2.2 Number of types of organisations charities partner with

In total, 71.0% (N=49) of the surveyed charities undertake some form of partnership with other organisations. This suggests a high level of collaboration in delivering support to armed forces families.

Armed forces charities may partner with more than one type of organisation – for example, Service and non-Service charities, or NHS and social services. Specifically, the respondents to this survey reported partnering with between one and eight of the types of organisation specified above.

Figure 3.2 presents the percentages of charities that partner with these different types of organisation, for charities which indicated that they undertake some form of partnership (N=49). While 18.4% (N=9) partner with one type of organisation, the overwhelming majority (81.6%, N=40) partner with two or more different types of organisation. The average number of different types of partner organisation is four, and 10.2% (N=5) partner with all eight different types of organisation specified in DSC's survey.

Figure 3.2

Number of different types of organisation charities partner with
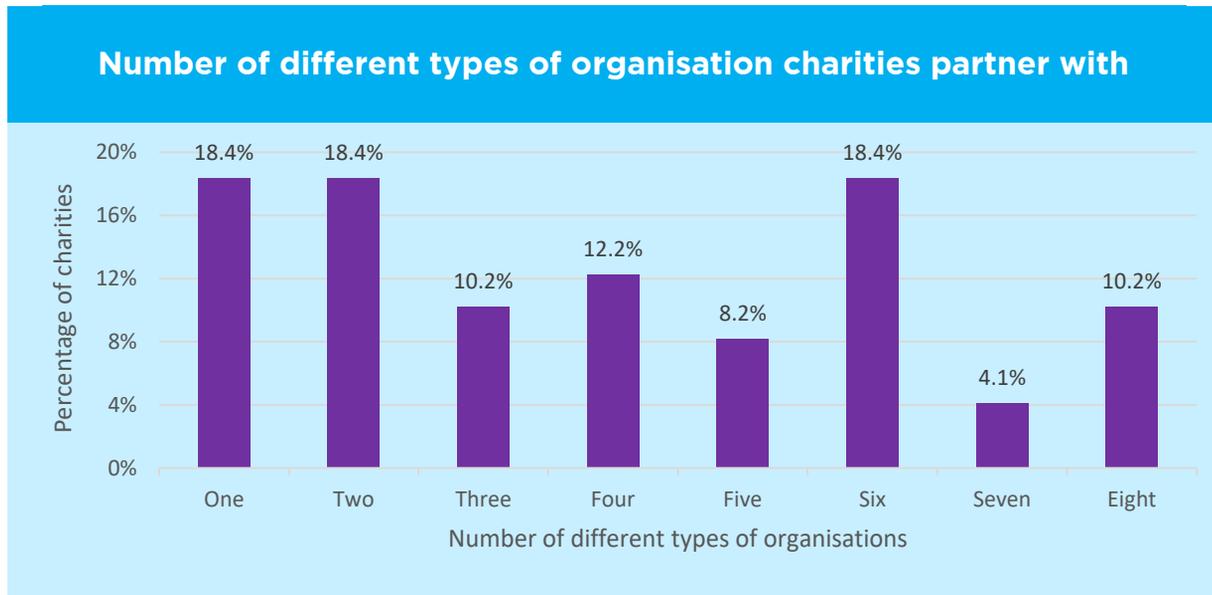
Note: Calculated as a percentage of survey respondents who partner with other organisations (N=49). The percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Further analysis was undertaken to understand how partnerships may vary according to charity size. For each charity size category, table 3.1 presents the percentages of charities which collaborate with others and the average numbers of different types of partner organisation (as seen above, this can range from one to eight).

Table 3.1

	Percentage of charities collaborating and average number of different types of partners by charity size		
Charity size	**Income bracket**	**Percentage of charities which collaborate**	**Average number of partners**
Large	£5 million to £100 million	62.5% (N=5)	5
Upper medium	£500,000 to £5 million	76.5% (N=13)	4.3
Lower medium	£100,000 to £500,000	86.7% (N=13)	4.5
Small	£10,000 to £100,000	68.4% (N=13)	3.3
Micro	£0 to £10,000	62.5% (N=5)	2

Note: The total numbers of respondents were N=8 micro charities, N=19 small charities, N=15 lower medium charities, N=17 upper medium charities and N=8 large charities (N=2 charities did not have available financial data).

The results show substantial amounts of collaboration for all charity sizes. Interestingly, micro and large charities are equally likely to collaborate (62.5%). However, overall, small and micro charities have a lower rate of collaboration than their larger counterparts, with charities in the lower medium category most likely to collaborate (86.7%).

Meanwhile, with respect to the number of different types of partner, the trend suggests that as charity size decreases, on average, the number of different types of partner organisation also decreases. Upper medium and large charities partner with approximately twice as many different types of organisation as micro charities, on average.

ARMED FORCES CHARITIES

3.2.3 How charities benefit from partnerships

DSC's survey included an open-ended question in which respondents were asked to explain how they benefit from partnerships with other organisations. Two-thirds (66.7%, N=46) of all the survey respondents indicated a benefit from partnership. These responses were analysed by the researchers and grouped into seven main categories:

- Providing holistic support
- Identifying beneficiaries
- Sharing resources
- Sharing expertise
- Grants and/or fundraising
- Efficiency gains
- Awareness

Figure 3.3 presents the percentages of charities which reported experiencing each of these main categories of benefit from collaboration. Charities may fit into more than one of these categories based on their responses, so the groups are not mutually exclusive.

Figure 3.3
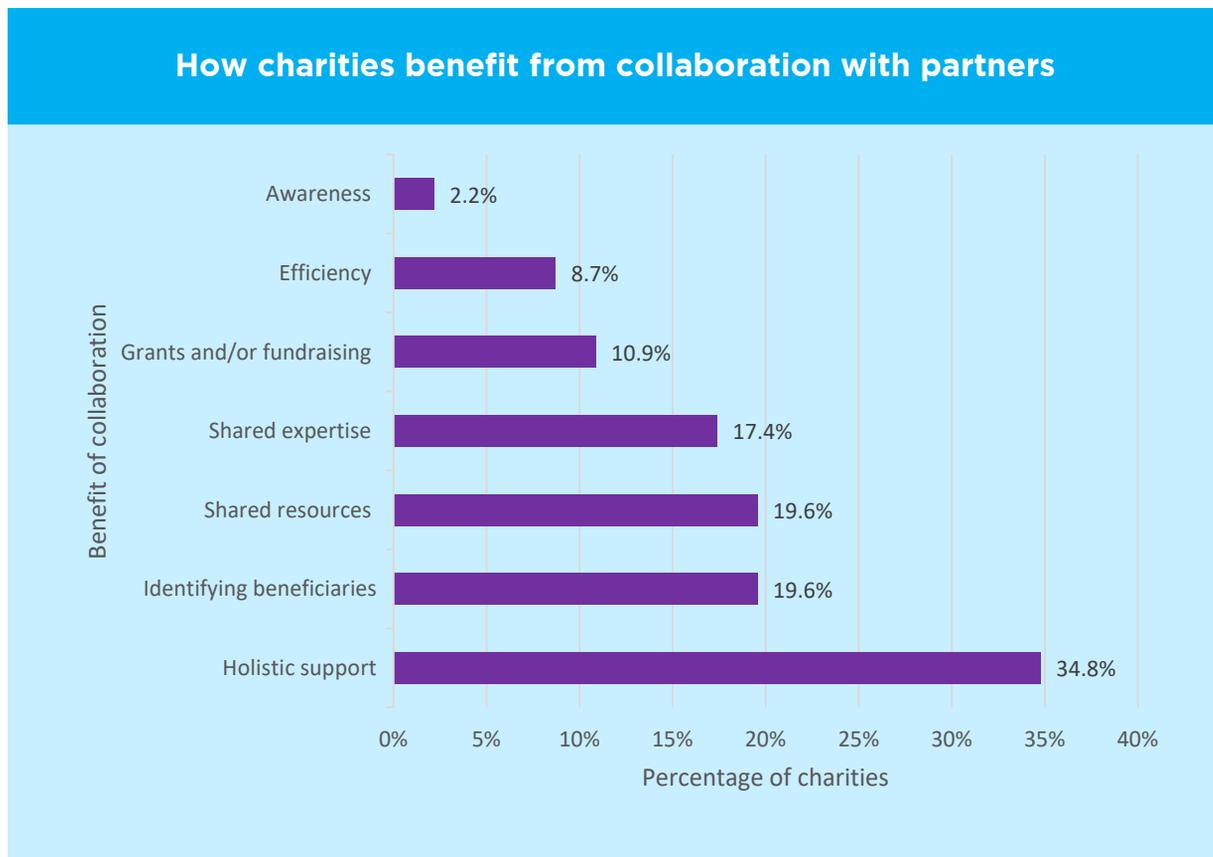
How charities benefit from collaboration with partners

Note: Respondents could select more than one of the items in this question; therefore, the percentages do not sum to 100%. Each percentage is calculated out of those charities which indicated a benefit (N=46).

The most common benefit from collaboration, reported by over one-third (34.8%, N=16) of respondents, is that it enables the provision of holistic support to armed forces families. This means that it enables beneficiaries to be supported in multiple areas of need in a way that would not be possible through charities working independently. Charities that support beneficiaries in one (or more) area collaborate with another charity (or charities) that supports beneficiaries in other areas to achieve this holistic support. To illustrate this, several responses within this category are reproduced below.

Example responses: Holistic support

'It enables us to deliver a more rounded service to our clients and saves us signposting people. We can deal with any issue throughout the life cycle of support required.'

'It allows us to signpost families to external organisations who can support them.'

'As a small charity we are unable to provide support services to beneficiaries so we try to engage with other organisations who can provide help and advice.'

'We are part of a Veterans Accommodation Pathway project. … We each benefit by providing a key stage of this pathway.'

'It creates a network of support for areas that we are not specialised in delivering.'

'We are able to gain the right amount of support required for the children and families; it supports children with SEND [special educational needs or disabilities].'

Survey respondents

Note: Quotes are for illustrative purposes only and the views expressed by respondents are not endorsed by DSC.

Furthermore, 19.6% (N=9) of the respondents to this question reported that collaboration improves their ability to identify beneficiaries. As noted in section 2.3.2, identifying beneficiaries relates to the varied processes through which charities and beneficiaries are brought together; the three main routes are charities being approached by beneficiaries, charities receiving referrals and charities searching for beneficiaries. Examples of benefits in identifying beneficiaries achieved through collaboration are reproduced below.

Example responses: Identifying beneficiaries

'We help each other identify and help veterans and their families.'

'It enables us to reach those most in need of our grants.'

'We receive referrals, give referrals, receive funds, coordinate to meet social needs.'

'We recently developed a partnership with a number of smaller charities to enable us to apply for funding from the Armed Forces Covenant. Through this, we have developed a particular relationship with [name of charity] as our go-to referral agency. We benefit from our partners referring veterans and their families to us.'

Survey respondents

Note: Quotes are for illustrative purposes only and the views expressed by respondents are not endorsed by DSC.

One-fifth (19.6%, N=9) of the respondents to this question stated that they benefit through sharing resources. This refers to charities bringing together their individual resources in order to provide support to beneficiaries that otherwise might not be possible. Examples of responses in this category are reproduced below.

Example responses: Shared resources

'As we are a small charity … there is a limit to what we can achieve with our funding levels. Joining with others enables us to jointly meet the needs of the individual.'

'We almonise the finances … to ensure families' needs are being met.'

'[Name of charity] provides sheltered housing for the charity's ex-Service beneficiaries and shares staff costs.'

'A small charity … cannot function without support from case-working organisations and other charities.'

Survey respondents

Note: Quotes are for illustrative purposes only and the views expressed by respondents are not endorsed by DSC.

Slightly less commonly, 17.4% (N=8) of charities reported sharing expertise as a beneficial outcome from collaboration. This category relates to sharing various types of information; this may include specific knowledge on particular areas of support and/or information on what different charities are working on, which can prevent duplication of effort and resources. Example responses are reproduced below.

Example responses: Shared expertise

'We benefit through collaborative working, which leads to a comprehensive understanding of potential services and facilities available to our service users.'

'Multi-disciplinary team work.'

'Support and advice where necessary.'

'Expert advice.'

Survey respondents

Note: Quotes are for illustrative purposes only and the views expressed by respondents are not endorsed by DSC.

A further 10.9% (N=5) of the respondents to this question highlighted grants and/or fundraising as a benefit of collaboration. This includes being able to apply for funding and receive grants from other charities, including other Service charities. Indeed, DSC's previous research has found that armed forces charities' grant-making demonstrates a highly coordinated distribution of financial resources (Cole et al., 2020, p. xvi).

Efficiency gains through collaboration were identified as a benefit by 8.7% (N=4) of the respondents to this question. This refers to improvements in support with respect to time, use of resources and prevention of duplication of individual charities' work. Illustrative example responses are detailed below. Finally, one charity (2.2%) identified increased awareness as a benefit of collaboration.

Example responses: Efficiency
'Sharing knowledge and contacts, preventing duplication of effort, reducing waste of resources, improving networks for collaboration.'   *'Effective collaboration … is a force multiplier, enabling better targeting of resources, information sharing and speed of delivery.'*   *'It makes the charity more effective and efficient.'*   *'Quicker response times.'*   Survey respondents

Note: Quotes are for illustrative purposes only and the views expressed by respondents are not endorsed by DSC.

3.3 IMPACT MEASUREMENT

3.3.1 Percentages of charities which measure impact

Measuring impact can help charities to demonstrate their social impact and, in doing so, earn the confidence of funders, donors, beneficiaries and stakeholders. It can also enable charities to assess whether their current range of support is effective and, if not, adapt it accordingly – indeed, this is the most commonly reported benefit in previous research (Ógáin et al., 2012).

DSC investigated which procedures, practices and tools are commonly used by charities to evaluate the support they provide to armed forces families. In total, over half (54.2%, N=32) of the survey respondents reported evaluating the impact of their support on families, while 45.8% (N=27) reported that their charity did not (a further ten respondents did not respond to this question).

3.3.2 How charities measure impact

DSC analysed the survey respondents' open-ended answers and grouped the responses into five main categories:

- Monitoring and evaluating outcomes
- Beneficiary feedback and testimonials
- Feedback from other organisations
- University studies
- Annual reports

For the charities which stated that they measure the impact of their support on families (N=32), the percentages employing each of these different methods are presented in figure 3.4. These five main categories of methods used to measure impact are not mutually exclusive; charities may be grouped into more than one category based on their responses.

Figure 3.4
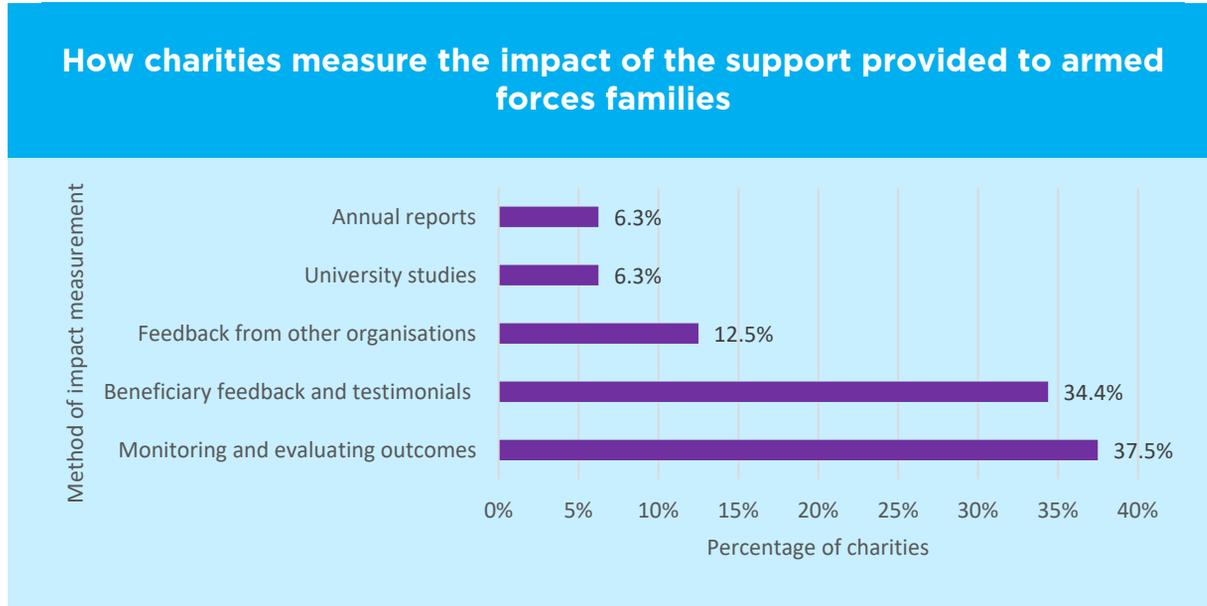
How charities measure the impact of the support provided to armed forces families

Method of impact measurement	Percentage
Annual reports	6.3%
University studies	6.3%
Feedback from other organisations	12.5%
Beneficiary feedback and testimonials	34.4%
Monitoring and evaluating outcomes	37.5%

Percentage of charities

Note: Respondents could be assigned to more than one of the items in this question; therefore, the percentages do not sum to 100%. Each percentage is calculated using the total number of respondents to this survey question (N=32).

Monitoring and evaluating outcomes, undertaken by 37.5% (N=12) of charities that evaluate their impact, refers to mechanisms which establish metrics for understanding whether beneficiaries have benefitted from support and then recording and evaluating these. Examples of monitoring and evaluating outcomes are reproduced below.

Example responses: Monitoring and evaluating outcomes

'Percentage of successful outcomes into employment, self-employment or further training.'

'Every family member who receives treatment has outcome measurements.'

'We keep records of people we have helped, and the outcomes.'

Survey respondents

Note: Quotes are for illustrative purposes only and the views expressed by respondents are not endorsed by DSC.

A good example of an armed forces charity that evaluates the impact it has on families is Surf Action. This charity's activities and methods of measuring impact are detailed in case study 12.

Case study 12:
EVALUATING IMPACT ON ARMED FORCES FAMILIES
Surf Action

Surf Action, based in Cornwall, was established in 2009 to provide support to ex-Service personnel and their families, in particular those who are affected by post-traumatic stress

disorder (PTSD) and physical injuries and/or experiencing difficulties re-adjusting to civilian life (Surf Action, 2020a).

The services delivered by the charity are premised on the benefits that can be gained from nature-based physical activities. Research suggests that activities based in natural water environments can engender a 'feeling of release from suffering' resulting from PTSD (Caddick et al., 2015). It is this notion, referred to as the Blue Gym, that Surf Action draws upon in supporting serving and ex-Service personnel and their families (Surf Action, 2020a).

Surf Action reports that guidelines from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence underscore how important it is for the whole family unit to be supported when a family member is recovering from PTSD. This is important not only to improve the care of the person with PTSD but also to 'identify and meet their own needs as carers' through providing information, self-help groups or peer-support groups (NICE, 2018).

Surf Action's Family Resilience Project (formerly Home Front Project) is underpinned by this whole-family approach to recovery; it takes into account that the impact of Service life and associated physical and mental health problems can affect family members both directly and indirectly (Surf Action, 2020b). The project was funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and involves six-week-long family resilience courses in the Blue Gym, with on-site access to counsellors and mentors, alongside funded access to local occupational therapists, psychotherapists and psychologists.

The start of this project during 2020 coincided with the onset of restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As with other charities that deliver face to face services to beneficiaries, this posed a particular challenge. In response, Surf Action postponed the start date, changed the course's location and increased the number of instructors to facilitate social distancing within groups.

In order to evaluate the impact of this project, Surf Action chose an outcome of interest, the psychological wellbeing of participants. This was measured using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (for children) and the Emotional Needs Audit (for adults). For children, questionnaires were completed at the beginning, middle and end of the project, which enabled Surf Action to build a data set to evaluate whether the project had had the intended impact. The results show that, on average, children who participated in the project showed an increase of 17% on the wellbeing scale (Surf Action, 2020c).

Note: Some of the information in this case study was gathered via interviews and/or correspondence with charity representatives.

Beneficiary feedback and testimonials are sought by 34.4% (N=11) of charities that evaluate their impact. Charities use these methods to ascertain beneficiaries' perspectives on their experiences – for example, through surveys or phone calls.

The third most common method of evaluating impact is feedback from other organisations, undertaken by 12.5% (N=4) of those who measure impact. As with feedback from beneficiaries, this method of impact measurement seeks perspectives from stakeholders who are outside the organisation, such as linked case-working organisations, which may provide impact assessments.

Less commonly, survey respondents indicated evaluating their impact through studies conducted in collaboration with universities (6.3%, N=2) or through annual reports (6.3%, N=2).[7]

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[7] Charities which specified 'annual reports' were not included in the monitoring and evaluating impact category because they did not specifically refer to impact in their qualitative response and annual reports vary in their content.

3.3.3 Variations in impact measurement by charity size

Previous research has highlighted that smaller charities may be less likely to measure impact than larger charities (Ógáin et al., 2012). In light of these findings, DSC investigated whether smaller and larger charities differ in the prevalence of their impact measurement.

As explained in the introduction, charities can be grouped into sizes based on their annual incomes. Table 3.2 shows the percentages of those that reported measuring impact, out of those who responded to the question, in each income bracket. This highlights that micro and small charities in DSC's survey are considerably less likely to measure impact than charities in larger income groups, suggesting that there may be barriers to their doing so.

Table 3.2

Percentages of charities which measure the impact of their support by charity size		
Charity size	**Income bracket**	**Percentage which measure impact**
Large	£5 million to £100 million	100.0%
Upper medium	£500,000 to £5 million	64.3%
Lower medium	£100,000 to £500,000	69.2%
Small	£10,000 to £100,000	35.3%
Micro	£0 to £10,000	37.5%

Note: Percentage which measure impact calculated as respondents in that income bracket that do measure impact out of total respondents in that income bracket that answered this question: micro (N=8), small (N=17), lower medium (N=13), upper medium (N=14) and large (N=5).

3.4 CHALLENGES

3.4.1 Practical challenges faced by charities

DSC's survey asked charities to identify the practical challenges they face in delivering support to armed forces families. Only three respondents stated that they do not face any practical challenges. The remaining respondents to this question (N=49) provided open-ended answers, which were analysed by the researchers and grouped into categories. The six main areas in which charities face practical challenges are:

- Identifying beneficiaries
- Funding and finance
- Beneficiaries' needs
- Beneficiaries' location
- Human resources
- COVID-19

Figure 3.5 shows the percentages of charities, out of those who identified challenges (N=49), reporting each of these challenges. These themes are not mutually exclusive, as more than one of these main categories of challenges may be applicable to each charity.

Figure 3.5

Main areas in which charities face practical challenges

COVID-19 — 8.2%
Human resources — 8.2%
Beneficiaries' location — 10.2%
Beneficiaries' needs — 18.4%
Funding and finance — 18.4%
Identifying beneficiaries — 36.7%

Area of challenges (y-axis)
Percentage of charities (x-axis: 0% to 40%)
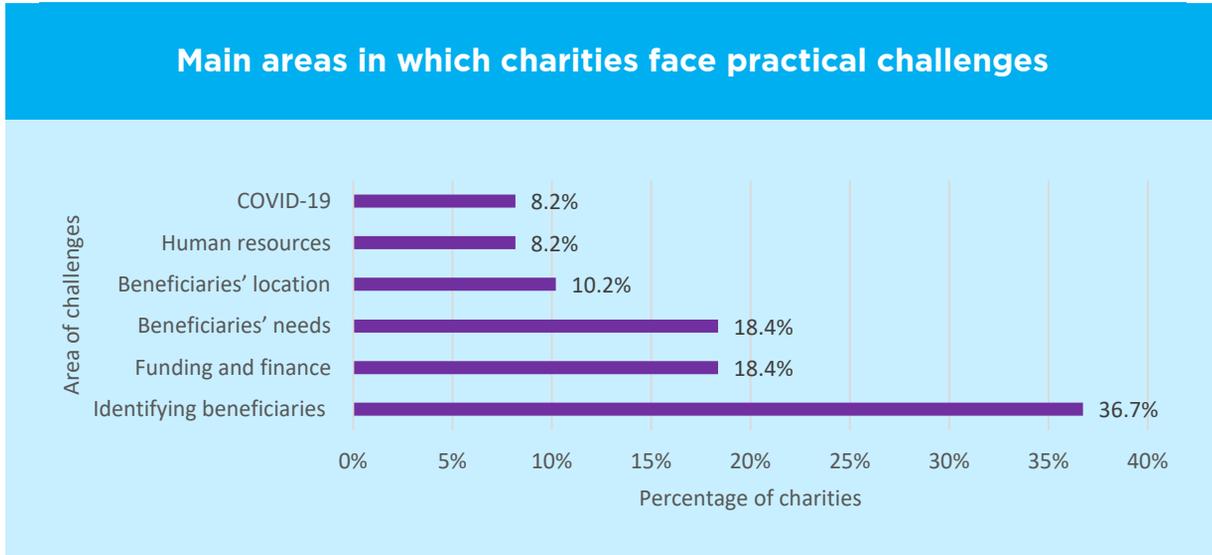
Note: Respondents could be assigned to more than one of the categories; therefore, the percentages do not sum to 100%. Each percentage is calculated using the total number respondents who identified challenges (N=49).

This figure shows that the most common area in which charities face practical challenges is in identifying beneficiaries. Over one-third (36.7%, N=18) of those who responded to this question identified this as a challenge. As noted in section 2.3.2, there are three main approaches to identifying beneficiaries: approximately three-quarters (75.4%) of the total survey respondents (N=69) are approached by beneficiaries themselves, two-thirds (66.7%) receive referrals from other organisations and just less than one-third (30.4%) search for beneficiaries themselves.

DSC's analysis indicates that, of the charities which reported challenges relating to identifying beneficiaries (N=18), eight reported difficulties in searching for beneficiaries. This suggests that while searching for beneficiaries is the least common way of identifying beneficiaries, it potentially presents more challenges. A further four charities cited awareness of the charity (or the charity's activities) among potential beneficiary groups as a challenge. This relates to charities being approached by beneficiaries themselves: potential beneficiaries can only approach charities or services that they are aware of. Finally, referrals from other organisations were identified as a challenge by two charities.[8] Examples responses are reproduced below.

Example responses: Challenges relating to identifying beneficiaries

'Other organisations not referring.'

'Access to the families in need who do not engage of their own accord. Finding those families is difficult as they are not on the radar.'

'Lack of awareness of who we are.'

'MOD refuses to enable contact with local veterans or their dependants.'

Survey respondents

Note: Quotes are for illustrative purposes only and the views expressed by respondents are not endorsed by DSC.

_____

[8] Four charities in this 'identifying beneficiaries' category could not be sub-categorised.

Funding and finance presented a practical challenge to 18.4% (N=9) of the respondents to this question. Charities within this category explained that they faced challenges in raising funds, for example through applying for grants or from internal income-generating sources, and in maintaining consistent funding that enables them to meet their beneficiaries' needs. Some example responses are reproduced below.

Example responses: Challenges relating to funding and finance

'Our primary challenge is consistency in funding streams, allowing us to provide a sustainable and ongoing level of service delivery focused on the needs of military families as a specialist group.'

'As we do not receive grants from any major external organisation or body, we are reliant on [self-generated] income and this can limit what can be achieved.'

Survey respondents

Note: Quotes are for illustrative purposes only and the views expressed by respondents are not endorsed by DSC.

Furthermore, meeting beneficiaries' needs was identified as a challenge by 18.4% (N=9) of the respondents to this question. Four respondents identified the intensity of beneficiaries' needs as a challenge. This was commonly related to identifying beneficiaries, discussed above; challenges in identifying beneficiaries early (before problems become larger or more complex) can compound the challenges faced when charities provide support for these beneficiaries. DSC's discussions with charities in the sector found that understanding why beneficiaries do not always seek support early – and how to address this – is an important area for further research.

Other related challenges included diversity of need (N=2), assessment of need (N=2) and prevalence of need (N=1). Example responses are reproduced below.

Example responses: Challenges relating to beneficiaries' needs

'Not knowing who needs help until they ask for it – often very late when the problems are more complex.'

'We are well practised at providing housing support, where the main challenges are invariably repairs and maintenance related. However, we are finding that budgets of local authorities are becoming increasingly stretched, which places a greater onus on our being able to assist [beneficiaries].'

'The diverse range of needs presented to us, the expectations placed upon us and the time delays when needing help from other organisations.'

Survey respondents

Note: Quotes are for illustrative purposes only and the views expressed by respondents are not endorsed by DSC.

Relatedly, 10.2% (N=5) of those who responded to this question identified their beneficiaries' location as a practical challenge in delivering support. This primarily relates to geographical dispersion – charities may face challenges providing support for beneficiaries in different geographical areas given the constraints they face in getting resources, such as staff, to the appropriate place to support them.

Example responses: Challenges relating to beneficiaries' location

'The main issue is one of location and availability. We are a growing charity and having the right people in the right place can be difficult at times. We manage, though.'

'Consistency of service across the geography of Scotland. Resource limitations.'

'Contacting and developing relationships with geographically dispersed families across the UK and overseas.'

Survey respondents

Note: Quotes are for illustrative purposes only and the views expressed by respondents are not endorsed by DSC.

The fifth distinct category relates to human resources (8.2%, N=4). Such challenges include staffing levels, staff turnover and salary expectations among (potential) employees. The same percentage of respondents to this question also identified COVID-19 as a practical challenge. These responses are discussed in more detail in section 3.4.2.

While these are the main categories of challenges identified by the researchers, there are other areas in which charities face challenges, including – but not limited to – low or fluctuating numbers of beneficiaries (N=4); finding the most effective method of communication with beneficiaries, for example through social media, email, telephone or word of mouth (N=3); partnerships, for example knowledge of types of support among partner organisations or delays in referrals (N=3); and having access to sufficient resources, such as physical space to deliver support in (N=2).

3.4.2 Challenges and impacts related to COVID-19

The previous section highlighted that 8.2% (N=4) of the survey respondents identified COVID-19 as a particular challenge. Charities' qualitative responses identified that COVID-19 has created challenges with respect to fundraising, additional support required, communicating when social distancing measures are in place, and running services in line with new health and safety restrictions.

DSC's survey included a separate question specifically relating to the impacts of COVID-19. Charities identified whether they had experienced one or more of seven potential impacts:

- Changed methods of service delivery
- Drop in fundraising or donated income
- Depletion of reserves
- Pausing of some services
- New areas of need emerging
- Staffing changes
- Increased demand for financial assistance from beneficiaries

The percentages of all survey respondents (N=69) which experienced each of these impacts are illustrated in figure 3.6.

Figure 3.6
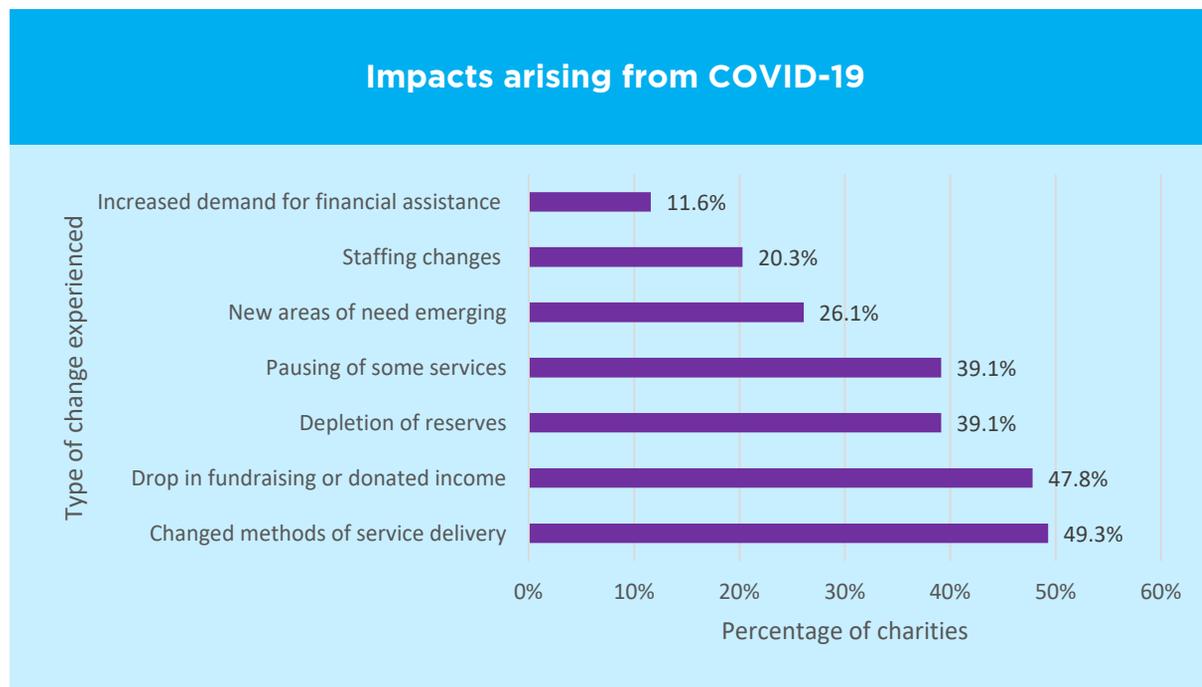
Impacts arising from COVID-19

Note: Respondents could select more than one of the items in this question; therefore, the percentages do not sum to 100%. Each percentage is calculated using the total number of survey respondents (N=69).

The most common impact, experienced by approximately half (49.3%, N=34) of the survey respondents, was a change in the methods of service delivery. This is unsurprising given the pervasiveness of health and safety measures, such as social distancing, which have changed not only how face-to-face services can be delivered but also how services are run (such as with staff working from home).

The second most common impact experienced due to COVID-19 was a drop in fundraising income or donated income. This was reported by just under one-half (47.8%, N=33) of respondents. Moreover, depletion of reserves and the pausing of some services had each been experienced by approximately two-fifths of the survey respondents (39.1%, N=27).

Furthermore, approximately one-quarter (26.1%, N=18) reported new areas of need emerging and one-fifth (20.3%, N=14) highlighted staffing changes, for example due to having to furlough staff or make redundancies.

The least common impact experienced was an increase in demand for financial assistance, reported by just over one-tenth (11.6%, N=8) of respondents. However, two further respondents highlighted changes in beneficiaries' needs in their open-ended responses, including beneficiaries who had been furloughed or made redundant having greater financial need, such as after moving into rent arrears.

Other qualitative responses referred to the impact on the charity's ability to identify beneficiaries (N=3). Specifically, this related to the processing of cases with partner organisations, which may have been subject to reduced capacity and/or delays. Additionally, one charity highlighted a fall in beneficiary numbers, and another experienced challenges accessing funding that was not specifically related to COVID-19. Finally, one charity reported that it had experienced no significant impacts.

Overall, the majority of the respondents experienced one or more of the impacts outlined above (69.6%, N=48). Further analysis indicated that often these impacts overlapped. Out of those who indicated that they had experienced any impacts (N=48), just over four-fifths (81.3%, N=39) had experienced two or more impacts due to COVID-19. Indeed, the median number of impacts experienced was three, with 12.5% (N=6) experiencing six of the seven impacts included in DSC's survey.

3.5 CHAPTER THREE SUMMARY

3.5.1 Partnership and collaboration

The majority (71.0%, N=49) of the survey respondents partner with other organisations. On average, charities undertaking partnerships collaborate with four different types of organisation, with almost one-fifth (18.4%, N=9) partnering with one other type of organisation and 10.2% (N=5) partnering with eight different types of organisation.

Analysis by charity size shows that micro charities (with incomes under £10,000) are equally as likely to partner with other organisations as large charities (with incomes over £5 million). However, they are less likely to collaborate than small and medium charities. Furthermore, as charity size increases, the average number of different types of partnership also increases.

Most commonly, the respondents partner with other Service charities (65.2%, N=45). Nevertheless, more than one-third (37.7%, N=26) partner with non-Service charities.

Meanwhile, over half (56.5%, N=39) of the respondents partner with one or more organisations outside the charity sector: approximately two-fifths (40.6%, N=28) partner with the MOD, over one-third (34.8%, N=24) each with Armed Forces Covenant signatory organisations and NHS services, over one-quarter (26.1%, N=18) with social services, and approximately one-fifth with government initiatives (21.7%, N=15) or housing associations (20.3%, N=14).

The majority (66.7%, N=46) of the respondents reported experiencing benefits from partnerships. Most commonly, this was that partnerships enable holistic support to be provided to beneficiaries, covering multiple areas of need or ways of providing support. Other benefits include identifying beneficiaries, sharing resources and expertise, grants and/or fundraising, and efficiency gains.

3.5.2 Measuring impact

Over half (54.2%, N=32) of the survey respondents reported measuring the impact of their support on families. However, there was considerable variation by charity size, with small and micro charities much less likely to measure impact than larger charities.

The three most common methods of impact measurement are monitoring and evaluating outcomes (which involves establishing and recording metrics to assess how far beneficiaries have benefitted from support), beneficiary feedback and testimonials, and receiving feedback from other organisations.

3.5.3 Practical challenges

The most common practical challenges faced in delivering support are identifying beneficiaries (36.7%, N=18), funding and finance (18.4%, N=9), and meeting the intensity, prevalence and diversity of beneficiaries' needs (18.4%, N=9).

3.5.4 COVID-19

Impacts due to COVID-19 were experienced by over two-thirds (69.6%, N=48) of the charities surveyed. These charities experienced, on average, three impacts each. The four most common impacts related to methods of service delivery, a drop in fundraising or donated income, depletion of reserves, and pausing of some services. These impacts were each experienced by between two-fifths and one-half of the survey respondents.

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CHAPTER FOUR

The last word: conclusions and recommendations

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this research was to provide an independent analysis of the subsector of armed forces charities which supports armed forces families – that is, spouses or partners, children, widows and adult dependants. The report itself is a resource for policymakers, the media, researchers, and both established and emerging charities.

This chapter provides conclusions and recommendations based upon the report's findings in relation to the following research questions:

- How many armed forces charities deliver support for families and how many beneficiaries do they support?
- What types of support are delivered to armed forces families and to which family members?
- What examples of collaboration and impact measurement exist?
- What challenges do charities face in supporting armed forces families?

4.2 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF ARMED FORCES CHARITIES THAT SUPPORT FAMILIES

As of July 2020, DSC's data indicated that the total number of armed forces charities operating in the UK was approximately 1,800. Yet, as the evidence in DSC's *Focus On* reports has shown, when this sector is broken down by topic of support, such as education or housing, relatively small groups of charities are found to serve large numbers of beneficiaries through highly directed support (see Cole et al., 2017; Doherty et al., 2017, 2018a, 2018b; Robson et al., 2019).

The research presented in this report corroborates these previous findings. The report identified 268 armed forces charities that provide support to armed forces families. This represents only around 14.8% of the armed forces charity sector. For the year to July/August 2020, the subset of these charities that participated in DSC's survey (N=69) supported approximately 88,921 beneficiaries and spent approximately £68.5 million on provision.

The findings indicate that the majority (75.0%) of the charities surveyed had supported up to 600 beneficiaries in the past year, with a median of 140. Meanwhile, a relatively small number of respondents (13.0%, N=9) supported 1,500 beneficiaries or more; collectively, this small number of respondents supported 92.2% of the total number of beneficiaries. This suggests a large degree of concentration within the sector: while most beneficiaries are supported by a few charities, a large number of charities provide support to small numbers of beneficiaries.

Almost two-thirds (62.3%) of the charities surveyed provide support to the families of both serving and ex-Service personnel. This suggests that the majority of the charities which support armed forces families do not specialise in supporting either the serving or the ex-

Service population. However, of those that only support one or the other, almost three times more support families of ex-Service (27.5%) than serving (10.1%) personnel. While it is known that the ex-Service population is larger and older than the serving population (Royal British Legion and Compass Partnership, 2014), further research is required to clarify how far this finding reflects this difference or whether more specialist support is required to meet the needs of families of serving personnel.

The respondents support a range of types of family member, including spouses or partners (69.6%), children (66.7%), widows (60.9%) and adult dependants (43.5%). Furthermore, almost half (48.2%) of charities which reported supporting any particular types of family member supported all four. Of the one-fifth (19.6%) of charities which specialise in supporting one family member, this is most likely to be spouses or partners (45.5%, N=5) or children (36.4%, N=4).

4.3 AREAS OF SUPPORT AND METHODS OF SERVICE DELIVERY

The research presented in this report found that, collectively, armed forces charities provide wide-ranging support to families, covering all ten topics of support shown below.

Social groups (43.5%)	Mental health support (42.0%)	Education support (40.6%)	Financial support (34.8%)	Physical health support (29.0%)
Housing support (27.5%)	Employment support (21.7%)	Domestic violence support (20.3%)	Childcare support (15.9%)	Criminal justice support (14.5%)
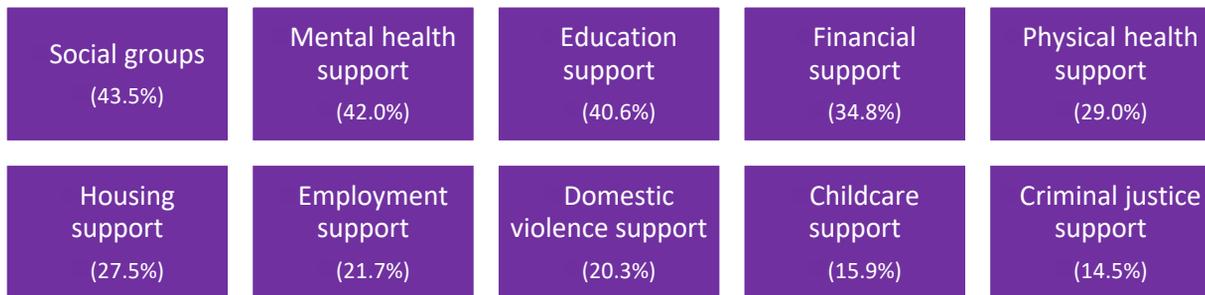
The three most common areas of support delivered to armed forces families are social groups (43.5%), mental health (42.0%) and education (40.6%). The three least commonly provided areas of support are domestic violence (20.3%), childcare (15.9%) and criminal justice (14.5%). Approximately two-thirds (66.1%, N=37) of the respondents provide more than one area of support.

Where charities specialise in providing one area of support to armed forces families, this is equally likely to be in education (26.3%, N=5) or housing (26.3%, N=5). This may be indicative of the investment in specialist human and/or physical capital required to provide such support; for example, the cost of owning or renting housing stock or a school or nursery, and the cost of training educational staff. Yet, sizeable proportions of charities also only provide social groups (21.1%, N=4) or financial support (15.8%, N=3).

DSC asked the charities whether they support families during three important stages of military life: deployment, relocation and transition. Charities most commonly support armed forces families during transition (47.8%, N=33). Still, substantial proportions support families during deployment (33.3%, N=23) and relocation (31.9%, N=22). Most charities support families at all three stages (51.4%, N=18). Charities that provide support at only one stage (31.4%, N=11) almost always do so during transition, the only exception being one charity that provides support only during relocation. This reflects the earlier finding that there are, overall, more respondents supporting ex-Service families than serving families.

Respondents most commonly deliver support directly to beneficiaries (53.6%). This is followed by those which signpost to other organisations (46.4%). One-third (33.3%) deliver grants to individuals, while just over one-fifth (21.7%) provide grants to other organisations. It is most common for charities to focus on just one of these methods.

Under half of the charities surveyed specified that they deliver support to armed forces families in rural or hard-to-reach areas (43.5%, N=30). Those that provide support in rural or hard-to-reach areas do so regionally, nationally and internationally. This is an important finding as research indicates armed forces families are becoming increasingly geographically

dispersed (Rodrigues et al., 2020). Yet, approximately one-third (31.9%, N=22) do not provide support to armed forces families in rural or hard-to-reach locations.

4.4 COLLABORATION, IMPACT MEASUREMENT AND CHALLENGES

The majority (71.0%, N=49) of the survey respondents work in partnership with other organisations and most of the charities surveyed experience benefits from partnerships (65.2%, N=45).

Just under two-thirds (65.2%, N=45) of the respondents partner with other Service charities. Nevertheless, a significant proportion – more than one-third (37.7%, N=26) – partner with non-Service charities. This highlights considerable collaboration both within and outside the armed forces charity sector to support armed forces families.

There was also evidence of substantial collaboration outside the charity sector. Overall, more than half (56.5%, N=39) of the respondents partnered with non-charity organisations. Most commonly, this was with the Ministry of Defence (MOD), followed by Armed Forces Covenant signatory organisations and NHS services. A smaller but substantial proportion partner with social services, government initiatives and housing associations.

MOD welfare services (40.6%)	Armed Forces Covenant signatory organisations (34.8%)	NHS services (34.8%)	Social services (26.1%)
	Government initiatives (21.7%)	Housing associations (20.3%)	
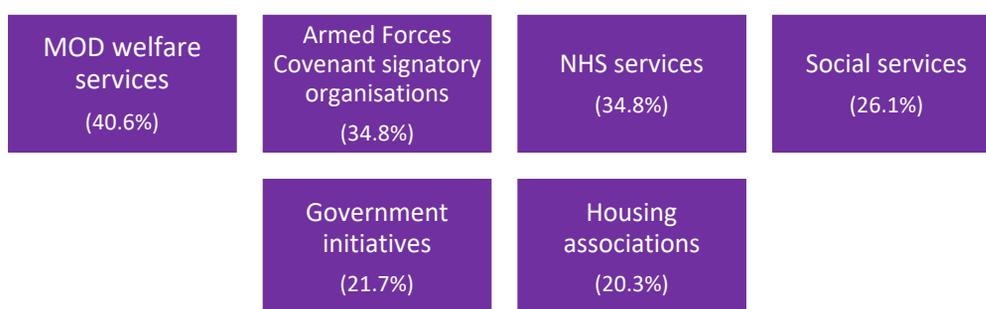
On average, charities undertaking partnerships collaborate with four other organisations. However, this varies by charity size: charities in larger income brackets, on average, partner with more types of organisation. Further, micro charities and small charities have a lower rate of collaboration, on average, than their larger counterparts. Nevertheless, an equal percentage (62.5%) of micro and large charities in DSC's survey reported collaborating.

Given previous evidence on barriers to collaboration for small charities (CCEW, 2003, 2010), this is a positive finding within the subsector of armed forces charities – and is a foundation for further strengthening collaboration. Indeed, in DSC's consultations with prominent armed forces charities that support families, it was highlighted that a 'key priority' going forward is to build on this well-established collaboration by enhancing the underlying 'infrastructure' for collaboration: awareness of the impact of collaboration, networks of support, and the knowledge and tools to collaborate effectively.

Out of those who provided a response, 54.2% (N=32) measure the impact of their support on families. This demonstrates a considerable degree of commitment to understanding how support affects beneficiaries – and, by extension, to improving support and outcomes for beneficiaries. However, the percentage of charities which engage in impact measurement is less than has been found in the broader charity sector (75% according to Ógáin et al., 2012, p. 2). Further, the percentages measuring impact were considerably lower for micro (37.5%) and small (35.3%) charities than for their larger counterparts.

While charities face individual challenges particular to the support they deliver and the needs of the beneficiaries they serve, the practical challenges most commonly reported by survey respondents related to identifying beneficiaries (36.7%, N=18). Charities also reported challenges relating to funding and finance (18.4%, N=9); meeting the intensity, prevalence and diversity of beneficiaries' needs (18.4%, N=9); and delivering support to geographically dispersed families (10.2%, N=5).

The COVID-19 pandemic has given rise to an average of three impacts per charity, with over two-thirds (69.6%, N=48) of the charities surveyed experiencing at least one impact. Almost half (49.3%, N=34) of the survey respondents experienced changed methods of service delivery or a drop in fundraising or donated income (47.8%, N=33). Meanwhile, 39.1% (N=27) of respondents paused some of their services and the same proportion had depleted reserves. While just over a quarter of respondents (26.1%, N=18) reported new areas of need emerging due to COVID-19, it is possible that this may increase as the economic impact evolves.

An additional four charities made reference to COVID-19 when asked more generally about challenges their charity faces. Their comments related to fundraising, the additional support required, communicating effectively with beneficiaries when social distancing measures are in place, and running services in line with new health and safety restrictions.

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

4.5.1 Furthering commitment and reducing barriers to measuring impact

Previous research has shown that charities benefit from measuring impact through improvement in their support, being better able to demonstrate the results of their work, and through improvement in the targeting of their support (Ógáin et al., 2012, p. 23).

Nevertheless, this report found that the percentage of respondents which measure their impact (54.2%) is less than has been found more broadly in the charity sector (75%; see Ógáin et al., 2012, p. 2). Meanwhile, the findings on variation by charity size are in line with previous findings: micro and small charities in DSC's survey are less likely to measure impact than their larger counterparts.

This suggests that, in addition to promoting impact measurement among charities that deliver support to armed forces families as a whole, more work needs to be pursued to reduce the barriers to measuring impact for small and micro charities in particular. Barriers to measuring impact may include a lack of funding or resources, not having staff with training in data collection and analysis, and not having staff with expertise in indicator or outcome selection (Ógáin et al., 2012, p. 46). These may be particularly salient for small charities with less financial and human resources.

In expanding their impact measurement, following Ógáin et al. (2012, p. 51), this report recommends that charities aim to do more with the data that they do collect. Where more data collection is necessary, it is suggested that charities should engage in discussions with funders to leverage more funding to evaluate their impact. They could also collaborate with other Service and non-Service charities, and other organisations, to share best practice and resources. Specifically, greater collaboration between financially larger and smaller charities could encourage greater impact measurement, given the benefits of sharing resources highlighted by small charities in this report (see section 3.2.3).

4.5.2 Improving processes for identifying beneficiaries

Identifying beneficiaries was highlighted as a key challenge faced by charities supporting armed forces families in this report. These are important challenges to overcome not only because many potential beneficiaries who could benefit from a charity's support may not be reached, but also because beneficiaries' needs can become more complex as a result of delays in reaching them.

Improving processes for identifying beneficiaries requires making it easier for charities to be approached directly by beneficiaries, to receive referrals from other organisations, and/or to search for beneficiaries themselves.

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Approximately two-thirds of the charities in this report receive referrals from other organisations, demonstrating considerable collaboration in order to connect beneficiaries to the right charity or charities that can support them. Nevertheless, more can be done to improve these referral pathways – as noted in this report, some charities experience delays and/or a lack of knowledge among partner organisations about the support they provide (see section 3.4.1). Furthermore, while the charities in this report show considerable collaboration outside the charity sector, more data is needed to understand the extent to which referrals come from within the (sub)sector, from the mainstream charity sector or from other organisations.

It would be beneficial for the charity regulators to gather more detailed information about the types of beneficiary that charities support and encourage charities themselves to make this information more transparent – whether in annual reports and financial accounts or on charities' websites. Information should be open and accessible for those both within and outside the armed forces charity sector, such that beneficiaries can be signposted or referred to appropriate sources of support by a wide range of organisations.

A key tool that has recently been developed is the Map of Need, which provides information pertaining to veterans' locations and needs based upon 'support they have asked for or accessed' (Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, 2020b). This can be used by organisations within and outside the sector to understand need and direct support accordingly.

This report also found that many challenges in identifying beneficiaries are related to searching for beneficiaries. However, more in-depth research is required to fully understand the processes by which armed forces charities currently identify potential beneficiaries – and also explore ways of improving beneficiary engagement. Indeed, in order to improve communications to potential beneficiaries, charities consulted for this report suggested more research is needed to better understand beneficiaries' help-seeking behaviours, which anecdotal evidence suggests can be characterised by self-reliance and reluctance to seek help.

4.5.3 Further research

This report provides a comprehensive snapshot of armed forces charities' support for families as of July/August 2020. An insightful approach for further research would be to undertake a longitudinal investigation of the subsector, to enable an understanding of how the support provided to armed forces families changes or remains stable over time.

In particular, the data for this report was collected during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK. This was therefore a time of widespread and extensive economic and social upheaval, with charities more broadly in the sector reporting substantial changes to their finances and to beneficiaries' needs (Institute of Fundraising, 2020). While the longer-term changes in levels and patterns of charitable giving are difficult to discern across the sector at present (Pinkney and Scharf, 2020), DSC's previous research has found that the sector is highly dependent on income from the public (Cole et al., 2020). Furthermore, 40% of armed forces charities with incomes over £500,000 do not have enough reserves to cover 12 months' operation (Cole et al., 2020).

The respondents in this report highlighted experiencing an average of three impacts due to COVID-19. These included changed methods of service delivery, a drop in fundraising or donated income, depletion of reserves and pausing of some services. Charities also noted changes in beneficiaries' needs, which may continue to evolve as the situation progresses.

Further research would therefore be instructive to better understand how serving and ex-Service personnel's families' needs change and how armed forces charities respond to those changes, along with adapting to the evolving context of COVID-19 more broadly.

Another instructive area for further research concerns specialist support for families of serving and ex-Service personnel. This research found that charities which focus on supporting one of these groups are almost three times more likely to support families of ex-Service personnel than serving personnel. Furthermore, where charities support both groups, it is not clear how much of their support is directed towards one group or the other. A deeper understanding of this question could better inform provision of support and draw attention to any gaps in support for families of serving personnel.

A note from the authors

DSC hopes that this report will help to illuminate this small subsection of the armed forces charity sector which delivers support to families within the armed forces community. It is hoped that the report will prove a valuable resource for policymakers, the media, the forces charities themselves and, in turn, their many beneficiaries.
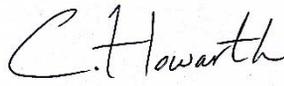
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Armed Forces Charities' Support for Families 2021

This report follows on from the Directory of Social Change's (DSC) *Sector Insight* reports on UK armed forces charities, a series which DSC has been publishing since 2014. Building on these broader studies, the *Focus On* series provides more specific analysis of the work of armed forces charities across the UK – in this case, charities which support armed forces families.

This study contributes to DSC's growing body of research on the armed forces charity sector, which also includes the *www.armedforcescharities.org.uk* website. It provides an overview of the support for armed forces families delivered by armed forces charities registered across the UK, focusing on:

- An exploration of the types of support available to armed forces families
- Insights into the characteristics of the beneficiary population
- An examination of charities' expenditure on support for families
- Case studies on charities which support families
- Collaboration, impact measurement and practical challenges
- Conclusions and recommendations

This is a unique resource for charities, government, policymakers and researchers to understand what armed forces charities deliver in terms of their provision for armed forces families. The subject area is thoroughly explored to provide a body of evidence and insightful analysis which informs of policy, practice and research.

'The three Families Federations welcome this report and its focus on the assistance that armed forces charities provide to families. We are grateful to the Directory of Social Change and Forces in Mind Trust for highlighting the challenges that our armed forces families face, the sacrifices they make and their need for effective support.'

Anna Wright, Chief Executive, Naval Families Federation
Collette Musgrave, Chief Executive, Army Families Federation
Maria Lyle, Director, RAF Families Federation
(from the foreword)

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This report is part of a wider project for and about armed forces charities, which includes the website
www.armedforcescharities.org.uk