



ACTIVITY REPORT

2017 - 2018



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This report details the activity of X-Forces Enterprise from 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018.

X-Forces™ Enterprise, a social enterprise, is the trading name of X-Forces (XF) CIC. This company is registered in England & Wales with Company Registration No. 08034041.

“ It is becoming increasingly apparent... that the enthusiasm and enterprise of the cohort of those men and women leaving the Armed Forces... is there to be harnessed to the benefit not only of the individuals concerned but to our nation as a whole.”

Rt Hon Lord Young of Graffham CH

HELPING YOU BE THE BEST IN BUSINESS

PATRON'S MESSAGE

Rt Hon Lord Young of
Graffham CH

Patron,
X-Forces Enterprise



It was during the time we were launching the Start Up Loans programme that I heard of the difficulties faced by those leaving the Armed Forces. A chance encounter with Ren Kapur shortly after led to X-Forces Enterprise (XFE) becoming the exclusive delivery partner for the military community, to help them transition through enterprise. In the five years since that meeting, XFE has grown into an award-winning Social Enterprise that has enabled over 1250 people from the Armed Forces community to start their own businesses.

We have not done this by ourselves. From the very beginning we have received the support and collaboration of some of the United Kingdom's leading companies which has enabled our new entrepreneurs receiving not only the support but the knowledge that is so essential to success. Indeed it is the partnership between large companies and our start-ups that has been the secret of our success along with the enthusiasm and determination of all involved with XFE.

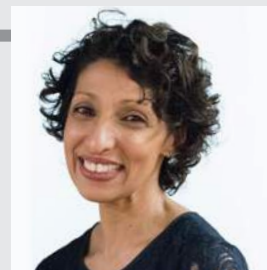
I am delighted that 2017/18 was another successful year as is clear from this Activity Report. It is becoming increasingly apparent, as the years go by, that the enthusiasm and enterprise of the cohort of those men and women leaving the Armed Forces, together with their spouses, is there to be harnessed to the benefit not only of the individuals concerned but to our nation as a whole.

I am proud of all their efforts and to be their Patron.

CEO'S MESSAGE

Ren Kapur MBE

CEO,
X-Forces Enterprise



There is an ethos and set of values by which the military community live and work; leave no one behind and work together as a team. Likewise, in the X-Forces Enterprise (XFE) community, established and growing businesses provide the next generation of support for the new businesses coming through.

Furthermore, stakeholders work with us to enhance the power of the network and build on valuable knowledge exchange to create a circle of success.

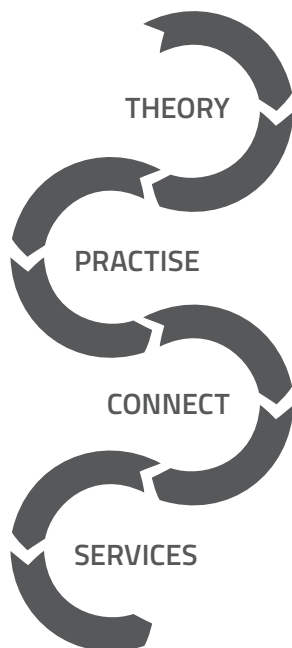
Leading from the front, XFE is evolving and scaling; walking the steps in unison with the beneficiaries and creating new opportunities to solve problems and break glass ceilings.

In this last year we have supported XFE businesses with new learning forums, such as masterclasses for customer acquisition, and actively partnered them with big business. We link them with new services as they grow locally, nationally and now internationally.

The tenacity, endeavour and desire to succeed shown by beneficiaries is a great example to us all.

GUARDROOM TO BOARDROOM

The X-Forces Enterprise development journey begins by providing business **theory** which enables new entrepreneurs to **practise** their skills on their ideas with specialist support. They are then **connected** with the tailored training and networks they may need and, finally, signposted to **services** within the community to help establish their businesses and go on to grow.



2017-18 ACTIVITY IN NUMBERS



275

BUSINESS OWNERS supported with launch and growth aspirations



386

BUSINESS PLANS developed and appraised



£2.77m

OF FUNDING facilitated



1027

BENEFICIARIES engaged in training



8961

HOURS of enterprise training



at least
592
MENTORING
APPOINTMENTS



69
WOUNDED, INJURED
AND SICK
supported to decide if
self-employment could
be right for them



1
POLICY CHANGE
Self-employment is now
included in the Covenant
guidelines

SNAPSHOT STATS SINCE LAUNCH

£12.5m
OF SEED FUNDING
accessed by beneficiaries

1282
BUSINESSES OWNERS
supported with launch and
growth aspirations

28.9%
FEMALE
members make up
the complete cohort

93%
SUCCESS RATE
of micro funding

2
POLICY CHANGES
influenced

THE XFE FIVE STEPS

Having defined steps in the approach to support people helps in knowing where they can start.

Discovery - Understanding oneself with an introduction to the pros, cons and realities of business in order to make an informed decision about pursuing self-employment.


Business Planning - Breaking down the business plan into easy segments, guided by Business Advisors, from the initial idea to writing a well-structured plan.

Reflection - A vital step to reflect and understand the areas to work on for the business to succeed, and in which areas support is needed to develop skills, tools and networks to give the best start.

Funding and Launch - Should the decision be made to progress, X-Forces Enterprise (XFE) will help to navigate the best route to funding and support the launch of the new business.

Ongoing Support - Whether choosing to start a business or take up an employed role, a network of expert mentors is available to the XFE community, across industry sectors, offering knowledge, advice and reassurance.





“ Having no income for a period of time was the main obstacle, but I love the freedom that comes with having your own business.”

CASE STUDY BEN PRICE

After eight years in the Army as a Military Intelligence Analyst, Ben had seen more than his fair share of injuries. Fuelled by a desire for independence combined with his passion for human performance, Ben launched **The Fitness Masters**, an online strength and mobility coaching business.

Ben now has a member subscription scheme and an app to support clients with their training.

COLLABORATION, COLLABORATION, COLLABORATION

THE COMMUNITY

FOUR STAKEHOLDERS: ONE MISSION

X-Forces Enterprise (XFE) focuses stakeholder resources to maximise impact for beneficiaries.

BENEFICIARIES

The core purpose is to support and do best by the beneficiaries. These are made up of Service leavers, veterans, spouses, reservists, cadets, wounded injured and sick and the wider Armed Forces family.

CHARITY

XFE continues to forge strong and sustainable relationships with third sector partners to ensure that beneficiary provision is at the heart of community activity, giving optimum support at the right time.

BIG BUSINESS

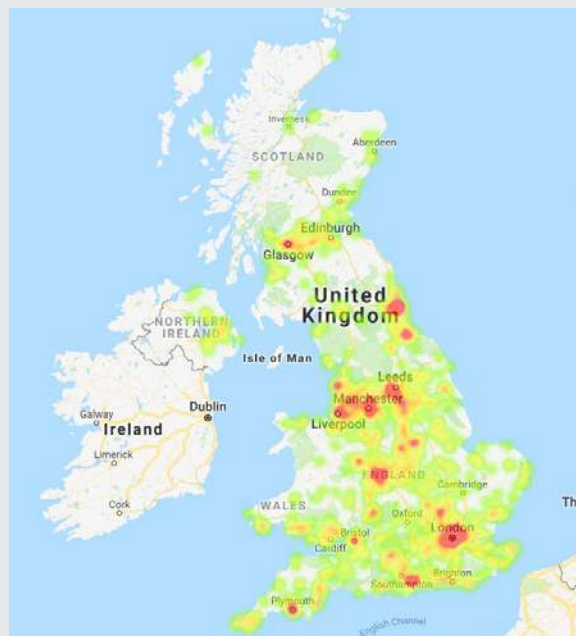
Big Business has a great role to play to support small business; from doing societal good to making commercial sense in the supply chain. XFE channels and adds energy to the UK's corporate pledges of support for military businesses.

GOVERNMENT

XFE is not alone in thinking that to effect good change we need to share, debate and demonstrate excellence in business and society. Working closely and transparently with government departments provides opportunities to influence and lead on new provision in the Armed Forces community.

"It's great to know that there's someone at the end of a phone that you can call and who genuinely wants to help you and see your business succeed."

Tom Fox, Thoughtify



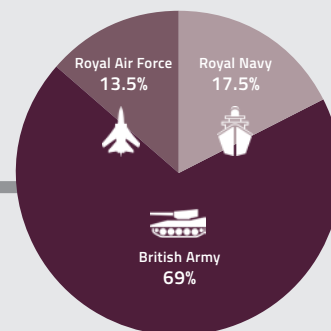
HEATMAP INDICATING ORIGIN OF XFE BENEFICIARY INITIAL
'EXPRESSION OF INTEREST'

OUR WORK WITH BENEFICIARIES

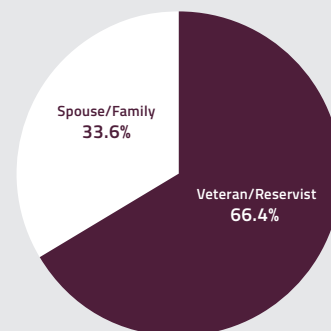
X-Forces Enterprise (XFE) beneficiaries are the primary focus of the organisation's activities. The XFE community would not exist without the entrepreneurs and business owners that embark upon and fulfil a self-employment journey.

Each individual's needs and interests are bespoke to their circumstances, and XFE endeavour to give them a tailored solution, guidance and ongoing support.

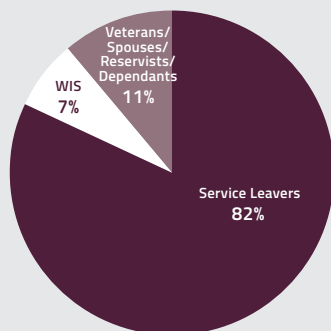
The need for enterprise skills, start-up and scale-up support crosses gender, service and relationship with the military. Service leavers, veterans, reservists, family dependants and cadets; they all contribute through military service and are all capable of contributing to UK economic activity and building a career outside of their military identity.



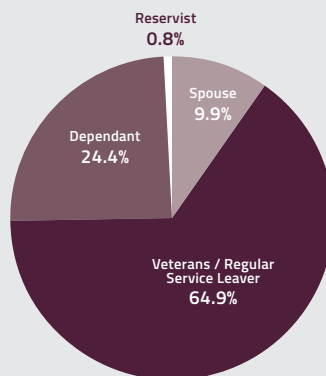
XFE BENEFICIARY SERVICE CONNECTION
(OF 1282 TOTAL, FROM 2013 TO AUG 2018)



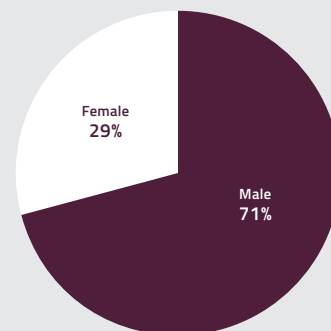
XFE BENEFICIARY CATEGORY
(OF 1282 TOTAL, FROM 2013 TO AUG 2018)



BENEFICIARY CATEGORIES IN RECEIPT OF TRAINING (OF 1027 TOTAL, DURING 2017-18)



BENEFICIARY CATEGORIES SUPPORTED
(OF 275 TOTAL, DURING 2017-18)



XFE BENEFICIARY GENDER
(OF 1282 TOTAL, FROM 2013 TO AUG 2018)

OUR WORK WITH CHARITIES

X-Forces Enterprise (XFE) proudly collaborates with key military charities to transform beneficiaries **from reliance to resilience**.

PERFECT PARTNERSHIP

The XFE community is built on collaboration.

Working in partnership with military and civilian charities provides beneficiaries a holistic approach to their journey, enabling XFE to concentrate on providing excellence in enterprise support.

Strong, sustainable relationships exist across wider third sector partners to ensure that beneficiaries may be signposted accordingly, be this welfare, housing, mental or physical wellbeing.

XFE has become the go-to organisation within the military community for self-employment, enterprise and business ownership advice.

"Representing the military charity sector, it is just wonderful to see how the charities working with X-Forces are embracing enterprise."

Sir John McColl - CEO, Cobseo



OUR WORK WITH BIG BUSINESS

Big businesses are role models in our commercial world. They can set an agenda and initiate a trend. Some large organisations thrive and grow on business they receive from their smaller counterparts. For start-up businesses to grow, for established companies to be sustainable, the economic ecosystem is essential.

Corporate partners of X-Forces Enterprise recognise the contribution they can make to this ecosystem by providing:

- Access to business **mentors**;
- **Knowledge exchange** with subject matter experts;
- **Facilities** that can be used for training and/or events;
- **Education** on and around procurement;
- Easier **access** to their own procurement processes;
- **Financial resources** towards engagement and sponsorship opportunities.

"I had the pleasure of serving for the British Armed Forces and understand the wealth of attributes the men and women who transition into civilian life can give to business. If we can support this transition and be part of the successful businesses they run, this has got to be good for everyone both civilian and ex-military."

Ian Heath
Director UKI Alliances, Dell EMC

CORPORATE MEMBERS 2017/18



OUR WORK WITH GOVERNMENT

Relationships and engagements in key areas of government are valued and nurtured in the pursuit of support for the X-Forces Enterprise (XFE) community. XFE works closely with the Ministry of Defence, Department for Work and Pensions, Cabinet Office and the British Business Bank.

WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, XFE HAS PROVIDED:

- Self-employment awareness and enterprise training to Service leavers across the UK and Germany through the Career Transition Partnership programme;
- Access to seed funding through the British Business Bank and Start Up Loans Company;
- Advice and guidance through DWP's Job Centre Plus;
- Input to policy to encourage small business growth;
- Support for small business access to foreign markets and supply chains;
- Joint leadership on the Sandhurst Women 100 Forum.

For work across the community, in October 2017, XFE achieved the MoD's Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award.





"It's difficult having nobody else to fall back on when you're the only employee. I'm not sure where Toddle would be now without X-Forces."

CASE STUDY HANNAH SAUNDERS

Aged 23, outdoors enthusiast Hannah Saunders joined the RAF, attracted by the adventure training opportunities.

On a family hike, Hannah identified a gap in the market when her young son's chapped lips were bleeding. Their regular lip salve wasn't withstanding the dribble of a teething toddler. Hannah began to develop her own recipe and Toddle was born.

Hannah left the RAF in Summer 2017 to work on the business full time. Toddle now has three product lines and a team of 6 freelancers supporting Hannah on her entrepreneurial journey.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES



BIG BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

Increasingly big business recognises its obligations to society. The X-Forces Enterprise (XFE) **Big Business supporting Small Business** initiative connects Armed Forces start-ups with supportive large organisations.

BENEFICIARY AND COMMUNITY RECOGNITION

Focused on breaking glass ceilings, we celebrate achievement in the Armed Forces community through the Soldiering On Awards.

BENEFICIARY ENGAGEMENT

The biggest challenge for any new and growing business is establishing and refreshing a client base. To facilitate new connections, the X-Forces Directory was launched alongside a network of regional ambassadors.

COMMUNITY RESEARCH

An agile and nimble organisation, XFE explores self-employment adversity and success in the wider Armed Forces community, working with Warwick Institute for Employment Research and QinetiQ. This research was funded by the Forces in Mind Trust.

SPECIALIST PROGRAMMES

Some beneficiaries within the XFE business community need more focused care and support. Specialist programmes provide the means to do that.

" We constantly look to enhance, celebrate and promote the contribution that former Service men and women are making to the world of business. I am so proud of our ongoing 3-year partnership with X-Forces Enterprise. Together we will enable more and more people from a military background into enterprise, continuing their outstanding contribution to society."

Haydn Thomas
Head of Business Development, NatWest Business Banking



BBsSB STEERING GROUP

The Big Business Supporting Small Business (BBsSB) Steering Group is made up of no more than 20 organisations that are progressive in their work and desire to help the Armed Forces community in business.



On May 9th 2017 the X-Forces Enterprise BBsSB Steering Group was set-up and held the first meeting. BBsSB was established to add weight and energy to XFE's activities that connect the UK's corporate world with the unique, diverse skills of ex-Service men and women.

This year the Steering Group has championed a policy change in the Armed Forces Covenant and established working groups to tackle three issues: leadership development in a small or medium sized enterprise; mentoring and knowledge exchange; supply chain and procurement. These meetings have representation from government, military charities and beneficiaries by invitation, to ensure that there is wide and varied debate on key subjects. The meetings are held twice a year and chaired by Rt Hon Lord Young of Graffham CH, Patron of XFE.

XFE with BBsSB partners aim to:

- **Build Engagement;**
- **Increase Awareness;**
- **Support Sustainability;**
- **Report on Progress;**
- **Celebrate Effective Change.**

Alison Rose, CEO, RBS Commercial and Private Banking, acknowledges the Big Business supporting Small Business launch on 9th May 2017.

SOLDIERING ON AWARDS

The Soldiering On Awards (SOA) provide an instrumental platform to celebrate successes in the Armed Forces community across many sectors and disciplines.

SOA recognise the outstanding achievements of the diverse people and groups who work together in support of the Armed Forces community. SOA aim to inspire, boost and provide support for this extraordinary community by recognising the accomplishments of the people, teams and businesses within it.

X-Forces Enterprise (XFE) became official partners with SOA in June 2017 introducing three new awards to celebrate businesses set up by members and families of those who have served in our Armed Forces.

The new award categories acknowledge:

- Those who are new to their start-up journey and have been in operation less than two years - **Start-up Award**
- Those who are scaling up their business and have been in operation more than two years - **Scale-up Award**
- Those whose business has made a positive impact on the community - **Community Impact Award**



“ The event provides a fantastic platform to give recognition to the extraordinary achievements of our Service personnel, veterans and the groups, businesses and charities that support the Armed Forces community.

I would also like to recognise the sterling work of X-Forces Enterprise and all you do to support our Armed Forces.”

Rt Hon Theresa May MP
Prime Minister



2018
Soldiering On Awards

Recognising the
Armed Forces Community



See you next year!



X-FORCES DIRECTORY

X-Forces Enterprise (XFE) created a directory through the combined efforts of a number of stakeholders within the military community.

The directory is for anyone looking to engage with veteran-owned businesses.

On 20th March 2018, at the MoD Partnering with Defence Conference, the X-Forces Directory was launched. This was the culmination of research, design and development work during the year with extensive collaboration, particularly with Balfour Beatty and G John Surveys Ltd. The directory allows big businesses to support military start-ups whilst facilitating the engagement of more veteran-owned businesses. It validates eligibility criteria so that corporate procurement professionals can track the diversity within their supply chain, as well as any commitments they are making as part of their pledge towards the Armed Forces Covenant.

It is an opportunity for veteran-owned businesses to put themselves in the spotlight as potential suppliers. Registration on the X-Forces Directory is simple, and is free-of-charge to individuals, businesses or stakeholders of the XFE community.

Visit: x-forcesdirectory.com



Balfour Beatty



" I really enjoyed working with the X-Forces Enterprise team on the launch of their Directory service. It promises to be a very useful tool both for someone like me in a corporate procurement team and hopefully also for the military owned businesses who register their company."

Aaron Reid, Balfour Beatty



Robert Stephenson (left) with Richard Tucker (right) of AAA Caring Caretaker Ltd

AMBASSADOR NETWORK

X-Forces Enterprise (XFE) has the aim to build a national network of regional ambassadors. This was piloted during 2017/18 with great success. Richard Tucker MBE, Managing Director of AAA Caring Caretaker, volunteered to be the XFE Ambassador for the North East.

The XFE Ambassador network aims to connect business owners from the Armed Forces community. Events hosted by ambassadors bring together fellow military entrepreneurs with larger organisations engaged in XFE's BBsSB initiative, plus local government representatives and other supportive bodies.

On 4th October 2017 the first North East regional event on board HMS Calliope in Gateshead was enjoyed by local dignitaries, veterans, business owners and various others. Since then Richard has organised follow-on events, and his property maintenance company has built a strong working relationship with Landmarc Solutions, an XFE corporate member, whose supply chain now includes various veteran-owned businesses.

After the success of this pilot region, and now with the support of The Royal British Legion, the next three years will see the network of regional ambassadors grow to sixteen.

"The ambassadorship is a fantastic opportunity to share my experiences in starting and growing a business. We really look after all our employees and it feels great to now be supporting fellow veterans in my region."

Richard Tucker MBE, AAA Caring Caretaker

SELF-EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH

Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) awards grants to research projects that propose long-term solutions to the obstacles faced by the Armed Forces community.

Warwick Institute for Employment Research, in partnership with X-Forces Enterprise and QinetiQ, engaged in an 18-month study into self-employment in the Armed Forces community, to fill the gap in empirical evidence and inform policy making and service delivery. The research, completed in summer 2018, explores self-employment experiences of ex-Service and Reserve Force personnel, plus spouses of Service and ex-Service personnel.

The key objectives of the research project are to provide a thorough and comprehensive review of self-employment in the Armed Forces community to:

- **Identify the characteristics of, and factors determining, successful self-employment;**
- **Identify aspects unique to that community compared to the general population;**
- **Draw conclusions on the value of self-employment; and**
- **Recommend how to enhance the contribution of self-employment to the overall employment outcome.**

“ This research will, for the first time, provide a sound evidence base allowing policy makers and those supporting the Armed Forces community who are considering self-employment, to better understand the challenges and successes of this group. ”

Ray Lock, Chief Executive
Forces in Mind Trust



'Self-employment and the Armed Forces Community' has been funded by the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT), a £35 million funding scheme run by the FiMT using an endowment awarded by the Big Lottery Fund.



SPECIALIST PROGRAMMES

WOUNDED, INJURED AND SICK (WIS)

X-Forces Enterprise (XFE) runs a benchmark business experience programme in partnership with Help for Heroes. Aimed at WIS veterans and Service personnel who are considering their own business now or in the future, the course provides a solid foundation on the basics of running a business.



BLIND VETERANS

XFE and Blind Veterans UK run a hands-on four-day programme which offers bespoke support to each individual taking into account their idea, visual impairment and circumstances. The programme teaches enterprise and business skills that can be utilised for employment or self-employment.



SPOUSES

In association with ABF The Soldiers' Charity and the Covenant Fund, XFE provided an open and friendly introductory workshop for military spouses and partners covering the pros and cons of self-employment and the basics of business planning alongside other like-minded potential entrepreneurs.



A widows programme supported by Forces Pension Society Charitable Fund has been set-up and promoted. This will be delivered through 2018 and 2019 and will feature in the next Annual Activity Report.



CASE STUDY LEIGH HICKS

Since leaving the Army in 2008 Leigh had eight different jobs in as many years. Nothing was sparking his excitement until he realised he could turn his life-long passion for Volkswagens into a business and started **Combe Valley Campers**.

After two years, his business restoring, repairing and customising campervans was strong enough that Leigh moved into larger premises.

“ I am now the master of my own destiny. The success of the business completely depends on how hard I work.”

WORKING TOGETHER EVERYONE WINS

COVER PHOTOGRAPHY

Front cover:
Ruth Wilde, Care Force
Consulting;
Gareth John, G John Surveys.

Back cover:
David Smith, CrossFit Spitfire.

Martin Wing

Chairman of the Board of Directors,
X-Forces Enterprise



The remarkable achievements outlined in this activity report for 2017-18 would not have been possible without extensive collaboration and endeavour from the various stakeholders that work with X-Forces Enterprise (XFE).

The sheer range of activities and achievements requires vision, teamwork, effort and, of course, financial resources. Thank you to everyone who has made this possible.

In particular I would like to thank three people:

- **Rt Hon Lord Young of Graffham CH** - Patron, XFE, amongst many other things. His unfaltering energy and enthusiasm for enterprise and learning within the Armed Forces community continue to be an inspiration.
- **Ren Kapur MBE** - Founder, Director and CEO, XFE. Her indomitable drive, ambition and tenacity leads the organisation's vision, values and standards.
- **Gary Lydiate** - Non-executive Director, XFE and CEO, Kilfrost Limited. His pragmatic and balanced advice to the Board is valued, well-respected and always so blindingly accurate.

By the time this report is published, the next reporting period will be just over halfway through. Already we have more achievements to report; together we continue to win for this deserving community.



This Activity Report has been prepared and published with the support of NatWest.





"The transition from Service life to self-employment can be extremely challenging and daunting but together we are stronger and anything is possible."

David Smith, CrossFit Spitfire



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