

“We adapt and overcome, and that’s what we were told to do”: A  
qualitative study on UK veterans’ experience of preparedness and the  
COVID-19 pandemic.

Jessica Boyle

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## THESIS PORTFOLIO: CANDIDATE DECLARATION

<b>Title of degree programme</b>	<b>Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology</b>
<b>Candidate name</b>	Jessica Boyle
<b>Registration number</b>	21026107
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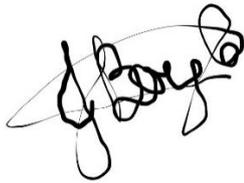
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I confirm that the thesis submitted is the outcome of work that I have undertaken during my programme of study, and except where explicitly stated, it is all my own work.

I confirm that the decision to submit this thesis is my own.

I confirm that except where explicitly stated, the work has not been submitted for another academic award.

I confirm that the work has been conducted ethically and that I have maintained the anonymity of research participants at all times within the thesis.



Signed:

Date: 19/04/2024

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## **Thesis abstract**

This thesis provides a synthesis of the existing literature on the impact of stress and anxiety on the performance of first responders, followed by an exploration of the experiences of preparedness and the COVID-19 pandemic on UK military veterans using reflective thematic analysis methodology.

Paper 1 is a literature review that synthesises the current literature surrounding anxiety and stress in the decision-making of first responders. Ten articles were reviewed using the mixed methods appraisal tool (MMAT). Findings suggested that anxiety and stress do have an impact on the decision-making of first responders. The anxiety and stress impact could be mitigated by factors such as individual differences or specifics of their role, such as the experience gained during the role. Clinical implications of this review suggest that it is essential to consider how best to support first responders within their roles and foster resilience to manage difficult times.

Paper 2 is an empirical paper exploring the experiences of preparedness and the COVID-19 pandemic on UK military veterans. Reflective thematic analysis was used, and three themes were identified: military mentality prepared us for this, harder for others than us, and protecting and serving the family. These themes showed that participants' military experiences and preparedness provided skills to help them adapt better to COVID-19, which overall gave them a positive experience of COVID-19. Therefore, veterans with experience in preparedness may provide an untapped resource for disaster response management in the UK if we ever face a crisis or emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic again.

Paper 3 is an executive summary of the empirical paper and has been reviewed by a UK veteran.

Paper 1- Literature review:

What is the impact of anxiety and stress on the decision-making and performance of first responders? A systematic literature review.

Jessica Boyle

This systematic literature review was prepared for submission to the journal *Personality and Individual Differences* (see author guidelines Appendix 1).

Word count: 7,990

## **Abstract**

Between the early 2000s and 2023, the impact of stress and anxiety has been at the forefront of media and societal awareness, and recognised by mental health services, educational institutions, and employers as an ongoing concern. Research has also considered anxiety and the impact of stress on well-being and decision-making. The role of a first responder comes with even more potential to be exposed to anxiety-provoking or stressful situations, through exposure to natural disasters, terrorism, death, fire or assault. Given the high-threat nature of these roles, this review aims to provide an up-to-date synthesis of the literature that considers the impact of anxiety and stress on the decision-making of first responders. Screening databases found ten relevant articles that were included in this review. Articles were appraised using the MMAT appraisal tool (Hong et al., 2018). Findings (Cumming & Harris, 2001; Hartley & Phelps, 2012) also suggest that experience and individual levels of trait anxiety can impact how much decision-making is affected. A synthesis of the papers suggests that anxiety and stress can impact the decision-making of first responders: nine papers found it to impair decision-making, and one paper found it to heighten decision-making. Support for first responders around decision-making in anxious or stressful situations is critical to aiding the best decision-making.

## **Introduction**

### ***Biological and health definitions of stress***

Anxiety can be defined as a feeling of unease, worry, or fear and can vary in severity (Beesdo et al., 2009). The DSM V considers anxiety to be medically diagnosed as a generalised anxiety disorder, defined as excessive anxiety and worry which occurs more days than not and can cause fatigue and restlessness, and impact daily and cognitive functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Anxiety is experienced by 3.6% (264 million) of the world's population (World Health Organisation, 2017). Anxiety may be more prevalent in some individuals than others, which can be due to various socioeconomic factors, such as the type of occupation, where they live, how much they earn, and cultural and individual differences which can all create variability in causes and experiences of anxiety and stress. However, the World Health Organisation (2017) found that anxiety typically impacts females more than males, accounting for 4.5% and 3.4%, respectively.

Stress is similar to anxiety in that it can be defined as a state of worry or tension caused by a problematic situation (Ursin & Eriksen, 2004). It has been reported that stress affects one in four people, which manifests as an inability to cope with everyday functioning (Seňová & Antořová, 2014). Signs of stress can be difficulty breathing, panic attacks, sleep problems, and fatigue, and impacts cognitive functioning. Similarly, stress can be caused by several socioeconomic factors and is at higher levels in women than men (Rincón-Cortés et al., 2019). Research has found that chronic and daily life stressors were significantly higher in women than men (Matud, 2004).

Research has found that stress and anxiety are different but can be linked. Fink (2016) states that anxiety can be a reaction to a stressful situation. Therefore, stress can be a reaction

to a situation or trigger that may cause physical and mental stress, or anxiety, whereas anxiety can still exist without a stressor.

One of the biggest causes of stress and anxiety can be work-related due to the demands a role puts on a person or the nature of the job itself. Some causes of work-related stress are long hours, workload, job insecurity, and interpersonal conflict with those people you work with (Nakao, 2010). This review will focus on the role of first responders due to the nature of the role. First responders usually find themselves in high-stress situations, can work long hours, and be in potentially risky environments, all of which can cause anxiety and stress to occur.

### ***Definition of a first responder***

A first responder is someone with specialised training and is the first to respond and help in an emergency, such as an accident, disaster, fire, crime, or terrorist attack. Professions or occupations of first responders fall under military personnel, police officers, fire persons, nurses, and doctors (Schmidt et al., 2020). Previous research has found that these professions report higher burdens on mental health than in general populations, such as depression, anxiety, and stress (Lawn et al., 2020). The experience of mental health related to these occupations is due to having to face direct or indirect stress due to the nature of their work (Huang et al., 2022). When examining the pressure and burden on cognitive functioning in highly stressful working environments, in the case of paramedics for instance, where decisions may determine emergency medical procedures or life and death, we must consider the impact that these pressures have on decisions that need to be made (Spitzer, 1993).

### ***What is decision-making?***

Decision-making is the cognitive process that involves using the information provided in a particular situation to decide a course of action and assessing alternative solutions (Byrnes, 2002). Some situations require us to make decisions quickly, and we may be responsible for the consequences that may follow that choice. In other instances, we may have to slow our thought processes and be more considerate. Therefore, anxiety or stress occurs depending on the context within which decisions must be made and the level of risk involved. Previous research has found that anxiety and stress can impair decision-making (Hartley & Phelps, 2012; Mui et al., 2008; De Visser et al., 2010).

### ***Rationale for the literature review***

With anxiety and stress being one of the biggest reported problems impacting people's mental health worldwide, it is essential to consider how it impacts those populations where the occupation may heighten anxiety and stress. Previous research has focused on how anxiety and stress may impact decision-making (Cumming & Harris, 2001; Hartley & Phelps, 2012). However, not many have focused on the roles of first responders, particularly those first responders who may not meet the criteria for post-traumatic distress disorder. Therefore, this review hopes to explore and synthesise findings from the current literature concerning the impact of anxiety and stress on first responders' decision-making.

### ***Aim and Research question***

The review aims to provide an up-to-date synthesis of research and considers the following question: "*What is the impact of anxiety and stress on the decision-making and performance of first responders?*"

## Method

### *Search terms and databases.*

A literature search was conducted using ELSEVIER, Web of Science, psychINFO, Taylor and Francis, and Sagearticle, searching via host websites Scopus, Google Scholar, Clarivate, and Staffordshire University Library database. The search was conducted between April and May 2023. All keywords related to the concept, such as first responders, were combined using the 'OR' Boolean operator; anything to be excluded from the search would use the 'NOT' Boolean operator. These terms would then be combined with terms using the 'AND' Boolean operator to create a broader search of the literature and return results that were relevant to the review. The table below details the search terms used for different databases when searching for papers to review (see Table 1).

**Table 1.**

*Details of combined search terms for each database.*

	<b>Database</b>	<b>Search terms</b>
<b>Peer-reviewed articles</b>	Staffordshire University Library search	"Impact of" anxiety OR stress on "decision making" on "veterans" OR "military personnel" OR "first responders" OR "police" NOT "PTSD" OR "Post-traumatic stress disorder" REFINE Journal articles
<b>Peer-reviewed articles</b>	Scopus	"Impact of" anxiety AND "decision making" (military OR "first responders" OR police OR ambulance) NOT (PTSD OR "Post-traumatic stress disorder") INCLUDE military OR "first responder" OR police OR ambulance to key words REFINE research articles.

<b>Peer-reviewed articles</b>	Google Scholar	"Impact of" anxiety OR stress on "decision making" on "veterans" OR "military personnel" OR "first responders" OR "police" NOT "PTSD" OR "Post-traumatic stress disorder" INCLUDE research articles.
<b>Peer-reviewed articles</b>	Clarivate	"Impact of" anxiety OR stress on "decision making" on "veterans" OR "military personnel" OR "first responders" OR "police" NOT "PTSD" OR "Post-traumatic stress disorder" REFINE BY psychology, articles NOT review articles, Research areas (psychology or psychiatry or Behavioural sciences) open access, headings (humans, military personnel, male, adult, female, united states, veterans, anxiety disorders or attention or anxiety.

***Inclusion and exclusion criteria***

Studies had to meet the following inclusion and exclusion criteria to be included in the literature review, the following criteria are included in the table below (see Table 2);

**Table 2**

*Details of inclusion and exclusion criteria for literature review.*

<b>Inclusion criteria</b>	<b>Exclusion criteria</b>
Empirical studies relating to anxiety and stress on decision making.	They are focused on therapeutic intervention as a coping strategy for stress and anxiety.

Focused on the first responder population. They are focused on physical health services.

Focused on the impact of stress and anxiety concerning decision-making. They were not peer-reviewed articles.

The full article was accessible and written in English. Focused on the impact of anxiety with other disorders such as PTSD

Focused on adults over 18 years of age. They did not focus on the first responder population.

### *Search strategy*

An initial search of databases and a hand search found 1336 results, with 5 duplicates. Google Scholar is a vast search platform that yielded thousands of results. Therefore, recommendations suggest focusing on the first 300 results in the Google Scholar search engine (Haddaway et al., 2015), a hand search was completed by looking at suggested articles when reading through titles and abstracts. During the first search, a further 1008 papers were excluded because the title needed to meet the criteria resulting in 28 papers. Next, the papers were filtered by reading the abstract, resulting in a further ten papers being removed as they did not meet the inclusion or exclusion criteria. In the final stage, all papers were read in their entirety to establish whether they met the inclusion or exclusion criteria. Two papers were not accessible and attempts to contact the author or access papers via another institution were attempted before the choice to exclude was made.

Consequently, ten papers were included as meeting the inclusion criteria. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flow chart below provides further details on the search strategy, databases, and inclusion and exclusion process (see Figure 1.) The PRISMA flowchart enables consistency and reliability across

systematic reviews and establishes a better quality of analysis by ensuring all prescribe the same process when searching for literature (Moher, 2009).

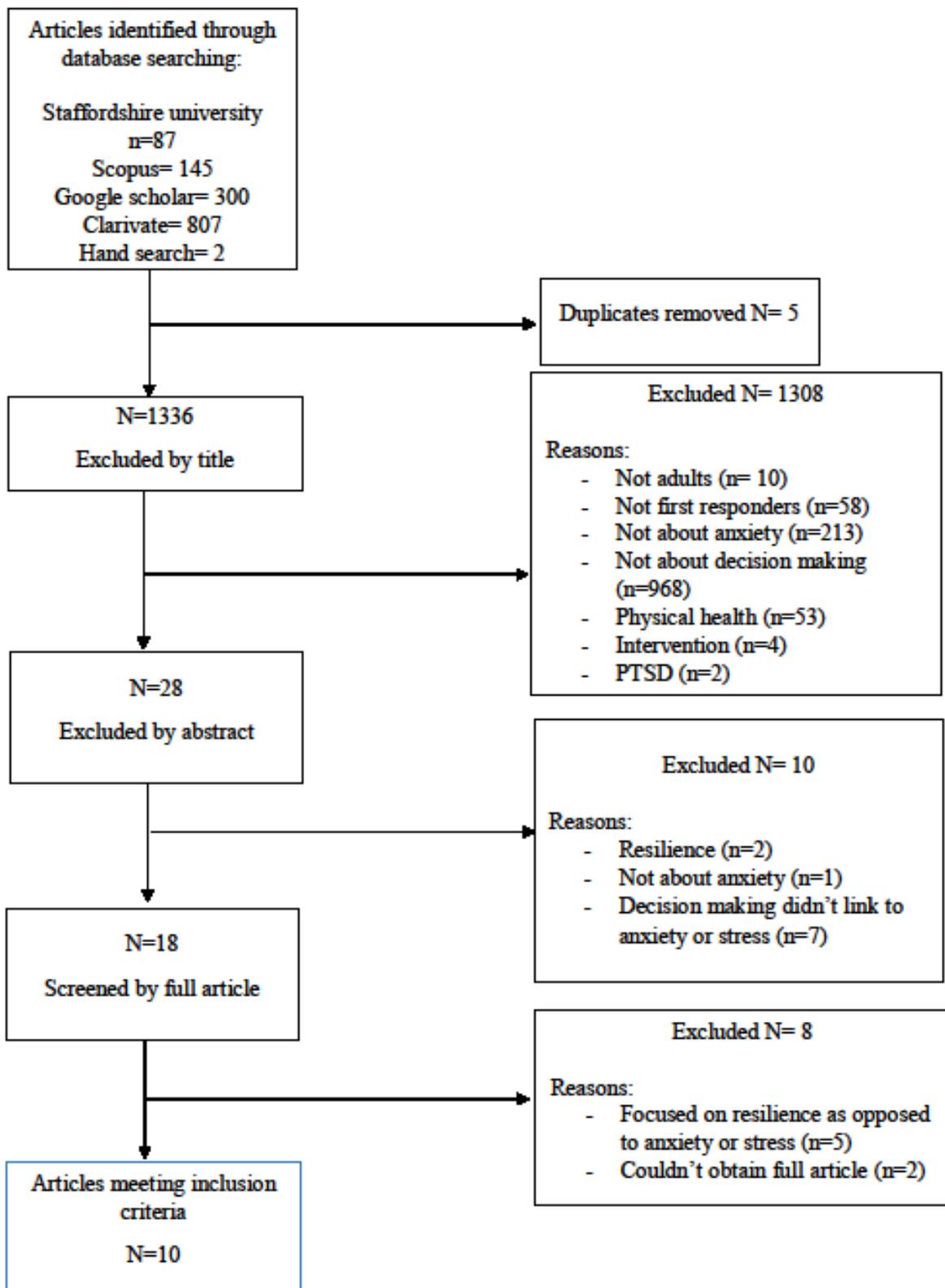


Figure 1. PRISMA flow chart (2009) stages of the search strategy for literature review.

## *Quality appraisal*

The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool, initially developed in 2006 (MMAT, 2018), was used as a quality assessment tool to appraise the ten articles included in the review. Various tools could have also been appropriate for appraisal, such as the Critical Skills Appraisal Programme (CASP) (Critical Appraisal Programme, 2018). However, the MMAT was selected as it covered five different approaches to methodology. Due to the variety of analyses used in the papers selected, using one appraisal tool meant that scores could be more easily compared (Hong et al., 2018), and the MMAT tool allowed all the papers to be evaluated by the same tool. The MMAT has a comprehensive guide for its use and has suitable inter-reliability measures (Pace et al., 2012), which is helpful as variability can arise due to individual observation, so reducing the impact of individual variability through an appraisal tool enables more reliability within the findings (McHugh, 2012).

Using the MMAT, the included papers were assessed for methodology, application to real-life situations, and rigour. Each paper received a score created by the researcher as MMAT does not have a scoring criterion, focusing more on methodological quality and application to settings and less on methodological reporting. Therefore, after assessing the quality of the papers using the MMAT tool, the researcher used a high, medium, or low rating appropriate for the MMAT (see Appendix 1) approach of not using overly rigid scoring and focusing on the quality of each criterion (MMAT, 2018).

It is essential to consider that MMAT has limitations, particularly its lack of generalised scoring criteria; therefore, the scoring should be interpreted alongside the synthesis of findings to determine the quality of the papers.

## **Results**

Four of the ten papers received a high score, meeting all aspects of the MMAT appraisal tool; another four received a medium score, indicating they met most of the MMAT criteria, two received low scores, as they met the minor criteria. Critical details about the studies can be viewed in the table below (see Table 3), and the appraisal criteria are provided in Appendix 1). Findings were synthesised using a narrative synthesis (Popay et al., 2006). Details of this process will be described later in the review.

**Table 3***Summary of Included Studies and Quality Appraisal.*

No	Study & Year	Title	N	Sample and key settings	Methods & Procedure	Key findings	MMAT quality score
1	Holmes, Boulton & Panter, 2021	Understanding the role of uncertainty and anxiety in police decision-making during the investigation of sudden unexpected deaths in children	26	Used members of the police force ranged from police inspectors to police sergeants.	It was a mixed methods study; phase 1 consisted of viewing a scenario and choosing from four different decision points, one was considered the conservative option, two were neutral, and one was considered progressive. Phase 2 was a qualitative semi-structured interview where participants discussed why they made their decisions.	The thematic analysis of phase 1 highlighted that the key themes which impacted their decision-making were "anxiety" and "uncertainty", and these key themes caused participants to primarily choose the neutral options, as opposed to conservative or progressive, due to feeling anxious and uncertain they were making the right choice.	High

2	Gamble et al., 2018	Different profiles of decision-making and physiology under varying levels of stress in trained military personnel	26	Used a sample group of active US infantrymen and special reaction team (SRTs)	Participants completed a threat discrimination task across high and low-stress conditions. Each condition required them to make quick decisions on whether to shoot based on whether they were friends or foes. Foe would be shown as having a black pistol, and friends would have no pistol or something innocuous. In the high-threat condition, they would receive a small electric shock when incorrect; in the low-stress condition, they received a low vibration. Behavioural performance and heart rate were measured.	Findings showed a positive relationship between the low-stress condition and sensitivity between foe and friend compared to the high-stress condition and a positive relationship between accuracy and the low-stress condition compared to the high-stress condition. They suggested that participants were more accurate and better able to distinguish between friend and foe in the low-stress condition than in the high-stress condition.	High
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3	Mather, Stein & Sareen, 2010	Social anxiety disorder and social fears in the Canadian military: Prevalence, comorbidity, impairment, and treatment-seeking-	8441	Sample from active and reserve military personnel, 5155 reserve military personnel, and 3286	The survey was administered to participants; it consisted of four measures to capture psychiatric diagnosis, treatment seeking, social fears, and role impairment.	The survey found a high prevalence of lifetime and past-year social anxiety disorder in active military personnel, and those deployed had higher rates of comorbidity with other psychiatric disorders. Findings also show that those with social anxiety disorder were less likely to show treatment-seeking behaviours and experience more significant impairment in their ability to complete roles.	Medium
4	Renden et al, 2017	Effects of Threat, trait anxiety, and state anxiety on police officers' Actions During an Arrest	88	The study used a sample of 88 police officers with an average of 3.5 years of experience. The sample consisted of male (n=67) and female (n=21) officers.	Participants were asked to enter a practice room and arrest someone suspected of completing a physical assault. They were assessed on communication, gaining control, and handcuffing; the scenario was either high threat (suspect was intimidating and aggressive) or low threat (suspect spoke in a low and calm tone)	No significant difference existed between the state anxiety levels in the low and high-stress conditions. However, there was a positive correlation between trait anxiety and state; for instance, the more trait anxiety a participant had, the more state anxiety they had, which impacted their decision-making during the experiment.	Medium

5	Nieuwenhuys, Savelsbergh, Oudejans, 2012	Shoot or Don't Shoot? Why are police officers more inclined to shoot when they are anxious	36	The sample of 36 experienced police officers consisted of male (n=33) and female (n=3) officers. All had relatively low trait anxiety compared to the norm.	Participants were asked to participate in a simulation of high and low anxiety conditions. If the suspect appeared with a gun, they were asked to shoot as quickly and accurately as possible; if they did not have a gun, they were asked to shoot a black X on the floor.	In the GUN scenarios, responses appeared to be faster in the high anxiety condition than in the low anxiety condition. No differences existed between high and low anxiety conditions in the NO GUN scenarios. Correct responses were made faster in the NO GUN low anxiety than in high anxiety. Shot accuracy diminished significantly in the high anxiety GUN condition compared with low anxiety. Gaze behaviour did not have any significant results. Overall, they suggested that participants made quicker but less accurate decisions in the anxiety-provoking scenario in the low-anxiety scenarios.	High
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6	Rice & Schroeder, 2019	Self-Reported Sleep, Anxiety, and Cognitive Performance in a Sample of US Military Active Duty and Veterans	233	Sample of active duty and veterans	Participants were asked to complete an anxiety and sleep questionnaire before completing cognitive performance tasks.	Performance on the cognitive measures was compared against self-reported scores of anxiety and sleep. The study found that those who struggled the most with sleep and anxiety performed worse on cognitive tasks. When anxiety was controlled for in the study, the impact of sleep on performance was reduced. The study suggests there is a relationship between anxiety between sleep and performance.	Medium
7	Belanger & Blanchette, 2022	Stress and the interpretation of ambiguous faces in police officers.	234	A sample of Canadian police officers does not say any key demographics.	Participants were assigned to a stress-induced group or a control group. Participants were given a high or low-stress-induced arithmetic task and then asked to rate 60 ambiguous faces as positive or negative.	The study found that older police officers were more likely to interpret the face positively than younger officers. Those with higher levels of perceived stress at baseline were more likely to interpret the face as unfavourable. There was no significant difference in interpretation between the stress-inducing conditions.	Low

8	Anikola & Mendes, 2011	Stress-induced cortisol facilitates threat-related decision-making among police officers.	81	Participants were all male US-based current police officers	Participants had to complete a stress-inducing role play involving a black disgruntled citizen who has accused another police officer of verbal and physical abuse and themselves as the supervisor. They were told this would be watched and evaluated and then asked to complete a shoot or do not shoot task.	Results found that those with higher cortisol levels from the stress task made fewer errors than those with lower levels. The relationship between error rates and cortisol reactivity was reduced with black and armed images compared to white and armed images. They showed that participants could better distinguish between armed and unarmed images of black people than white people. Overall, it suggests that increased stressful situations heighten the ability to detect stress or not.	Low
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9	Nieuwenhuys, Savelsbergh, Oudejans, 2015	Persistence of threat-induced errors in police officers shooting decisions	57	Used active police officers, both male (n=52) and female (n=5)	Used the same procedure as the previous study (see Nieuwenhuys et al., 2012), but this time included a practice session.	The pre-test found that errors made tended to be higher in the high-stress condition compared to the low-stress condition, as seen in the previous study. However, after completing a practice round, they found fewer errors reported, which was also found with the control group who did not have practice, although this was not significant, suggesting that practice was not enough to reduce the impact of anxiety on decision-making.	High
10	Faro, Frost & Barrett, 2022	Training and experience influence the consequences of anxiety during a performance—a study of two groups of British firearms officers during bi-annual testing.	127	Used active UK police officers trained to use firearms; they were either part of the authorised firearm officer (AFO) or armed response vehicle officer (ARV). The sample contained both	2 x 2 mixed design heart rate measurements were taken during a five-task qualification training session. Scores and heart rate were measured in each of the tasks. Participants knew they had to achieve a certain amount to pass.	AFO showed higher arousal and anxiety rates than more experienced ARV officers, making more errors than ARV officers. However, the association was much smaller based on just heart rate alone. Their hypothesis was only partially supported.	Medium

males (n=122)  
and females  
(n=5).

## **General critique of the papers**

Nine of the ten papers used a quantitative methodology; one used a mixed methodology. Different methods were used for data analysis, from correlations, to regressions to t-tests, and thematic analysis was also used in the mixed methodology paper (Holmes et al., 2021). A range of strengths and limitations can be considered across all the papers, which are helpful when synthesising the results. For instance, all the papers reviewed explained their aims and used appropriate methods with suitable summaries of the papers and appropriate implications. However, two papers were rated as low (Belanger & Blanchette, 2022; Akinola & Mendez, 2011) because their methods needed to be stronger and contained confounders that could have impacted findings. For instance, Belanger & Blanchette (2022) used an arithmetic task as part of their stress-induced condition, however, Canadian police officers may be exposed to greater high-pressure situations such as violent arrests. Therefore, the findings from Belanger & Blanchette (2022) may not be generalisable to the anxiety levels felt during other high-stress situations. Likewise, Ankinola & Mendez (2011) used a scenario involving a disgruntled Black citizen wanting to make a complaint regarding treatment from police officers, and then measured the decision-making of participants after experiencing this situation. However, Ankinola & Mendez (2011) did not replicate this scenario with other citizens of different ethnic identities which means findings may not be replicable across different situations.

All the papers had relevant samples for the population of interest: first responders. However, varying sample sizes all seemed to have sufficient sizes ranging from 26 to 8441, improving the findings' reliability and validity. Not all demographics were represented within the studies; for instance, some did not consider gender differences or differences amongst race or class. On the other hand, age is factored across all papers, and average age within the

papers was N=35.7. Therefore, considering the strengths and limitations of individual papers is useful when synthesising the findings as this may impact the validity of the main themes.

Holmes, Boulton & Panter (2021) scored high on the MMAT appraisal tool. Their study focused on the impact of anxiety and uncertainty on decision-making in police officers. The study used a mixed methodology, collecting quantitative responses and following up with qualitative responses, which enabled participants to decide and expand on why certain decisions were made. Participants were recruited from different ranks within the detective level of the police department and had an appropriate experience, which increased generalisability. The quantitative data collection and analysis were adequately explained, and there was some explanation of how the thematic analysis was performed, but aspects such as reflexivity or triangulation were not discussed. For instance, the authors did not reflect on the relationship between the participant and the researcher and how this may influence analysis. However, it provided helpful findings on the impact of anxiety on decision-making. Another limitation of the paper is that it did not focus on gender differences. As previously mentioned, women have been found to report anxiety and stress more so than men (Rincón-Cortés et al., 2019). Therefore, the findings may not be wholly generalisable as it does not take accounts from female officers, who may have reported higher anxiety levels based on findings such as Rincón-Cortés et al., (2019).

Gamble et al. (2018) also scored high on the MMAT appraisal tool. The study focused on decision-making when encountering a stressful situation, such as a shoot or do not shoot scenario. The study had a smaller sample size (N=26), but it had appropriate participants from active US infantrymen or special reaction teams (SRTs). The study used appropriate behavioural measurements such as virtual reality and heart rate variability, which enabled the study to detect heart rate across conditions and show the relationship between increased heart

rate in different stressful conditions, similar to (Faro, Frost & Barrett, 2022). The researchers made appropriate attempts to control confounding variables using an artificial setting but did not mention any expected confounds or how they controlled this. Overall, the study met the aims of the hypothesis, which was that participants would perform better in the low-stress conditions than the high-stress condition, and found significant p results using stepwise regression.

Mather, Stein, and Sareen (2010) scored medium on the MMAT appraisal. The study had a large sample size of 8441, all military or reserve personnel. The study assessed how prevalent social anxiety disorder was within this population and how it impacted their lives, ability to seek treatment, and comorbidities with other disorders. The study used a quantitative questionnaire, and although it yielded a high population, the impact of the research is relatively limited. For instance, a questionnaire was analysed using a logistical regression meaning that it lacked causality. The researchers found a relationship between anxiety and job performance, stating that anxiety impaired performance but could not say how. Relying on a quantitative methodology meant the responses lacked depth.

Renden et al. (2017) was an RCT of threat and state anxiety on police officers during an arrest and received a medium score on the MMAT appraisal tool. There are typically fewer females in this profession than males (Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013; Diaz et al., 2021), and in this study, researchers recruited a representative participant pool from active police officers (N=88), which included 67 males and 21 females. There was no mention of exclusion or inclusion criteria. Also, this study was an RCT but failed to specify how participants were randomly assigned. Measurements were appropriate, and a second experimenter and police officers not involved in the study volunteered to check the arrests made by participants which ensured there was no researcher bias. This paper used appropriate

regression analysis and stated they considered confounders but did not specify what those confounding variables were.

Nieuwenhuys, Savelsbergh, and Oudejans (2012) examined the impact of anxiety on participants when shooting at a target. The study also included gender differences within the sample populations; there were 36 men and three women, all were police officers, so representative of the population mean. The study scored highly on the MMAT appraisal tool, and the strengths were that variables within the study were clearly stated, and the measurements used were appropriate to test these variables because they tested for reliability or had previously been tested for reliability. Also, the study accounted for confounders by getting participants to shoot at a black X in the no-shoot condition, so they could still account for response times and establish the impact of anxiety on the speed regardless of whether they were in the shooting condition or not.

Nieuwenhuys, Savelsbergh & Oudejans (Nieuwenhuys et al., 2015) followed up their 2012 study on anxiety and impacting on shooting accuracy to assess whether shooting practice prior to the study experiment could impact anxiety and its effects on decision-making. Participants practised shooting over three consecutive weeks. This study also scored high on the MMAT appraisal tool. A strength of this study is that they used the same methods and measurements used in the previous study (Nieuwenhuys et al., 2012), which increased the validity and reliability of the research. They also accounted for confounders by making the practice session longer than the test sessions, ensuring the participants had sufficient time to learn before being assessed. Again, there was no mention of exclusion data, and although the sample did include both men and women, the sample of women was smaller comparatively, making the study imbalanced.

Rice and Schroeder (2019) had a medium score on the MMAT appraisal tool. The study aimed to consider the impact of anxiety and sleep on military personnel. The strengths of this study were that it captured baseline measures before completing the task. It had a large sample (N=233), comprised of active-duty soldiers and veterans, and 124 men and 109 women. The study used the Pittsburgh sleep quality index and the Zung self-rating anxiety scale questionnaire, both of which had been tested for reliability and validity and attempted to control for individual variables. For instance, when controlling for anxiety, they established that sleep and decision-making improved when anxiety was not a factor. However, the researchers did not control for sleep, and whether this was a confounder of the dependent variable is unclear. The paper used a correlation design which, although it may establish significant relationships between variables in the data, using a correlation means causality could not be established between the amount of sleep and anxiety levels (Altman & Krzywinski, 2015).

Faro, Frost, and Barrett (2022) had a medium rating on the MMAT appraisal tool. This study aimed to consider the impact of anxiety on performance. The study examined the impact of anxiety on the performance of police officers who were completing their bi-annual qualification shoot. This study has strengths, such as it used appropriate measures such as a heart rate monitor and an anxiety scale, which had been tested for good internal consistency and reliability. The sessions contained five shooting elements in the same order, the environment was standardised across sessions. However, the study used an already-in-use scenario: the proficiency exam. Although this was a generalisable real-life setting, as it measured the anxiety levels in the proficiency exam, it did not control for confounders that may have already existed in this exam initially which may have impacted findings.

Belanger & Blanchette (2022) rated low on the MMAT appraisal tool. This RCT study aimed to establish how stress impacted police officers' decisions on whether an ambiguous face was perceived positively or negatively. This study had a large sample size (N=234), and although the study was representative of the target population (police officers). The particular limitations of this study are within the methodology. For instance, how participants were randomised needed to be more detailed. Although the exact number of participants was allocated to an experimental and a control condition, it was unclear whether researchers were blind to the allocation, which could be a confounding variable as the experimenter may have influenced the allocation of groups. Therefore, although the findings were significant, the methodology needed to be stronger and received a low appraisal score.

Similarly, the study by Akinola & Mendez (2011) also received a low rating on the MMAT appraisal tool. This study aimed to assess the impact of stress on threat-related decision-making in police officers when asked to shoot simulated Black or White unarmed or armed targets. There were some strengths to this study as it had an adequate sample size (N=81) of current serving US police officers, and measurements were appropriate to an extent because participants were given the same role-play to enact with two observers. However, there were some limitations: for instance, the sample comprised male participants, so gender differences in response to threat scenarios could not be established. Furthermore, the participants were aware that this was a role-play being videotaped. Therefore, participants could act differently in a real-life setting with someone more unpredictable and in a less controlled environment.

### **Synthesis of results**

A narrative synthesis was used to synthesise the findings from the papers included for review. Narrative synthesis has been considered an appropriate approach for synthesising

findings when attempts such as meta-analysis or meta-ethnography cannot be used (Popay et al., 2006). The ten studies referenced in this paper used various data collection and analysis methods, so narrative synthesis was considered the most suitable option to conclude those studies. Synthesis of the evidence produced three themes: *anxiety impacts performance and decisions, individual difference: role-specific and pre-existing anxiety, and experience, and role longevity and confidence in the role.*

### ***Anxiety impacts performance and decisions.***

All the studies found that anxiety impacts first responders' performance and decisions regarding errors made on a task and how anxious they feel dependant on their role. Eight of the papers reviewed required participants to complete stress-inducing tasks. They measured how many errors resulted from the stress-inducing task, which replicated duties participants were expected to complete in their duties. (Holmes et al., 2021; Gamble et al., 2018; Renden et al., 2017; Nieuwenhuys et al., 2012; Belanger & Blanchette, 2022; Ankola & Mendes, 2011; Nieuwenhuys et al., 2015; Faro et al., 2022). Five studies included a shoot or do not shoot task (Gamble et al., 2018; Nieuwenhuys et al., 2012; Ankola & Mendes, 2011; Nieuwenhuys et al., 2015; Faro et al., 2022), which would have been a potential situation encountered by police officers. The other three papers tested other areas of police officer roles, such as decisions made investigating sudden deaths in children, engaging in arrests using handcuffs, responses to non-verbal facial expressions, or general cognitive performance (Holmes et al., 2021; Renden et al., 2017 Belanger & Blanchette, 2022) which all can be anxiety or stress-inducing.

The studies highlighted that even though these tasks were a part of their roles, first responders were aware of the anxiety and stress-provoking aspects of the job. These tasks still created anxiety when placed in those situations, and as a result, the anxiety or stress

experienced impacted how well they performed or the level of risk-taking when making decisions. Rice and Schroeder (2019) considered aspects such as working long hours or not getting enough sleep, which led to cognitive impairment for their participants which led to more mistakes on the job. However, this also varied depending on individual anxiety scores, as the more anxious a person rated themselves on the survey, the less sleep they tended to have and the more mistakes they made on the task.

Likewise, even those papers that did not focus on an experimental task found that anxiety and stress were still prevalent and impacted their performance and decisions (Mather et al., 2010). The researchers found that active and reserve military personnel experienced a higher prevalence of lifetime and short-term anxiety due to the nature of the role they did, and this was more so in the active population that had been deployed and were less likely to seek treatment, leading to further impairment in their work and an increase in social fears.

All the papers included in the synthesis showed that anxiety or stress impacted the first responders in the sample, and most of the papers found that stress had a negative impact. However, Ankinola and Mendes's (2011) study showed that stress heightened their responses, leading to fewer mistakes. When considering why Ankinola and Mendes (2011) found opposing results, it is worth considering the stress-inducing situation they used. In all the other shoot-no-shoot studies, participants were given no prior context before beginning the trial. For instance, they were told to shoot at the image when someone had a gun or not in various conditions. However, the Ankinola and Mendes (2011) study asked participants to engage in a role-play before the task, where they were a supervisor dealing with a disgruntled citizen reporting a complaint. The participants had to engage in this role play, get to know the citizen, and assist them with their complaints. It could be argued that engaging in a personal way gave the participants more of an understanding of the person rather than as a perpetrator,

which impacted their responses when asked to complete a shoot or do not shoot trial, resulting in reduced errors. Therefore, prior experiences of engaging with people in a stressful situation can also improve job performance and could impact the experience of anxiety or stress and thus impact decision-making positively.

### ***Individual difference: role-specific and pre-existing anxiety***

Four of the papers raised the consideration of the individual differences in anxiety levels (Mather et al., 2010; Rice & Schroeder, 2019; Renden et al., 2017; Belanger & Blanchette, 2022), although these papers found anxiety to impact decision-making, they also found that impaired decision-making was greater in those who experience trait anxiety more so than other participants. Trait anxiety is the anxiety experienced individually and related to personality. In contrast, state anxiety can occur in response to stimuli within the environment or a situation (Leal et al., 2017). Trait anxiety has been found to impact how much state anxiety is experienced. First responders typically are exposed to more anxiety and, therefore, may experience more state anxiety, so considering pre-existing trait anxiety is essential. It is a factor that Nieuwenhuys et al. (2012) considered before completing their experiment, and they found trait anxiety to be below the general population in their sample of first responders.

Therefore, varying levels of trait anxiety may impact how much state anxiety a person experiences, which then impacts decision-making processes during stressful situations. Renden et al. (2017) found no difference between trait and state anxiety in high stress condition which was a practice scenario arresting someone using threatening and intimidating language or low-stress conditions, which was the same practice scenario but where the arrestee was speaking in a calm and neutral tone. However, they found that those with more trait anxiety showed more state anxiety, which impacted decision-making. The results suggest that although this did not vary between conditions, it did have an impact overall.

When considering the impact of stress and anxiety in decision-making, it is vital to consider the unique nature of the role of a first responder. First responders with higher levels of trait anxiety who were then exposed to state anxiety due to their roles may experience a greater impact on their decision-making than those with lower levels of trait anxiety. First responders with high levels of trait anxiety could make quick or incorrect decisions when in a stressful situation which creates state anxiety.

***Experience: Role longevity and confidence in the role.***

The study by Ankinola and Mendes (2011) found that experience is a factor that impacts decision-making, which was present in the findings of other papers (Belanger & Blanchette, 2022; Nieuwenhuys et al., 2015; Faro et al., 2022). The interaction in the role play (Anikola & Mendes, 2011) gave the participants an experience dealing with a simulated interaction with the public. Arguably, providing first responders with more experience in their role could lead to more confidence and less anxiety around their decisions, leading to fewer errors. Training is helpful in many workplaces, especially in first responder roles, to upskill staff and provide valuable information to assist them in being the best. Nieuwenhuys et al. (2015) replicated their previous study (Nieuwenhuys et al., 2012) by including a practice trial. The practice trial enabled participants to learn what the task would be to give them more experience and skill when completing the experiment. The paper found that shooting error rates did reduce somewhat after the practice condition, although not significantly, as the control group who did not participate in the practice runs also showed a reduction in shooting errors in the post-test. Although the findings were insignificant, there was a change in participants who had a shooting practice, so the finding is still valuable for learning about the level of stress first responders are under to make the right decision. Studies such as Nieuwenhuys & Oudejans (2011) and Oudejans (2008) found that practice sessions

between three to four one-hour sessions can reduce shooting errors. Therefore, it could be assumed that more practice at a task over a sustained period may reduce anxiety or stress in the role.

Two papers found that the time a law enforcement officer had been in service impacted the stress and anxiety experienced in particular tasks (Belanger & Blanchette, 2022; Faro et al., 2022). Belanger and Blanchette (2022) found that older officers interpreted ambiguous faces more positively than younger officers. The latter found that the more experienced Armed response vehicle (ARV) officers performed better on the task than the less experienced Armed firearms officers (AFO). Suggesting that ARV officers may have been exposed to more high-stress situations which may go some way to mitigate the effects of anxiety on their decision-making compared to the less experienced AFO officers.

## **Discussion**

This review aimed to explore the existing literature surrounding the impact of anxiety and stress on decision-making in first responders. All the papers found that anxiety and stress impacted the decision-making of first responders. This finding is similar to previous research in general populations that found anxiety and stress impact decision-making (Cumming & Harris, 2001; Warren et al., 2020; Park & Moghaddam, 2017). Nine of the papers found that anxiety and stress harm the decision-making of first responders, causing those participants to make more errors when put into a high-threat situation. However, one paper found that being exposed to a stressful situation and being heightened more by anxiety, reduced errors and positively impacted decision-making. Support for this can be found when considering Rutter's theory of resilience (Rutter, 2007), which proposes that resilience is created through exposure to adverse events that can vary across contexts and is created through an interaction between genetics, environment, and coping style. The review found that how much

experience the participant had, impacted how anxious or stressed they felt in the experimental conditions; older or more experienced participants appeared to feel less anxious or stressed in the experiments and overall performed better and with fewer errors on tasks, when compared to younger inexperienced participants. Hofer (2006) argued that this depended on the level of adversity experienced; when there was moderate adversity, exposure to stress can have positive effects and create greater resilience and of sense of preparedness; however, when the adversity is extreme, the stress is less conducive to positive adaptations. Therefore, Hofner (2006) suggests there can be a right amount of stress.

Likewise, some papers found that an individual participant's anxiety, known as trait anxiety, could impact their feelings when exposed to an anxious situation creating state anxiety. Therefore, the findings in the reviewed papers support Spielberger's (1971) trait anxiety theory that if a participant's trait anxiety was high at baseline, then being exposed to a stressful situation may add to pre-existing anxiety levels, causing a more significant impact on their decision-making compared to those who have lower levels of trait anxiety. Considering this, Eysenck (2013) believed trait anxiety would lead to hypervigilance, which can increase cognitive vulnerability, increasing the likelihood of suffering from anxiety disorder. Hypervigilance can be defined as a cognitive tendency to be considerably alert to somatic distress signals in the brain (Hollins et al., 2009). However, Richards et al. (2014) found hypervigilance helpful, reducing decision-making errors as it diverts an individual's attention to the threat instead of other external stimuli. When considering the exposure to high-stress situations first responders' face, it could be argued they are exposed to high levels of hypervigilance which may reduce decision-making errors but can increase the likelihood of suffering from an anxiety disorder.

### ***Strengths and Limitations***

Overall, some of the papers in this review had limitations in their methodology. Both of the papers that used an RCT method did not indicate how the participants were randomised, and this impacts the reliability and validity of the study as future research cannot replicate the groups in the same way. Blind participant allocation in controlled experiments reduces researcher bias and this was not transparent in the studies included in the review (Renden et al., 2017; Belanger & Blanchette, 2022). All papers had an uneven distribution of men and women (total participants N=9349, number of men= 9132, number of women= 217). Although statistically, there are fewer women in first responder roles, the discrepancy in the sample populations could limit generalisability.

The MMAT appraisal tool (MMAT, 2018) was chosen for this review due to the varying methodologies within the papers selected. The appraisal tool has limitations: for example, it does not have a standardised scoring system, as it focuses more on the quality of the methodology than the findings of the paper, making the appraisal criteria less standardised than some measures like the CASP (CASP, 2018). However, The MMAT covers a wide variety of methodologies in one tool, which was considered the most appropriate for the review than using multiple different tools, making it more of a standardised measure. The potential to create a personalised appraisal tool for this review was considered. However, this would have needed more standardisation for the review.

### ***Clinical implications***

The findings of the current review are essential when we consider the role of the first responder, who are typically exposed to more anxiety or stress-provoking experiences than the general population (Huang et al., 2022). First responders must also work long, unsociable

hours and make difficult decisions quickly and often (Lavee & Ben-Ari, 2007; Feldman et al., 2021). The papers highlight that anxiety and stress impact first responders' decision-making even with all of the training within their role. Therefore, it raises the question of how best to support the optimum environment to enable first responders to make the best decisions. Some research has begun to focus on building resilience within first responders to reduce anxiety and stress where these factors come with the territory, for instance, promoting breathing exercises, the use of gratitude journals, and considering better sleeping habits (Thompson & Drew, 2020).

### ***Future research***

The papers in this review did not fully consider representation from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups (BAME) within the studies included for review. Although women were included in some of the samples, they were underrepresented. Considering De Visser et al. (2010) have found trait anxiety appears higher in women compared to men, it would be beneficial for future research to consider the views of these groups in order to understand if differences between demographics lead to any considerable differences in anxiety in first responders and how this impacts their decision-making.

Considering that all papers did find that exposure to difficult conditions did have a serious impact on the anxiety, stress and decision-making of first responders in some way, whether positive or negative. One aspect the papers did not consider was how first responders coped with being exposed to those environments, and how first responders experienced the intensity and degree of exposure to these conditions. Future research may benefit from not just considering the impact of stress and anxiety on first responders but how first responders cope with this anxiety, whether some coping strategies are more beneficial than others (Arble

& Arnetz, 2016), and also if having these strategies create a sense of preparedness when working in these roles.

### ***Conclusion***

First responders are vital to society's safety and support for instance in response to global pandemics, natural disasters, and other challenging situations. A narrative synthesis of ten studies was conducted to review the literature regarding the impact of anxiety and stress on decision-making in first responders. A synthesis of the findings created three themes; anxiety impacts performance and decisions, individual difference: role-specific and pre-existing anxiety and experience, and role longevity and confidence in the role. This review adds to the existing literature on first responders, finding that levels of stress and anxiety were experienced as affecting performance, were dependent on individual differences, and levels of experience and confidence within the role. Helping individuals in those roles identify anxiety and stress as factors that impact performance may reduce cognitive errors. This review may aid future research by offering implications for reducing the impact of anxiety and stress, and highlighting gaps in knowledge, such as how role preparedness and resilience may contribute to differing effects of anxiety and stress on decision-making.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Journal submission guidelines**

Available via website link <https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/personality-and-individual-differences/publish/guide-for-authors>

## Appendix 2-

### MMAT appraisal of papers

	Methodological quality criteria	Holmes et al., 2021	Gamble et al., 2018	Mather et al., 2010	Renden et al., 2017	Nieuwenhuys et al, 2012	Rice and Schroeder, 2019	Belanger & Blanchette, 2022	Ankinola & Mendes, 2011	Nieuwenhuys et al, 2015	Faro et al., 2022
Screening questions	S1. Are there clear research questions?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	S2. Do the collected data allow us to address the research questions?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Qualitative	1.1. Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	1.2. Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to address the research question?	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	1.3. Are the findings adequately derived from the data?	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Quantitative (RCT)	1.4. Is the interpretation of results sufficiently substantiated by data?	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	1.5. Is there coherence between qualitative data sources, collection, analysis and interpretation?	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2.1. Is randomisation appropriately performed?	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2.2. Are the groups comparable at baseline?	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2.3. Are there complete outcome data?	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2.4. Are outcome assessors blinded to the intervention provided?	N/A	N/A	N/A	Cannot tell	N/A	N/A	Cannot tell	N/A	N/A	N/A
	2.5. Did the participants adhere to the assigned intervention?	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A

Quantitative Non randomised	3.1. Are the participants representative of the target population?	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
	3.2. Are measurements appropriate regarding the outcome and intervention (or exposure)?	Yes	Yes No- was explained in the study.	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes No- was explained in the study.	Yes	Yes
	3.3. Are there complete outcome data?	Yes		N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A		Yes	Yes
	3.4. Are the confounders accounted for in the design and analysis?	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
	3.5. During the study period, is the intervention administered (or exposure occurred) as intended?	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Quantitative- descriptive	4.1. Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	4.2. Is the sample representative	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

	of the target population?										
	4.3. Are the measurements appropriate?	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A						
	4.4. Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	N/A	N/A	Yes	N/A						
	4.5. Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	N/A	N/A	No	N/A						
	5.1. Is there an adequate rationale for using a mixed methods design to address the research question?	Yes	N/A								
Mixed methods	5.2. Are the different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	Yes	N/A								

	5.3. Are the outputs of the integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpreted?	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	5.4. Are divergences and inconsistencies between quantitative and qualitative results adequately addressed?	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	5.5. Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods?	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Score	High, Medium, Low	High	High	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	Low	Low	High	Medium

## Paper 2: Empirical paper

“We adapt and overcome, and that’s what we were told to do”: A qualitative study on UK veteran’s experiences of preparedness and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jessica Boyle

This empirical paper was prepared for submission to the journal *Personality and individual difference* (see author guidelines Appendix 1).

Word count: 7,985.

## **Abstract**

The COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented change to daily life in the UK at levels not seen since World War II (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020). Research during the COVID-19 pandemic suggested that increased levels of distress have had a lasting impact on people's daily lives (Daly & Robinson, 2022). Research on military veterans suggests that they are prepared for the immediate and subsequent response to disasters due to their level of training and experience (Kranke et al., 2017). This current research aimed to consider the experience of UK veterans during the pandemic with particular consideration to experiences of preparedness due to their military experience. The research used semi-structured interviews with six participants and analysed the data using reflexive thematic analysis. Three key themes and subthemes were developed from the analysis: military mentality prepared me for this; harder on others than us; and protecting and serving the family. The results found that participants experienced overall levels of preparedness, which helped them to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic using problem-solving, adaptability, and pragmatism, attributes developed from their experience in service that helped veterans manage these enforced changes in their daily lives.

## **Introduction**

### ***Context of COVID-19***

Implementing both the 2020 and 2021 lockdowns across the United Kingdom (UK) has been shown to have caused an increase in distress in the population (Solomon-Moore et al., 2022). Daly and Robinson's (2022) longitudinal study found that distress levels increased from 21% to 27.1 % in January 2021, which is a 5.8% increase compared to the pre-pandemic levels of 2019. The distress related to the COVID-19 pandemic ranged from having so many changing restrictions on how many items could be bought in a supermarket to who we could see in our private lives, for instance, restricted access to people in hospitals or care homes and loved ones dying from COVID (Shiba et al., 2022). Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has become less prevalent, there still remains an increase in people experiencing low mood symptoms, suggesting it has had a lasting impact on mental health in the UK (Daly et al., 2022).

During the pandemic, there were some positive developments, particularly in technology. For example, Renu (2022) noted that COVID-19 led to an increase in remote and online work, which expanded the capabilities of technology. Additionally, there were advances in entertainment, with more people utilizing streaming services and online gaming.

### ***Definition of veterans of the UK Armed Forces***

This paper focuses on veterans' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic between March to June 2020 and January to July 2021. By definition, a veteran is someone who has served a day or more in the British Armed Forces (Truusa & Andrew Castro, 2019). There has been a growing recognition of the impact of military service on veterans, with an increased focus on the effects of PTSD, anxiety, and depression on veteran mental health, especially in the United States (US) and more recently in the UK (Macmanus & Wessely,

2013).

### ***Preparedness and veterans***

Portnoy et al. (2018) found that although veterans serving on the frontline are more likely to be exposed to trauma, they also develop psychological resilience from their exposure to traumatic events. Der-Martirosian et al. (2019) stated that military training provides veterans with transferable skills, such as being adaptable and solution-focused, which can be used in an emergency. As a result, it can create valuable preparedness for veterans during emergencies. Der-Martirosian et al. (2016) found that US veteran households were more likely to be prepared for emergencies such as earthquakes than non-veteran US households. Kranke et al. (2017) found that U.S. combat veterans who volunteered for Team Rubicon, a disaster response organization, did not experience adverse mental health effects in their roles. Their prior military experience provided them with a level of preparedness that proved helpful in their work within the organization. Team Rubicon's responsibilities included creating plans for communities at risk of disasters and assisting in rebuilding after disasters.

Furthermore, Annis et al (2016) researched whether any differences in US veterans made them more prepared than civilians for earthquake emergencies. The authors defined *preparedness* as an evacuation plan, enough food for days, and extra water. The authors found that veterans were better prepared because they had more supplies and created evacuation plans (Annis et al., 2016). Windle (2011) describes resilience as a way of adapting to or managing significant sources of stress in the context of trauma. Post-traumatic growth (PTG) can be defined as a positive psychological change that can occur due to a struggle with a challenging life event (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). Therefore, it is believed that being exposed to traumatic events can create resilience in veterans (Portnoy et al., 2018) due to the post-traumatic growth they can gain from traumatic events (Habib et al., 2018). As a result, veterans are more likely to be prepared for emergencies such as a pandemic like COVID-19

(Heslin et al., 2013).

### ***Rationale for the study***

Based on recent research, it is evident that US veterans have been the focus of several studies related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These studies have examined various aspects such as their access to treatment during this period (Sciarrino et al., 2020), the impact of COVID-19 on the physical and mental health of veterans in the US (Purcell et al., 2021), and the preparedness and resilience of US veterans in response to the pandemic (Pietrzak, 2021). However, there needs to be more research into UK veterans' experiences with COVID-19 because there may be differences between US and UK veterans' experiences, training and deployment, which means they may have different perspectives and responses during times of national or global disaster when people are at their most vulnerable. With this in mind, the researcher aims to collect veterans' experiences of how they managed during a pandemic that closed many services and implemented restrictions.

### ***Aims and research question***

The research question was: What are UK veteran's experiences of preparedness and the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the aims of the current research were twofold:

1. Conduct an in-depth analysis using reflexive thematic analysis to investigate how the experiences gained from serving in the UK Armed Forces have shaped the preparedness of UK veterans and how this has impacted their encounters with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, assess the far-reaching implications of these factors for UK veterans.

## **Method**

### ***Research design***

This study used a qualitative design and face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The interview transcripts were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clark, 2020). RTA is analysing oral or written data using semantic or latent levels of coding. RTA involves working with and making sense of data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). During this analysis, the researcher aims to address a specific research question set before the analysis (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). RTA offers flexibility in analysing accounts from relatively straightforward to more complex experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The process involves developing and analysing patterns in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022), making it particularly suitable for exploring UK veterans' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### ***Participants***

A total of six participants were recruited for this research. Previously, Braun and Clarke proposed that the minimum number for thematic analysis studies was 12 (Picariello et al., 2017). There is an ongoing debate on the effectiveness of using data saturation to determine sample size, and Braun and Clarke suggest employing information power instead (Braun & Clarke, 2021). For instance, Malterud et al. (2016) suggest that information power depends on the research aim, target population, use of established theory and quality of dialogue. Research into this area of veteran populations has been predominately quantitative, as shown by Annis et al. (2016) and Wall & Lowe (2020). As such, quantitative methods are suitable for random or representative population sampling. This current research is concerned with the quality of experiences. Therefore, the researcher aimed to gather rich and in-depth lived experiences of veterans in the North West of England. The expected minimum range for interviews was between 5 and 9 in order to establish themes. This range is comparable to the

number of participants in studies involving veterans, focusing on similar concepts of preparedness and post-traumatic growth as those done by Habib et al. (2018), Walker & Kampman (2021), and Kranke et al. (2017).

Participants were invited to participate in the research using adverts posted on social media such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook, as veterans tend to set up groups and engage with each other on these media platforms, mainly since the pandemic has caused many services to move from a physical to a virtual space. For example, the researcher contacted a veterans' breakfast club in the North West of England, which uses Facebook to advertise events and recruit new members. Social media was used initially to connect with services, and the researcher attended local clubs in person. The researcher also broadcast advertisements through local charity services such as Combat Stress and word of mouth.

### ***Inclusion and exclusion criteria***

Participants were UK veterans who experienced both COVID-19 lockdowns during 2020 and 2021 in the United Kingdom; any level of experience in the Armed Forces applied to the Ministry of Defence definition that a "veteran is anyone who has served for at least one day in Her Majesty's Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve), or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations" (Gribble et al., 2019). Veterans had to be able to participate in the research, be 18 or over, and not currently serving. In order to gather as much information about their experience of managing during both lockdowns as possible, no other exclusion criteria were set.

### ***Participant demographics***

Participants included one female and five males. The mean age was 46, ranging from 28 to 57, and all identified as "White British." There were various experiences, from working within a combat role to non-combative roles, and the average length of service was 14 years,

ranging from 6 to 22 years. Further information relating to demographics is listed below (see Table 1). Pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of participants.

**Table 1.**

*Participant demographics and military characteristics.*

<b>Participant pseudonym</b>	<b>Nora</b>	<b>Ben</b>	<b>Jason</b>	<b>Nick</b>	<b>Steve</b>	<b>Will</b>
<b>Age</b>	49	55	35	28	54	57
<b>Enlistment status</b>	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular
<b>Role during service</b>	Combat	Combat	Combat	Combat	Combat	Combat
	support	support		support	support	support
<b>Length of time in service</b>	16 years	14 years	6.5 years	4.5 years	22 years	23 years

### ***Ethical considerations***

The study was designed and created in line with the British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines (British Psychological Society, 2021). A participant information sheet (see Appendix 4) was distributed to all participants via email and reiterated during and after the interview was completed. Informed consent was gained from all participants (Appendix 3). As mentioned, pseudonyms were used to protect participant's anonymity. The research was approved by the Staffordshire University Research Ethics Committee (See Appendix 2). All data was stored electronically using a password-protected drive on a laptop. Recordings, transcripts, and consent forms were anonymised and password-protected. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw, which could be done by emailing the researcher up to four weeks after the interview and having their data, such as recordings, destroyed (BPS et al., 2021). The scheduling of interviews was planned to reduce participants' distress, and this plan was reviewed by the research supervisor and ethics board.

## ***Materials***

The research advertisement (Appendix 5) was completed using Microsoft Publisher and was created in consultation with a veteran from a local veteran's club. Advertisements were distributed online, primarily because online platforms would reach more potential participants and provide a greener solution than printing out physical paper advertisements. In line with reflexive thematic analysis, a semi-structured interview was conducted, which provided flexibility to enable the interview to be participant-led while also containing some initial open questions built upon during each interview.

## ***Recruitment and procedure***

Participants were recruited via social media and word of mouth, and their suitability as participants was checked against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Potential participants contacted the researcher via the email in the advertisement to schedule an interview. Participants were allowed to complete the interview online or in person via Microsoft Teams. If the interview was conducted via Microsoft Teams then the inbuilt recording function was used. Participants were also allowed to appear with their cameras turned off if that was their preference. All six participants chose to have the interview completed via Microsoft Teams, and consent to record the interview was obtained in writing and verbally before the interview began. Participants were signposted to any relevant services if they experienced discomfort during the interview and wanted support following the interview. Demographics and military characteristics were completed at the beginning and during the interview. Interview recordings were then anonymised, transcribed, and analysed.

## ***Analysis***

Data analysis was completed in line with the six principles of reflexive thematic analysis created by Braun and Clarke (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The researcher followed an

iterative process of going through transcripts when coding and noticed preliminary themes developing, refining this theme development process as the researcher continued to read and re-read the transcripts. The first phase of analysis was data immersion, which consisted of listening to the interview recording and re-reading the participant transcripts, repeating this process as a method of familiarisation with the data. The researcher made notes and observations throughout the process for each transcript.

In Braun & Clarke's (2022) study, the second stage of analysis involved initial coding. The researcher used electronic copies to write and highlight the transcripts, reading through them line by line. They began inductive coding, using different colours to highlight descriptive or conceptual codes. Stage three was the development of initial themes, which involved the researcher collating all the codes derived from the data, rearranging them into initial themes, and developing a thematic map of the data. Stage four involved theme development and review (Braun & Clarke, 2022), in which the researcher considered the viability of the current initial themes and explored whether there were any alternative themes to consider, leading the researcher to reflect on the current initial themes and return to phase two and three to consider what was meaningful to the analysis. Phase five involved refining and naming themes, demarcating themes from other themes within the data, and establishing a strong core concept that facilitated the development of themes and subthemes. The researcher reflected on the creation of the themes and, at times, delved back into phase four and liaised with their research supervisor to consider the development of themes by reducing data whilst still trying to maintain the voice of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Phase six was the writing of the report.

### ***Reliability and validity***

Reliability and validity were assessed using investigator triangulation, which involved multiple people looking at the data (Carter et al., 2014) and a reflective log kept by the

researcher. The researcher attended research supervisions to ensure the validity and robustness of the findings. The researcher also attended thematic analysis workshops to check the analysis with peers. Utilising multiple perspectives and reflexive logs is helpful to prevent observer bias within the research and maintain reliability and validity.

### ***Personal and epistemological reflexivity***

Personal and epistemological reflexivity assumes that the researcher cannot remain outside the research and acknowledges how the researcher can influence the interpretation of participant experiences based on their lived experiences, and involves a critical reflection on their role as researcher (Shaw, 2010). The researcher must use reflexivity to consider their stance within the research and establish rigour (Lazard & McAvoy, 2017). Being reflective considers the cultural, political, and social reflections of the researcher's perspective and the perspectives and voices of participants (Teo, 2019).

I did not come from a military background and did not have any family members who had served in the military. Not being a veteran meant that I had a civilian perspective influenced by media portrayals of veterans and military life. My research adopted a social constructionist approach, which views reality as something shaped by human cognition rather than being determined by an observable external reality. This approach focuses on how meaning is created in the psychosocial world (Braun & Clarke, 2022) and examines how veterans construct their identities as 'veterans' and others as 'civilians'. It has been observed that veterans have developed a unique identity that defines what it means to be a 'veteran'. This identity is important to them and sets them apart from those who have not served. Their shared experiences, social connections, and trust in each other all contribute to this identity, highlighting the significance of the military in their lives (Flack & Kite, 2021).

Therefore, I was aware that I have not directly had a shared sense of experience as a

veteran or coming from that background, and my experiences may have differed or been similar to the participants during COVID-19. However, there was a shared sense of the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic as a global phenomenon. It is also worth noting my position as a Trainee Clinical Psychologist and how having this position impacted the nature of the interview process, such as whether the participants would share all of their experiences with me as a civilian. If the participant's experience was challenging, they may have been concerned about how I would have viewed this. Paradoxically, the participants may have prepared for the interview by only talking about mental health, assuming that may have been what I (as a researcher) wanted to hear due to my role. I also reflected on my position of not coming from a military background and how this may have impacted the interview process. Participants may have felt I did not share their experiences, so they may not have shared aspects of who they are if they considered me an "outsider". Throughout the interviews and the analytical process, I kept a reflective log to consider how my epistemological position impacted how I made sense of and interpreted the interview data.

## **Results**

Data analysis presents some insight into veterans' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Not all data could be synthesised and produced for this paper. However, three key themes were derived from the data, as seen in Table 2. Themes and sub-themes are explored in further detail below.

### **Table 2.**

*Developed themes and sub-themes from the analysis.*

<b>Main theme</b>	<b>Subordinate theme</b>
<b>1. Military mentality was the preparation</b>	1.1 Following the rules prepared me for this.

	1.2 Action first, think later.
	1.3 The military taught us to deal with difficult times.
<b>Harder for others than us</b>	2.1 Them vs Us.
	2.2 Need to serve.
<b>Protecting and serving the family</b>	3.1 Looking after your own
	3.2 Camaraderie fosters a sense of military family.
	3.3: Fostering camaraderie in the home.

***Theme 1: Military mentality was the preparation***

Throughout all the interviews, there was a common theme of a military mindset that helped participants prepare for and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. This mindset, influenced by their time in the military, shaped how these individuals identified as veterans and guided their behaviours and actions during the pandemic. For instance, Nora commented, "I can't move away from it; I still see myself as military as part of the RAF; it is scary". Jason felt "You become that institutionalised" to the military and to explain to "someone that [if] you haven't lived it, there's very much us and them mentality". It is suggested that the teachings and experiences of the military are part of who they are and how they respond to situations.

***Subtheme 1.1: Following the rules prepared me for this.***

What came across all participant responses was the ease with which participants felt comfortable following rules and changes due to COVID-19, such as isolating from family

and friends and only purchasing a certain number of items from the stores. When reflecting on their time in service, Steven commented that "in military life, there are so many rules of what you can and cannot do" Jason said, "You learn to follow pretty much from day one". When it came to the COVID-19 pandemic, participants were accustomed to following rules in their military lives, which meant following the government-imposed rules of the COVID-19 pandemic became second nature. Ben commented, "I just sort of accepted what was going on and went with it".

Similarly, Will stated that he "had no beliefs in what I thought, I just followed what the government said", and Nick said, "I have followed the rules almost my entire life now. And people tell me what to, and I just do it because I don't really think about the why". However, Nick did share some frustration about the lockdown rules - not his ability to follow them but the difference in rules across counties that meant "my family were under different rules to me" and "I work in [Manchester] but live in [Lancashire], so how does that work for me?" Therefore, although Nick found following lockdown rules easy, there was some frustration due to restrictions on travel, and travelling from one county where he lived to another for work meant he had to remember which rule applied to which county.

Although rules during the COVID-19 lockdown affected everyone in the population, because of their experiences within the military, following rules was not a difficult adjustment for participants, compared perhaps to civilian populations who may have viewed enforced pandemic rules as a loss of freedom. Therefore, a unique nature of the military mentality is an acceptance that someone makes the rule, which is followed without question. For instance, Steve did not consider following rules as a loss of freedom because "...there has to be a management or governance to stop people getting injured" (Steve), creating a sense that the rationale for the rules and restrictions was to protect the public. Therefore, managing the need to follow many rules during the lockdowns was more manageable for participants to

accept.

The introduction of COVID-19 vaccines in the UK during the pandemic resulted in diverse reactions. Some individuals exhibited hesitancy and resistance towards the vaccines, basing their concerns on personal beliefs and the potential impact of vaccination on various aspects such as healthcare services and employment (Finney Rutten et al., 2021; Troiano & Nardi, 2021). However, veterans due to their military mentality seemed to have different responses to the vaccines compared to some civilians. Ben reflected on his experience receiving injections during the Gulf War and how "we got a lot of injections of nasty stuff and told you have got to have it", so having the injections "didn't bother me at all".

*Subtheme 1.2: Action first, think later.*

Having a military mentality did not just teach participants how to follow the rules but how to adapt to constantly changing situations. Jason commented that the military teaches people to prioritise action and solutions: "...mission critical [to focus on] the most important things so that you can compartmentalise". Nora reflected that "instinct just kicks in... to sort of say, right ok, how are we going to solve this". Nora's comment suggests that the military provided participants with skills to adapt and problem-solve, which appeared to be a critical approach the participants used during the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, Nick reflected that when he was isolated due to his partner contracting COVID-19, he was able to compartmentalise and think, "the time you've got and you're trapped in the house for two weeks, so let's do all the jobs that you've been putting off for three years", and Ben viewed it as "[accepting] another challenge". Ben shared a significant reflection on his experience and how military training prioritises action: "We adapt and overcome as that's what we're taught to do". The mindset from service gave the participants a slightly advantageous position over civilians in adaptability to the changing times of the pandemic.

*Subtheme 1.3: The military taught us to deal with difficult times.*

Although life in the military was challenging, participants did recall how the military taught them to survive difficult times. For instance, Jason commented, "You learn what you can and can't push" and "what your body can do on no food and no sleep and limited water", and Ben reflected on basic training of "10 weeks of proper beasting in there" where there would be "shouting in your face. But you know the shouting that loudly spits in your face, is all that it was", highlighting that the experiences of the military exposed them to challenging experiences and taught them how to stretch their limits and consider what they could achieve during tough times. Nick reflected that during their military service:

“The best times are the hard times when you're cold, you're wet, you're hungry, but then you look over, and all your friends are in the same boat as you, and you just kind of chuckle to yourself (Nick).

Steve thought COVID-19 was "absolutely brilliant". Both he and Ben shared the sentiment that COVID-19 was a time "to pause and reflect and relax" (Steve), focusing more on the positive things they gained from the pandemic, such as having time to spend with family and having more time to do things they were unable to do before. When considering the restrictions, Steve stated that if they had run out of toilet roll, then he would “just go outside to the back garden and get some soil with some grass on it. You know, go back to the good old days", suggesting that exposure to difficult times during the military enabled participants to pull out the positives in their experiences too.

***Theme 2: Harder for others than us***

Another theme derived across all participants was the idea that others in society found the COVID-19 pandemic harder than them, which derived two further subthemes below, such as the idea that there are those (Veterans) and then us (Civilians) and the need to serve. Across

the data, all participants commented that regardless of their situation during the COVID-19 pandemic, they could all reflect and think that someone else in society would have found it more challenging. For instance, Ben discussed that he had been diagnosed with cancer prior to and during both periods of the COVID-19 lockdowns, which placed him at a higher risk of COVID-19 having a more detrimental impact on his health. However, he reflected that "while you are worried about wearing masks, what's that family dealing with today" when discussing a friend who had experienced a bereavement. When reflecting on his experience of the pandemic, Ben stated, "There are a lot more people worse off than us, you know? Why am I whinging when there's all these elderly people living on their own". Likewise, Steve reflected feeling guilty about his good experience of lockdown because "I know some people really, really struggled, you know some people lost their relatives and loved ones", and Nora, who ran her own business and suffered some financial implications during the start of lockdown reflected that "it didn't hit me as hard as perhaps as others", suggesting that participants considered themselves as being more resilient and resourceful than others. They considered the plight of others as a way to gain perspective over their situation and reflect on their own experiences, which helped them to manage. For instance, Steve suggested that "the experiences of the past [constant changes in the military], the people I was with, it actually made out to be not stressful". Therefore, it could be suggested that Steve was more prepared for change because of being exposed to constantly changing environments in the military and that participants instinctively consider others different from themselves due to their experiences. Due to those experiences in the military, participants considered others worse off than themselves and needed more support, creating a sense of needing to serve others.

*Subtheme 2.1: Them vs us.*

Although all the participants in this paper had been out of the military for many years,

a subtheme was that there was still a perception that there was a difference between us (veterans) and them (civilians). Two participants suggested some struggle adapting to civilian life when they left the military, such as Jason, who stated that "you're very much an overpaid child" during his time in the military. However, when people leave the military, people "start again from ground zero. So when I got out, I couldn't find work". Steve shared that he found it challenging to maintain civilian employment due to people not understanding "military phraseology" and being from a different background: "I just couldn't get on with the people I was working with. There's a completely different mindset" (Steve). Suggesting that a military career is a unique experience that sets them apart from civilians. Although, Nora did not "struggle to become a civilian" she felt that she had "a connection to being in the military", suggesting that although participants adapted to their civilian life, they are still separate from civilians due to their experiences and remain connected to their military past. Both Steve and Will reflected on the perception of the veteran in society. Will expressed that "we get stereotyped by a lot of civilians, I think we're a threat to other people's jobs, they [veterans] put that little extra bit in". Likewise, Steve commented that "a military person in a non-military environment, it would be quite easy to shine".

Due to their experiences, participants learned to work hard and adapt, making their ability to handle situations like COVID-19 easier than it may have been for civilians. Nick reflected that civilians "have always lived their lives and not had many rules set upon them, so when COVID-19 came in, and people were told you can't leave the house now... I think that's what made people more nervous" suggesting that even though the transition may have been difficult initially due to their differences with civilians, those differences have helped them in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, there is an expectation that soldiers have to do things civilians would not, such as kill an enemy if necessary. Therefore, this expectation of military personnel to follow and accept the rules is a natural way of life in

military service.

*Subtheme 2.2: Need to serve.*

The need to serve as a subtheme was generated across all participant's transcripts. When exploring their time in service, participants spoke of wanting to serve and help others and the value they derived from it. Ben discussed his work in the community: "being sent somewhere and building something which is gonna get used for something". Nora reflected on wanting to go to the Gulf War: "At least I am going somewhere I'll be of value, I'll be of service", whilst Nick reflected that "you'll always want to try and help people", suggesting that being in the military creates a sense of needing to serve and to help others. It becomes commonplace to want to help others. A sentiment shared by Will, who found difficulty when he left the military: "You just don't realise how selfish people are", acknowledging that some "will help you, but most people don't want to, and that's the hard thing sometimes". The military is ultimately about serving and protecting others and expects those who serve to give up their life if necessary. Participants felt that the military taught them that serving others and group unity are essential to the values and ethos of military service; this may differ from a civilian mentality, which can focus more on individual interests and betterment.

The extreme and urgent nature of the COVID-19 pandemic emergency created a sense of need for some participants to serve others. For instance, Nick expressed frustration at being unable to "help the people I wanted to help", and Nora reflected that she "sort of wanted to just get in there and sort it out". So during the COVID-19 pandemic, she used her business "to reach more people to say, look, you know, why not get healthy and help protect your immune system against getting COVID", suggesting that the pandemic created a sense of needing to serve others. Furthermore, Nora stated that: "my [military] background always plays a part in everything I do, I guess". For some participants, the stressful and life-changing impact of the pandemic instinctively prompted a need to help others during this time, which

may have been impacted by the training and experiences they had during their military careers.

### **Theme 3: Protecting and serving the family**

All participants discussed the importance of looking after their families during the COVID-19 pandemic and what they did to foster togetherness in their families and respond to the reality of conditions under COVID-19.

#### *Subtheme 3.1: Looking after your own*

A key theme from the data was the concept of looking after your own family. This notion would not be hugely dissimilar to most people during the pandemic who worried about their families. However, when considering the military experience, looking after your own can be considered within the context of their experiences from the military. For instance, when reflecting on their time in service, Jason said: "At 18/19 or 20, you can essentially be in charge of people's lives", which can create a sense of responsibility for those under your command and a need to look after them. Likewise, Nora reflected on her leadership position: "When I was in the RAF as an officer, and I was telling my guys not to do something I wouldn't have dreamed of doing it myself", suggesting that veterans' military experiences taught service, protection and responsibility from a young age. Nora and Jason's experience during the lockdown also reflected this sense of responsibility. For instance, Nora shared her experience of her mother becoming ill during the pandemic: "I've gotta be strong. I've got to make sure I'm there for her when I can be", which suggests that the military emphasises the importance of looking after those in your unit, therefore, when the COVID-19 pandemic began, participants felt a sense of responsibility to take action and ensure the safety "of [their] little circle" (Ben).

### *Subtheme 3.2: Camaraderie fosters a sense of military family*

Across the data, all participants reflected on the impact of camaraderie during their time in service. Being exposed to military experiences created friendships that participants found difficult to replicate in a civilian environment and fostered that sense of unity similar to concepts of family, which participants still reflect on as essential for them today. Jason reflected on feeling a sense of family with those he served, stating that: "you do have that kindred affinity, I suppose", and Steve reflected on the depth of friendships created in the military that provided emotional support during bereavement:

"...because of what they go through, how close they have worked together, and the friendships they form with people...unless someone on civvy street does something similar, then it can't be understood. You know the grief we feel when we lose someone is very deep" (Steve).

Therefore, it can be considered that, as reflected by Steve, when veterans experience a loss within this "military family", the grief is profound due to the nature of war and the potential loss of life. The concept of a "military family" creates a family within the military. As Ben stated, "The army became a family. I left my real family, became a family within the army". Supporting, protecting, and sacrificing for your unit and failure to do so impacts veterans profoundly. For instance, Ben reflected on leaving service:

I left them to it, and I felt guilty after all that Afghanistan, and it made me feel good when we had the reunion - a bit mixed up. I felt so guilty that I had left them at first when I was 30, and they went through all that shit, but without me, I was a bit guilty, felt guilty".

For Ben, leaving the service proved a conflicting experience, as he felt ready to leave but guilty at having not served with his unit when he felt they may have needed him most

during Afghanistan. Consequently, when one of his friends he served with suffered a bereavement during the pandemic, his first thought was, "We have to go and support him. We all did it; we all got there" (Ben). For Ben, the need to support his friend was a priority. He was prepared to go against lockdown protocol if needed to support him, suggesting camaraderie creates a support system based on sacrificing, protecting and caring for one another in a similar way to family support systems, which helps those in the military during difficult times. Similarly, Steve also commented that during times of difficulty, "You would be like: 'Come, let's go to the pub' [and] they would just take them out and do something. Now people will sit down, let's talk about it, they would go and see the MO".

### *Subtheme 3.3: Fostering camaraderie in the home*

As discussed, the sense of camaraderie appears to be an essential factor in the lives of participants during their time in service, allowing them to create meaningful and trusting relationships that helped them navigate the difficulties and experiences they had during their time in service. As Jason reflected, there is a "sense of togetherness you feel with everyone else", and Nick stated, "that kind of being together all the time. That's why it was kind of like uni in a way. And the fact that you just surrounded by your mates the whole time" helped them navigate the difficulties of service life.

Therefore, a subtheme across some participants was fostering a sense of camaraderie during the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, Steve reflected that the pandemic gave him more time to be with the family and helped create a sense of camaraderie in the home, for instance, comparing his time with the Royal Marines where: "we made our own breck [breakfast], we did all this kind of stuff" to doing things such as "[when the] Chinese takeaway [was] shut - I'll tell you what, let's get a recipe and make a fakeaway" (Steve). Drawing on that camaraderie and bringing it into the home was essential. It enabled him and his family to navigate a difficult period and harness that sense of togetherness to get them

through. Steve compared this time during the pandemic to "deployment but with the internet". What appeared crucial for participants was to have a robust support system during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this may have been due to prior experiences during the military, which taught them the importance of having a sense of camaraderie to get them through tough times and this is what they fostered in their own families during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Discussion**

This paper highlights the importance of experiences in shaping our responses to situations. The findings suggest that participants' time in service taught them skills and ways to respond quickly. Therefore, participants' time in service instilled a lasting sense of preparedness, separating them from typical civilians. Preparedness can be considered in terms of how someone responds to an emergency and the ability of people or services to continue operating when exposed to an emergency (Hémond & Robert, 2012). Skills typically needed to develop military preparedness involve planning, mitigation, detection and recovery, as the priority in this context is keeping soldiers alive. Therefore, when participants were exposed to the COVID-19 pandemic, those skills and thought processes were utilised, and how they approached the pandemic was to use pragmatism, logic, and adaptability to cope with the changes as well as fostering camaraderie and the values such as serving others to manage difficult periods. Participants were also aware of their differences from civilians, and even though all had transitioned into civilian roles, they still saw themselves as military and problem-solved with a military mentality, which set them apart from civilians and led to their perceptions of the pandemic being different in some cases (Truusa & Castro, 2019).

This study's findings are in line with previous research, such as the work by Kranke et al. (2017), which was a qualitative study on the response of US veterans who volunteered during disasters. The study showed that these volunteers did not experience adverse effects

from working in disasters due to their prior military training and preparedness, which was relevant to disaster situations. The current study's findings, such as the theme of military mentality preparing veterans, are consistent with Der-Martirosian et al. (2019), which found that US veterans displayed leadership skills and a 'can-do' attitude towards problems, making them vital in disaster response situations.

However, the findings from this paper differed from the findings of Purcell et al. (2021), who suggested that US veterans in a current Veterans Administration (VA) residential programme seeking support for their physical and mental health struggled with loneliness, social isolation, and access to treatment during the pandemic. Findings from this current study differed from those of Purcell et al. (2021) as it found an overall positive experience of COVID-19 due to having more flexibility with working, which enabled them to spend more time with their families. Veterans may have struggled more in the case of Purcell et al. (2021) as they were in a residential programme (away from their families) and were seeking treatment for mental health issues. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a reduction in staff and face-to-face support. In this study, the participants were not from a clinical sample. They were living in their own homes with family members. This environment possibly enabled them to cope better during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to the participants in the Purcell et al. (2021) study.

Themes such as protecting and serving the family showed how participants could draw on the positives of creating a "military family" and camaraderie in their homes during the pandemic, as it provided the skills and confidence to make it through difficult times. The theme supports similar findings such as Woodward & Neil Jenkins (2011), who explored the military identities of British military personnel and found that in some cases, veterans in their study considered the kinship and camaraderie they fostered during the military as their family and viewed them as such, coining the phrase "kinship family".

Furthermore, when participants talked about having vaccines in the military, they felt prepared due to those experiences and had less fear around taking the coronavirus vaccine. Studies such as Mourtakos et al. (2021) compared Hellenistic Navy Seals (HNS) against health controls (HC) in an emotional Stroop task. They monitored both groups' heart rates and found that HNS exhibited lower heart rate levels in the task than HC, suggesting that they may appraise threats differently due to the stressful experiences HNS are exposed to within their role. Consequently, preparedness may result in less negative threat appraisals of situations, which is a notion that considers how one might evaluate a situation and can be different from person to person, depending on experiences and individual differences. Therefore, this supports this research that participants' experiences led to more preparedness and lower threat appraisals to experience situations like the COVID-19 pandemic in a more solution-focused way, enabling them to draw on their adaptability and problem-solving skills.

### ***Strengths and limitations***

This paper provides vital insight into the experiences of UK veterans during COVID-19, adding to the growing research around the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Pietrzak et al., 2021) and provides a qualitative account of research primarily dominated by quantitative studies of veterans in the US (Annis et al., 2016). In addition, the study focused on UK veterans and how prepared they were during COVID-19. This provided a unique opportunity to explore military preparedness in the UK in a way that wasn't possible before the pandemic, as the UK is less exposed to natural disasters (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020). As a result, this study captured the experiences of UK veterans during a national crisis, which hadn't been possible previously. The current study provided a platform for UK veterans to share their experience of the pandemic during a time when there was little platform for this.

However, there are some limitations to the study, such as it may not capture every experience from veteran populations. The sample included one female participant, and

although there are statistically fewer women in the military services (Mankowski et al., 2015), it would have been advantageous for the sample to be more equally distributed across genders, as previous research such as Mota et al. (2011) has shown gender differences, with women in the military being more likely to experience PTSD, low mood, and anxiety. Therefore, having a more equal sample across genders may highlighted more concerns regarding mental health during the pandemic. However, even though this research captured various ages, service experience, and length of service in the UK Armed Forces, all were White British, and one participant raised the potential differences in experience for those within the Commonwealth Service and those who transitioned out of the military during the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, members of the UK military from the commonwealth might have housing for themselves and their families while serving, but they lose it once they leave. If they left during the pandemic, they would lose their housing and might not be able to travel because of restrictions, which could have affected their experience differently compared to others.

### ***Clinical implications***

The research emphasizes that while some veterans may face challenges when transitioning out of the military, including mental health issues (Teeters et al., 2017), others may leave without any such issues (Iversen & Greenberg, 2009). In addition, veterans develop practical skills as a result of their experiences. Hence, we may underestimate the skills of the veteran population and assume that their military experiences are predominantly negative. Consequently, the research suggests that veterans who have undergone such preparation may represent an underutilized resource for disaster response management in the UK, should we face an emergency similar to the COVID-19 pandemic in the future.

The findings in this paper challenge the assumption that military experiences are always negative. They allow us to explore how we can use the skills gained from military

service to our advantage. For instance, veterans often prioritise the well-being of their family and friends and feel a need to protect those close to them. It is essential to recognise the value of therapeutic models that consider these relationships, such as systemic interventions that use family dynamics to address issues. Furthermore, military veterans might find therapeutic approaches such as cognitive behavioural therapy more suitable. For example, veterans develop positive skills such as adaptability and problem-solving during military service. By incorporating practical techniques and structured sessions with specific agendas, veterans will find these specific approaches as being able to provide a more immediate outcome of the intervention, which may increase therapeutic alliance and engagement.

### ***Future research***

This research found that veterans may develop a military mentality, which provides them with a level of preparedness that can help in scenarios such as the COVID-19 pandemic. However, future research may focus on the experiences of preparedness, and military mentality of veterans who were transitioning out of the military during the COVID-19 pandemic. As participants in this study had all left prior to the pandemic beginning, so had established housing and jobs, which potentially enabled them to feel more prepared than those veterans who did not have this. Particularly, future research may focus on leavers from the commonwealth and consider how the travel and housing restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted their experiences and preparedness.

### ***Conclusion***

This paper aimed to explore participants' experiences of preparedness and the impact of this on veterans' experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings suggest that developing a military mentality prepared participants for the changes brought on by the pandemic, such as the lockdown restrictions. This also showed a difference between how

veterans responded to a global health crisis and how civilians experienced it during COVID-19. It was also essential for participants to foster a sense of camaraderie within their homes to manage through difficult times and prioritise looking after their own.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Journal submission guidelines**

Guidelines can be accessed via website <https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/personality-and-individual-differences/publish/guide-for-authors>

## Appendix 2-

### Ethics letter of approval



### School of Health, Science and Wellbeing

#### ETHICAL APPROVAL FEEDBACK

<b>Researcher name:</b>	Jessica Boyle
<b>Title of Study:</b>	SU_22_062 'Impact of preparedness on veterans' experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic.'
<b>Award Pathway:</b>	PGR
<b>Status of approval:</b>	Approved

Your project ***proposal has been approved*** by the Ethics Panel and you may commence the implementation phase of your study. You should note that any divergence from the approved procedures and research method will invalidate any insurance and liability cover from the University. You should, therefore, notify the Panel of any significant divergence from this approved proposal. This approval is only valid for as long as you are registered as a student at the University. You should arrange to meet with your supervisor for support during the process of completing your study and writing your dissertation.

When your study is complete, please send the ethics committee an end of study report. A template can be found on the ethics BlackBoard site.

The Ethics Committee wish you well with your research.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. M. Elliott'.

**Date: 07.02.2022**

**Signed:**

Dr Jade Elliott

Ethics Co-ordinator  
Psychology  
School of Health, Science and Wellbeing

## Appendix 3

### Consent form



Study Number:

Participant identification number for this trial:

Age:

### CONSENT FORM

**Title of project:** What are the experiences of preparedness of the COVID-19 pandemic on UK veterans?

**Name of researcher:** Jessica Boyle

Please initial box

1. I can confirm I have read and understood the information sheet for this research project. I have been allowed to ask questions and have had these answered appropriately if necessary.
2. I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw at any time without any disadvantage to myself or my legal rights.
3. I understand that the information collected about me will be anonymised but may be viewed in the public domain if the research is published.
4. I agree to take part in the research.
5. I understand that the researcher will record the interview for research purposes, and I consent to the interview being recorded.

---

Name of participant

---

Date

---

Signature

---

Name of person asking  
for consent

---

Date

---

Signature

## Appendix 4

### Information sheet



Research title: Military preparedness and how UK veterans experienced the COVID-19 pandemic?

---

#### **Introduction**

The COVID-19 pandemic saw changes to everyone's lives, services and society. We are researching to hear how the pandemic made a difference in your life over the last two years.

We are particularly interested in how you experienced the COVID-19 pandemic and your life habits, whether you experienced changes in how you were to socialise or how the experiences of being in the military impacted your experience of the pandemic.

#### **What's involved?**

We would like you to tell us about your experiences and answer some questions you will be asked during the interview. It would be helpful if you could tell us about your experiences as much as possible. Still, we understand some things may be pretty difficult to talk about, so you can choose to withdraw at any time.

#### **Why have I been invited to take part?**

This research aims to hear the experiences of the COVID pandemic on veterans. We are looking for participants aged 18 and over who meet these criteria. Only those who have the capacity can participate in the research as full consent is required.

#### **What will happen if I take part?**

The research aims to look at veteran experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The research will be a qualitative method, which aims to look at similar themes presented in different people's experiences. The use of one-on-one interviews and questions such as "Has the pandemic affected your access to social support systems in any way" will be used.

As there may be reflections on your experiences that may be difficult to talk about, we would like to ensure a setting that feels the most comfortable for you but also provides a confidential, safe space. Therefore, we are happy to complete the interview at your home or in one of our secure office bases at Staffordshire University. Or it can be completed virtually via teams if this is something you would prefer.

As mentioned, the research aims to capture veterans' experiences during the COVID- 19 pandemic. Any information gathered from you will be stored securely and confidentially. Your name and age will be anonymised. The researcher will only record the interview via audio and will only do this with your consent. We will indicate the start of the recording before it begins.

### **Do I have to take part?**

No, participation in this research is entirely voluntary, and you should only participate if you wish. Not taking part does not disadvantage you in any way. Once you have read the information sheet, please contact us if you have any questions. If you do decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to sign a consent form, which you will be given a copy of for you to keep.

### **What are the advantages and disadvantages?**

This research is an opportunity to share your experiences and have your voice heard. The information gathered from you and others can also help services and people understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted other veterans with similar circumstances, hoping to enact some changes if necessary. You may find some of the topics upsetting or reflect on a time that has been upsetting for you. If that happens, we will cease the interview, and there will be an opportunity to continue at another time or withdraw from the research. If you continue feeling distressed, don't hesitate to contact some of the valuable services below.

***Samaritans- 01785243333/ 03300945717***

***Home treatment team- 03001231535***

### **Data handling and confidentiality**

The researcher will store any information gathered on a password-protected drive. We will only gather basic identifying information such as name, age, and time served. All names will be anonymised using a pseudonym, so identity is protected.

Information gathered will be stored securely for ten years and then destroyed per Staffordshire University policy. Any archived data will also be anonymised. Information will be shared with the research team and processed by a transcribing service. However, any information shared will be completely anonymised, and the researcher will give no identifiable information. We will not store information with the transcribing service.

Your data will be processed under the data protection law and comply with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR).

### **Data Protection Statement**

The data controller for this project will be Staffordshire University. The University will process your data for the research outlined above. The legal basis for processing your data for research purposes under the data protection law is a 'task in the public interest' You can provide your consent for using your data in this study by completing the consent form that has been provided to you.

### **What will happen if I don't want to continue with the research?**

You are free to withdraw at any point of the research collection, and you do not have to provide a reason. Withdrawing from the research will not affect you in any way. If you wish to withdraw, you can do this until January 2023, when the data collected will have been processed.

If you choose to withdraw, we will not retain any information you have provided us as part of the research.

### **What will happen to the results of the research?**

The research is part of a doctoral thesis, meaning the information gathered forms part of the university research project. The aim of the research is to be published in peer-reviewed journals, so there is a potential, if published, that the results will be part of the report that is publicly available. Still, as mentioned, all identifiable characteristics will be anonymised.

### **Who should I contact for further information?**

If you have any questions or require more information about this study, please get in touch with me using the following contact details below.

### **What if I have further questions or if something goes wrong?**

If this study has harmed you in any way or if you wish to make a complaint about the study, please get in touch with the study supervisor or the Chair of the Staffordshire University Ethics Committee for further advice and information.

**Thank you for reading this information sheet and considering participating in this research.**

### **Contact details**

Jessica Boyle  
Trainee Clinical Psychologist  
Staffordshire University,  
Tel: 07971792968  
Email: [jessica.boyle@combined.nhs.uk](mailto:jessica.boyle@combined.nhs.uk)

Dr Kim Gordon CPsychol, FHEA

Lecturer in Clinical Psychology (Research Tutor)  
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Project Lead for Clinical Psychology  
Staffordshire University  
Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology  
BACP Member  
Tel: 01782 294830  
Email: [kim.gordon@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:kim.gordon@staffs.ac.uk)

## Appendix 5-

### Interview schedule

Adaptation.	Potential elaboration questions.	Potential elaboration questions.
What drew you to join the armed forces?	What did you do?	Did you travel anywhere during your time in service?
How long were you in the armed forces?	What was your transition out of the military like?	
Do you feel you learnt anything about yourself and other people during their time in the Armed Forces?		
How was the COVID-19 pandemic for you		
How did you feel about the social isolation rules in COVID-19?		

How did you feel about the changes and rules during the pandemics?	How did you feel about the introduction of the COVID-19 vaccines?	How did you feel about the use of social media during the COVID-19 pandemic?
How do you make sense of your experience of COVID-19?		

## Appendix 6

### Research advertisement



STAFFORDSHIRE  
UNIVERSITY

# ARE YOU A VETERAN IN THE UK? PARTICIPANTS WANTED FOR DOCTORAL RESEARCH- WHAT ARE THE EXPERIENCES OF VETERANS ON GLOBAL EVENTS?

**Research is interested in experiences of service in the Armed Forces veterans experienced events like the COVID-19 pandemic**

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES?

**This study is being conducted to gain insight into Veteran perceptions of the COVID pandemic and both lockdowns**

## WHAT'S INVOLVED?

Consent and participate in an interview, this will last around 1 hour and can be offered on Microsoft Teams or face-to-face at Staffordshire University, Stoke on Trent



## PARTICIPANTS CAN TAKE PART IF?

-Participants must be 18 or over and have served in the armed forces

If you have any questions or would like to participate in this research, please contact  
Researcher: Jessica Boyle  
b0261071@student.staffs.ac.uk  
Research supervisor: Dr Kim Gordon  
kim.gordon@staffs.ac.uk

## Appendix 7

### Thematic map

Thematic map included below.

Key

Colour	Theme
	Military mentality prepared me for this
	Protecting and serving the family
	Harder for others than us

Coding map			
Quote	Code assigned	Initial theme	Theme
"Don't understand the reason as to why you do those particular tasks, learn very much to follow and be somewhat subservient"- Jason	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Told to have, so you had to have it"- Ben	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Soldiers are very resilient when they are being told what to do"- Jason	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You know, when you sign up that if you've gotta go somewhere, you gotta go somewhere, you know?"- Steve	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"think that's a big thing when you get told to do something, you do it"- Will	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"The forces, they cant strike can they? They've got to be go out. They've got to go to Libya tomorrow. They've got to go to Libya. Ukraine, tomorrow for six months, then they've got to go"- Will	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"you just followed what the what? What was you just follow what was said. You just followed. I had no, I had no beliefs in what I thought. I just followed. What the government said."- Will	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"But then that's back to that military isn't it, you follow, you know, in the forces, if the government government say you're going to Libya with these	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this

floods tomorrow, guess what ,you're going."- Will			
"You can do stuff sometimes without question"- Jason	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"following those rules is safe, and so it really I tapped into them."- Will	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Without even trying to look at the big picture, youre going ok, this is what were doing now"- Jason	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"it's not a case of I go to it and say, no, I can't do that. You know, if if you're told you're going, you're going and that's it"- Steve	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"We did everything that we were supposed to do, you know, vaccinated, wore masks"- Nora	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"We just followed the instructions and everything"- Nora	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"But I just thought as long as I stick to what I feel I'm doing right"- Nora	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"We stayed at home when we were supposed to"- Nora	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Go along blindly with what's asked"- Jason	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I thought it was fine"	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I don't know whether I pushed back even with when COVID jabs"- Nora	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I'd have to read all those and make sure I was up to date with what was the rules were"- Nick	Followed rules	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this

"there is definitely a routine everyday set up, pretty much the exact same you going to work, you check the truck over you make sure everything's working, and all your equipment's good then"- Nick	Regimented style of working in current job	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I try and think rationally. Most days"- Nick	Important to think rationally	IT- Action first, think later	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Went to lots of different RAF camps"- Nora	Opportunity to travel	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So yeah, there's a lot of tours, a lot of travelling."- Will	Opportunity to travel	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I got sent to Germany for two years. And so I lived in Germany for two years . And then from there I was all over. Really I was I went to Norway for a bit. Austria, just all over europe. And then after two years I got promoted and then went to Wales for two years."- Nick	Opportunity to travel	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Enjoyed the opportunities it was gonna give me to travel"- Nora	Opportunity to travel	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Going away on the cadets again it helped because I went away a lot with them"- Nora	Opportunity to travel	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I enjoyed the travel"- Ben	Opportunity to travel	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Main reason I joined was for a career path and get a trade"- Ben	Opportunity to travel	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You can do trades in the army"- Ben	Opportunities in the military	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I'm glad I did it cause I'm quite, I've used it all my life"- Ben	Opportunities in the military	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this

"One of the reasons to join the army see the world"- Ben	Opportunities in the military	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Exposed me to a lot of other jobs to go out and do things, so I end up doing electronic warfare"- Steve	Opportunities in the military	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"How to lead people, but how to work as team"- Nora	Opportunities in the military/Motivations to join	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"How I felt you should lead people"- Nora	Opportunities to lead, teaches you teamwork	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I was section commander in charge of doing combat engineering"- Ben	Opportunities to lead, teaches you teamwork	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Be a leader and and and to have some responsibility"- Nick	Opportunities to lead	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Electronic Warfare squadron electronic warfare instructor of 662 Squadron, 3rd Regiment"- Steve	Opportunities to lead	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"then I think after about 7 years I got promoted to corporal. Seven years later sergeant"- Will	Opportunities to lead	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Contract managers position quite quickly"- Ben	Opportunities to lead	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You can be essentially in charge of peoples lives"- Jason	Opportunities to lead	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Realising what life management, leadership, those kind of things"- Jason	Opportunities to lead	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"And when I started there, I was their senior recruit officer so. Oh, so I was in charge, like 220 recruits."- Will	Opportunities to lead	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"And I'm not only doing my normal job, but I'm also teaching air cadets how to fly"- Steve	Opportunities to lead	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this

"if you get to the rank of corporal by 12 years, you can then stay on for another 10 years."- Will	Opportunities to lead	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Friend of mine from school joined the air cadets, said it was really interesting, she said she thought I would enjoy it as well."- Nora	Opportunities to lead	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Joined up together at 14."- Nora	Childhood aspiration/ something interesting to do	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Started of when I was about 14. I'd seen the top gun film."- Nora	Childhood aspiration	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Wanna be in the royal engineers. I want to be a surveyor"- Ben	Childhood aspiration	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I said I've joined to be a surveyor"- Ben	Career aspiration	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You gain your pension also. That's the main thing, I think"- Will	Financial incentive of the military	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Yeah, I could have stayed in quite easy said till 55"- Will	Financial incentive of the military	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Then what you do, you got to leave with a pension and lump sum or carry on. Carry on until you're 55 is the sort of like final point. So I decided to leave a sort of I I was 41. I think it was."- Will	Financial incentive of the military	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"But what you get out of it, you know, as a person"- Steve	Skills from service	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I've travel the world seeing the world bit"- Ben	Career aspiration	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Pension definitely had a big thing because I knew as an officer. I stayed on the old pension plan.... Because I knew if I served 16 years I got an immediate pension"- Nora	Opportunity to travel	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this

"ings Lynn, then Germany, then Yorkshire, then Cyprus and then down South, and then again back, did a couple of tours overseas, Iraq and stuff like that, Falklands."- Will	Opportunity to travel	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I knew I was expecting, but I just wasn't expecting it to be so hard and I knew I knew it was gonna be hard,"- Nick	Financial security of the role	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I didn't mind the discipline"- Nora	Expectations of military	IT- Military gave opportunities	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I went where I was told to and did, did my job and everything"	Attributes of the role	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Compared to the cocktail I had when I was in the military of, especially when I was due to the gulf war"- Nora	Requirements of the role	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I think they would have kept us there for three months before you were allowed home"-Nora	Requirements of the role	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"We did more IQ tests, aptitude tests, maths tests, etcetera"- Ben	Requirements of the role	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"These are credit you've got. This is the list of courses you can do"- Jason	Requirements of the role	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Relating back to my army days, where empathy isn't really needed there, so they kind of like they don't squish it out of you. But you know they don't. They don't tell you to be. Ohh well this you need to be sorry for him kind of thing."- Nick	Requirements of the role	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Called KAPE, keeping the army in the public eye"- Ben	Requirements of the role	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You did 14 weeks basic training, which every soldier does, And then I did is I think about six	Military systems	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this

months of medical training."- Nick			
"Later found out they were short of electricians"- Ben	Military systems	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"They went you two points down on the maths"- Ben	Military systems	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"When you sleep, you everything is mapped out for you"- Jason	Military systems	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"They give you some money and they they gave me a rail card, rail pass to get down to chepstow. And off I went on my merry way"	Military systems	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"OK, so let's put on to. You can get that in two kind of ways. Really. One is right. You're being posted and you're moving to this place, which means you know you and the family go and do a different job in a different part of the country that's different. And that tends to be planned. So you'll do like three years, four years somewhere and then, you know, you're going to move on. As it was, I was doing so well in my last posting, enjoying it so much."- Steve	Military systems	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So you could end up on a on a on a ship for 12 months and aircraft carrier for 12 months quite easily. It was all joint forces because the aircraft then was the typhoon aircraft, euro fighter"- Will	Military systems	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I have done my trade training and I got my sitting gales and was equivalent to NVQ level 3 now and because we were royal engineers then go to	Military systems	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this

do another 10 weeks combat engineering training"- Ben			
"Every single regiment in the forces had got a welfare officer"- Jason	Military systems	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I must admit with the vaccines, cause in gulf war one, we got a lot of injections of nasty stuff and we were told you gotta have it"-Ben	Military systems	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"for six week's, basic training, as anybody will go into and then.Seven months of trade training, so I went through seven months of trade training, about 10 core elements. You have to pass every time like exams, practical exams and then after seven months of that you then get posted to your first unit."- Will	Military systems	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So I joined up and it's all changed now. But when I joined up, I went in with something called a radio telegraphist, OK."- Steve	Military systems	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Brainwashed you mildly, were all mildly brainwashed"- Ben	Military systems	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Brainwashing you basically to end life"-Ben	Motivations of military	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Attached to the civilian company doing maintenance in Army uniform"- Ben	Motivations of military	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I've been doing training"- Ben	Military roles	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"And that's when I first came out the army I was really bad for that. I was kind of lived in a in a black and white world and there was good and there	Military roles	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this

was bad, there was right and that was wrong"- Nick			
"However long you stay in the forces you live in a focused bubble, where you know nothing else you know"- Jason	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I was a bad guy. He was like making, you know, the discipline side."- Will	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"skills. They want you for you, your personality, your reliability"- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Very regimental sessions and people always ask, you know, were you in the force, straightaway.I think that's good in a way because that's that's that's good in a way"- Will	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I think probably a lot of the guys I know there's a lot of guys who and some people might just crack up, but I think the force gives you that strength to be resilient sometimes and resilience is a big one."- Will	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I think now when it train now, people ask me the question were you in the forces because of the discipline because the way I am I think because the way you know it's it's quite fine, I mean walking to my sort of training room and it's all laid out nice and pretty and straight"- Will	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"the age of the 13, I joined the Army cadets and I just loved that sort of that military side of things."- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this

"8-10 months of training"- Nick	Skills from service	IT- role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Being outside, going out exercises and using the different bits of kit, all the all the weapons"- Nick	Skills from service	IT- role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I was sending Morse code. I was sending teleprinters over the radio. I was doing voice over the radio from vehicles from manpacks, from building"- Steve	Skills from service	IT- role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"The reason why I went into health and safety, consultancy and training, when I come out."- Will	Skills from service	IT- role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"but yeah, it's a lot like very much around, that's probably why I'm in health and safety as well is very much safety, critical safety"- Will	Skills from service	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I was at Armourer, so the maintenance of ejection seats and aircraft equipment inside the cockpit like parachutes and all that sort of stuff. So if somebody did pull the handle, hopefully it works."- Will	Skills from service	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"yes, I learned how to have the confidence to do anything"- Steve	Skills from service	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You know, a confidence in yourself that you can actually just do anything you know"- Steve	Skills from service	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I'd be attached to the infantry and the any problems from you know, big old injuries to some ingrown toenails"- Nick	Skills from service	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You stay and learn what you can and cant push"- Jason	Skills from service	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"that I then had an opportunity and I went	Skills from service	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this

away with the Army Air Corps for five years flying helicopters"- Steve			
"I'm definitely learned that I am. Capable of hard things"- Nick	Skills from service	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"we were doing things where you know we were listening to any communications and, you know, transcribing them and finding out who they are"- Steve	Skills from service	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Prioritisation in is is something I'm good at. I know what needs to be done and when it needs to be done"- Nick	Skills from service	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I always say to people, it's a very, very bizarre dynamic, the forces are"- Jason	Military environment is unique	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"It's a very, very bizarre dynamic"- Jason	Military environment is unique	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"when I when I came out of the army and it it just baffled to me, is that not? How does everybody not think that this?"- Nick	Military environment is unique	IT- Role of soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Having going into the army and having these rules set upon you and and having this responsibility to set up on you, you kind of understand. I don't wanna say more than most, but I definitely have a good understanding of what it takes"- Nick	Military environment is unique	IT- Role of soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"It probably did me good to start, but that it did me good"- Ben	Values the discipline	IT- Role of soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I also enjoyed the structure and discipline of it"- Jason	Values the discipline	IT- Role of soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"We always aim to be there 5 minutes before you know if you arrive on	Military mentality	IT- Role of soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this

time, you're late, you know"- Steve			
"It was difficult to get out of that structure"- Jason	Part of their mentality	IT- Role of soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"16 years I moved every two to three years"- Nora	Lots of changes in military	IT- Role of soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"To waterbeach, and then yeah was doing germany and there are lots of different things based on waterbeach, I was at waterbeach for five years, my first posting"- Ben	Lots of change in the military	IT- Role of soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"The falklands, that first post, december bound the falklands again, doing a lot in Germany and I went to gulf war one, then came back from gulf one"- Ben	Lots of change in the military	IT- Role of soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I was in Germany, got called for Gulf war, end up in Saudi Arabia was one of the first there september 11, the march so did a good stretch there "- Ben	Lots of change in the military	IT- Role of the soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Then I went to Gibraltar for two years"- Ben	Lots of change in the military	IT- Role of the soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Getting off one plane, getting on to another"- Ben	Lots of change in the military	IT- Role of the soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So I went to RF Marham, Sceptre RF base and I was attached for three years near king's lynn"- Ben	Lots of change in the military	IT- Role of the soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"And then I finished flying with the Air Corps for various reasons, and I went back to the signals"- Steve	Lots of change in the military	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"We became pin cushions"-Ben	Military roles	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Like the alcohol culture in the forces"- Jason	Alcohol present in military life	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Friends drinking every night straight from the job"- Jason	Alcohol present in military life	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this

"[Alcohol] is till very much part of the fabric" Jason	Alcohol present in military life	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"every night we used to go, you know you you go to the pub."- Will	Alcohol present in military life	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Two people go the pub, peer pressure. Yeah. Again. So I presume them days. That was how you how you cope with it."- Will	Alcohol present in military life	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"by then I was so used to kind of, think I think what, how do I say this? I think what kind of the stressfulness of it all was"- Nick	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"you have certain levels of readiness"- Steve	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You come from a place where get told everything"- Jason	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"some of the phrases that are indoctrinated in in the military"- Steve	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"it's like you say it's just sometimes very regimented"- Will	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"you could be away on the on the call you could on guard. If you do, a weeks guard away from you doing your shifts."- Will	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"There's a completely different mindset"- Steve	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"it's just that professionalism and that it's hard to come out. I don't know."- Will	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"care about people and that and that's it really. But again, I also care about what I do. So sometimes I'm probably a little bit what's the word? Anal"- Will	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I think a discipline is the key thing."- Will	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this

"you had T-shirt. His shirt was well ironed, pressed."- Will	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"as you know, when do six weeks basically training turns them into not a man or a woman. It just makes him more disciplined. And then when they come to trade training, it's completely different, you know"- Will	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"you see how people are resilient again with that. But in the forces I can reflect on that quite easily, especially I mean."- Will	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Build myself up into this sort of safety role and making sure things are right. It's probably the forces because the role I went into."- Will	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"then he's putting me back into that and the discipline again, discipline, discipline. It's all like this one. So yeah, but it's good. It's good. It's good."- Will	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"My rules, my rules of safety, my rules of safety are protecting my senior corporals and my corporal"- Will	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Oh, definitely, air Force. Yeah, definitely"- Will	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So I use that rise thing all the time. Respect, integrity, service excellence and a fall that through from the Air Force to to now and that's what you know as as a instructor in the School of Training Technical Training also as."- Will	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Yeah. Respect, integrity, service and excellence. I always go by that respect others be honest and then	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this

deliver a service and also be excellent in what you do."- Will			
"you know we're institutionalised"- Steve	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"gone from, like a military environment to a discipline environments."- Will	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So he hasn't changed, still presses uniform every day, smartly, still turns up, puts the time in, you know, and and and that's the way it's always been."- Will	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So I think that's the big thing about the forces side. You know we have been out there and done your tours, whatever. And you've seen the bad side. You know"- Will	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"But yeah, I think that's the end of that. Yeah. I think it forces guys, personnel keep a lot of things themselves"- Will	Military mentality	IT-Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Often in the military if one person messes up, everyone messes up"- Jason	Collective responsibility	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I seem to be drawn to the regiment, the regimented structure of it"- Jason	Military systems	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I suppose it's a traditional career"- Jason	Military is traditional	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"What your body can do on no sleep and no food and limited water"- Jason	Skills from military	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You learn a lot about yourself and about what you can endure"- Jason	Skills from military/ military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So I have always in my career in my role, have always signed to say that I have done that job or have signed to oversee somebody saying that	Skills from military/ military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this

they've done their job safely."- Will			
"being deployed in my view, being in command when being deployed, you know, so people have the responsibilities and just everyone came together and did their thing"- Steve	Skills from military/ military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Soldiers are very resilient, until they're not"- Jason	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"that that just shows what type of people the military have or can be."- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"there's people in there that will just ignore it you know and they're the people that will always be a private all their life, but if you engage with these things and learn them and use them and apply them it's amazing what you can do."- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"you know, it's you taught the military. You know it's your mind how you think problems through you know it's just you're taking through everything"- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Its very closed off and walls go up"- Jason	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"But you become barriered with other people going through the same thing"- Jason	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"And then routine. Then the next day same again, same again, same again. You got your Facebook and stuff. A lot of teams and all that sort of stuff. Your quizzes, that's it really. But also you think about being away in the Falklands being away.	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this

And Iraq and being away from family, being away, you're isolated anyway"- Will			
"Think with the forces made me to in my job, roles at Armour is to make sure safety is key. So I probably where the safety comes into it is there. And then of course safety is what it is so."- Will	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"If you can go up to somebody, kill then and not think about it and sleep like a baby at night, all the better for you. You will be the better soldier for it."- Nick	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Integrity is speaking to people, but yeah, so yes, that's something I think, well, what I've learned before, when I talk about stuff that you probably tell already, I'm very passionate. What I talking about."- Will	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"well. I think you see a lot of forces guys to look after themselves. They go to the gym, they look after themselves and you see a lot of that as well."- Will	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Mental health wasn't a thing, it was very much you just suck it up and carry on"- Jason	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"when I was in the forces mental health wasn't even talked about, but then was their negative people in the forces"- Will	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"honestly, it was never, never talked about. I'm serious. I'm mental health	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this

in them days you can ask anybody."- Will			
"People think, well, yeah, I think they can. They can see quite clearly if that person, in the forces or not, they can see it"- Will	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"but when I came out the forces, it wasn't one of the things that was recognised or no one spoke about it."- Will	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You've got that thing to do and you go, ok well you have just got to suck it up"- Jason	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"keep me views to myself and that's what you learn in forces"- Will	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I don't think even part of the induction process with young people coming through. Even when I joined up at Swindon , the training school"- Will	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"just my own confidence and yeah, just knowing that. I've been through hard times before and I can get through them again if I need to"- Nick	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"There's no problem. You know you can't control it. So why get upset about it? Just go with it. You know. You know, if you go back to the basics"- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You know, the thing they I don't know about yourself, but I think they adapt they they they put that little extra bit in."- Will	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this

"So in relation to there, yeah, without a doubt. You know, I think the forces made me a professional attitude to say something if I feel it needs to be done."- Will	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I'm so much more of a confident person and if something is difficult or I think it's gonna be difficult, I just think it's like the worst that can happen is that, you know, I'm not very good at it. And that's not exactly a bad thing."- Nick	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"We just gotta live with it"- Nora	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"sometimes people but you just got to just accept it."- Will	Military mentality	IT- Role of a soldier	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Well, it's just, it's just, it's just a cold or, you know, it's just"- Nick	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"When you are in it, its obviously its just natural"- Jason	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You learn to follow, from very much day one"- Jason	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I switched into what I'd say is almost like military mode and right okay"- Nora	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I've gotta be strong. I've got to make sure I'm there for her when I can be"- Nora	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"Kind of shut away emotion to a certain extent"- Nora	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"It just so falls into the military mentality. It's just like, shut up and move one, shut it, get it done. Yeah. Stop talking. Get it done. Then you can relax"- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"A trait from the military because can go im not doing this anymore because I need to do that"- Jason	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"But you know, you making mistakes. You learn from it and then you try again. And so that's that's why that's why I quite like this job."- Nick	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"But I think probably from the influence of the military."- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"and it's sometimes you've just got to jump and learn to fly on the way down. You know, things like that"- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"doesn't matter what the journey is, as long as you know the first step. Just get on it and see what happens, and then go from there, you know, and that's basically what it was, you know, right"- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You don't lose your freedom. But then it has to be a management or governance purely to stop people getting injured or killed or stuff like that"- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"because you know we because of the military life, there's so many rules of what you can and what you can't do."- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So they'll be used to taking orders as well. You know, so when someone says, oh, you can't do that, it's like, well, OK."- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"The military background, and especially being an officer, a commissioned officer"- Nora	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"And, you know, in my mind, I was thinking I could just play. You just play games all day like you don't have to go to work. I have to do anything."- Nick	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"With our background also with what we do"- Nora	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I did that then because I didn't question anything and I had to do as I was told"- Nora	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Probably cause of me and my wife, the way we are, probably rubbed off on them anyway"- Ben	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"But I think the forces background just got on with it. I always said the way you looked at it"- Ben	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"we would we put in radios up in the back garden and listening to satellites and getting weather maps transmitted from satellites"- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"You just had to remember and keep in the back of head like it's only 14 weeks. It's only 14 weeks. Well, one week down we're two weeks down."- Nick	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"where the forces are now. Well, yeah, I think negativity. I've learned a lot. You know, about staying in a positive environment, being with positive people."- Will	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So and that's probably when you're back to your service on you, so suddenly you're thinking about your respects there and then your excellence may have dropped a little bit because you you got stuck to a conversation which you're not normally done."- Will	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"But the whole you know, having gone and having done deployments abroad for sort of six months and having next to nothing, just the rucksack on your back and that's it, you know."- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"it's just being mindful of what you're doing, you know, so you don't have to go mad."- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"For this period of time, this is what were doing"- Jason	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"We just accepted we had to fall in line"- Ben	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"Think even I say I did as I was told in the military"- Nora	Military mentality/Followed rules	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"It's probably my experience probably helped me"- Ben	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Just have we eaten today, Is the baby ok"- Jason	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"The big goal is there, but we got it just a little bit step by step little step by step, you know and it's it's a lesson that I take with me today you know is that if I've got to do that right, where do I start? What is the first step?"- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I think the forces background helped me"- Ben	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"so yeah, so now and you come back stronger, don't you"- Will	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I knew what's going on. I mentally dealt with it"- Ben	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"It's definitely a military thing. You know, if it ain't work, if it don't work, fix it."- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"The rules part wasn't an issue for me"- Jason	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"You know, sitting, complaining about something is not gonna all you're gonna hurt is yourself"- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"We cant whinge, just get on with it"- Ben	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"a quite a stressful situation and to be able to just prioritise"- Nick	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"That's what I do when that's what's instilled into you. Well, a lot of people focus on the negative side and that's what they're being around negative"- Will	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Whereas I've followed rules almost my entire life now. And people tell me what to do. And I just do it because I don't really think about the why."- Nick	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Following the rules wasn't really a problem for me."- Nick	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"so with the toilet roll. for me. Crikey. I'll just go outside the back garden and get some soil with some grass on it. You know, go back to the good old days. You know, they they say for everything there's a solution."- Steve	Military mentality	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"more packed in and you're expecting that actually more people are going to die just purely by exposure and concentration of humans. But you know, the fact that vaccines have been in	Need to think logically	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this

and how many people have survived, you know, or more to the point, how many people didn't die."- Steve			
"It is what it is. You know there there is more important things in this world to be thought about than who went to whose party during lockdown."- Steve	Need to think logically	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You've got to be there 5 minutes before, but then when I plan to drive somewhere to be 5 minutes before I'll add on another half hour in case of traffic and stuff like that"- Steve	Problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I thought it was fine, I just got on with it"- Jason	Adaptibility/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"just having something having a a scenario put in front of you and trying to figure out what what is the best way of solving this problem" Nick	Adaptibility/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"That was how we we got through most of the lockdowns to be fair, just having that kind of that plan in place and thinking right, what's gonna be what's gonna keep me sane"- Nick	Adaptibility/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"let's let's sort out what we're gonna do. What's our plan here"- Nick	Adaptibility/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I'm practical because of my experiences."- Nick	Adaptibility/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking	Military mentality prepared me for this

		comes from military	
"That kind of right, well, you know, you are the master of your own fate. Nobody's gonna come help you to fix this. So you need to figure it out for yourself. So figure it out or die kind of thing. That's that's that's the problem you face with."- Nick	Adaptibility/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Do I need to be doing this or do I not need to be doing this?"- Nick	Adaptibility/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I do like to be in stressful situations and I do like thinking on my feet and"- Nick	Adaptibility/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I have to use my brain and figure out right. How do I? How do I solve this problem like now how do I do that? So I like that kind of aspect of it."- Nick	Adaptibility/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Sure. In situations you know people will adapt, can adapt differently, but I think it's been resilient as well as important."- Will	Adaptibility/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"like I say, you put a plan in place. I say because of ex forces, is what you put a plan in place. You slowly. You put a plan in place. You're planning all the time making sure that when it does get to that stage."- Will	Adaptibility/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So I've gone through the diagnostic.... So weve done that phase now and then I'll go through the	Adaptibility/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking	Military mentality prepared me for this

recovery phase. So I box it to a programme"- Ben		comes from military	
"I've always kind of like approach a situation of like how can I fix this? What's the best outcome for me and what, how do what do I, what steps do I take to get to that outcome"- Nick	Adaptibility/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Well, I'll do something else. You know, it's not like, oh, I don't. I can't do that. oh. Find an alternative then. So how can I work around this? You know, it's always. Well, there's a problem. We'll. I'll find the solution, you know?"- Steve	Adaptibility/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"what I'm realising now is no, it's exactly the same. Take those skills. I thought, you know, even I thought, you know, with all of my qualifications in communications and IT and technology, and I thought, I'm not going to get a job and I get out, you know."- Steve	Adaptibility/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"every time something, my risk assessment change. So I have to change risk assessments have to change that. So over the course I think 19 times have changed it."- Will	Adaptibility/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"so the thing I loved is the even now when I go around, I've got a day sack on me, OK? And even, you know, I've got my mobile phone in there, but I've also got a compass, you know, I've got a gps, I've got a map. You know, I've got a flask, some food.	Adaptibility/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this

<p>You know, it just waterproof clothing, warm clothing"- Steve</p>			
<p>"100% and it's how we cope with it. But you know well things like anything else in the government have reacted to it and we're learning from the legislation's change, health and safety's changed."- Will</p>	<p>Adaptibility/ problem solving</p>	<p>IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military</p>	<p>Military mentality prepared me for this</p>
<p>"so it's like myself now I think I'm adapted to."- Will</p>	<p>Adaptibility/ problem solving</p>	<p>IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military</p>	<p>Military mentality prepared me for this</p>
<p>"Adaptability. I think in the Air Force"- Will</p>	<p>Adaptibility/ problem solving</p>	<p>IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military</p>	<p>Military mentality prepared me for this</p>
<p>"So again, there's a lot of people out there. Can't do virtual training, won't do virtual training. You can't do it. But I can. I have adapted. I can deliver that."- Will</p>	<p>Adaptibility/ problem solving</p>	<p>IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military</p>	<p>Military mentality prepared me for this</p>
<p>"Well, there's no bread shops , well make your own, you know, and it's how you develop skills, right? It's how you develop skills. You know what a Chinese take away? What a Chinese take away are shut I'll tell you what. Let's get a recipe. We'll do a fake away. We'll make your own."- Steve</p>	<p>Adaptibility/ problem solving</p>	<p>IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military</p>	<p>Military mentality prepared me for this</p>
<p>"So again, like I said, you know, if you if you can't, then you find a way, you know"- Steve</p>	<p>Adaptibility/ problem solving</p>	<p>IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military</p>	<p>Military mentality prepared me for this</p>

"We got a nice home, I've had it worse, you know more restrictions"- Ben	Adaptability/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"here forces guys try to adapt because that's probably that's still a bit probably I'd say, Im no, but I know it's been to people, that's what they're struggling with because when they run it, they couldn't do that."- Will	Adaptability/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"like now, isn't it? You just deal with what, what's out there and you manage it"- Will	Adaptability/ problem solving	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I would go to the gym each day, but then go to the bar afterwards and stuff. So yeah, I did lots of walking, explored the place"- Nora	Sense of routine	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I get quite frustrated at the lack of organisation"- Nora	Sense of routine	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Your forms have to be in a set way and then you go out to other things"- Nora	Sense of routine/ Regimented	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I cant move away from it, I still see myself as military and RAF and its quite scary"- Nora	Part of identity	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So I sort of accepted what was going on and generally went with it or the mass"- Ben	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Stay in our social bubbles and keep cleaning things like that"- Ben	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"I guess its something that's really ingrained"- Nora	Part of identity	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Some people would stay institutionalised"- Nora	Part of identity	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You become that institutionalised"- Jason	Part of identity	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Force is definitely helped me to become who I was"- Will	Part of identity	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I do still use a lot of military terms and things. And that's just, I think they way it is"- Nora	Part of identity	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I do still see myself connected. I've still got lots of friends who are in the RAF, when I see you know RAF aircradts and things, I still have an affinity with them"- Nora	Part of identity	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I still dream that I'm in the Air Force"- Nora	Part of identity	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So I a part of me knows that I'm not in anymore, but I still dream about being in the uniform"- Nora	Part of identity	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I still feel I've got connection to being in the military"- Nora	Part of identity	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"Definitely my background, just play always plays a part in everything I do I guess"- Nora	Part of identity	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I think the training for both of us just kicked, if that makes sense"- Nora	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"A lot of constructions and building accomodations"- Ben	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You know in my roles and health, the safety consultant and instructor. Then it's all about the the do's and don'ts into what you should do, what you need to do and what you must do."- Will	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Definitely that is very much a military skill which I hadnt thought of"- Jason	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"The instinct just does kick in"- Nora	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"And that kicks in first"- Nora	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Building bridges, footbridges and patent walls"- Ben	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Definitely instinctively kick in, they the sort of military training that you you've had"- Nora	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"Just been able to deal with things and I'm quite good deal with stuff anyway"- Ben	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Kind of did it with the background that I thought I was still taking safe procedures"- Nora	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Live on instant noodles or something for the rest of the month"- Jason	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I could do teams training zoom. I can use your your different skills of that, so adapt you by that. So again, adapting 'cause after COVID that came into it came in massively. So again, that's where my skills probably again the adaptability of what I was to doing this."- Will	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Down to discipline"- Ben	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You live on very little"- Jason	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Definitely built my confidence"- Nora	Skills from the role	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Suppose my background to sort of say look"- Nora	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Look at it in a logical way. If they have tested this vaccine, if theyre saying that's what we	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking	Military mentality prepared me for this

need, then let's go with that"- Nora		comes from military	
"I tried to look at it as pragmatically as possibly could"- Nora	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Have a set of skills and you do you can do a lot of learning, a lot of courses"- Jason	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So that's the sort of thing where I my adaptability probably come in, and of course flexibility as well. So it's good anyway."- Will	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Bridge building, blowing up things starting on trades, boats, making fresh water from river water"- Ben	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Doing electrical work and maintenance"- Ben	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I've done it before I've gone through that phase"- Nick	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Using my electrical trade"- Ben	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So I definitely wouldn't be who I am today if I didn't join"- Nick	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Trying to be as disciplined and adhere to the rules"- Ben	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"Being adaptable for changes in dealing with if something goes wrong"- Ben	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"And I think that's where the force comes into it. So as I build through the ranks, when I got to that senior NCO sergeant's role and you are and also that's that I even think about as an SAC. You know you're you're packing this ejection seat, you're fitting this injection to an aircraft. And at the day everything you did was critical"- Will	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Just get on with it"- Ben	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"This is the situation we've just gotta deal with it"- Nora	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Definitely gave you the experience and plenty of experience to sort of, say right ok how were gonna solve this"- Nora	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Have to work out how can we carry on running our business"- Nora	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"We had to put out stuff, the exercise online. So were doing it through facebook"- Nora	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"The time you've got and you're trapped in the house for two weeks. So let's do all the jobs that you've been putting off for three years."- Nick	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"The most mission critical, or the most important thing, so you can quickly compartmentalise"- Jason	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Were just like one we knew what the situation was, but its like well this it's the situation, you've just have to get on with it"- Nora	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"We've got a situation here. We've got a problem. We we need to find a solution for it. What, whatever it is"- Nora	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"To know whats happening then you can deal with it as best"- Nora	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Try to think as logically pragmatically as you possibly can"- Nora	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Logic says if I test myself, if they test themselves, if there happens to be 5 people at my mums house... she's got a big living room. We all sit seperately"- Nora	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I looked at it and went well. If farmers have the anthrax jab and they're still ok, then I should be alright"- Nora	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Just to get on with it"- Ben	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Adapt quickly"- Ben	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"Another challenge, must accept the challenge"- Ben	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Did things differently, you know, and that was it. We just did. Definitely found a way around it and get on with it. You know, if you just see and complain about something, it's not going to fix it. So you just get out and find a different way."- Steve	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I suppose it was following structure"- Jason	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Very much compartmentalising that's what's important now"- Jason	Skills from service	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"It was very much crack on, ok this is what were doing now"- Jason	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I just saw it as well, the vaccinations gonna help"- Nora	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I got up. I got routine."- Will	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Just dealt with just whatever the government say. Just jump, Just jump it. Yeah. And manage it"- Will	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I've quickly decided what was bad"	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"As long as we stay at home and derisk ourselves then you know, hopefully we wont get it"- Nora	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Obviously everybody got used to skyping"- Nora	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You struggle with that change, but I think nowadays you've got to adapt to"- Will	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"The experiences of lets play a game, well we haven't got any board games. Well, I'll tell you what. Let's get some bits of paper and let's get some scissors and let's get some cellotape and let's invent a game"- Steve	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"We made our own Breck, we did all this kind of stuff. You know, we we fended for ourselves, you know. And and it was always OK. So if the helicopter doesn't get in, what are we going to do for the next week? See you plan and once you got your plan it's easy you know. So that was that's we planned meals you know we're going to do that for the next week and we want that we want that we want that what we did want to do is like have a big big sort of fridge full of load stuff."- Steve	Problem solving/adaptability		Military mentality prepared me for this
"I just had to get at something, I had to adjust too I think"- Nora	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"We we just dealt with it as best as we could"- Nora	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Our exit strategy"- Ben	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"beginning, sitting down with everyone once said right lockdown. How are we going to do this? And we've all talked about ideas of what to do and what have you and you know"- Steve	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"We lived together for a few years to make sure we were right"- Ben	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"But we just got on with it"- Ben	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"We just gotta deal with a temporary situation and then it will all get better."- Nick	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"we'll just get on with it. We just get on with it and then we'll you know it will be fine"- Nick	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"best part of the job,to be fair"- Nick	Positive experience of transition out of military	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So I was already making the transition from military life to civilian life anyway"- Nora	Positive experience of transition out of military	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"You very much go with the flow"- Jason	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Thought might as well. Because I have had a load of radiation"- Ben	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"We adapt and overcome and that's what we were told to do"- Ben	Problem solving/adaptability	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I havent struggled to become a civilian"- Nora	Positive experience of transition out of military	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"here's a meeting and then the HR person comes out and they're sweating a lot and there's a lot of problems. He's like, we've got a problem with some of the company. That's a combat indicator."- Steve	Positive experience of transition out of military	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I really enjoyed my time down in the falklands"- Nora	Positive experience of the military	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"And I don't think its done my any detriment"- Nora	Positive experience of the military	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I would have continued to do 22 years"- Ben	Positive experience of the military	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Which was a bit weird but I really enjoyed that"- Ben	Positive experience of the military	IT- Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"So I ended up yeah, doing that and just went and had an amazing career playing the radios in the army. So it was sort of two things that I enjoyed, came together and then I went and did it."- Steve	Positive experience of the military	IT-Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Will air crew, pilots and stuff. Maintenance of all that equipment. So yeah, it was good. It was good."- Will	Positive experience of the military	IT-Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Living out of a bag 14 years it was great. I enjoyed it"- Ben	Positive experience of the military	IT-Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"A good time of something proud of, and I don't go out saying, well, if it wasn't for the forces and it's not who am. But I know it made me who I was."- Will	Positive experience of the military	IT-Solution focused thinking comes from military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"aren't we? I made me choice to come out, but while I'm say it was great, you know, it was it was cool"- Will	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I loved being away and loved to travel and go in there for a purpose"- Ben	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I've got memories of long warm summer days just on a rifle range. Just shooting and shooting, you know and just holding my skills and just brilliant you know going out sleeping under the stars."- Steve	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"the Air Force is saying forces, you know, the there's so many positive outweigh negatives, I'd say probably 95% positive and 5% negative. And people always reflect on negative side, don't they?"- Will	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"So you could go up to a maximum four star, OK, but each star had a different subject. You had to learn to be tested up. So as you learn more and get tested more, you achieve your star"- Steve	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So lots of lots of fun trips and lots of fun trips bouncing around all over the place. But that was, that span 23 years"- Steve	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Well, everything really to be honest with you. Apart from that, I think, yeah, it's just builds you as person."	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You know, it gives you so many good things. It really does that I think you know."- Steve	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"This is why I advocate the military again."- Steve	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You know, the military do a lot of really good stuff, you know."- Steve	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Yeah, I loved it. I don't sell it to anybody. And the day I'm proud of what I did. And then my kids are and, that's that's important to me"- Will	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You know, they didn't join the forces, but I feel the boys will Have the same attributes that I've had and think that's come from the background."			
"But yeah, so I I love it, it was good."- Will	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"you know I have had to adapt differently. But yeah, yeah, it's good now. But then also I say yeah, I'm proud of what I've	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this

done. My kids are proud"- Will			
"I wouldn't change it. I'll go back in. I wouldn't change it, but yeah, it was good"- Will	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"It's just amazing if you engage with it. It's just amazing what you can get."- Steve	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I think it does change a lot of people in, in a good way"- Will	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"So I'm saying about, you know, winning the military"- Steve	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Also had nice places"- Ben	Positive experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I went to a lot of rough places"- Ben	Negative experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"I absolutely hated first 14 weeks. It was the worst thing that I'd I'd I'd ever ever have ever done"- Nick	Negative experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"That's part of why I left because of the bureaucracy of it"- Nora	Negative experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Gas. Its just gash, you know its not organised and messy"- Nora	Negative experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"send you in the middle of nowhere where there nothing but grass and they they just stick you there for six months and hard you away"- Nick	Negative experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"so it was good, but it there, there was definitely some downsides."- Nick	Negative experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
" In the army, like it's a long time especially when you kind of not enjoying not enjoying what you're doing for a long time"- Nick	Negative experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"You've got all these skills and organisation cry out for this, is still the lie that is often fed"- Jason	Negative experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"But it was difficult. It was hard."- Nick	Negative experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"The longstanding lie of the forces is that you can gain all these skills that are transferable"- Jason	Negative experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You're very much an overpaid child"- Jason	You don't grow up in the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"It wasn't the case of what you sold"- Jason	Negative experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"People take what they fed at the recruitment office. Total belief and face value"- Jason	Negative experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"everybody in my in my troop had a had a real bad time of it"- Nick	Negative experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"You know, friends injury fatalities. But I think it's in fact that's the two. It's person, you know. You witness friends passing away"- Will	Negative experience of the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Mental health and depression again some reason, back when I was in it was still taboo. It wasn't widely spoken about"- Jason	Impact on mental health/ motivation of military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"what I hated most one about training and in particular was just being treated like an idiot. Like you didn't know what you doing like you were like 5 years old and you needed to be told specifically"- Nick	You don't grow up in the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"10 weeks of proper beasting in there and learned how to be a combat engineer"- Ben	Tough training in the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this

"Shouting in your face. But you know the shouting that loudly spits in your face, is all that it was"- Ben	Tough training in the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"Room inspection is getting your beds thrown out of the window"-Ben	Tough training in the military	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"just it was just relentless. It was just constant, being tired, getting no sleep, being hungry all the time."- Nick	Military pushes your limits	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"felt confident to become a soldier"-Nick	Important to be confident	IT- Experience of military	Military mentality prepared me for this
"But I kind of tweaked that kind of bent things a little bit"- Nora	Less adherence to rules when it comes to family	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"We'll follow these rules, but I still want to see her"- Nora	Less adherence to rules when it comes to family	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"I think we took the same when it came to COVID we took, we didn't take everything at face value. We looked into it ourselves. Were not big fans of social media"- Nora	Less adherence to rules when it comes to family/ Individual thinking	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"We don't rely on it as being the ultimate truth. We don't look into things ourselves"- Nora	Less adherence to rules when it comes to family/ Individual thinking	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"My mum was really happy about that, relieved"- Nora	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"Our son at the time was in middle school"- Nora	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"Especially when you get older and you want to settle your roots."- Will	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"but again cause of two children being rooted everywhere. Again, we decided to make a decision to stay in Stoke and then the kids then can build up	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family

their own futures in Stoke."- Will			
But me trying to teach him. Ohh. Its just it was just an absolute nightmare"- Nora	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"My mum last year got diagnosed with bladder cancer and she had a really rough time and thing and it was hard"- Nora	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"My family up in west yorkshire who I had not seen and not seen my mum for months"- Nora	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"Like my family were under different rules and compared to what I was under here"- Nick	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"More worried about my mum"- Nora	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"Asking the parents to have it as well, they were a bit of apprehensive"- Ben	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"And if they died from it, cause they probably would of died, I'd never forgive ourselves"- Ben	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"So I think being away from the family stuff is probably, yeah, especially at Christmas time and all sorts. It's probably the hardest."- Will	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"In my last year I lived at home because my dad died when I was 16. So really its only been my mum and myself for a long time"- Nora	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"So I spent six months with not seeing my family"- Nora	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"My son was born the week after we got locked down"- Jason	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family

"So its more worrying in the sense that theres nothing I could do"- Nora	Family pressures/ lack of control	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"My son included"- Nora	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"Start missing home a bit"- Ben	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"Worst part saying goodbye to"- Ben	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"So my whole shift in focus was there"- Jason	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"I know I need my exercise, but it also at that particular point in time wasn't a factor"- Jason	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"Being here with my partner, Amy, she's she's never had, like, a a leadership role kind of thing. Open to that point anyway. So she wasn't like, panicked or anything, but I I could tell that she was worried"- Nick	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"Because we did have a sole focus point, I was just making everything very, very small and just this is this tiny human"- Jason	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"She understands the role. If there is one of an army wife."- Steve	Family pressures	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"And so it was me ta background, I suppose Dad's background, my brother's background."- Will	Family connection	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"my father was in the armed forces, my brother, my brother joined the army"- Will	Family connection	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"Negative side of it was goodbyes"- Ben	Pressures on relationships	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family

"Say goodbye to. But she was in the forces as well"	Pressures on relationships	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"We'd meet up and then disappear again"	Pressures on relationships	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"If I got married in the forces then we wouldn't have seen each other"- Ben	Pressures on relationships	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"I had three sister who all married soldiers and all got divorced. So I learned"- Ben	Pressures on relationships	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"He's quite disciplined and things"- Nora	Family dynamics	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"Not a particularly huggy family anyway"- Nora	Family dynamics	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"You know, so we had space, you know, and it was a beautiful summer"- Steve	Family dynamics	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"I designed that. I wanted to be closer than when we lived down south, but didn't want to be too close"- Nora	Family dynamics	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
""You know, they didn't join the forces, but I feel the boys will Have the same attributes that I've had and think that's come from the background."- Will	Family dynamics	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"why I think that's where military comes in, is if you can pass on to your own family, then I think that's important as well. Yeah, definitely, yeah."- Will	Family dynamics	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"I don't know whether that's because I loive with two people who my husband in background consultancy worked from home a lot than happy to sit behind a screen and not have to speak to anybody"- Nora	Family dynamics	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family

"Sister's were married to soldiers"- Ben	Family dynamics	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"All I was interested in was the safety of my little circle"- Ben	World is separate from family	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"5-6 months down the line of the pandemic being in place that I actually started to look outside and go. What's happening in the world"- Jason	World is separate from family	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"I probably managed it and experienced it a bit different where I wasn't so affected by it"- Jason	World is separate from family	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"I had sole focus point pretty much throughout"- Jason	World is separate from family	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"So that was my focus, so I didn't even look out the world for a good few months"- Jason	World is separate from family	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"That was one of the toughest things we experienced in pandemic"- Ben	Loss within support system	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"I did give him a big hug, at the end I thought, soddit, this man needs some physical moral support"- Ben	Friends over rules	IT- Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"Were a strong unit, family unit for us"-Ben	Family dynamics	IT-Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"We've always promoted going out, we had a camper van, going to the country side"- Ben	Family dynamics/ Opportunities to spend time with family, value base	IT-Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"Let's have an extended coffee break, you know, so you're going upstairs. Everyones downstairs. You spend more time with people. You know. It's amazing. Now it just reverted back so quickly. Everyone's off doing their	Opportunities to spend time with family	IT-Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family

own thing. They've got their own"- Steve			
"We enjoyed being together"-Ben	Opportunities to spend time with family	IT-Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"Remember this that it's a memory that you have then that you can then in later on in life, you know when you've got your grandkids and then you go. I remember this me your dad made this"- Steve	Opportunities to spend time with family	IT-Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"I think actually I found I probably spoke to my family more."- Steve	Opportunities to spend time with family	IT-Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"Because you've got time to do it. You know, you just click on BTC chat and what have you. So we probably communicated more during it"- Steve	Opportunities to spend time with family	IT-Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"Keep an eye on their studying and we have a movie night and then BBQs and stuff like that, just to break it up a bit"- Ben	Opportunities to spend time with family	IT-Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"we just started doing things together as a family"- Steve	Opportunities to spend time with family	IT-Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"I was never alone because I had Helen and we had a sole focus point"- Jason	Importance of family	IT-Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"I was lucky cause I had the network around me"- Jason	Importance of family	IT-Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"Because if I was, if I was on my own, I would have just turned into a fat mess, I think."- Nick	Importance of family	IT-Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"But then when it started putting your family at risk, that's probably different"- Will	Importance of family	IT-Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family

"But because I was with and we were together, I was. I was so determined just to keep her."- Nick	Importance of family	IT-Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"I do appreciate my family a lot more and like my friends and who I go and speak like I I make more of an effort now to go and see people. And I don't know, just tell people that I love them."- Nick	Importance of family	IT-Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"But as a family, we all did it, and there was no hesitation"- Ben	Family responsibility	IT-Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"Went back to my mums house, whereas some people don't have that"- Jason	Housing pressures	IT-Family impacts our decisions	Protecting and serving the family
"I enjoyed the fact that you were with a group of people and you all work together"- Nora	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"Specifically about training that I hated. But then when you get to your unit. more. And yeah, just a lot, there's a lot more fun times than bad times. The further you get on."- Nick	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"So going all over the place with my friends was like the best thing."- Nick	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"The peer pressure we're now look how things have evolved in the forces"- Will	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"the best times are just as the hard time to get in when you cold, youre wet, youre hungry and but then you look over and all your friends are in the exact same boat as you and you kind of just yourself like a chuckle. You like? Ohh yeah. It's not too bad actually."- Nick	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"I enjoyed the comraderie"- Nora	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family

"when people haven't seen each other for years and years within 5 minutes is if like they have seen each other everyday."- Will	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"You had the people around you that would help you solve it"- Nora	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"Im still good friends with some of the people I met when I was 16"- Ben	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"We were the night of lockdown in oxford having a reunion in a nice hotel"- Ben	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"We have to go and support him. We all did it, we all got there"- Ben	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"The level of teamwork and the comraderie"- Jason	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"The togetherness you feel with everyone else"- Jason	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"Because even in the military, youre not used to that cause go down the corridor and you see your mates"- Jason	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"There's always someone either in the block or on camp that you just go to"- Jason	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"You know, because of what they go through and how close they've worked together, the friendships they forward with people, I just don't think anyone you know, unless someone on civilian St does something similar"- Steve	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"think being part of of of the team it's the same old cliché as you've been part of that team."- Will	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"I can walk into a pub with my badge and my medals on and speak to somebody I've never met before"- Jason	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family

"you put each other first as well"- Will	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"So I've known him since back then, you know, now he's my boss and it's just it's so easy, you know, because we we've worked together throughout our careers as well. So we know each other intimately. We know what each other's thinking, you know? I know that when he brings up and says something, I know exactly what he's asking."- Steve	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"Because you do have that kindred affinity I suppose"- Jason	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"Not many people that will see short, so you know people might slip you a few quid"- Jason	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"So back in my day when someone was struggling, you would be like come on lets go to the pub, they would just take them out and do something"- Steve	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"have some absolutely amazing, amazing memories of nights in the mess with him, you know, in sort of 1970s gear and drunken dancing and having an amazing night."- Steve	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"and just this whole feeling of it's a strange feeling of being a part of a team. And back in cadets, you know, it was, it was nothing. It was just a bunch of kids together."- Steve	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"You know, mates are talking to mates"- Steve	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"that friendship, that camaraderie that I knew."- Steve	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family

"And it's just like people have never met before. But there's that instant you've got to make friends. You've got to trust each other, you know, and straight into it."- Steve	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"It's not like that because it's like, oh, you see, it's an easy it's all about being, you know, helping each other."- Will	Comraderie	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"I said in the military it was easy. OK, so you see someone there in uniform. OK, they've got a rank on their shoulder. So you know where they are in the pecking order. You know, they've got a cap badge. So you sort of know what job they do, you know, and the fact that they're at that point, you know, they're 1/2 decent human being."- Steve	Trust in other who serve	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"Look at the squaddies now and I wonder if you had the same as what we did"-Ben	Shared sense of experience	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"Suppose cause you was all doing it", as a group- Ben	Shared sense of experience	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"You all went through the same"- Ben	Shared sense of experience	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"You go through the same set of experiences"-Ben	Shared sense of experience	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"I also sympathise, it wasn't just the british government, governments around the world tried to deal with it"- Ben	Shared sense of experience	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"Were all in the same boat, we all go through the same experience"- Ben	Shared sense of experience	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"We all going through the same crappy restrictions"- Ben	Shared sense of experience	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family

"I knew I wasn't going to be too close to it, so I thought, well, at least I'm going to be"- Nora	Going to be part of it	IT- Part of something	Protecting and serving the family
"I havent mentioned the fact I was worried about getting COVID"- Nora	Felt in control of health	IT- My family will be safe from covid	Protecting and serving the family
"I wasn't so worried about the COVID, kind of things and probably again, like I said, for a background of myself and my husband"- Nora	Felt in control of health	IT- My family will be safe from covid	Protecting and serving the family
"None of us got COVID"	Felt in control of health/ families health	IT- My family will be safe from covid	Protecting and serving the family
"There was never a point where I was concerned for myself, my husband and my son that we would necessarily die from it because like I say, we were healthy"- Nora	Felt in control of health	IT- My family will be safe from covid	Protecting and serving the family
"You hand your kit, you walk out the door and theres no, theres no follow up"- Jason	Loss of support system	IT- Need to belong	Protecting and serving the family
"Very muhc there is zero follow up from there"- Jason	Loss of support system	IT- Need to belong	Protecting and serving the family
"On the run up to getting out, theres no follow up"- Jason	Loss of support system	IT- Need to belong	Protecting and serving the family
"You hand your kit in, you go out the door and no one rings you up a month later"- Jason	Loss of support system	IT- Need to belong	Protecting and serving the family
"That's still very active very much today. You hand your kit in and then that's it, you down the road, theres no follow up"- Jason	Loss of support system	IT- Need to belong	Protecting and serving the family
"Just giving your kit back and then saying goodbye to that everything you know"- Jason	Loss of support system	IT- Need to belong	Protecting and serving the family

"my friends that have died from within the forces, you know, you expect it because we don't expect it."- Steve	Loss of support system	IT- Need to belong	Protecting and serving the family
"It's it can't be understood. So you know the grief that we feel when we lose what abouts is very deep and very profound."- Steve	Loss of support system	IT- Need to belong	Protecting and serving the family
"a name will come back and you'll go. Oh, thank God it's not anybody I know. But after you feel guilty, you go hang on. That person had a wife or husband, you know, children"- Steve	Loss of support system	IT- Need to belong	Protecting and serving the family
"So having having that property and the roots and then you can also build up your own. And also I think more importantly with live in Stoke as well, you build up relationships outside the Air Force as well."- Will	Need to create new relationships	IT- Need to belong	Protecting and serving the family
"Anyway, you're not reliant on any build of your own little sort of culture and your attitudes around people"- Will	Need to create new relationships	IT- Need to belong	Protecting and serving the family
"I'm not obsessed with it. Don't get it wrong. I'm. I'm not obsessed. When I left, I left. You know, I've got a few couple. I'm not meeting anybody every week because I miss it. I don't talk about it. I don't talk about it."- Will	Need to create new relationships	IT- Need to belong	Protecting and serving the family
"I just like, so I just settled in. So I started a kids football team. My son played there , so I knew a lot of people. So yeah. So the adjustment, the adjustment was quite easy because it was for five years"- Will	Need to create new relationships	IT- Need to belong	Protecting and serving the family

"Last year, just a friend of mine that I work with, Scotty Thomas, I've got his funeral thing just here."- Steve	Loss of support system	IT- Need to belong	Protecting and serving the family
"losing friends. Losing friends. Definitely. I mean, that's that's losing friend"- Steve	Loss of support system	IT- Need to belong	Protecting and serving the family
"I think what I found most stressful was like not being able to see the people that I wanted to see"	Loss of support system	IT- Need to belong	Protecting and serving the family
"Its very much, see you later, hand your kit in"- Jason	Loss of support system	IT- Need to belong	Protecting and serving the family
"Since we've been doing what been doing, we get ill very very rarely"- Nora	Felt in control of health	IT- My family will be safe from covid	Protecting and serving the family
"When I was in the RAF as an officer and I was telling my guys not to do something, I wouldn't have dreamed of doing it myself"- Nora	Opportunities for leadership	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Protecting and serving the family
"Somebody in that position should have integrity and they should if they making the laws they should stick to themselves more than anybody else"- Nora	Responsibility of those in influence is important	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"It's a rule for them and a rule for everybody else"- Nora	Responsibility of those in influence is important	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"But somebody in a position of power where you're telling other people"- Nora	Responsibility of those in influence is important	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"Is it somebody's into the wrong hands or somebody's made a mistake, why isnt anything been done about it, theres been no consequences"- Ben	Responsibility of those in influence is important	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us

"Get in the older famous people and put it on their social media and putting that on the news. I think that was really good because when you see familiar faces getting the vaccine, you think, OK, well, there's, I don't know the queen or somebody who getting that right now"- Nick	Responsibility of those in influence is important	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"Yeah. So I think the media is made it worse."- Steve	Responsibility of those in influence is important	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"the the media should have been used to promulgate information to help people, but instead they just, oh, this is bad and all this is bad"- Steve	Responsibility of those in influence is important	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"I suppose politicians should have led by example"- Ben	Responsibility of those in influence is important	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"Some of them let themselves down"- Ben	Responsibility of those in influence is important	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"But when the people who make the rules start breaking them or start twisting them in a way where it's like, ohh. It's just a cheese party or whatever it is, it's not a party. It's just a cheese gathering, And that's that's when it it really annoyed me"- Nick	Responsibility of those in influence is important	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"The hypocrisy of them not doing it as well. You know, it happens"- Steve	Responsibility of those in influence is important	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"You need to stick to the rules. Everybody will be so much better and then you are blatantly breaking them"- Nick	Responsibility of those in influence is important	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us

"and especially the people who were making the rules and then just breaking them the day after just because they thought that they could and they could getaway with it so."- Nick	Responsibility of those in influence is important	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"So to go out of your way to break the rules that you've actually made is. You know, it's just, it's just scummy. And, but yeah, genuinely, genuinely infuriated me and still does to this day."- Nick	Responsibility of those in influence is important	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"the hear and what they see on Facebook and what they do. And you know, and the hoarding, you know, you know, what control have I got over that."- Will	Responsibility of those in influence is important	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"They're making money. How many people are there made money off COVID"- Will	Belief people benefitted from COVID	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"Need to know what the root cause was"- Ben	Need to know whose responsible	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"I'd like to know who caused it in the first place"- Ben	Need to know whose responsible	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"A lot of the general mass population would mix and doing stuff"- Ben	Collective mentality, hypocritical	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"They say one human isn't stupid, but the pack mentality is just crazy"- Steve	Collective mentality, hypocritical	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"problem was of course people weren't following the rules, were they"- Will	Collective mentality, hypocritical	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"The politicians weren't ready for it"- Ben	Collective mentality	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us

"People's giving their views all the time and the negative side of things end of the day."- Will	Collective mentality	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"the anti vaccine movement has been massive after COVID it was it was. It was big before but I think now it's it's just gone through the roof because people are so sceptical."- Nick	Collective mentality	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"Their whole mentality"- Nora	Collective mentality	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"It's very saw, very focused on what we're going to do as a corporate responsibility. You're accountable, same as health and safety, were accountable, we part with the consultants, we're accountable our decision making. We'll be saying what they need do, but we're also accountable for telling the the directors that they need to do it."- Will	Collective mentality	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"That's the problem. I don't know how. I think that's where I struggle. Probably you know, people don't like people, don't like rules, do they? Don't like being told what to do."- Will	Collective mentality	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"I'm not really bothered about what Boris did or what the government really, but OK, that's integrity. I suppose that's integrity. Where and that come out after, didn't it?"- Will	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"Loads of people broke the rules. loads of people would have done it"- Steve	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us

"So again, that's probably where I struggle with where people. Didn't follow the rules, you're following the rules and there's people blaming others for not following."- Will	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"If they end up getting COVID, then somebody passed away, then that was on them. That was on them"- Nora	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"Some people that just fobbed it off because they thought they knew better, you know"- Steve	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"You know, but let's not forget that other people were doing it as well. So why are they not being hauled over the coals as well? You know, it's good for one. It's good for the other"- Steve	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"same. It covid was the same, oh covid doesn't exist. It's a myth, its one of these money things, until well then when one their family members got COVID"- Will	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"We see people down the street, you know, next door walking to the next door's house, then come back out again. You're like, well, you know, social distancing, you know. But that never got shouted about."- Steve	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"I think people are always going to break the rules are gonna bend. The rules are gonna break the rules because you know we have laws in the country	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us

and people break the law all the time."- Nick			
"I don't carry what other people do. That's on them"- Jason	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"People have always going to do I suppose what they think is right in the moment"- Jason	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"Whatever choice. But yeah that's very much on them and not on me"- Jason	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"Then more than other people, I get the other people, theyre going to bend the rules"- Nora	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"Ive got enough intellect to weigh things up a bit and see through things and not just think what I see on tv"- Ben	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"So if people create rules that's on them, that's not on me"- Jason	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"You're always going to get them in society arent you"- Ben	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"I cant control what other people do"- Ben	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"If we don't have and something goes wrong, you never forgive yourself"- Ben	Sense of responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"So let people do whatever they wanted to do, as long as it didn't affect us"- Ben	Individual responsibility	IT- COVID questioned responsibility	Harder for others than us
"Its almost like a reset"- Ben	COVID was a shift in focus	IT- Covid was a shift in social norms	Harder for others than us
"Another sort of wake up call"-Ben	COVID was a shift in focus	IT- Covid was a shift in social norms	Harder for others than us

"Werent in the rat race on about 100 miles per hour, in the fast lane, suddenly its handbrakes and were all pulled up in the hard shoulder"- Ben	COVID was a shift in focus	IT- Covid was a shift in social norms	Harder for others than us
"So that was another sort of epiphany, sort of mental"- Ben	COVID was a shift in focus	IT- Covid was a shift in social norms	Harder for others than us
"COVID is a life reset and I think it's a life reset for a lot of people"- Ben	COVID was a shift in focus	IT- Covid was a shift in social norms	Harder for others than us
"Not being able to hug and he is distraught"- Ben	Restrictions of COVID frustrating	IT- Covid was a shift in social norms	Harder for others than us
"People who normally can only say hello to you, just literally turn their back on you. And that was a bit weird"- Ben	COVID change in social norm	IT- Covid was a shift in social norms	Harder for others than us
"Certainly a strange time. Wasn't it"- Jason	COVID change in social norm	IT- Covid was a shift in social norms	Harder for others than us
"Then it was the news about covid and then I started to feel a bit uncomfortable and crammed"- Ben	COVID was scary/ shift in social norms	IT- Covid was a shift in social norms	Harder for others than us
"Didn't really bother me at all"- Ben	Positive experience of COVID	IT- Experiences of COVID	Harder for others than us
"I'm working the house is here. The food's coming in. Everyone's healthy, you know, it's it's sunny"- Steve	Positive experience of COVID	IT- Experiences of COVID	Harder for others than us
"It was literally what I felt it was just like it is a time to pause and reflect and relax, you know?"- Steve	Positive experience of COVID	IT- Experiences of COVID	Harder for others than us
"didn't really feel isolated from people."- Steve	Positive experience of COVID	IT- Experiences of COVID	Harder for others than us
"I was quite sad when it finished, actually."- Steve	Positive experience of COVID	IT- Experiences of COVID	Harder for others than us
"we could do something else, you know, and it was really good fun."- Steve	Positive experience of COVID	IT- Experiences of COVID	Harder for others than us

"My experience was was generally quite positive"- Nick	Positive experience of COVID	IT- Experiences of COVID	Harder for others than us
"Really good experience with lockdowns"- Steve	Positive experience of COVID	IT- Experiences of COVID	Harder for others than us
"So what are the phrases I heard brilliantly about the pandemic? Was it's like a deployment but with Internet"- Steve	Positive experience of COVID	IT- Experiences of COVID	Harder for others than us
""I think the only issue probably people had was the financial side wasn't it."- Will	Negative experience of COVID	IT-COVID was experience	Harder for others than us
"It was more of a pain going to the shops with a mask on"-Ben	Restrictions of COVID frustrating	IT-Covid was a shift in social norms	Harder for others than us
"Yeah, the beginning, very stressful"- Nora	Negative experience of COVID	IT-COVID was experience	Harder for others than us
"So it ended up getting very, very stressful"- Nora	Negative experience of COVID	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us
"But yeah, you're right though, it's greed. It's greed. It's it's, it's put it again."- Will	Negative experience of COVID	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us
"He struggled with anxiety and things since, and I put it down a lot to COVID"- Nora	COVID impacted mental health	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us
"He did really struggle with going back to school and being in the classroom"- Nora	COVID impacted mental health	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us
"I'd like to think myself in many ways, I think I'd rather be home than going out"- Nora	COVID impacted mental health/ socially	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us
"I used to love going out and doing things in socialising with people and now I even now I still sort of cant be bothered"- Nora	COVID impacted mental health/ socially	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us

"to definitely a lot of a lot of companies adapting and it's like hospitality, the adapted by doing you know deliveries and you know sessions like PT is on like a boy me lad like you know PT did a lot of zoom sessions and stuff like that. So people adapted accordingly."- Will	Adaptability is good	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us
"I still see that people are still struggling socially"- Nora	COVID impacted mental health/ socially	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us
"Weve still got a lot of positives coming out of COVID"- Ben	Positive experience of COVID	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us
"overall it was a positive experience of for me"- Nick	Positive experience of COVID	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us
"Absolutely brilliant."- Steve	Positive experience of COVID	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us
"but ohh kind of flourished in that environment. Weirdly, I don't know why"- Nick	Positive experience of COVID	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us
"being forced to go on a diet and then doing an activity just to keep yourself sane throughout the day. And yeah, it helped me. It helped me massively"- Nick	Positive experience of COVID	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us
"Not knowing is the worst"- Nora	Uncertainty is the difficult	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us
"And there was so much in the air and it it just it didn't. It didn't make sense to me"- Nick	Uncertainty is the difficult	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us
"I think the only issue was the uncertainty"- Will	Uncertainty is the difficult	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us
"It was probabl more difficult"- Jason	COVID made things difficult	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us

"I think the changes were. And frustrating I think, because if it was progressive"- Nick	COVID made things difficult	IT- Experience of COVID	Harder for others than us
"It didn't hit me as hard as perhaps as others"- Nora	Others found it harder	IT-COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"Because I know so many people who'd like lost family members or whoever."- Nick	Others found it harder	IT-COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"A lot of people have always lived their lives and not had many rules set upon them. So when the COVID came in and people were being told right. You can't leave the house now. You can't do this. You can only be have an exercise for this amount of time. You have to do this in the shops and stuff like that. And I think that's what made people more nervous."- Nick	Others found it harder	IT-COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"Then. So I did have an issue at all"- Will	Others found it harder	IT-COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"alot of other people had an awful time with it"- Nick	Others found it harder	IT-COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"But I think COVID has had a detrimental effect to a lot of people"- Nora	Others found it harder	IT-COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"I think the detriment from a mental health point of view has been massive on people"- Nora	Others found it harder	IT-COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"I think its he's had a massive impact on people and it is hard"- Nora	Others found it harder	IT-COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us

"Some other service leavers. I know a lot of people struggled"- Jason	Others found it harder	IT-COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"My husband thought COVID in lockdown was fantastic because he didn't have to do any of that"- Nora	COVID was easier for some	IT-COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"They say you either become an alcoholic or a fitness freak"- Nora	Service assumptions	IT- Assumptions about world	Harder for others than us
"They're perfect organising"- Nora	Service assumptions	IT- Assumptions about world	Harder for others than us
"Used watching the TV on the films and british films"-Ben	Service assumptions	IT- Assumptions about world	Harder for others than us
"People dealt with it better than other people"- Ben	Others found it harder	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"Looking back, I can see like that that probably was a really hard, difficult time for them"- Nick	Others found it harder	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"Big play" was the isolation for people"- Jason	Others found it harder	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"awful time for a lot of people."- Nick	Others found it harder	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"I was hearing loads of people were gaining weight. They were just watching Netflix all the time. They weren't doing anything. And mine was the exact opposite of that. And I got really into my fitness"- Nick	Others found it harder	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"course, people were dying, really. You know, I can complain all day long because I was stuck at home on lockdown when there's people like an NHS or or whatever."- Will	Others found it harder	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us

"I really felt sorry for people like single mums that are in a flat in sort of a big block of flats, you know, because they can't get out, they haven't got the support, you know, all the pressures of having to raise a child by themselves"- Steve	Others found it harder	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"There's a tinge of guilt with that because I know some people really, really struggled, you know, and some people lost relatives and loved ones"- Steve	Others found it harder	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"While youre worried about wearing masks, whats that family dealing with today"- Ben	Others found it harder	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"Just say there is probably worse people than me"- Ben	Others found it harder	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"Some of the commonwealth soldiers would have undoubtedly struggled"- Jason	Others found it harder	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"There a lot more people worse off than us, you know why am I whinging when there's all these elderly people live on their own"- Ben	Others found it harder	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"Some of the people I've served with felt the isolation"- Jason	Others found it harder	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"How many people are there struggling? You know what I mean? You know, you walk around the streets of Stoke on Trent or Wanglely and you see so many homeless out there"- Will	Others found it harder	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"They were used to that team dynamic and then a lot of people went to being solely alone"- Jason	Others found it harder	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us

"the stress levels, these guys are under is is incredible. So, yeah, I think you know, these are the same. These have the same attributes as that. I think people in that role because they care about kids."- Will	Others found it harder	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"Out of people and know that worked solely alone, that had recently go out. Those are the people that spiralled"- Jason	Others found it harder	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"We were just coming out of it seeing the light"- Jason	Covid was dark	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"The isolation was the big player for a lot of people"- Jason	Others found it harder/ Loss of support system.	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"Some people went through going it alone, just cut from some people they knew"- Jason	Others found it harder/ Loss of support system.	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"a lot of I know a lot of people who've never been in this situations before and they might just standstill and think and get a bit overwhelmed and say ohh I don't know what to do here."- Nick	Most people cant handle the pressure	IT- COVID was harder for others but not me	Harder for others than us
"Sort of wants to just get in there and sort it out"- Nora	Make things better	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"I am generally somebody who wants to solve problems"- Nora	Make things better	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Build on the sort of skills they already had to become a good problem solver"- Nora	Make things better	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"But it's trying to get people when theyre all worried about getting COVID"- Nora	Make things better	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us

"I never went to the frontline, not for a want of trying and I did volunteer"- Nora	Need to serve and justify why they didn't	IT-Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"help the people that I wanted to help and that was that was the stressful part for me really"- Nick	Need to serve	IT-Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"You. You'll always want to try and help people, and that's what I learn, I think."- Nick	Need to serve	IT-Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Instead of sending me where I was supposed to go"- Nora	Need to serve	IT-Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Do tasks for the public"- Ben	Need to serve	IT-Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"think we all sacrifice. I think a lot of people sacrifice, you know, from from the fire to police, et cetera"- Will	Need to serve	IT-Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"I'm volunteering for the falklands because you've not sent me anywhere"- Nora	Need to serve	IT-Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Very difficult, I think very difficult. I think it was difficult way again because you have a responsibility for people."- Will	Need to serve	IT-Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"I really felt that I should do my duty cause that's why you sign up"- Nora	Need to serve/ reason for signing up	IT-Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"I think it was just something I was always going to do"- Jason	Personal motivations/ reasons for signing up	IT-Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Ever since I was small running around in the garden"- Jason	Childhood aspirations	IT-Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Didn't really focus in school because I kind of knew where I was going"- Jason	Personal motivations/ Military is the only path	IT-Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Pay the piece of paper as they say"- Nora	Need to serve	IT-Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us

"I needed to do my duty and go wherever they sent me"- Nora	Need to serve	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"I started working with a forces charity doing mentoring for service leavers"- Jason	Personal motivations/Need to serve	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Its going through all these things, what do you with your mental health, this is how you fill in a housing application"- Jason	Personal motivations/Need to serve	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Hopefully providing that service and help to people, I would have liked to when I first got out"- Jason	Personal motivations/Need to serve	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Was going to join the navy but couldn't join up because of manning levels, so I ended up going into the army"- Jason	Personal motivations/ Didn't want to wait	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"So I did everything that I could to go"- Nora	Need to serve/ need to justify why I didn't go	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"At least I am going somewhere I'll be of value, I'll be of service"- Nora	Need to serve	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"I felt so guilty that I'd left them at first"- Ben	Need to serve	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"I said I would have been there like a shot"- Nora	Need to serve	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"But I thought I was my duty"- Nora	Need to serve	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Is this is what you need to hear and want"-Ben	Need to serve- wanting to serve researcher	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Not necessarily us but you know our parents and another vulnerable people"- Nora	Need to serve	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Go in there for a purpose"- Ben	Need to serve	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"It was all purposeful"- Ben	Need to serve	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us

"You know, I'm a I'm a decent person. I think I'm a I'm a nice person. I help people."- Will	Need to serve	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Being sent somewhere and building something which is gonna get used for something"- Ben	Need to serve	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"you'll do these little charity runs. You'll do these sponsorship and it's normally that forces person who comes up with that idea or so."- Will	Need to serve	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"The excellence the service comes in 'cause you're always thinking of others"- Will	Need to serve	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"How you wanted to be treated as well"- Nora	Part of their value base	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Treat people the way you want to be treated"- Nora	Part of their value base	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"So we didn't want to jump on it and use it as anything but it"- Nora	Part of their value base	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"He was doing the work and it wasn't getting checked"- Nora	Part of their value base	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Integrity to me it means a lot, if you've got integrity"- Nora	Part of their value base	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Yeah, there was a moral certainty"-Nora	Part of their value base	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"responsibility is a big deal and you have to take it seriously."- Nick	Part of their value base	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"I just couldn't understand it. Like how one person just could be so selfish."- Nick	Part of their value base	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"I think I could have done better being a bit more empathetic to all all the looking back I was definitely more of like."- Nick	Values in question	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us

"I definitely should have been more empathetic and I should have been more empathetic to people who were really struggling with being stuck in the House"- Nick	Values in question	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"I wouldn't say I wouldn't say that that that way of thinking is a positive anymore."- Nick	Change of mindset since of COVID-19	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"Seemed like a good fit"- Jason	Personal values aligned with military	IT- Motivations for actions	Harder for others than us
"when you come out with forces environment, you go into Civvy St it's so different"- Will	Military life is different to civilian	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"You get out the army suddenly, its more work hard and less play"- Ben	Military life is different to civilian	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"Being in charge of a household, managing your time, you money effectively, none of those things are taught"- Jason	Civilian life skills different to the military	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"You don't know anything about the administrative side of life"- Jason	Civilian life skills different to the military	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"A lot of people are awful with their money, and people in the forces that we'll go out and blow it all"- Jason	Money is not important in the military	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"That kind of thing cause there's no budgeting"- Jason	Money is not important in the military	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"There's nothing else for them to do, because nothing else has been taught"- Jason	Civilian life skills different to the military	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"I see different others and I think it's even odd than I was. Things like cost of living and pressures people have and I think about, you know"- Will	Civilian life skills different to the military	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us

"Civilian life, no matter where you work, if you leave, or even if you are fired. Yes, theres an exit interview"- Jason	Military life is different to civilian	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"when I see people on strike, don't you? I see people on strike all the time now. That's that's sometimes. I I don't get. I struggle with that sort of thing."- Will	Military life is different to civilian	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"Explain to someone that you havent live it, theres very much us and them mentality"- Jason	Military life is different to civilian	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"When you come out and you realise, wow, it's a different world. It is."- Will	Military life is different to civilian	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"Because some will help you, but most people with they don't want to, and that's the hard thing I think sometimes."- Will	Military life is different to civilian	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"You're always around positive people in the forces and then that's the big thing. You're always around positive people. Well, the civvy street youre around negative people."- Will	Military life is different to civilian	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"Well, I can't think you know that's that's I think we get stereotyped and forces when we come out by a lot of civilians. But then I think and vice versa. So I think that's they. I think we're a threat. I think forces are a threat to."- Will	Military life is different to civilian	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"It would be a military person in a non military environment. It would be really quite easy to shine and I'm not saying over	Assumption about veterans	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us

everybody, but the majority you know"- Steve			
"yeah, a lot of force. Guys don't. Don't get it wrong. It's not stereotyped. There's a lot of forces, guys who don't look after themselves but think a majority of them do when they come out and they carry on as well. And that's important as well. So yeah, the well-being of people is important as well, yeah."- Will	Assumption about veterans	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"weird sometimes, might be a threat. Maybe to them. And also these stereotype us as regimented and don't listen and what it's not like that, some are."- Will	Assumption about veterans	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"you just don't realise that you know how selfish people are"- Will	Assumption about civilians	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"Stack a few shelves. Worry about what? What? You know, the only way I've got really is. Where do the mushy peas go? Do they go between the processed peas or do they go between the garden peas? You know what I mean? And that's how people love that, don't they? People can do it every day. They're given a nine till five. Finish at 5. Go home, catch the bus every day. The same routine	Assumption about civilians	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"That it's like you know, so but then they look at us, they look at us ex forces and different light don't	Assumption about civilians	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us

know they stereotype us."- Will			
"The other thing I couldn't adapt to I think well I still cant sometimes is people."- Will	Transition out of military is hard	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"Absolutely you start you again from ground zero. So when I got out, I couldn't find work"- Jason	Transition out of military is hard	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"But imagine veterans there, do you think they've adapted to it?"- Will	Transition out of military is hard	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"Qualifications don't necessarily transcet into something in civilian life"- Jason	Transition out of military is hard	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"Then when they get out of the forces and they still try and drink and party at that level"- Jason	Transition out of military is hard	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"A lot of people struggle when they get out"- Jason	Transition out of military is hard	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"I think if you look at the statistics, within the first six month your I think 80% more likely to join straight back up"- Jason	Transition out of military is hard	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"I was teetering on the edge of joining back up because I didn't know what the plan was"- Jason	Transition out of military is hard	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"The problems that people were facing coming out were the same, people didn't know about housing, or jobs or what organisations were looking for"- Jason	Transition out of military is hard	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"You can end up being very much isolated in the Air Force and when you come out it's very difficult to build that."- Will	Transition out of military is hard	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us

"Because when you leave the forces there is no real bridge"- Jason	Transition out of military is hard	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"That's certainly something that causes people issues"- Jason	Transition out of military is hard	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"I just couldn't get up with the people that I was working with"- Steve	Transition out of military is hard	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us
"just did really well when it came out and being an alpha safety"- Will	Did well with transition out of the military	IT- Veterans have to adjust to civilian life	Harder for others than us

### Paper 3: Executive summary

“We adapt and overcome, and that’s what we were told to do”: A qualitative study on preparedness in UK military veterans’ experience of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jessica Boyle

Word count: 2411.

## Introduction and Background

This executive summary is an overview of the research that explored the experience of preparedness and the COVID-19 pandemic in UK veterans. The following summary has been produced with the target population in mind: veterans. However, it may also be helpful for those who work with veterans or groups exposed to similar occupational environments, such as first responders. I hope this paper provides a concise summary of the findings.

## Context of COVID-19

Implementing both the 2020 and 2021 lockdowns across the United Kingdom (UK) has been shown to have caused an increase in distress in the population (Solomon-Moore et al., 2022). The distress related to the COVID-19 pandemic ranged from having so many changing restrictions on how many items could be bought in a supermarket to who we could see in our private lives, for instance, restricted access to people in hospitals or care homes and loved ones dying from COVID (Shiba et al., 2022). Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has become less prevalent, there still remains an increase in people experiencing low mood symptoms, suggesting it has had a lasting impact on mental health in the population (Daly et al., 2022).

## Preparedness and Veterans

Preparedness is a concept that considers individuals who have developed a sense of readiness for emergency situations.

Portnoy et al. (2018) found that although veterans serving on the frontline are more likely to be exposed to trauma, they also develop psychological resilience from their experiences. Der-Martirosian et al. (2019) stated that military training provides veterans with transferable skills, such as adaptability and solution-focused thinking, which can be used in an emergency. As a result, it can create valuable preparedness for veterans during emergencies such as the COVID-19 global health crisis.

### Rationale for the Study

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been some research focused on veterans and the COVID-19 outbreak, which has focused on how they have accessed treatment during this period (Sciarrino et al., 2020) and the effects of COVID-19 on the physical and mental health of veterans in the US (Purcell et al., 2021). However, there needs to be more research into UK veterans' experiences with COVID-19 because there may be different experiences. With this in mind, the researcher aims to collect veterans' experiences of how they managed during a pandemic that closed many services and implemented restrictions.

### Research question and aim.

The research question was:

What are UK veteran's experiences of preparedness and the COVID-19 pandemic?

The aims of the study are included below;

Look at how the experiences of preparedness in UK Armed Forces veterans due to their time in service may have impacted the way they experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, and why this is essential for understanding UK veteran experiences.

## Method

This study used a qualitative design, which analyses non numerical information to understand people's experiences. Face to face interviews were used and were recorded and transcribed. Then the researcher analysed the interview transcripts using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) (Braun & Clark, 2020). Reflexive thematic analysis aims to understand patterns from what people say with the aim to answer a research question (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The study involved six participants who met the following inclusion and exclusion criteria as shown in the table below:

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Veterans had to be able to participate in the research,</li><li>• Be 18 or over</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Currently serving in the Army, Royal Air Force or Navy</li></ul>

Participants included one female and five males. The mean age was 46, with a range of 28-57, and all identified as "White British." There were various experiences, from working within a combat role to non-combative roles, and the average length of service was 14 years,

ranging from 6 to 22 years. Further information relating to demographics is listed below.

Names have been changed to protect the anonymity of participants.

<b>Participant pseudonym</b>	<b>Nora</b>	<b>Ben</b>	<b>Jason</b>	<b>Nick</b>	<b>Steve</b>	<b>Will</b>
<b>Age</b>	49	55	35	28	54	57
<b>Enlistment status</b>	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular	Regular
<b>Role during service</b>	Combat support	Combat support	Combat	Combat support	Combat support	Combat support
<b>Length of time in service</b>	16 years	14 years	6.5 years	4.5 years	22 years	23 years

Participants were recruited via social media and word of mouth, and their suitability as participants was checked against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Potential participants reached out to the researcher via the email and agreed a date and time. Participants completed the interviews online and were recorded using Microsoft Teams. Participants were signposted to any relevant services if they experienced discomfort during the interview and wanted support following the interview.

### Key findings

Three themes with subthemes were identified: 'Military mentality prepared us for this', 'Harder for others than us', and 'Protecting and serving the family'. At least five participants identified these themes, which are discussed below.

Theme 1- Military mentality prepared us for this.

Across all the interviews, participants shared a mindset shaped by their military experience, influencing their identity as veterans. This prompted their behaviours and actions during the COVID-19 pandemic;

Nora -"I can't move away from it; I still see myself as military as part of the RAF; it is scary."

It suggests that the military's teachings and experiences are part of who they are and how they respond to situations.

Subtheme 1.1- The following rules prepared me for this.

What came across all participant responses was the ease with which participants felt comfortable following rules and changes due to COVID-19. Participants reflected on their time in service and having to follow rules such as;

Steve- "in military life, there are so many rules of what you can and cannot do."

Therefore, when it came to the COVID-19 pandemic, participants were accustomed to following rules in their military lives, which meant following the government-imposed rules of the COVID-19 pandemic became second nature.

Will- "I had no beliefs in what I thought; I just followed what the government said"

Subtheme 1.2- Action first, think later

Having a military mentality did not just teach participants how to follow the rules but how to adapt to constantly changing situations. This suggests the military provided participants with skills to adapt and problem-solve, which appeared to be a critical approach the participants used during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ben- "We adapt and overcome, as that's what we were taught to do."

Ben's quote suggested that the mindset from service gave the participants a slightly advantageous position over civilians in terms of being adaptable to the changing times of the pandemic.

Subtheme 1.3- The military taught us to deal with difficult times.

Although life in the military was challenging, participants did recall how the military taught them to survive difficult times, highlighting that the experiences of the military exposed them to challenging experiences and taught them how to stretch their limits and consider what they could achieve when faced with adversity.

Jason: "You learn what you can and can't push" and "what your body can do on no food, no sleep, and limited water."

Some participants reflected on the positives of their time in services and drew on the positives of the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting that exposure to difficult times during the military enabled participants to pull out the positives in their experiences, too.

Theme 2- Harder for other than us

All participants commented that regardless of their situation during the COVID-19 pandemic, they could all reflect and think that someone else in society would have found it more challenging. Therefore, it could be suggested that participants consider others different from themselves due to their experiences. Due to those experiences in the military, participants considered others worse off than themselves. Considering civilians as needing more support, creating a sense of needing to serve others.

Ben- "There are many more people worse off than us, you know? Why am I whinging when there's all these elderly people living on their own?"

Therefore, they considered the plight of others as a way to gain perspective over their situation and reflect on their own experiences, which helped them to manage.

#### Subtheme 2.1- Them Vs Us

Although all the participants in this paper had been out of the military for many years, a subtheme was that there was still a feeling of separation between us (veterans) and them (civilians). Two participants suggested that some struggled with adapting to civilian life when they left the military.

Steve- "I just couldn't get on with the people I was working with. There's a completely different mindset."

Due to their experiences, participants learned to work hard and adapt, making their ability to handle situations like COVID-19 easier than it may have been for civilians. This suggests that even though the transition may have been difficult initially, veterans' military service helped them manage during the COVID-19 pandemic in a way that may separate their experiences from those of civilians. For instance, there is an expectation on military

personnel to follow the rules and accept this as a natural way of life; this is deemed necessary due to the expectation soldiers have to do things civilians wouldn't.

Nick reflected that civilians "have always lived their lives and not had many rules set upon them, so when COVID-19 came in, and people were told you can't leave the house now... I think that's what made people more nervous."

#### Subtheme 2.2- Need to serve

The need to serve as a subtheme was generated across all participant's transcripts. When exploring their time in service, participants spoke of wanting to serve and help others and the value they derived from it. Suggesting that being in the military creates a sense of needing to serve and to help others.

Nick- "you always want to try and help people."

The military is ultimately about serving and protecting others, and it expects those who serve to give up their lives during war if necessary. The participants felt that the military taught them that serving others and group unity are essential to the values and ethos of military service, which may be different from a civilian mentality that can be more focused on individual interests and betterment.

Nora - "[you] sort of want to just get in there and sort it out."

For some participants, the stressful and life-changing impact of the pandemic instinctively prompted a need to help others during this time, which may have been impacted by the training and experiences they had during their military careers.

### Theme 3- Protecting and serving the family

All participants discussed the importance of looking after their families during the COVID-19 pandemic and what they did to create a sense of togetherness in their families to respond to the reality of conditions under COVID-19.

#### Subtheme 3.1. Looking after your own

A key theme from the data was the concept of looking after your own family. This would have been similar to most people during the pandemic who worried about their families. Suggesting that veterans' military experiences taught them service, protection, and responsibility from a young age.

Jason- "At 18/19 or 20, you can essentially be in charge of people's lives."

This suggests that the military emphasizes the importance of looking after those in your unit. Therefore, when the COVID-19 pandemic began, participants felt a sense of responsibility to take action and ensure the safety of their family and close friends.

#### Subtheme 3.2. Camaraderie fosters a sense of military family

Across the data, all participants reflected on the impact of camaraderie during their time in service. Being exposed to military experiences created friendships that participants found difficult to replicate in a civilian environment and fostered that sense of unity similar to concepts of family, which participants still reflect on as essential for them today.

Ben- "The army became a family. I left my real family became a family within the army."

### Subtheme 3.3. Fostering camaraderie within the home

The sense of camaraderie appears to be an essential factor in the lives of participants during their time in service, allowing them to create meaningful and trusting relationships that helped them navigate the experiences they had during their time in service. Therefore, a subtheme across all participants was fostering a sense of camaraderie during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Steve- "[when the] Chinese takeaway [was] shut - I'll tell you what, let's get a recipe and make a fakeaway"

Steve and other veterans in the study suggested that it was essential to draw on camaraderie experienced in their military service, and bring it into the home as it enables them to navigate a difficult period and harness that sense of togetherness to get them through the pandemic.

### Conclusion

The findings suggest that developing a military mentality prepared participants for the changes brought on by the pandemic, such as the lockdown restrictions, which also showed a difference between how veterans responded to a global health crisis and how civilians experienced COVID-19. It is also essential for participants to foster a sense of camaraderie within their homes to manage through difficult times and prioritise looking after their own.

### Strengths and limitations

- × This sample comes from a population consisting mostly of males with only one female representative; therefore, it may not fully represent all female veteran experiences.

- ✓ This research did capture a variety of age, service experience, and length of service in the UK Armed Forces.
- ✓ This study provided a unique opportunity to explore military preparedness in the UK in a way that has not been explored before the pandemic due to the climate of the UK, being less exposed to natural disasters compared to US veterans.

#### What does the research help to show?

- This research indicated that veterans can develop a level of preparedness, which, combined with their military experiences, may help them respond better to crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, during their civilian lives.
- Developing a military mentality during their time in service enabled them to become successful problem solvers and leaders and gave them the confidence to take risks, such as setting up their own business in the case of Nora and Will.

#### Distribution of research

- Will be submitted as part of the researcher's Professional doctorate of Clinical psychology thesis.
- The research will be shared with participants who completed this research.
- A presentation of the findings will be shared with local veteran breakfast clubs who advised on recruitment and research advertising.
- It will be submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal.
- Findings of the study will be shared with relevant veteran services such as Combat Stress.

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