Network for Ex-Service Personnel (NESP) Evaluation

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Context

Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Co-Financing Organisation (HMPPS CFO) addresses barriers to work for hard-to-help offenders, facilitating access to comprehensive support mechanisms appropriate to their individual circumstance and assessed need. In late 2015, CFO3 received a £500,000 grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund to support fast-tracking onto resettlement schemes and enhanced provision for ex-service personnel who have been recently discharged from the military following a custodial sentence in the Military Corrective Training Centre (MCTC) in Colchester following conviction. CFO3's scheme was branded as Network for Ex-Services Personnel (NESP and was divided into three strands: the continuity of resettlement provision for those transferred to HMPPS custodial estate, continuity of resettlement provision for community discharges from MCTC Colchester, and trend analysis to inform future provision.

Strand 1 and 2 were facilitated through the placement of a NESP representative based at MCTC Colchester, generating interest and referring participants onto the CFO3 programme. Until June 2017, this was the NESP Case Worker, the role was then taken on by a Case Manager from CFO3 regional Provider Shaw Trust. When participants were released or transferred from MCTC, they would then be contacted by the CFO3 Provider in their region, and could begin receiving support. CFO3 provision is structured in a prescribed pathway to ensure participants build on solid foundations towards a goal of sustainable employment. Core activities, such as CV or disclosure advice, lead on to supportive measures, which include specialist referrals, before participants can then go on to complete vocational courses and qualifications. CFO3 will also provide job search support, interview preparation and look to broker employment for the participant.

While Strand 1 had a focus on supporting continuity of resettlement provision for MCTC detainees transferring into the civilian custodial estate, it became clear early on that the number of detainees being transferred into custody was lower than anticipated. In light of this, the NESP Project Team sought to expand and diversify the project horizons, looking to support current HMPPS prisoners who had transferred out of MCTC prior to the commencement of the NESP project. CFO3 staff have access to HMPPS databases and were able to identify offenders who had a Court Martial and highlight them to existing CFO providers for mainstream CFO3 provision. This cohort were dubbed "historical cases". Resources were also redirected from the Provider Veteran Support Fund (PVSF), which became the

First Step Fund. This fund offered small grants of £30,000 to third party organisations to improve support options for all ex-service personnel offenders in the Criminal Justice System. A summary of the work provided by the First Step Fund organisations is detailed in the document 'NESP Project Summary'. Strand 2 aimed to bridge the gap in support given to ex-service personnel discharged into the community following their sentence at MCTC Colchester. This group are not subject to any licence conditions and therefore receive no statutory support from the National Probation Service (NPS) or their respective Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs)[1] unless they have a concurrent order for an offence convicted in civilian court.

The final strand of the NESP project focussed on trends analysis to inform future provision. As part of this, research was commissioned to evaluate what provision undertaken at MCTC Colchester has reduced the likelihood of ex-service personnel receiving HMPPS custodial or community sentences after leaving the military. The purpose of this research was to analyse previous offending patterns to enable CFO3 and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to predict future offending and to provide evidence as to the success of provision available at MCTC and their impact on recidivism after leaving the military. It also aimed to enable both parties to identify the specific needs of ex-service personnel which will influence future provision and programmes aimed at this subgroup.

Evaluation Approach

Thorough evaluations serve as an effective feedback mechanism to the MoD, HMPPS and Providers, exploring the delivery of the project and the impact on participants. The principle aim of this report is to determine whether the project contributed to the change that it was designed to make, and to examine those aspects of the project that contributed to or hampered its success – to demonstrate examples of good practice, identify the areas for development and outline the lessons learned.

Quantitative research was sourced from administrative data on the CFO3 Case Assessment and Tracking System (CATS). Case data included the assessed needs of participants, work completed with CFO3 staff and responses to Participant Feedback Forms (PFFs)[2].

Qualitative data has been collected through a multitude of sources. Six detailed interviews were conducted. Three of these were with participants, one with the Shaw Trust Case Worker based at MCTC and two were with CFO3 Case Managers based in the community in the South West and East Midlands. The methodology involved semi-structured one-to-one interviews. The structured aspect to the interviews used seven questions for the participants and eight questions with the case workers (see Appendices 1 and 2). An online survey was sent out to participants who ceased engagement with CFO3 following release from MCTC Colchester. One completed survey was returned and is included in this evaluation. A low response rate was expected, given these participants had ceased engaging. In

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[1] NPS and CRC are responsible for the supervision and rehabilitation of low-medium risk offenders in the community.
https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/criminal-justice-management-2015
[2] PFFs are used to gather feedback on participant experience

order to collect participant experience, an additional feedback form was introduced. The MCTC Feedback Form was completed by participants immediately prior to their discharge from MCTC. There are six responses to this form included in the evaluation.

As part of strand 3, CFO3 worked closely with staff at MCTC to collect data of all detainees who were discharged from the military and released into the community from 2011 to 2017. Possesses were then utilised to match detainees with CATS records and management systems used by HMPPS custodial estate and NPS, namely P-NOMIS and N-Delius. This enabled CFO staff to identify whether a detainee has received either a custodial or the community sentence since being discharged from the military. This data was then used to identify recidivism upon discharge from the military. Analysis was conducted to evaluate what provision undertaken at MCTC Colchester has reduced the likelihood of the client receiving (HMPPS) custody or community service after leaving the military.

Results

The results are now split into the three strands: the continuity of resettlement provision for those transferred to HMPPS custodial estate, continuity of resettlement provision for community discharges from MCTC Colchester, and trend analysis to inform future provision.

Strand 1: Continuity of resettlement provision for those transferred to HMPPS custodial estate

The original intention of Strand 1 was to promote CFO3 provision and accept referrals whilst participants were detained at MCTC. It transpired that only 27 detainees were transferred from MCTC into the HMPPS estate during the project lifetime and so to offset potential shortfall in anticipated throughput, a number of strategies were deployed; namely the First Step Fund and the historical case reporting method. Both of these strategies were used to support current HMPPS offenders who had been before a Court Martial prior to the commencement of the NESP project. Within these 27 detainees, only one participant was referred onto CFO3 provision whilst detained at MCTC, which was not the expected outcome. This result has been largely influenced by the MCTC procedure to hold members of this cohort for a matter of days before they are transferred to the HMPPS estate. This meant that the NESP Case Worker, and later the Shaw Trust Case Managers, had very little time to make an appointment and complete the CFO3 entry assessment before the detainee left the premises. Despite this outcome for the original Strand 1 efforts, the success of the First Step Fund organisations and MoD reporting facility is reflected by 22 of the 27 being picked up by the historical case reports or Ormiston Families at HMP Chelmsford. Nine have been enrolled in support provision, with a further 13 made available to Providers through the historical case reporting facility.

At the time of writing, there are 22 historical cases enrolled on CATS. These participants have received support in goal setting and CV advice, with three completing vocational courses, and two supported into employment. One of the employed participants felt that he would not have found work without

the help of CFO3, noting that this was because the support was tailored to his needs, it was "*exactly what I needed*". The natural progression of the CFO3 pathway, which begins with one-to-one advice sessions before continuing on to specialist referrals and vocational courses, was credited as a reason for keeping the participant focused and engaged.

Strand 2: Continuity of resettlement provision for community discharges from MCTC Colchester

Strand 2 has had greater success than the original Strand 1 pathway, accepting 95 referrals for those MCTC detainees discharged into the community. Of these, 31 completed work with the NESP case worker, including four who continued to engage with case workers in the community following release from MCTC. The results for Strand 2 looks at participant outcomes and experience, areas for development, and lessons learned.

Participant experience related to CFO3 pathway

CFO3 participants are required to complete an assessment and initial casework known as 'core activities', which include disclosure advice, money management, self-esteem or confidence building, and CV writing, before proceeding to vocational training. The assessment helps to identify areas of need, and a first core activity of goal setting is a popular choice in order for participants to have an overview of the structure and content of provision, and to set realistic targets throughout. The CFO3 assessment and goal setting work was seen by participants to have been particularly useful because it meant that they were directed to industry sectors that they were interested in, whereas their prior experience of generic supervision or support had tended to be that they were put on irrelevant courses. This kept the participants focused and was a key factor in their engagement. The PFF responses also reflected this, showing that 14 of the 17 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the work completed was right for them.

Of the 25 participants who completed a second core activity, 14 were assessed as having needs in regards to offence disclosure, and seven in communication. One of the participants who engaged more on the programme received support on disclosure, CV writing and interview practice. He stated that he particularly appreciated the proactive nature of his Case Manager in the community, stating "*it has helped me out massively*". He felt significantly more confident in his job search as a result. Two participants who were actively supported into employment by CFO3 staff opted to receive core activities after completing training courses with CFO3. This included obtaining business cards, debt advice and support registering for self-employment tax references. The feedback from participants and their Case Managers was that these measures were also important and significant in assisting the participants into employment. Credit for taking up additional activities lies both with the participants, who recognised the usefulness of additional CFO3 provision, and with the case workers, who were

proactive and dedicated in promoting the additional support available to aid participants in finding employment.

Importance of pre-release provision

The planned pathway at the start of the project envisaged that provision would begin shortly after discharge into the community with vocational training following thereafter. The reality was that only one of all referred participants engaged in CFO3 support in this format prior to June 2017. The drawback of this approach was recognised by the NESP Project Team and as a result, a Provider Case Manager from Shaw Trust was brought in to begin provision within MCTC Colchester. This was the major factor contributing to the increase in engaging participant numbers from one to 26 over a short period of time. The reason for disengagement of the bulk of the participants upon discharge from MCTC was explained by the Shaw Trust Case Manager as mostly being due to the huge pressure to find employment quickly upon release into the community. Similarly, a participant who became ineligible for the programme due to finding employment quickly after release, noted that he still wanted additional support to continue to "*develop himself professionally*". He was referred on to First Step Fund organisation Ubique[3].

For the four participants who have continued to engage with CFO3 support in the community, the pressure to find employment quickly has meant that project staff had very little time to arrange specialised courses. In order to prevent participants accepting lower grade, untrained roles for the sake of having an income rather than waiting to retrain through CFO3 to attain a better paid role or one offering training and development opportunities, staff responded quickly and were able to facilitate support. Short courses or vocational training was arranged for three of these participants, of which two then went on to employed roles in their chosen industries. A common theme in the MCTC Feedback Forms was the request for these vocational training courses to be available within MCTC, specifically for the CSCS card and lorry driving qualifications. To date one participant has been able to attend and complete a vocational course whilst detained at MCTC through the day release system.

The contrasting level of participant engagement at MCTC before and after the introduction of a Shaw Trust Case Worker at MCTC Colchester also represents a key lesson learned. The NESP Case Worker initially hired was himself ex-service, and previously a Warrant Officer based at MCTC Colchester. The Project Team reasoned that this would place him on a level playing field with regard to understanding the culture and terminology, thereby enabling him to forge positive, supportive and professional relationships with detainees. However, it was found that the strict hierarchal structure of the military influenced detainees to agree to receive support as they would agree to any other order from a superior officer. This meant that it is likely that participants agreed to accept support without an understanding of what it entailed, which resulted in the participants being less likely to engage with the programme upon leaving MCTC. The transition to a Shaw Trust Case Worker was pivotal to the

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[3] See paragraph below, 'First Step Fund Evaluation'

increase in referrals. This is because detainees appreciated the support of an "*outsider*", allowing a relative degree of freedom to express thoughts and feelings not in line with military culture.

Employment outcomes

The main objective of CFO3 provision is to support offenders into employment. Therefore, a core aspect of the evaluation considers how close participants came to reaching this goal. Seven out of 31 engaging participants obtained employment (23%), of which three (10%) were actively supported in their job search. The feedback regarding these participants was uniformly positive. They were motivated, had a positive attitude and focused on the support that they wanted. One Case Manager suggested this may be due to the participants being of a younger age, compared to other CFO3 participants.

It was noteworthy that the majority of engaging participants, and three of the four participants who remained on the CFO3 pathway to the point of vocational or training courses, indicated construction as a preferred sector. CFO3 Case Managers arranged telescopic handler training and the safety certificate that is a pre-requisite for a Construction Skills Certificate Scheme (CSCS) card[4]. Two participants taking these courses were interviewed for the evaluation, and both stated that the courses were pivotal to their ability to gain employment. The attraction to construction work for these participants has been due to the 'hands on' nature of the work, and minimal requirement of written examinations in pre-requisite courses.

Strand 3 – Trend analysis to inform future provision

The purpose of strand 3 was to collect data of detainees who have been discharged from the UK military and evaluate what provision undertaken at MCTC Colchester have reduced the likelihood of ex-service personnel receiving HMPPS custodial or community sentences after being discharged from the military. Evaluation staff at CFO3 met with staff at MCTC to discuss the available datasets and agree timescales to collect the data. A number of datasets were to be collected from MCTC and matched to HMPPS's PNomis and NPS's NDelius databases to identify which MCTC detainees later received custodial or community sentences following discharge from the military.

MCTC Datasets

Fletcher

Fletcher is a data system utilised by MCTC Colchester but run by CiSCO Data Centre. In initial discussions CFO staff were advised that all Fletcher data was stored by CiSCO and a report would have to be delivered and ran by them to extract this data. The costs of this was discussed however MCTC staff utilised a training day to extract the all current and historic Fletcher records for the purpose of

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[4] Required to work on a construction site

NESP Strand 3. Fletcher holds name, address, DB number, date of birth, gender, ethnicity, rank, dependant, length of service, marital status, admission & release date, offence and discharged or soldier on details. This is the main data system utilised by MCTC staff.

Detainee Assessment Record (DAR)

The DAR is an individual spreadsheet for each detainee, over several Excel tabs, which follows the HARDFACTS (Health, Accommodation, Relocation, Drugs and alcohol addiction, Finances, Attitudes, Children & families, Training, education & employment and Support). CFO3 statistician staff were able to develop a process to extract the relevant data from the spreadsheets, in accordance with the data sharing agreement. The DAR has been updated over the last 7 years and CFO3 were made aware of 3 different versions of it, 2 being Excel spreadsheets and 1 a Word document. 2774 records were extracted and once duplicates were removed, 1637 remained.

AB12

The AB12 is an excel spreadsheet which holds detainee information, including admission date, rank, company, offence codes, sentence length, marriage status and religion. This has been adapted over the last 7 years and extra information has been added to the AB12 since 2011, such as offence details, religion and sentence details.

Sentence plans

Sentence plans are used to document what training and education has been undertaken by each detainee. They are stored on excel spreadsheets which covers a 6 month period. Data includes surname, DB number, names and dates of training & education undertaken.

Open Road - Counselling records

MCTC utilise a counselling service from Open Road who deliver support to detainees in MCTC when required. They offer support in bereavement, anger management and substance misuse. Records are stored in paper format and include DB number, surname, forename, date of referral and dates attended.

Data quality

Upon collection of the above records it became apparent that some details were missing across all databases. Due to the formatting of the sentence plans, such as merged cells, it was not possible for CFO3 staff to extract training and educational details of each detainee to link with data extracted from other databases. Also in relation to the Open Road Counselling records, whilst some records state what type of counselling a detainee received, the majority did not. It was also discussed with MCTC staff that detainees may be referred to counselling for a specific issue but then may also receive

support for other issues which is not always documented. Also if a detainee had attended counselling sessions then stopped engaging, a new record would be started if the detainee then re-engaged. CFO3 staff discussed these issues with staff at MCTC and were advised that this data was not stored in alternative formats and it was decided that the sentence plans and Open Road records would need to be removed as datasets in Strand 3.

CFO3 staff envisaged that this may cause issues as by removing training, education and part of the intervention records, it would be difficult to evaluate what provision undertaken at MCTC reduced the likelihood of receiving a custodial or community sentence upon discharge. CFO3 staff visited MCTC to collect the Fletcher data report and extract the relevant DAR records. Upon extraction, CFO3 staff were advised that an estimated 1,200 DARs had been archived and were therefore unavailable for extraction. Discussions began regarding a solution to this, including the manual extraction of each record as the DAR held information relating to the provision undertaken at MCTC which had been lost by the elimination of sentence plans and Open Road Counselling records as datasets.

A VLookUp was conducted using excel to explore the accuracy of surnames and DB numbers between Fletcher, AB12 and DAR records. The Fletcher dataset held a total of 3087 records, none of which were duplicates however, 292 records had missing offence and sentence details. 694 surnames matched the corresponding DB number across all three databases. Fletcher records were then used to compare the accuracy and quality of data in AB12 and DAR datasets using VLookUp. Table 1 represents the results of the VLookUp including missing data, conflicting data and slight misspellings of surnames.

Table 1 VLookUp results MCTC databases compared to Fletcher records (3087)

	AB12	DAR
Data in Fletcher records but missing from other dataset	869	1709
Surnames that did not match	297	260
Different spelling of surname	35	4
Records matched to Fletcher dataset	1886	1114

The high number of missing DAR records was not surprising considering the 1200 DARS that had been archived. CFO3 staff and MCTC staff discussed this and CFO3 were advised that extracting the archived DARs was not feasible and consequently all DAR records were removed as datasets in strand 3 due to incomplete records. Any analysis conducted using data from the DAR would be unreliable and would likely skew results.

Due to the removal of the Open Road Counselling records, Sentence plans and DAR it was necessary to alter the initial research aim to one that was attainable with the remaining variables. Therefore the

focus of Strand 3 adapted to examine whether the type of offence committed, sentence length and detainees' age can predict the likelihood of MCTC detainees receiving HMPPS custodial or community sentences after leaving the military. Fletcher data was used as the primary source of MCTC data and matched with PNomis and NDelius records to determine which detainees had reoffended[5] upon release. A full breakdown of the methods and results is available in the NESP Strand 3 Report, along with recommendations relating to the storage and retrieval of detainee records and avenues for future research.

First Step Fund

Nation Prison Radio (NPR)

National Prison Radio (NPR) provided 12 weeks of dedicated programming on ex-service personnel in the Criminal Justice System, and advertisements weighted to play at peak times, which were designed to encourage members of this cohort to self-identify and seek support. The evaluation found that NPR had created a catalogue of interesting and informative programming that was appreciated by listeners, with an acceptable number of ex-service personnel seeking support as a result. The ex-serviceman host provided a relatable voice, and the informative aspects on support provision prompted listeners to reach out. The advertising was cleverly focused to appeal to the appropriate audience, and also achieved the desired result of spurring action. A number of other benefits arose from the broadcasting by NPR: stimulating discussion on the struggles of ex-service personnel, and raising awareness of specialised support available amongst the prison population. Evaluation research showed that ex-service personnel felt comfortable to declare when there was an ex-service staff member or charity representative present at induction, and highlighted that many non-military prisoners thought highly of ex-service personnel.

SToMP

SToMP seamlessly made adjustments to the programme due to lower than anticipated referrals from MCTC. They did this by merging the work of the Transition Officer with the existing SToMP support strategy. Mentoring work has been particularly successful, with participants expressing a deep gratitude for the support provided. Sourcing referrals through regular coffee mornings inside Welsh prisons has raised awareness of the SToMP provision, and enabled the Transition Officer to begin working with offenders whilst they are still imprisoned, however additional referral routes would be useful to improve participant numbers. Early contact with ex-service personnel in custody has facilitated 'through the gate' support, and those with significant time left to serve have still received employment advice and mentoring. This cohort have resettlement needs principally in housing and financial aid, though those in the community require support in money management, substance

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[5] For the purpose of this report, 'reoffend' refers to receiving a custodial or community sentence after being released from MCTC and discharged from the military. This does not include receiving police cautions etc.

misuse and mental health. For future monitoring and evaluation purposes, it is recommended that more thorough records are kept of casework completed.

RFEA

The Regular Forces Employment Association (RFEA) used the First Step Fund backing to build a Veteran Ex-Offender Employment Database. Whilst the database is still very new and has only been available to staff for a short period of time, the service is already a success and RFEA staff feel comfortable using it. This is demonstrated by the high employment outcomes achieved, with five participants assisted into employment in as many weeks. The service is successful predominantly because it provides relevant employment opportunities for a cohort who usually have very limited choice. This has been made possible by dedicated RFEA staff using effective methods to find offender-friendly employers. The filtering options by region or industry have made the service user-friendly for staff, and participants were noted to have felt more confident to contact employers who have confirmed they are offender-friendly. The additional aspect to the database, titled 'Wider Needs', helps RFEA staff to support participants in other areas, such as accommodation. There are some potential areas for development, such as offence types accepted by employers, though it may be useful for RFEA to develop a policy to ensure that information is added in a controlled and uniform manner. The database remains a priority for RFEA as a regular item for discussion in quarterly management meetings.

Ubique Partnerships Ltd

Ubique aimed to support service personnel being discharged from MCTC into their area of delivery, Warwickshire, Coventry and the wider West Midlands area. Due to low numbers of ex-service personnel returning to that area, Ubique focussed their efforts into supporting ex-service personnel offenders already in these areas, through the Armed Forces Covenant funded Remember Veterans network that they were already part of. They provided support to a total of 16 participants who were referred via a number of third party organisations. Participants were facing a number of resettlement needs and Ubique utilised their relationships with third party organisations to ensure that the most appropriate support was being provided. In terms of outcomes, four participants completed training courses such as peer mentoring and the Mental Health First Aid for Armed Forces community training. This course enables participants to develop a better understanding of the factors that affect the wellbeing of serving or ex-service personnel and how to identify triggers. This Project was also successful in support three participants into employment and three became voluntary peer mentors for the Veterans Contact Point (VCP), a voluntary contact point ran by ex-service personnel to provide peer support to serving and ex-service personnel.

Ormiston Families- Civvy Street

The Civvy Street project supported ex-service personnel in HMP Chelmsford by providing one to one support to those requiring help with relationships and through the 'Who am I?' programme. The 'Who am I?' programme is a five session weekly programme focussing on values, perceptions of themselves and others and how to re-adjust and prioritise relationships. Ormiston Families faced difficulties in throughput due to low numbers of ex-service personnel in HMP Chelmsford and the fact that a high number of offenders are initially held in HMP Chelmsford and then transferred to the appropriate prison dependant on the offenders' home location and offence type. In total, 7 participants were transferred to another prison whilst working with the Family Support Worker. Despite this they were still able to enrol a total of 18 participants. A number of these participants had restrictions placed on them in relation to contact with children or ex-partners due to their offence making some support not appropriate. The Family Support Worker adapted to this well and continued to support them in other areas such as initiating contact with family members, when appropriate.

The 'Who am I?' programme was delivered to three participants who engaged extremely well and were able to reflect on the content from previous weeks and link these to other exercises. They also voluntarily discussed their relationships in a group setting and participants were able to hold group discussions around previous difficulties and ways they could make changes to improve their relationships. The relationships built between participants and the Family Support Worker were apparent during project visits which enabled participants to confront their issues in a safe environment.

Due to the lower than expected throughput and difficulties faced by staff due to offence types, particularly sex offences, Ormiston Families identified a gap in the current delivery and the need for training relating to providing family support to sex offenders. This training is currently being developed and will be delivered to HMP staff at HMP Littlehey, CFO and Ormiston Families staff in order to provide the appropriate support to sex offenders whilst having a more comprehensive understanding of their needs.

Participant Interview

1. **How frequently do you speak to your case manager?**

   ○ Very frequently

   ○ Frequently

   ○ Infrequently

   ○ Rarely

2. **Can you tell me about your experience of the NESP programme? Positives & negatives**
   ○ **Whilst at MCTC?**
   ○ **After leaving MCTC?**

3. **How supported have you felt whilst you have been on the NESP programme?**
   ○ **Whilst at MCTC?**
   ○ **When dealing with NESP case worker?**
   ○ **After leaving MCTC?**

4. **Do you feel that the work you have completed so far has been right for you? Can you give me some examples of the work you have completed?**

5. **Do you feel that you are being offered support services that are right for you? Can you remember any examples of when your needs have been identified and support has been offered?**

6. **Do you feel that this programme is helping/has helped you towards gaining employment or training opportunities?**

7. **Would you recommend the NESP programme to other ex-service personnel?**

Case Manager Interview

1. How many Network for Ex-Service Personnel (NESP) participants have you worked with as part of the current CFO programme?

2. What has been your experience of receiving MoD referrals from MCTC? Can you remember any specific examples?

3. What experiences have you had in terms of engagement with NESP participants? Can you remember any specific examples?

4. What have you found to be the prominent barriers for NESP participants?

5. Have you found anything that works particularly well for this group?

6. Have you encountered any problems specific to this group?

7. What approach do you think works best for NESP participants?

8. How do you feel your relationship has developed with other stakeholders?

   o **MCTC**

   o **NESP Case Worker**

   o **Military organisations (e.g. charities, support networks)**

   o **Third party support organisations (e.g. charities, support networks)**