



The Military Human: Understanding Military Culture & Transition Continuing Professional Development

Impact Report: October 2015 to June 2016

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Contents

Executive Introduction:	2
Section 1: The purpose of the Impact Report	
1.1 Introduction	3
1.2 Key Findings	4
Section 2: Background to the Military Culture CPD	
2.1 Background	5
2.1.1 The York St John University CPD model	6
2.1.2 Example of discussion themes	7
2.2 The Military Human: Understanding Military Culture and Transition	8
Section 3: Data gathering exercise	
3.1 Method	9
3.2 Initial findings: 8 months beginning October	10 -11
3.3 Initial findings: Impact on Service Delivery	12
3.4 Initial Results: October 2015 to June 2016	13 - 14
Conclusion	15
Free Text Comments	16
Acknowledgements	17
References	18

Executive Introduction

In today's climate of increased awareness around health and mental health issues and the important role they play in helping people lead healthy lives, there has been a significant move towards supporting veterans and their families in their transition to non-military life.

In response to this York St John University has developed a strategy to engage health and social care staff in supporting veterans and their families within the wider community.

This report provides information about the current impact of our CPD training – **The Military Human: Understanding Military Culture and Transition**.

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Section 1: The purpose of the Impact Report

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to assess the level of service delivery impact following attendance of the previously titled *Veterans (Military Culture) Awareness CPD* (Continuing Professional Development) study day provided by York St John University. The CPD has now evolved and become the concept known as *'The Military Human: Understanding Military Culture and Transition'*.

By extracting data from an ethically approved and ongoing data gathering exercise, we have begun to determine the impact outcomes that *'understanding military culture'* (NHS Constitution, 2015) has on service delivery when working with members of the ex-Armed Forces community.

Between the 15th October 2015 and 6th June 2016, 234 Survey Monkey data capture questionnaires have been issued to participants prior to attending the YSJU CPD with 83 Pre CPD responses and 49 Post CPD completions registered to date. The CPD data gathering exercise is an ongoing study with a further set of data retrieval planned for October 2016.

1.2 Key findings

- **85%** of staff report **High to Medium** Impact on Service Delivery (Figure: 1 - pg11)
- Initial evidence suggests that having an '*Understanding of Military Culture and Transition*' overall has a **High Impact** on identification, engagement and service delivery
- **72%** of staff report **High or Full** '*Understanding of Military Culture*' Post – CPD compared with 22% previously (Figure: 3 - pg12)
- **72%** of staff report **High or Full** knowledge of '*Military to Civilian Transition*' Post – CPD compared with 21% previously (Figure: 5 - pg15)

Section 2: Background to the Military Culture CPD

2.1 Background

Definition of a Veteran

“Anyone who has served for a least one day in Her Majesty’s Armed Forces (Regular of Reserve) or Merchant Navy Seafarers and Fishermen who served in a vessel at a time when it was operated to facilitate military operation by HM Armed Forces” (Department of Health, 2008).

In 2012, and at the suggestion of Health Education Yorkshire and the Humber, the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences developed a one-day awareness-raising Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme for health and social care professionals who may come into contact with members of the public who have served in the Armed Forces (Veterans). The programme aims to enable teams that work with veterans to engage with and effectively incorporate into their own services the growing range of specialised support, focused interventions and dedicated resources available to veterans.

Over 700 staff from a wide range of community support teams have attended the CPD from across the Yorkshire and Humber, North West and Coventry and Warwickshire regions.

Examples of staff attending:

Battle Back Manager, Occupational Therapists, Nurses, GP’s, Community Mental Health, Health Visitors, Counsellors, Psychotherapists, Clinical Psychologists, Social Workers, Reception staff and Administrators, Service Managers, Physiotherapists, Community Support Workers, NHS Clinical, IAPT High & Low Intensity staff, Cognitive Behavioural Therapists, Community Psychiatric Nurses, HR Manager, ex Armed Forces Charity Managers, Ward Manager, Head of Recovery Programmes, Housing and Social Care Workers, Regional Lead Veterans Services, Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners, Community Matron, Criminal Justice System, Military personnel, NHS Service Improvement Head, Healthcare, Chaplain, Local Authority staff, NHS England staff, Department of Health, MOD VAPC, Substance misuse, NHS L&D.

“Overall, a very useful course both informative and enjoyable, more importantly I believe it positively impacts on service delivery to veterans and helps us meet our obligation to the armed forces covenant”. (Jonathan Ogram CMHT Manager/N Yorkshire Veterans’ Lead Tees Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust)

“The session has enabled staff to understand and consider the needs of veterans and their families, raising their awareness and ensuring that they are mindful of the complexities of this group of service users. This has directly impacted on the way in which they conduct assessments and consider the options available”. (Jill Jinks Business Unit Manager South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust)

2.1.1 The York St John University CPD model

Following an extended period of time developing the YSJU CPD model a clear need for *'basic education – even among those with lead responsibility for veterans within their own organisations'* (Gray & Wood, 2014) has become apparent.

A number of key **themes** making up the structure and delivery content of the CPD have emerged which include:

- Factors that influence enlistment in the Armed Forces
- Military culture, training, ethos, standards and the military family
- Transition to civilian life for serving personnel and their families
- Reservists
- Identification of Veterans (Ask the question)
- Barriers to engagement & myth busting
- Armed Forces Covenant & NHS Constitution
- Support available from statutory and charitable organisations

"It's a subject where there isn't much information on or training delivered to professionals"

(Participant feedback)

To support participants' understanding of the cultural similarities and differences that exist between military and civilian life, a supportive yet challenging learning environment is created on the course by *'blending different media and learning formats such as short films, PowerPoint slides, interactive group discussion, information sharing and encouraging reflection through questions, observations and concerns as they arise'* (Gray & Wood, 2014).

"More aware of the military 'culture' and obstacles for accessing help".

(Participant feedback)

A timeline approach is adopted that follows a young person from the day that he/she first joins the armed forces to the experience of discharge, transition and life as a civilian. This timeline approach enables the group to follow the distinctive events that a person may experience during their military career and to explore how those events may influence an individual's mind-set and impact on their readjustment to civilian life.

"Highlighting the need for 'asking the question'"

(Participant feedback)

The interactive and inclusive approach to this CPD activity has been well received by all participants, with many commenting that they believe that whilst supporting material made available online is valuable, the face-to-face contact offered by the course and its delivery by an authentic leader is invaluable for developing an understanding of the complex issues raised. The CPD content continues to be developed with plans to offer a range of specific and targeted subject themes coming under ***'The Military Human'*** concept adopted by York St John University. (Web link below).

2.1.2 Examples of discussion themes

A number of discussion themes are incorporated within the YSJU CPD delivery to generate discussion and reflection around some of the key factors that can affect transition from military to civilian life such as:

- What do the Armed Forces do, and what does the community expect of them?
- Why do people join the Armed Forces?
- Who is a veteran?
- How may a veteran feel when they leave the Armed Forces?
- What might participants consider and be mindful of when working with veterans?
- Myth busting and facts

By using this approach, participants are encouraged to explore in depth the themes that may influence the military to civilian journey, where these influencers may originate from, and how by having an '*understanding*' of military life and culture, can contribute to a positive outcome with regard to identification and engagement of veterans who are faced with challenges arising from their experiences while serving in the military, or the circumstances surrounding their discharge.

Due to a comprehensive support package and guide provided, participants are able to identify barriers to engagement, incorporate strategies into their work environment and appropriately access recognised resources when supporting veterans and members of the ex-armed forces community.

“A good transition is one that enables ex-Service personnel to be sufficiently resilient to adapt successfully to civilian life, both now and in the future. This resilience includes financial, psychological, and emotional resilience, and encompasses the ex-Service person and their immediate families.” (Forces in Mind Trust, 2015)

“A Service leaver, and to some extent their family, might feel they are losing their vocation, identity and status when leaving the Service to which they have been physically and emotionally committed” (Connelly, 2015)

2.2 The Military Human: Understanding Military Culture & Transition CPD

York St John University has created and developed the concept of the **'Military Human'**. The concept reflects on, and explores the experiences and lifestyle that a person undergoes as part of the military whilst acknowledging that a military person is not only a uniformed soldier, sailor, airman or airwoman, but is also a *'human being'* who wears or has worn a uniform at some time in their life. The concept acknowledges that a former member of the armed forces also known as a *'veteran'*, doesn't wear a uniform but recognises that some sources use illustrations of uniformed personnel when portraying images of veterans' which can lead to confusing messages. The definition of critical words such as *'veteran'* are discussed and how interpretations can significantly differ within military and civilian cultures.

"The Military Human"

By acknowledging the *'Human element'* participants can begin to have an *'understanding of military culture'* (NHS Constitution, 2015) and empathise with some of the *'human'* emotional challenges

"A Veteran doesn't wear a uniform"

faced by military personnel, especially around bereavement, the importance of family, teamwork and the significant investment of *'human'* emotions required to be part of a military team where the risk of serious injury or loss of life are part of military

operations and decision making. This suggests that being in the military is not only an occupation, but also a lifestyle requiring its personnel to be on call for 24 hours a day 365 days a year, having an impact on both serving personnel and their families. It could therefore be argued that *'the differences between military and civilian life are underestimated'* (FIMT, 2015) as most, but not all civilian occupations do not expect staff to commit in this way.

By exploring the importance and definition of *'family'* within military and non-military settings, it is possible to acknowledge the similarities, whilst comparing the differences. Both settings recognise the extent of *'human'* emotions invested in *'families'*, however, when factoring in the high level of risk attributed to military operations, it is apparent that military personnel experience an intense *'physical and emotional'* (Connelly, 2015) attachment

"On call for 24 hours a day, 365 days a year"

"Intense physical and emotional attachment to their comrades"

to their comrades based on survival, potential serious injury or loss of life.

This suggests that although some commentators argue that the military role is a job or occupation as any other, being in the military requires individuals to not only carry out their roles effectively, but in addition it requires an intense emotional investment based around family, values, ethos and lifestyle not always replicated in civilian roles, but certainly unique to military settings.

By recognising the similarities and differences between military and civilian cultures, participants are able to consider and apply this understanding to their professional roles and create a *'bridge'* of understanding for not only the practitioner, but also the patient/client/service user, with the intention of creating an environment to enable a positive effect on engagement and outcomes.

Section 3: Data gathering exercise

3.1 Method

To assess the impact of the **Military Human: Understanding Military Culture and Transition CPD** a data gathering exercise was performed between 15th October 2015 and 6th June 2016. The exercise is ongoing with a 12 month report planned for October 2016.

What was the question?

Does having an '*understanding of military culture*' have a positive impact on identification and engagement of veterans accessing services in the community?

A wide range of questions continue to be asked via Survey Monkey prior to participants attending the YSJU CPD with a 3-month follow-up exercise providing evidence of impact outcomes.

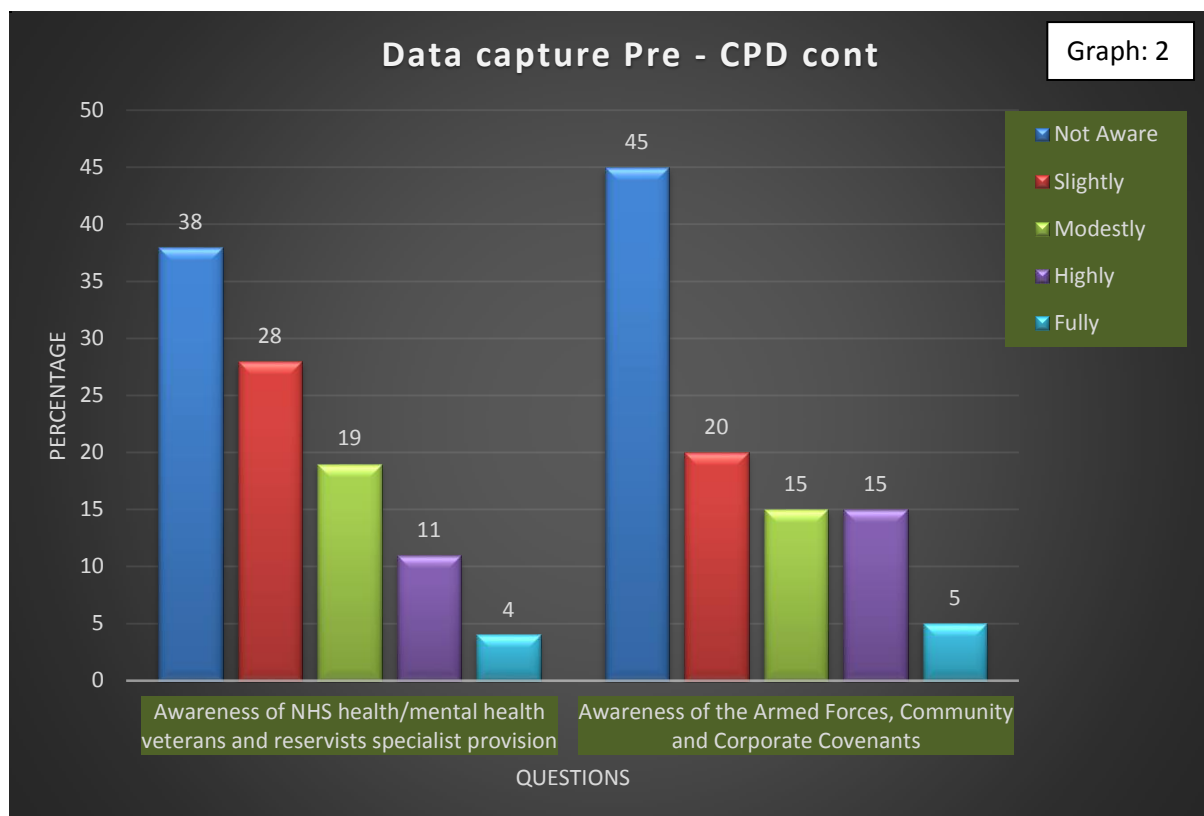
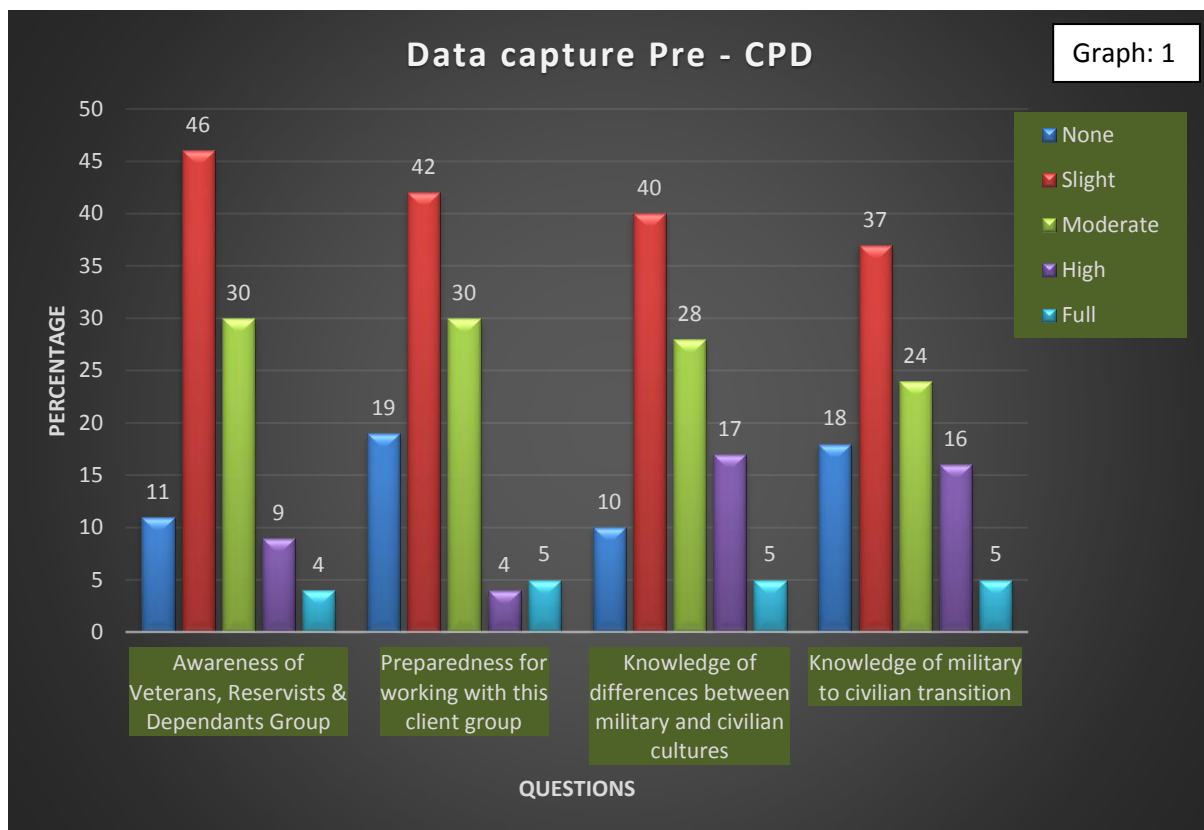
Pre-CPD questions include:

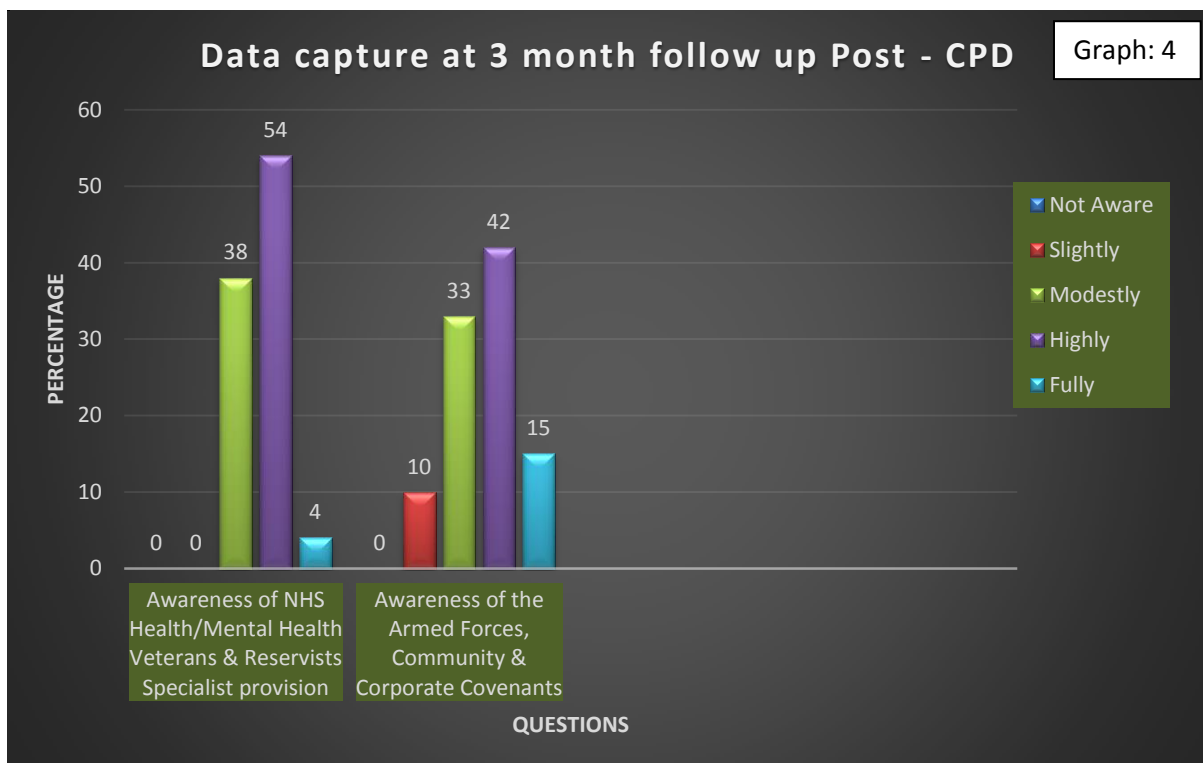
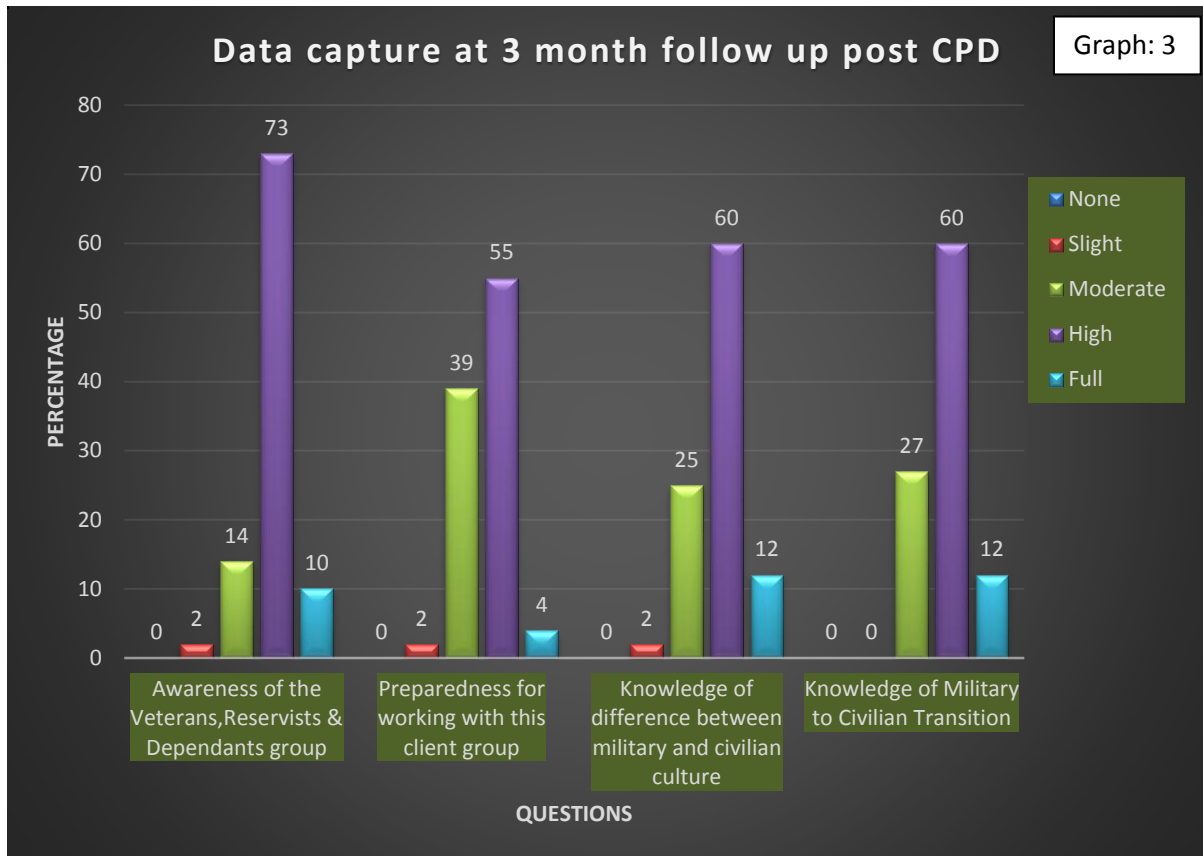
- Awareness of the veterans, reservists and dependants group
- Preparedness to work with veterans
- Knowledge of military culture
- Knowledge of transition
- NHS provision
- Armed Forces, Community and Corporate Covenants

Post – CPD 3 Month follow up questions include:

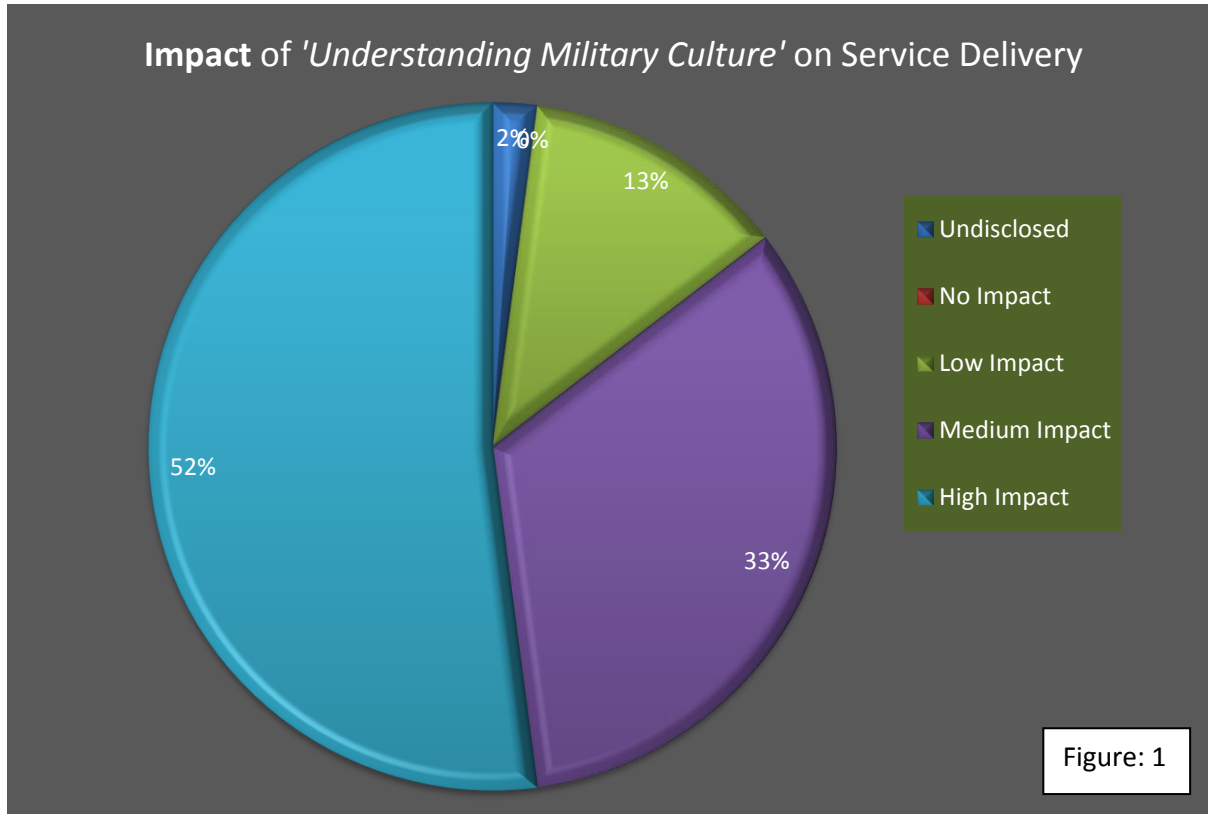
- Awareness of the veterans, reservists and dependants group
- Preparedness to work with veterans
- Knowledge of military culture
- Knowledge of transition
- NHS provision
- Armed Forces, Community and Corporate Covenants
- Impact on service delivery

3.2 Initial findings: 8 months beginning October





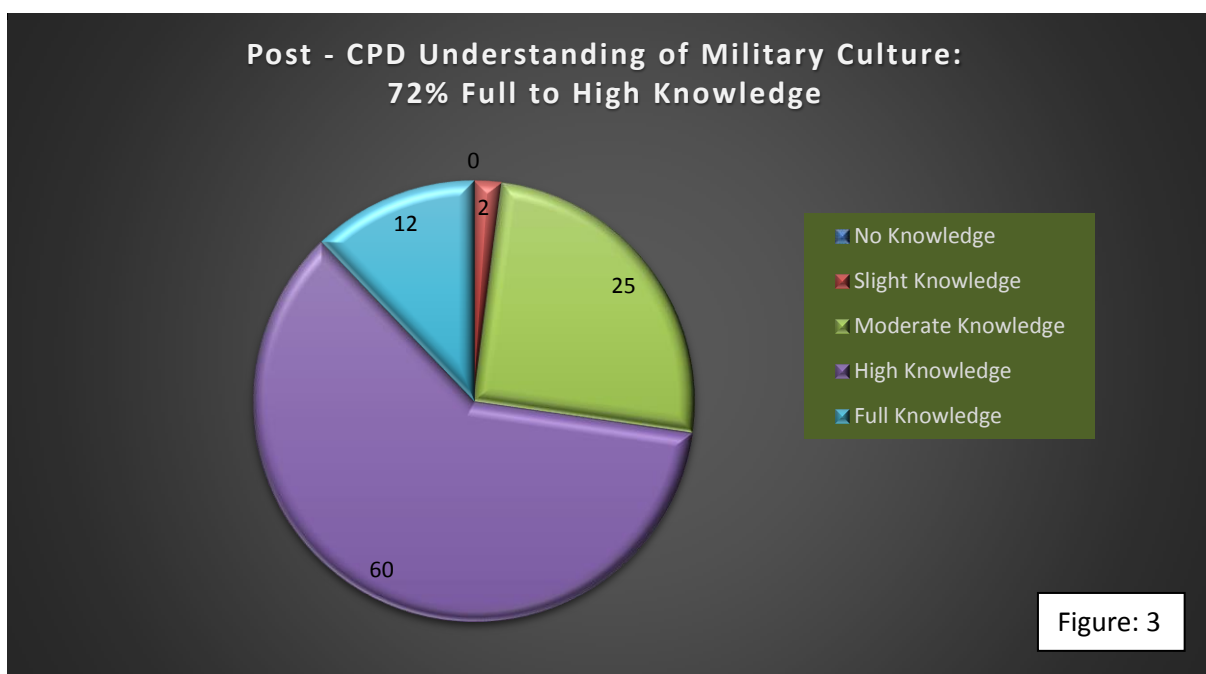
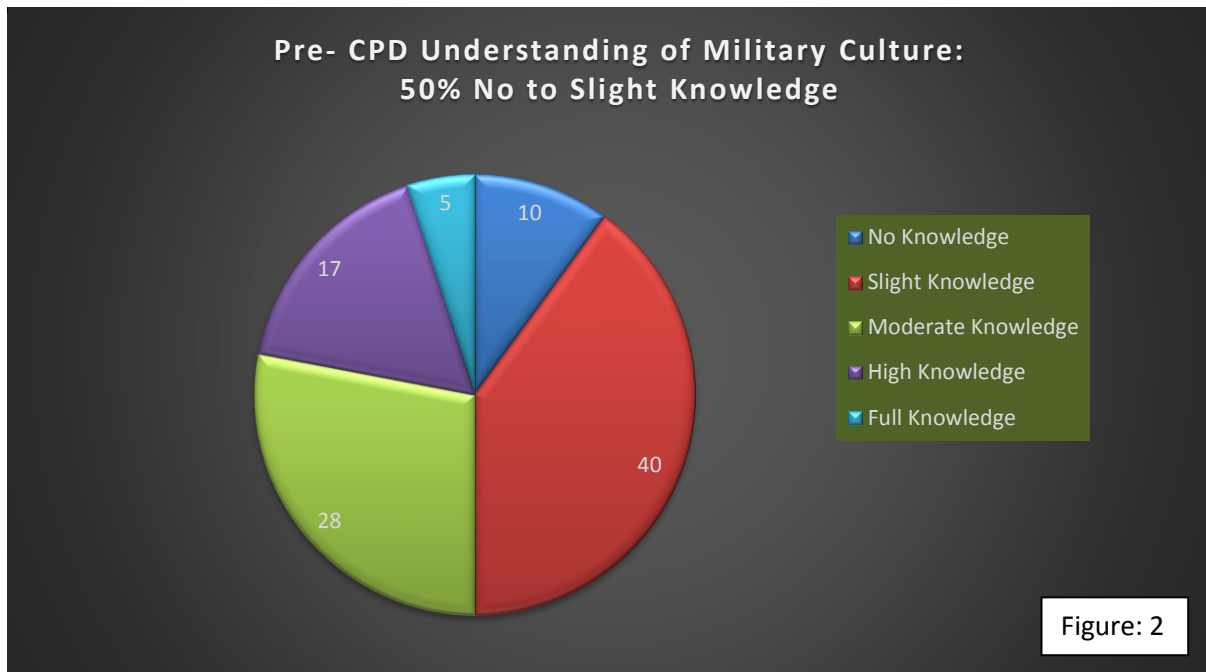
3.3 Initial Results: Impact on service delivery



Results:

- **85%** of staff report **High to Medium Impact** on Service Delivery

3.4 Initial Results: October 2015 – June 2016 (8 months)



**Pre - CPD Knowledge of Military to Civilian Transition:
55% No to Slight knowledge**

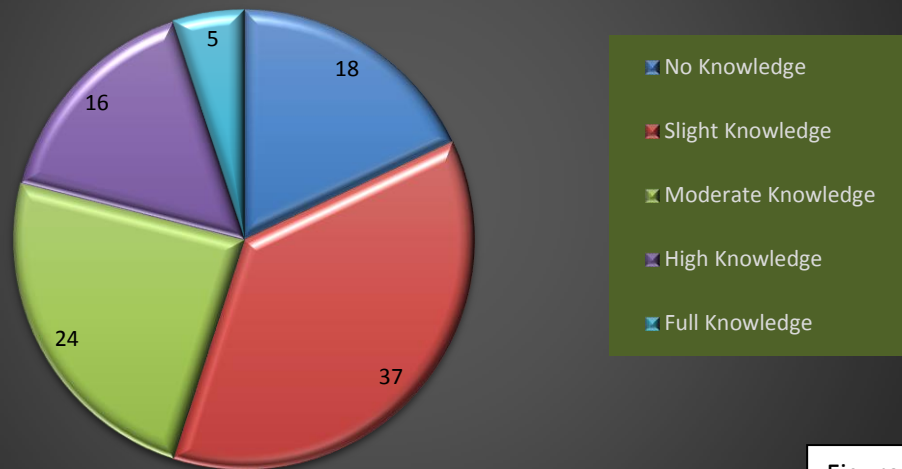


Figure: 4

**Post - CPD Knowledge of Military to Civilian Transition:
72% High to Full Knowledge**

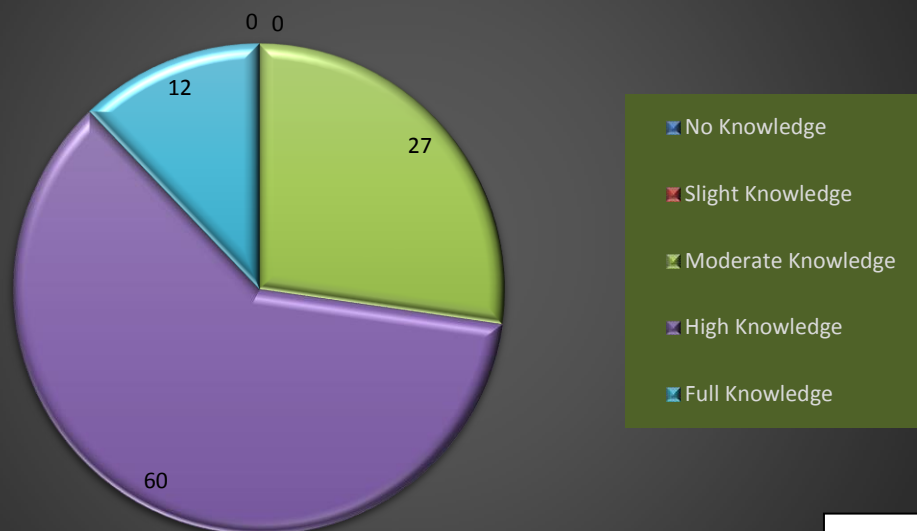


Figure: 5

Result:

- **72%** of staff report **Full or High** 'Understanding of Military Culture' Post – CPD compared with 22% previously
- **72%** of staff report **Full or High** knowledge of 'Military to Civilian Transition' Post – CPD compared with 21% previously

Conclusion:

Initial evidence following 6 months of data capture suggests that staff who have attended the Military Human: Understanding Military Culture and Transition CPD, and having an '*understanding of military culture and transition*' overall has a **High Impact** on identification and engagement with community service provision by members of the ex-armed forces community (Veterans).

Initial evidence also suggests that the **Military Human: Understanding Military Culture and Transition CPD** (*formerly Veterans Military Culture Awareness*) provides the appropriate education and learning environment for participants to explore and understand the issues that can create barriers to engagement with community support services.

Participant feedback indicates that by having an understanding of the unique military culture, intense emotional commitment to others and the transition journey can empower professionals and increase confidence when working with veterans by dispelling popular myths. Free text comments also indicate that this can have a positive effect on professional relationships between patient/client/service user and practitioner/service provider, contributing to building trust and commitment to engage, both of which contribute to the values, standards and ethos which are the cornerstones of military life.

Free text comments:

"Definitely came out with lots of information and more awareness - I know where to start when a veteran is identified which I wouldn't have before!"

"It helped me be aware of what to look out for in veterans, (triggers etc)".

"It was something that I had not been fully aware of before".

"It's one of the initial points I look at now when dealing with clients"

"I hope that this is a mandatory course."

"It was really useful especially as the trainer was a real-life veteran".

"It is a much neglected area in social work with adults, with many workers being unaware that they don't know what they don't know, and how much it shapes someone's whole culture".

"I now always ask, and met my first veteran last week. He was surprised that I asked and we had a good chat which I wouldn't have had without this training"

"Asking the Veteran question is now embedded into my work"

"I cannot stress enough how excellent this training was".

"It far exceeded all expectations".

"I would highly recommend this for any health worker"

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable support, advice and input provided by colleagues at York St John University without whom this impact report could not have been compiled. In particular Peter Gray (former Associate Dean for Development) for providing the initial opportunity to develop the Veterans and Families field of studies at York St John University.

I would like to also acknowledge Emma Gilmartin (Business Development and Communications Officer) for formulating and gathering the data that makes up the findings of the report, Robert Avery (Senior Lecturer) for his advice and peer review and Judith Barbaro – Brown (Head of Programme Interdisciplinary CPD) for proof reading and supporting the development of 'The Military Human' concept.

The opportunity and support provided by current senior staff, in particular Rob Aitken (Dean of the Faculty of Health & Life Sciences) and Frances Dodd (Head of Department Occupation and Wellbeing) is also recognised, as without their encouragement and willingness to explore a new field of study and the 'Military Human' concept, a valuable education tool to support members of the community who are ex armed forces and their families, would not have emerged.

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