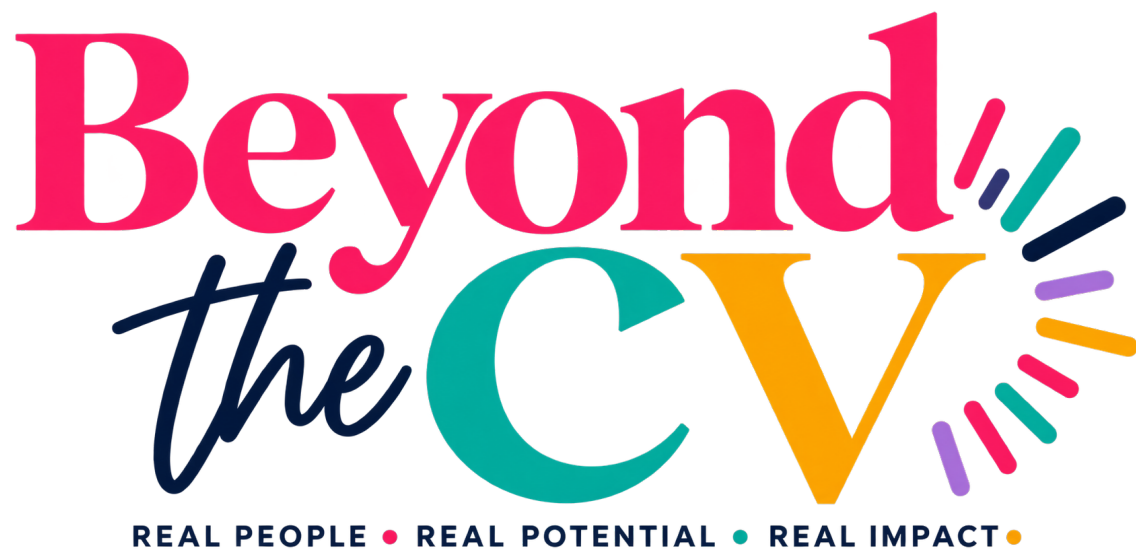




LOOKING BEYOND THE CV

A Practical Recruitment Guide

Tools for employers, hiring managers and HR teams to recognise skills, assess candidates fairly and recruit without assumptions.

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FREE EMPLOYER RESOURCE | OCTOBER 2026

01 A fairer way to recruit

A CV is a useful summary, but it cannot tell the whole story. Employment gaps, changes of sector and short-term roles can have many explanations. For some military spouses and partners, postings or family circumstances have shaped the opportunities available to them.

Beyond the CV exists to encourage employers to recognise talent that may not follow a conventional career path. This guide turns that principle into practical recruitment decisions.

We are not asking you to lower the bar. We are asking you to stop moving it.

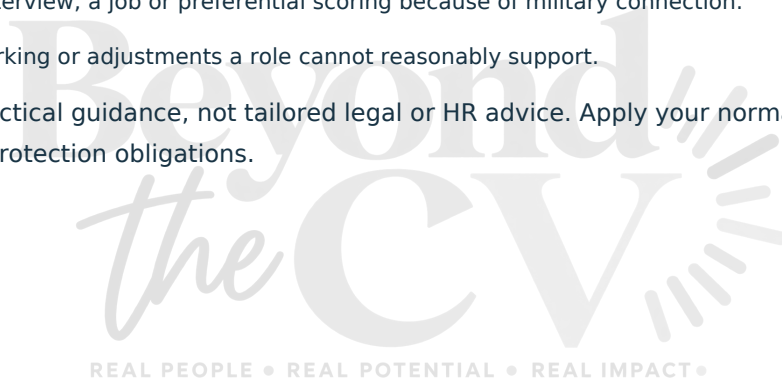
What fair recruitment looks like

- Define the skills genuinely needed to perform the role.
- Use consistent, job-related questions and criteria for all applicants.
- Invite evidence from paid work, self-employment, study, volunteering and other relevant experience.
- Offer reasonable opportunities for candidates to explain career transitions without pressuring them to disclose private family details.

What it does not mean

- Assuming every military spouse or partner has the same experiences or skills.
- Guaranteeing an interview, a job or preferential scoring because of military connection.
- Offering remote working or adjustments a role cannot reasonably support.

This resource is practical guidance, not tailored legal or HR advice. Apply your normal recruitment, equality and data-protection obligations.



02 Start with the job, not the ideal CV

Before advertising, separate what the job truly requires from what has simply become familiar in previous job descriptions.

A useful three-part review

Question	Example
What must someone be able to do from day one?	Handle confidential information accurately and communicate with customers.
What could be learned with training?	A particular case-management system or internal process.
What is genuinely essential?	A legally required qualification, professional registration or specific licence where applicable.

Watch for accidental barriers

- “Recent continuous experience” may exclude people with relevant skills and a career break.
- “Must live locally” may be unnecessary if the role is genuinely location-independent.
- “Five years in the same industry” may not be essential where transferable experience would suffice.
- “Must be flexible at all times” is vague; specify the actual working pattern.

Try this instead

Describe the outcomes you need, then invite applicants to show how they can achieve them.

A fair process still allows employers to insist on essential qualifications, experience, attendance or availability where these are genuinely needed.

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03 Write an advert that opens doors

Job adverts can communicate opportunity or unintentionally signal that only one type of career history will be considered.

Instead of / consider

Instead of...	Consider...
"Uninterrupted employment history required."	"Tell us about relevant experience and skills, including non-linear career paths."
"Only candidates with an identical background."	"We welcome transferable skills from other sectors where they meet the role requirements."
"Remote role" with no detail.	"Home-based within the UK; core hours 10am-3pm; occasional travel to our office."
"Must have no gaps in CV."	"Career breaks will not automatically disadvantage applicants."

Copy-ready advert wording

We assess applicants against the requirements of the role. We welcome relevant experience gained through employment, self-employment, education, volunteering and other settings. Career breaks or changes of direction will not automatically exclude you.

Be specific about salary range, location, required travel, working hours, training and genuine flexibility. Avoid promising arrangements you cannot provide.

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04 Look beyond employment gaps

An employment gap is not a measure of capability. It may reflect caring responsibilities, relocation, study, health, redundancy, a career change or personal choice. Employers should avoid assumptions and focus on the role.

Questions that help

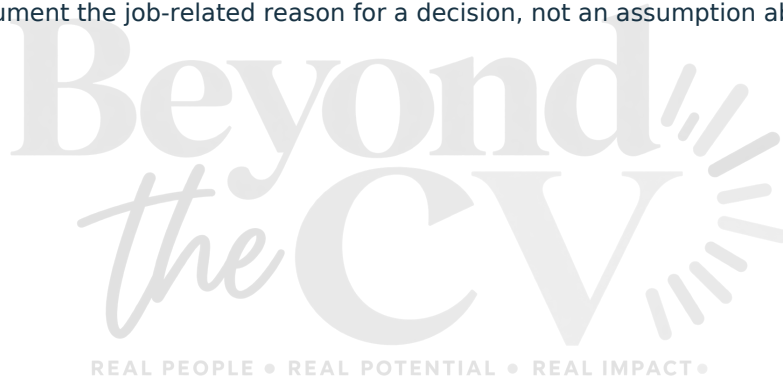
- “Which experiences have best prepared you for the responsibilities of this role?”
- “Can you give an example of a time you learned a new system or process?”
- “What would help you get up to speed in your first few weeks?”
- “Is there anything relevant to your experience you would like us to understand that is not obvious from your CV?”

Questions to avoid

- Do not assume a military partner will relocate soon, be unavailable during deployments or struggle with childcare.
- Avoid intrusive questions about a partner’s role, future postings, family plans or childcare arrangements.
- Do not treat an explanation of a career break as an invitation to probe private circumstances.

Ask every candidate what they can contribute. Do not ask one candidate to justify their family life.

Good practice: document the job-related reason for a decision, not an assumption about someone’s background.



05 Recognise transferable skills

Transferable skills should be evidenced, not presumed. A candidate may demonstrate them through work, qualifications, volunteering, community roles, self-employment or life experience.

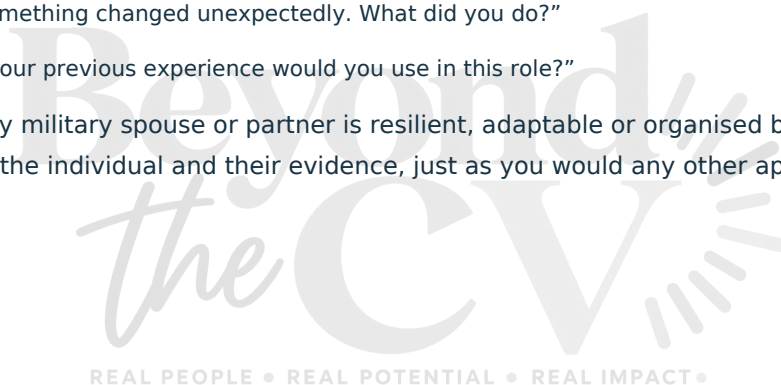
From experience to evidence

Experience described	Evidence to explore
Organised a community fundraising event	Planning, stakeholder communication, budgeting and delivery against deadlines.
Changed sectors after relocation	Learning new systems, adapting to new environments and applying existing expertise.
Managed a small online business	Customer service, record-keeping, marketing, financial organisation and problem-solving.
Completed study alongside other commitments	Self-management, research, meeting deadlines and sustained learning.

Ask for examples

- “Tell us about a task you organised from start to finish. What was your contribution?”
- “Describe a time something changed unexpectedly. What did you do?”
- “Which skills from your previous experience would you use in this role?”

Important: not every military spouse or partner is resilient, adaptable or organised by virtue of their connection. Assess the individual and their evidence, just as you would any other applicant.



06 Interview consistently and fairly

A structured interview helps candidates understand what is being assessed and makes decisions easier to explain.

Simple interview approach

- Ask the same core job-related questions of every candidate for the same vacancy.
- Use a consistent scoring guide with examples of what strong evidence looks like.
- Allow candidates to draw on different types of relevant experience.
- Tell applicants the interview format and any practical assessment in advance.
- Consider reasonable interview scheduling or remote participation where practicable.

Example scoring grid

Criterion	Score (1-5)	Evidence / notes
Customer communication	—	_____
Accuracy and organisation	—	_____
Learning and adaptability	—	_____
Role-specific requirement	—	_____

Suggested score meanings

1 = little relevant evidence; 3 = meets the stated requirement; 5 = strong, specific evidence above the requirement. Agree your criteria before interviews and record decisions consistently.

Score the answer, not the accent, career route or family circumstances.

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07 Make flexibility clear and realistic

Flexible working is not a single model. Some roles can be fully remote; others require on-site attendance, fixed shifts or customer-facing hours. Clarity is more useful than a vague promise.

Options to consider where operationally workable

- Defined core hours with some flexibility at the start or end of the day.
- Hybrid working or remote attendance for suitable tasks.
- Part-time roles, job shares or predictable shift patterns.
- Online interviews and remote onboarding where practical.
- Advance notice of travel, mandatory meetings or busy periods.

Questions for the employer

- Which duties genuinely require someone to be on site?
- What equipment, information-security measures or supervision would remote work require?
- Can the role be performed effectively if an employee relocates within the UK?
- What support is realistic during a change in family circumstances?

Do not promise portability across borders without checking tax, employment, regulatory, insurance and data-security implications. Employees may have statutory flexible-working rights; obtain current HR or legal advice when needed.

Be honest about what you can offer. A clear “no” is better than a misleading “yes”.



08 A practical recruitment checklist

Use this before publishing your next vacancy. Tick the actions that are appropriate for the role and your organisation.

Before advertising

- ☐ Essential and desirable criteria are clearly separated.
- ☐ The advert describes duties, hours, location and flexibility accurately.
- ☐ Unnecessary requirements for continuous experience have been removed.

During shortlisting

- ☐ Applications are assessed against consistent, documented criteria.
- ☐ Transferable experience is considered where relevant.
- ☐ Employment gaps do not trigger automatic rejection.

During interviews

- ☐ Candidates receive clear information about the process.
- ☐ Core questions and scoring are consistent.
- ☐ Questions focus on suitability, not assumptions about family life.

After selection

- ☐ Decisions are recorded against job-related evidence.
- ☐ The successful candidate receives a clear account of expectations and support.
- ☐ The recruitment process is reviewed for barriers that can reasonably be removed.

One small change to a recruitment process can open a door without lowering a single standard.

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09 Put it into practice with Beyond the CV

You do not need to overhaul your organisation overnight. Start with one job description, one conversation or one recruitment process.

Three actions you can take this month

- Review: choose a recent advert and identify requirements that may not be essential.
- Discuss: ask your hiring managers how they assess career gaps and transferable skills.
- Test: use the checklist and structured questions in this guide for your next suitable vacancy.

A note from our founders

Beyond the CV was established by Joanne Bowmer and Amy Lovely following an extraordinary response to a remote vacancy at Joanne's legal business: 121 applications from military spouses and partners in 24 hours. The response helped reveal how many people were looking for a fair opportunity to demonstrate what they could offer.

Joanne and Amy are happy to speak with employers, managers, recruiters and HR teams about military family life and practical recruitment approaches - completely free of charge. An informal conversation, a team discussion or a wider session can all be a useful starting point.

No membership fee. No obligation. Just a conversation.

Explore resources, real stories and the Employer Charter: www.btcv.co.uk

Get in touch: visit www.btcv.co.uk to contact Joanne and Amy.

This publication offers general information for UK employers. It is not legal advice and does not replace current professional guidance on recruitment, equality, data protection, flexible working or overseas employment.

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