



MILITARY SPOUSE & PARTNER EMPLOYMENT GUIDE

A practical guide for employers, recruiters and HR teams who want to recognise talent beyond the traditional CV.

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FREE EMPLOYER RESOURCE | OCTOBER 2026

01 A welcome from Beyond the CV

Behind every application is a person - not simply an employment history. Military spouses and partners may bring professional qualifications, previous careers, volunteering, caring experience and ambitions that are not immediately obvious from a conventional CV.

Beyond the CV was founded by Joanne Bowmer and Amy Lovely after 121 military spouses and partners applied for one remote vacancy at Joanne's legal business in just 24 hours. The volume of interest highlighted how much ability and aspiration can sit behind an unconventional career path.

This guide is designed to help employers understand some of the circumstances military families navigate, ask better recruitment questions and consider practical adjustments where they make sense.

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

What this guide is - and is not

- A practical starting point for fair recruitment and workplace conversations.
- Relevant to businesses of different sizes, including those unable to offer remote work.
- Not a requirement to recruit on the basis of military connection or to make promises a business cannot keep.
- Not a substitute for tailored legal or HR advice.

Our principle: military spouses and partners deserve to be assessed as individuals, on their skills, suitability and potential - just like every other applicant.

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02 Understanding military family life

There is no single military family experience. Some families move frequently; others remain in one place. Some face long deployments or separation; others do not. Employment decisions should never be based on assumptions about a candidate's home life.

Postings and relocation

A new posting may involve moving to another part of the UK or overseas. A partner can lose access to local employers, professional networks, training opportunities and continuity of employment. Some families live apart to protect a partner's career or children's education.

Deployment and separation

When a serving person is away, their partner may take on more household, caring and logistical responsibilities. The impact varies widely, and not every spouse or partner has children or caring responsibilities.

Qualifications and career continuity

A qualified professional may have moved between regions or countries, changed sectors or accepted work below their qualification level. Others have built valuable experience through community projects, volunteering, self-employment or study.

Transition out of service

The employment picture can change again when a serving person leaves the Armed Forces. Relocation, housing decisions and new civilian work arrangements can affect the whole household.

Ask what the individual can do - not what you assume military life will prevent them from doing.

03 Understanding the employment challenges

An employment gap is not a verdict

A period outside paid employment may reflect relocation, caring responsibilities, education, health, a lack of suitable local roles or a personal decision. It does not, by itself, establish someone's motivation or ability.

Short roles may have a reasonable explanation

A candidate may have held several short-term positions because of moves or changing circumstances. Look at the skills and results from those roles rather than counting job changes alone.

Location can narrow opportunity

Where a family lives may not be wholly within their control. Advertising genuinely location-independent roles as such can broaden an employer's applicant pool, while clear on-site requirements help candidates make informed decisions.

Career progression can be interrupted

A candidate may have paused professional training, missed promotion cycles or changed industry. Consider current capability and potential for development alongside the precise sequence of past roles.

A fair question to ask

Instead of "Why have you moved jobs so often?", try: "Would you like to tell us about the different roles you have held and the skills you would bring to this position?"

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04 Recognising skills beyond the CV

Military spouses and partners are not automatically more adaptable, resilient or organised than anyone else. The key is to identify evidence of relevant skills in each applicant's own experience.

Experience that may be worth exploring

- Organisation: coordinating projects, events, study, work or family logistics.
- Communication: supporting customers, colleagues, community groups or distributed teams.
- Problem-solving: resolving practical challenges and adjusting to changing circumstances.
- Digital skills: remote collaboration, administration, software and online learning.
- Leadership: supervising colleagues, leading volunteer activities or running a business.
- Learning: qualifications, training, self-directed study and professional development.

Assess evidence, not labels

Invite candidates to give examples of how they have used relevant skills. Apply the same selection criteria to everyone, whether their evidence comes from paid work, education, volunteering or other appropriate experience.

Transferable skills should be demonstrated and assessed - not assumed.

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05 Recruitment without assumptions

Before advertising

- Separate essential requirements from preferences.
- State location, working hours and any flexibility accurately.
- Consider whether equivalent experience could meet a qualification or sector-experience requirement, where appropriate.
- Use accessible language and explain the selection process.

During shortlisting and interviews

- Score applicants against the same job-related criteria.
- Avoid drawing conclusions from gaps, moves, surnames or military connections.
- Ask consistent, relevant questions about skills and examples.
- Offer reasonable interview scheduling options where practicable.
- Make adjustments required by law and consider accessibility for all candidates.

Questions that help

“What relevant skills have you developed across your different roles?”

“Can you give an example of solving a problem or learning a new process?”

“What support or working arrangements would help you perform this role effectively?”

Important: avoid intrusive questions about a partner’s service, deployments or future postings.

Seek only information genuinely necessary for the role and handle personal information appropriately.

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06 Practical support employers can consider

Support should be realistic, consistent and compatible with the role. Not every suggestion will be appropriate for every organisation.

For a small business

- Be clear about the hours and location a role genuinely requires.
- Consider a predictable rota, some flexibility in start times or occasional remote tasks if workable.
- Use video interviews when they are suitable.
- Provide clear induction and training rather than assuming a non-linear CV means a lack of ability.

For larger organisations

- Review recruitment criteria for unnecessary barriers.
- Train hiring managers to assess transferable skills consistently.
- Consider location-flexible roles where operationally feasible.
- Offer managers practical guidance on responding to changes in employees' circumstances.
- Evaluate retention, employee experience and recruitment outcomes.

For every employer

Talk to the employee or candidate rather than guessing what they need. Explain what the business can offer, what it cannot offer and why. Apply policies fairly, taking account of legal obligations and individual circumstances.

You do not need to do everything. Consider what you can do well.

07 The business case

Fairer recruitment can widen the pool of people considered for a vacancy. Where a role supports it, flexibility may also help employers recruit beyond their immediate area and retain employees whose circumstances change. These are potential benefits, not guarantees.

A real example: JB Property Law

After 121 military spouses and partners applied for one remote vacancy, JB Property Law could not employ everyone. As the business grew and a genuine need arose, it returned to the original applicant pool and offered Macey, a military partner and mother of three, a remote Administrative Assistant role.

The role met a business need while offering Macey an opportunity to gain experience and develop a career that could potentially continue through future moves. Neither side was doing the other a favour: both had something valuable to offer.

The lesson for employers

A fair approach is not about creating unsuitable jobs or guaranteeing flexibility. It is about recognising when a practical arrangement can work for both the employer and the employee.

What to measure

- Quality and diversity of the applicant pool.
- Time to recruit and suitability of shortlisted candidates.
- Employee retention, performance and development.
- Manager and employee feedback on working arrangements.

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08 Employer action checklist

Use these prompts at your next recruitment or people-management meeting. They are a starting point, not a compliance audit.

- ☐ Job adverts: Have we clearly distinguished essential criteria from preferences?
- ☐ Career history: Do we assess relevant evidence rather than automatically discount gaps or moves?
- ☐ Flexibility: Have we stated honestly what working arrangements are possible?
- ☐ Interviews: Are questions consistent, job-related and accessible?
- ☐ Skills: Do we recognise relevant experience from different settings?
- ☐ Managers: Do our managers know how to discuss individual circumstances respectfully?
- ☐ Development: Can employees access appropriate training and progression?
- ☐ Review: Do we ask what is working and make changes when appropriate?

One practical change is a worthwhile place to start.



09 Keep the conversation going

Beyond the CV offers free, informal conversations with employers, HR teams, recruiters and business owners who want to understand military family life and explore practical approaches to employment.

Joanne Bowmer and Amy Lovely are happy to speak with a small business owner, an HR team or a wider workforce. The discussion can cover military family circumstances, transferable skills, fair recruitment and ideas that may work in your organisation.

No charge. No membership requirement. No obligation.

You do not need to employ hundreds of people or have a fully remote workforce. You only need to be willing to listen and explore what is possible.

**Let's have a conversation.
www.btcv.co.uk**

Explore more

Visit www.btcv.co.uk for real stories, employer resources and information about the Beyond the CV Employer Charter.

Joanne Bowmer & Amy Lovely
Co-founders, Beyond the CV

This guide provides general information, not individual employment-law advice. Review your organisation's policies and obtain professional advice where needed. © Beyond the CV, 2026.