Identity in Occupational Transition

Evidence, Research and Future Directions for UK Policy

Parliamentary Evidence Review and Research Briefing

Version	2.0
Date	July 2026
Author	Gemma Gardner
Evidence Repository	AURIS Master Evidence Repository v2.9
Suggested Citation	Gardner, G. (2026). Identity in Occupational Transition: Evidence, Research and Future Directions for UK Policy (v2.0). Parliamentary Evidence Review and Research Briefing. AURIS Identity System™.

Evidence first. Interpretation second. Recommendations third.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Foreword

There are moments in life when a career ends, a uniform comes off, a role changes or a long-held identity no longer fits. For many people, these transitions are managed successfully. For others, they can become some of the most challenging periods they will ever experience.

Much has already been achieved in supporting occupational transition across the United Kingdom. This report does not seek to challenge those foundations. Instead, it asks whether there may be another dimension of transition that deserves closer examination.

The question emerged not from theory alone, but from lived experience. Following my own transition from fifteen years of military service, I found that many practical aspects of resettlement were addressed, yet I continued to struggle with a question that was far harder to answer: who am I now that I am no longer the role I once held? That experience became the starting point for a wider programme of research.

This report is the result of that journey, now updated a month into the first pilot programme actually being delivered. Since this report was first published, that research has moved from design into practice. Twenty-two of a planned 108 interviews are now coded, four more than when this report was first written. Three specific patterns have emerged that qualify, rather than simply confirm, what earlier participants described. And the first cohort of participants — through Trafford Veterans CIC's Op Re Muster programme — began meeting for the first time on 12 July 2026. Nothing about that delivery yet tells us whether the framework works. It does tell us that the question this report set out to ask is now being tested in a room with real people in it, not only on a page.

I believe that responsible research begins not with certainty, but with curiosity. I am grateful to every participant who has shared their experiences through the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme, to the organisations who have committed to supporting pilot work — Trafford Veterans CIC, Out in the Bay and Red Rose Recovery — and to the researchers, practitioners and policymakers whose work has informed this review.

Gemma Gardner

Founder, AURIS Identity System™ | Originator, Identity Performance Psychology | July 2026

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Glossary, Definitions and Abbreviations

Glossary of Key Terms

- AURIS Identity System™ — the practical implementation framework built on five domains: Awareness, Understanding, Regulation, Identity and Stability. An emerging implementation model, undergoing pilot evaluation.
- Identity — an individual's evolving understanding of who they are, informed by personal values, experiences, relationships, roles and life circumstances.
- Identity Performance Psychology (IPP) — the author's original evidence-informed conceptual framework integrating identity psychology, behavioural science, occupational transition research and implementation science.
- Identity-Defining Occupation — an occupation in which professional role, organisational culture and community become closely associated with an individual's sense of self.
- Occupational Transition — the period during which an individual leaves, changes or adapts to a significant occupational role.
- Role Exit — leaving a significant social or occupational role and adapting to a new one.
- Low-Fusion Starting Condition (new) — a pattern in which a participant's sense of self was not strongly tied to their former role.
- Pre-Emptive Identity Work (new) — identity-related work undertaken before leaving service, which may prevent disruption rather than speed recovery from it.
- Role-Replication Stability (new) — stability reached by continuing a similar role or activity rather than through the fuller Community → Purpose arc.

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Term
AURIS	Awareness, Understanding, Regulation, Identity and Stability
CFIR	Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research
COM-B	Capability, Opportunity, Motivation — Behaviour
CTP	Career Transition Partnership
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
ICO	Information Commissioner's Office
IPP	Identity Performance Psychology
RE-AIM	Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation and Maintenance
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
SIT	Social Identity Theory

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

List of Figures and Tables

Figures

- Figures 1-12: Occupational Transition Research Framework; UK Transition Landscape; Military Transition Evidence Map; Cross-Sector Map; Identity Psychology Concept Map; Behavioural Science Framework; IPP Systems Diagram; The AURIS Identity System™; Identity After the Uniform™ Research Programme; Pilot Programme Evaluation Framework; Evidence Integration Model; Future Research Roadmap — all unchanged and valid since June 2026.
- Figure 13. Emerging Cross-Cutting Pattern — CORRECTED: Identity → Community → Purpose → Stability, qualified by three documented patterns (low-fusion starting condition, pre-emptive identity work, role-replication stability). Based on 22 of 108 planned interviews — updated from 18 of 108 in the original version of this report.

Tables

Fifteen tables appear throughout this report, recreated inline within their relevant chapter or appendix rather than restated separately here.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Executive Summary

The Headline Finding

A survey commissioned by the Royal College of GPs and the Office for Veterans' Affairs, reported in 2024, found that 55% of 4,910 veterans surveyed had experienced service-related physical or mental health issues after leaving — and over 80% said their condition worsened after returning to civilian life. Existing transition systems measure employment, housing and healthcare access well. They do not yet systematically measure what happens to a person's sense of who they are. This report asks whether that gap is worth closing.

Purpose

Occupational transition represents one of the most significant periods of change experienced across the United Kingdom. Each year, thousands of people leave the Armed Forces, emergency services, healthcare professions, elite sport and other identity-defining occupations. Existing transition systems provide essential support through employment, education, healthcare, housing, welfare and community services. This report asks whether another dimension of transition — identity — deserves further research alongside these established practical outcomes. It does not argue that current systems are inadequate, nor does it propose replacing existing transition services.

Scope of the Review

This briefing brings together evidence from military transition research, occupational psychology, identity psychology, behavioural science, implementation science, cross-sector occupational transition literature, original qualitative research undertaken through the Identity After the Uniform™ programme, and the author's original conceptual framework, Identity Performance Psychology. Published evidence, original research and original conceptual work are clearly distinguished throughout.

Principal Findings

The evidence reviewed demonstrates that occupational transition is a multidimensional process involving practical, psychological, behavioural and social adaptation. Recurring themes across multiple research traditions include belonging, purpose, community, role transition, behavioural adaptation and self-concept. Current evidence suggests these themes warrant continued investigation. The evidence does not currently justify concluding that identity should become a national transition outcome, nor that identity-focused interventions are more effective than existing approaches.

Original Contribution

This report introduces Identity Performance Psychology, an original evidence-informed conceptual framework integrating identity psychology, behavioural science, occupational transition research and implementation science, and presents the AURIS Identity System™ as its practical implementation. Both are presented transparently as emerging contributions requiring continued empirical evaluation and should not be interpreted as validated psychological theories or proven interventions.

Original Research Programme

The Identity After the Uniform™ qualitative research programme has, at the time of writing, completed 22 of 108 planned interviews. Coding is in progress. Emerging themes continue to broadly align with several areas identified within the published literature, alongside three specific qualifying patterns: a low-fusion starting condition in which identity was not strongly tied to the role for some participants; pre-emptive identity work undertaken before leaving service, which may prevent disruption rather than simply speed recovery from it; and stability reached through role-replication rather than the fuller Community → Purpose arc, for which durability remains an open question. These findings remain preliminary and are reported as emerging qualitative evidence, not conclusions.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Evidence Base

Nine GREEN-verified sources address why coaching functions as an identity-formation mechanism, with the strongest direct empirical support in medicine and policing; evidence for fire, ambulance and elite sport remains less developed and is reported honestly as such. A related evidence gap on the coaching-versus-therapy rationale is partially resolved. No head-to-head study comparing coaching against therapy for identity-transition or veteran populations specifically has yet been located, and this limitation is carried forward wherever the coaching rationale is cited.

Pilot Programme

The report describes a structured implementation programme designed to evaluate the AURIS Identity System™ responsibly. Trafford Veterans CIC, Out in the Bay and Red Rose Recovery are confirmed pilot development partners. Delivery has begun with Trafford Veterans CIC (Op Re Muster, commenced 12 July 2026); Out in the Bay's delivery date remains to be confirmed; Red Rose Recovery's Designated Safeguarding Lead and delivery date remain to be confirmed. No outcome data exists yet for any pilot. The Ambulance Staff Charity remains in exploratory discussion, progressing to a formal meeting on 23 July 2026.

Recommendations

The report's recommendations remain proportionate to the evidence: expand longitudinal occupational transition research; develop and validate identity-related outcome measures; strengthen cross-sector comparative research; encourage independent evaluation and replication; and build collaborative partnerships across government, academia, charities and public services. The report continues to recommend no immediate structural reform of existing transition systems.

Overall Conclusion

The evidence reviewed throughout this briefing supports continued investigation of identity within occupational transition. It does not provide sufficient evidence to justify immediate policy change or claims regarding the effectiveness of emerging frameworks. The principal conclusion remains one of measured progression: identity should be recognised as a legitimate area for continued interdisciplinary research, evaluated through robust methodology, transparent implementation and independent scrutiny.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Part I — Context

Chapter 1 — Introduction and Purpose

Intended Audience

This briefing has been prepared for Members of Parliament, Select Committees, Government Departments, public sector leaders, researchers and organisations involved in occupational transition, veterans' policy, public service wellbeing and workforce transition.

Purpose

This briefing examines whether identity should be considered as an additional outcome of successful occupational transition alongside existing measures such as employment, education, housing and health. It brings together published research, official reports, original research and implementation planning to inform future discussion, research, pilot evaluation and policy development. The report does not evaluate the performance of individual organisations or existing transition programmes.

Evidence Hierarchy

This briefing draws upon four clearly distinguished evidence streams: peer-reviewed research and systematic reviews; official government and organisational reports; original published work by the author, clearly identified as such; and emerging qualitative findings from the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme, clearly identified as original research.

Definition

For the purposes of this briefing, identity refers to an individual's sense of self, continuity, values, purpose and belonging across life transitions. It does not refer to legal identity, personality type or clinical diagnosis.

Research Principle

Evidence first. Interpretation second. Recommendations third. Evidence is reviewed before conclusions are drawn. Interpretation follows the evidence. Recommendations are made only where supported by the available evidence and are proportionate to its strength.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Chapter 2 — The Author's Journey: From Lived Experience to Research Question

Occupational transition is an expected part of life for millions of people. Every year, individuals leave military service, emergency services, healthcare professions and other careers that have shaped not only what they did, but often how they understood themselves. This briefing does not question the importance of existing support. Instead, it asks whether the available evidence suggests there is another dimension of transition that deserves greater attention: identity.

From Lived Experience to Research

This work began with personal experience, but it did not remain there. Following medical discharge from the British Army in 2014, having served in the Adjutant General's Corps (Staff and Personnel Support) with 1 WFR, HQ ARRC, RTMC Chilwell, Worthy Down as a Phase 2 Instructor, 28 Engineer Regiment, before being medically discharged from the Queen's Royal Lancers, the author experienced a transition that challenged far more than employment: the structure that organised her days, the language spoken every day, the community she belonged to, the shared purpose that had guided her decisions, and, most significantly, the certainty of who she was outside the institution.

From One Story to a National Question

Lived experience can identify important questions, but it cannot answer them on its own. The work developed into a structured programme of research through three parallel evidence streams: a review of existing academic and professional literature; development of the AURIS Identity System™ and the conceptual framework of Identity Performance Psychology, presented throughout this report as the author's original contribution; and the Identity After the Uniform™ qualitative research project.

Emerging Research

At the point of writing, the Identity After the Uniform™ research project has completed 22 qualitative interviews with veterans, serving personnel, military families and individuals connected to identity-defining occupations. These interviews are not presented as representative of the wider population, and are treated as emerging qualitative evidence throughout this briefing.

Scope of this Report

Military transition forms the primary focus of this briefing because it provides the strongest and most established body of evidence relating to occupational transition. The report then considers whether similar identity-related mechanisms may also be relevant across other identity-defining professions, including policing, fire and rescue, ambulance services, healthcare, addiction recovery and other sectors.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Chapter 3 — Occupational Transition: The National Challenge

Every year, thousands of people across the United Kingdom leave professions that have played a significant role in shaping their daily lives, relationships, routines and sense of purpose. For many, this transition is managed successfully through existing services. However, an increasing body of research suggests that occupational transition involves more than practical adjustment alone.

How Transition Is Currently Measured

Existing transition systems prioritise measurable outcomes: employment, education, housing, income, healthcare access and welfare support. These remain essential. This briefing does not argue against these measures; it asks whether they provide a sufficiently complete picture of long-term adaptation.

Why Identity Has Become a Research Question

Identity has received growing attention across psychology, sociology and occupational research, examining how group membership contributes to self-concept, how professional identity develops, the psychological impact of leaving identity-defining roles, narrative reconstruction following major life change, the influence of belonging on wellbeing, and adjustment following retirement, injury or career transition.

The Central Research Question

Should identity be considered as an additional outcome of successful occupational transition alongside existing practical measures? The chapters that follow review the available evidence before offering interpretation and recommendations.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Chapter 4 — The Current UK Transition Landscape

The United Kingdom has developed a substantial network of organisations, policies and services to support individuals transitioning from military service into civilian life. This chapter establishes the current landscape before examining whether the available evidence supports considering identity as an additional dimension of successful transition.

Current UK Transition Framework

Transition Domain	Typical Current Focus	Common Measures
Employment	Returning to work, career transition, employability	Employment status, time to employment
Education & Training	Qualifications, vocational learning, resettlement training	Course completion, qualifications gained
Housing	Stable accommodation and homelessness prevention	Housing status, tenancy outcomes
Healthcare	Registration and ongoing care with health services	GP registration, treatment access
Welfare & Finance	Benefits, pensions and financial stability	Benefit uptake, financial security
Family Support	Partner, children and family transition	Family services, welfare support
Community Integration	Veteran services, peer support, local engagement	Participation and service engagement

Strengths of the Current System

The current UK transition landscape recognises that leaving military service is a significant life event, provides structured support before and after discharge, and brings together government departments, NHS services, local authorities, employers and the charity sector. A survey commissioned by the Royal College of GPs and the Office for Veterans' Affairs, reported in 2024, found that 55% of 4,910 veterans surveyed had experienced service-related physical or mental health issues after leaving, with over 80% saying their condition worsened after returning to civilian life.

Chapter Conclusion

The UK transition system already contains important practical, health, welfare and community support. The question is whether the evidence supports adding identity as a measurable and research-informed dimension of successful transition. That question is examined in the evidence chapters that follow.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Part II — Evidence Review

Chapter 5 — Military Transition: What the Evidence Currently Shows

Military transition has been the subject of increasing academic, clinical and policy interest over the past two decades. This chapter reviews the current evidence relating to military transition, establishing what is currently known, where evidence is consistent, where it is mixed, and where important gaps remain.

Transition as a Psychological Process

Current research suggests transition is a process rather than a single event. Several authors have argued that transition stress should be considered in its own right rather than being viewed solely through the lens of combat exposure or clinical trauma (Mobbs & Bonanno, 2018).

Belonging, Community and Purpose

One of the strongest recurring themes identified within qualitative military transition research concerns belonging. Qualitative work by Ahern and colleagues (2015) described recurring experiences of veterans attempting to establish what participants referred to as "a new normal" following transition.

Reintegration

Military reintegration has increasingly been described within the literature as extending beyond employment alone. Elnitsky, Blevins, Fisher and Magruder (2017) propose an adapted ecological model in which successful transition is influenced by multiple interacting systems including family, employment, community, healthcare and wider society.

Why Coaching, Specifically

Nine GREEN-verified sources (identified internally as COACH-001 through COACH-009) address why structured coaching, specifically, may support identity formation during transition. The strongest direct empirical evidence sits in medicine and policing — professions with established literature on coaching's role in professional identity formation. Evidence for fire, ambulance and elite sport currently documents identity-fusion outcomes but has not yet been separately tested for the coaching or training mechanism itself, and this gradient is stated honestly rather than treated as uniform across sectors. A related evidence gap — the coaching-versus-therapy rationale — has moved from open to partially resolved, with three further GREEN sources (Jarosz, 2016; Ammentorp et al., 2013; Aitken & Kinane, 2024) confirming that no head-to-head study comparing coaching against therapy exists yet for identity-transition or veteran populations specifically.

Current Evidence Gaps

Much of the identity-related literature remains qualitative; longitudinal studies remain relatively limited; direct evaluation of identity-focused transition interventions is scarce; cross-sector comparisons remain underdeveloped; and coaching-mechanism evidence for fire, ambulance and elite sport specifically remains an open gap.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Chapter 6 — Cross-Sector Occupational Transition: What the Current Evidence Suggests

The primary focus of this briefing is military transition. This chapter asks whether similar patterns have been observed beyond the Armed Forces, without assuming that different professions experience transition in the same way.

Addiction Recovery

Identity has become an increasingly important area of addiction recovery research. Dingle, Cruwys and Frings (2015) demonstrate that recovery may involve movement towards new social groups, new identities and new sources of belonging. This evidence lane is directly relevant to Red Rose Recovery, a confirmed AURIS pilot partner working with people affected by addiction, recovery, homelessness and mental health, whose delivery readiness remains to be confirmed.

Elite Sport

Systematic reviews of athlete career transition (Park, Lavallee & Tod, 2013) describe recurring themes including adjustment, planning, role change, psychological adaptation and the development of new purpose beyond competitive sport.

Retirement and Medical Transition

Research examining chronic illness has described experiences of altered self-concept following significant changes in physical capability or health; retirement research has identified adjustment processes extending beyond financial planning to include changes in routine, social relationships and occupational role.

Behavioural Science and Implementation Science

Frameworks such as the Behaviour Change Wheel and COM-B (Michie, van Stralen & West, 2011) describe how sustained behavioural change depends upon the interaction of capability, opportunity and motivation. Frameworks such as CFIR (Damschroder et al., 2009), RE-AIM (Glasgow, Vogt & Boles, 1999) and established implementation outcome measures (Proctor et al., 2011) provide structured methods for evaluating adoption, acceptability, feasibility, fidelity, sustainability and delivery.

Emerging Evidence Across Public Service Professions

The coaching-mechanism evidence has strengthened for policing. Evidence relating specifically to identity as a distinct transition outcome within fire, ambulance and healthcare more broadly remains comparatively limited within the current repository, and continues to be identified as a priority for future evidence extraction.

Chapter Summary

The wider literature demonstrates that questions relating to belonging, purpose, behavioural adaptation and role transition extend beyond military service. The evidence does not justify treating all occupational transitions as equivalent; it supports careful comparison while recognising the unique characteristics of each profession — a principle directly reflected in how AURIS's own pilot partners are each treated as distinct populations with distinct evidence needs.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Chapter 7 — Identity Psychology: Understanding Occupational Transition

This chapter explores the psychological theories that may help explain why themes of belonging, purpose, community and identity recur across different forms of occupational transition.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) proposes that individuals derive part of their identity from the social groups to which they belong. Military units, emergency service teams, healthcare professions and elite sporting environments all demonstrate characteristics associated with strong group identity.

Narrative Identity

Narrative psychology (McAdams, 2001) proposes that people construct meaning by developing stories about their lives, connecting past experiences with present identity and future direction. Major occupational transitions can interrupt these narratives.

Role Exit

Role Exit Theory (Ebaugh) examines how individuals leave long-established social roles, recognising that leaving a profession often involves changes extending beyond employment, without assuming pathology or psychological disorder.

Self-Determination Theory and Self-Efficacy

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) proposes that psychological wellbeing is influenced by autonomy, competence and relatedness. Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to organise and perform actions required to achieve desired outcomes.

Why Coaching Specifically Engages These Mechanisms

The nine coaching sources added to the evidence base suggest coaching, as a mechanism, engages several of these theoretical processes directly: structured reflection and practice consistent with Bandura's self-efficacy mechanism; coaching relationships that support autonomy, competence and relatedness, consistent with Self-Determination Theory; and coaching's role in professional identity formation, evidenced most strongly in medicine and policing. This is presented as a plausible integration of established theory with newly added evidence, not as proof that coaching outperforms other approaches — no source in the repository makes that comparison.

Integrating the Evidence

No single psychological theory fully explains occupational transition. Together, these theories suggest adaptation may involve changes in group membership, reconstruction of personal narrative, adjustment following role exit, restoration of competence, development of new purpose, rebuilding belonging, and integration of previous and future identities.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Chapter 8 — Behavioural Science: Understanding Sustainable Human Change

Understanding why transition occurs is only one part of the challenge; an equally important question is how people successfully create and sustain change over time.

The COM-B Model and the Behaviour Change Wheel

COM-B (Michie, van Stralen & West, 2011) proposes that behaviour results from the interaction of Capability, Opportunity and Motivation. Building upon COM-B, the Behaviour Change Wheel provides a systematic method for designing interventions that support sustainable behaviour change.

Habit Formation and Emotion Regulation

Research into habit formation demonstrates that repeated behaviours performed within consistent contexts gradually become more automatic. Emotion regulation research demonstrates that psychological wellbeing is influenced not by avoiding emotions but by recognising, understanding and responding to them appropriately.

Behaviour Occurs Within Systems

Family, community, organisations, employers, healthcare systems and social networks all influence the opportunities available for behavioural change. Implementation science complements behavioural science by recognising that successful interventions depend on consistent real-world delivery.

The Coaching-Versus-Therapy Rationale

A specific evidence gap tracking the rationale for a coaching approach, as distinct from a therapeutic one, has moved from open to partially resolved. Three GREEN sources (Jarosz, 2016; Ammentorp et al., 2013; Aitken & Kinane, 2024) support coaching as an appropriate, evidence-informed approach for non-clinical identity and behavioural support. All three are explicit that no direct, head-to-head comparison study between coaching and therapy exists yet for identity-transition or veteran populations specifically. This limitation is stated plainly rather than allowed to be implied away by the strengthened surrounding evidence.

Chapter Summary

Behavioural science provides a robust evidence base for understanding how sustainable human change occurs. The specific rationale for a coaching approach has strengthened, while the absence of a direct coaching-versus-therapy comparison study remains an honestly stated limitation.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Part III — Original Contribution

Chapter 9 — Identity Performance Psychology: An Integrative Conceptual Framework

The preceding chapters reviewed the current evidence relating to occupational transition, identity psychology, behavioural science and implementation science. No single existing framework integrates these evidence streams into one practical, structured approach designed specifically to understand identity during occupational transition. This chapter presents Identity Performance Psychology (IPP) as the author's original conceptual contribution, documented in the author's published papers (Gardner, 2026a, 2026b, 2026c).

Defining Identity Performance Psychology

Identity Performance Psychology is proposed as an evidence-informed conceptual framework examining how individuals develop, regulate and sustain identity throughout periods of significant occupational and personal transition. It considers identity not as a fixed characteristic but as a dynamic process influenced by self-awareness, psychological understanding, behavioural adaptation, social context, purpose, belonging and repeated action over time.

The Integrative Model

Evidence Domain	Contribution to IPP
Identity Psychology	Explains self-concept, belonging, narrative identity and role transition
Behavioural Science	Explains sustainable behavioural change through capability, opportunity, motivation and habit formation
Occupational Transition Research	Explains practical adaptation following military and other identity-defining careers
Implementation Science	Provides methods for consistent delivery, evaluation and continuous improvement

Relationship to the AURIS Identity System™

The AURIS Identity System™ represents the practical implementation of Identity Performance Psychology, organised around five interconnected domains: Awareness, Understanding, Regulation, Identity and Stability. This structure is set out in full in the author's published papers (Gardner, 2026a, 2026b, 2026c), which establish the public timestamp and priority claim for Identity Performance Psychology and the AURIS Framework™.

Current Stage of Development

At the time of writing, Identity Performance Psychology is supported by three published papers with live Zenodo DOIs (CC BY 4.0); the ongoing Identity After the Uniform™ qualitative research programme, now at 22 of 108 planned interviews; three pilot development partnerships — Trafford Veterans CIC, Out in the Bay and Red Rose Recovery — of which Trafford Veterans CIC has begun delivery; and nine further GREEN-verified sources specifically addressing coaching as an identity-formation mechanism. No claims of effectiveness are made at this stage.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Chapter 10 — The Identity After the Uniform™ Research Programme

This chapter introduces the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme: the author's ongoing programme of original qualitative research, distinct from the external evidence reviewed in earlier chapters.

Research Aim and Design

How do individuals experience identity during and after transition from identity-defining occupations? Semi-structured interviews explore participants' lived experiences of leaving service or a defining occupation, changes in routine and structure, community and belonging, purpose and meaning, personal identity, behavioural adaptation and life beyond the role or uniform.

Research Commitment and Current Progress

The programme is committed to a longitudinal qualitative study of 108 in-depth interviews. At the time of writing, 22 of the planned 108 interviews have been completed and are fully coded. The 108-interview commitment remains a research plan; it confers no findings in advance of the work being done.

Emerging Findings: The Core Sequence

A cross-cutting pattern continues to recur across the coded interviews: a disruption to identity on leaving the role, the renewed importance of community and belonging, a rebuilding of purpose, and a gradual return to a steadier footing — summarised as Identity → Community → Purpose → Stability. Support aimed at the presenting problem alone did not, on its own, appear to restore stability. What participants more often associated with a steadier footing was the rebuilding of identity together with reconnection to community and purpose. This remains the programme's strongest emerging theme, not a finding, drawn from 22 of the 108 planned interviews.

Three Qualifying Patterns

Three documented patterns qualify this sequence, and are reported honestly rather than folded silently into the headline pattern. A low-fusion starting condition: for some interviewees, identity was already portable — the uniformed role was never central to their sense of self, so the sequence's starting premise of identity disruption did not apply to them. Pre-emptive identity work: done before leaving service, this appears to prevent the disruption the sequence assumes happens first, rather than simply speeding recovery from it — based on a single case identified so far, and treated as a hypothesis warranting further evidence, not a finding. Role-replication stability: some participants reach stability by continuing a similar role or activity rather than moving through the fuller Community → Purpose arc — whether this represents a genuinely different, equally durable pathway, or a less durable version of the same one, remains an open question.

Current Limitations

The interview programme remains ongoing; the sample is not intended to be statistically representative; findings cannot currently be generalised to the wider population; and the three qualifying patterns are drawn from a small number of cases within the 22 coded so far.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Chapter 11 — Pilot Programme and Implementation Strategy

This chapter explains how the evidence reviewed in earlier chapters is translated into practice through structured pilot programmes. The purpose of the pilot phase is not to demonstrate effectiveness in advance; it is to evaluate feasibility, acceptability, implementation quality and participant outcomes.

Pilot Partners

Organisation	Status	Population
Trafford Veterans CIC	Delivering — Op Re Muster commenced 12 July 2026; Sentinel House, Eccles	Veterans, serving personnel, reservists and the wider military and blue-light-connected community, including retirees and family members aged 18+
Out in the Bay	Confirmed, operational readiness pending — No Labels, Morecambe; delivery date to be confirmed	LGBTQIA+ adults aged 18+ connected to the Morecambe and wider Bay community
Red Rose Recovery	Confirmed, operational readiness pending — Designated Safeguarding Lead and delivery date to be confirmed	Recovery, addiction, homelessness and mental health community
The Ambulance Staff Charity	Exploratory discussions continuing — formal meeting scheduled 23 July 2026	Not applicable — no partnership confirmed

Delivery Model

Pilot programmes are built around a structured pathway — six weeks for Out in the Bay and Red Rose Recovery, extended to seven weeks with a dedicated consolidation week for Trafford Veterans CIC — progressing participants through the five interconnected AURIS domains. The same core framework is maintained across all pilots, while examples, language and contextual discussion are adapted to meet the needs of each partner organisation.

Evaluation Framework

Evaluation is informed by established implementation science, examining acceptability, feasibility, fidelity, adoption, participant engagement and sustainability. These measures assess how well a programme is delivered and implemented; they do not, by themselves, demonstrate participant effectiveness.

Governance and Ethics

Participation is voluntary; safeguarding procedures are embedded within delivery via each partner's own Designated Safeguarding Lead and safeguarding policy; confidentiality and data protection requirements are observed under UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2026. Gemma Gardner / AURIS Identity System has completed registration with the Information Commissioner's Office (application reference C1978474).

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Part IV — Discussion and Future Direction

Chapter 12 — Discussion and Evidence Synthesis

Revisiting the Research Question

Should identity be considered as an additional outcome of successful occupational transition alongside existing practical measures? The evidence reviewed throughout this report does not yet provide a definitive answer. It does, however, provide a sufficiently strong basis for further investigation.

What the Evidence Supports and Does Not Yet Support

Occupational transition extends beyond employment alone; belonging, purpose, role transition, self-concept and community appear repeatedly across multiple research traditions; nine further GREEN-verified sources specifically address why coaching may support identity formation. The evidence does not demonstrate that identity should immediately become a nationally adopted transition outcome, nor that identity-focused interventions are necessarily more effective than existing approaches. No study directly comparing coaching against therapy has been located; this limitation is stated plainly.

Implications for Research, Policy and Practice

The current evidence suggests continued priority for longitudinal studies, development of reliable identity-related outcome measures, comparative research across military and other public service professions, and evaluation of structured transition interventions using recognised implementation science frameworks — now genuinely underway with Trafford Veterans CIC's delivery. Any future policy development should remain proportionate to the available evidence.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Chapter 13 — Recommendations for Future Research

- Longitudinal research: repeated measures across several years to identify short- and long-term patterns.
- Identity outcome measures: develop and test reliable, valid and ethically appropriate measures; AURIS's own five-item identity-stability measure should be treated as a candidate for this validation work, not assumed to already meet that standard.
- Cross-sector comparative research: the coaching-mechanism evidence gap for fire, ambulance and elite sport is now the most clearly defined gap in the repository and should be treated as a named priority.
- Intervention evaluation: recognised implementation science and outcome evaluation frameworks, now directly actionable given Trafford Veterans CIC's delivery is underway.
- Qualitative research: broader representation as the programme continues from 22 towards 108 interviews, with deliberate attention to recruiting cases that might disconfirm the emerging sequence and its three qualifying patterns.
- Mixed-methods research and independent replication of Identity Performance Psychology across different organisations, populations and researchers.
- The coaching-versus-therapy comparison: a properly designed comparative study would materially strengthen the evidence base underpinning AURIS's coaching-based approach.
- Collaboration between universities, government departments, NHS organisations, public service employers, military charities, emergency service charities, researchers and people with lived experience.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Chapter 14 — Recommendations for Policy and Practice

- Recognise identity as a legitimate area for further interdisciplinary research alongside existing practical transition outcomes.
- Expand national transition evaluation to explore whether additional psychological outcomes can be developed, validated and assessed alongside existing indicators.
- Support cross-sector collaboration between organisations supporting Armed Forces personnel, police, fire and rescue, ambulance services, NHS staff, prison and probation services and other identity-defining occupations.
- Invest in high-quality evaluation incorporating recognised implementation science frameworks and independent evaluation from the outset.
- Strengthen research partnerships between universities, NHS organisations, government departments, charities and people with lived experience.
- Encourage responsible innovation, tested through structured pilot programmes, openly reported and independently evaluated before wider implementation.
- Protect existing good practice; identity-related research should be viewed as an additional area of inquiry, not an alternative model of support.
- Develop a national research agenda bringing together government, academia, charities and public service organisations.
- Treat data protection registration and governance as a foundational requirement from the outset of any identity-focused transition support programme, not a step completed after delivery has already begun.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Chapter 15 — Conclusion and Future Direction

This briefing began with a simple question: should identity be considered as an additional area of investigation within occupational transition alongside existing practical measures? The evidence does not establish that identity should immediately become a national transition outcome, nor that Identity Performance Psychology or the AURIS Identity System™ have been validated through large-scale independent research. The qualitative research programme remains ongoing at 22 of 108 interviews. The pilot programmes have not yet generated outcome data, even though one — Trafford Veterans CIC — has begun delivery. No study directly comparing coaching against therapy for this population has been located. These limitations are recognised openly because they are essential to the integrity of the research process.

Why This Matters

Every year, thousands of people leave identity-defining professions across the United Kingdom. Some transition successfully; others experience significant challenges despite receiving practical support. The evidence reviewed throughout this briefing suggests that further exploration of identity, belonging and purpose may improve understanding of these different experiences.

Final Conclusion

Occupational transition is one of the most significant periods of change experienced by many individuals throughout their lives. This briefing does not challenge the importance of existing practical support; it asks whether identity deserves further investigation. The current evidence does not provide a final answer. It does provide sufficient justification to continue asking the question.

Closing Statement

This briefing has been developed in accordance with one guiding principle: evidence first, interpretation second, recommendations third. That principle has shaped every chapter, every conclusion and every recommendation. Ultimately, the purpose of this work is not to defend a framework; it is to improve understanding. If that understanding contributes, over time, to better support for people leaving identity-defining professions, this programme of research will have achieved its purpose.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Appendices

Appendix B — Master Evidence Repository Summary

The Master Evidence Repository is the single source of truth for this report. At the time of writing it holds 88 evidence rows across five research phases, tagged with source type, evidence level, verification status, cautions and permitted report use.

Evidence lane	Focus	Level	Status	Claims
Military transition	Belonging, purpose, reintegration	Qual./mixed (L3-L4)	Verified	C007-C012
Coaching mechanism	Why coaching supports identity formation	Mixed (L1-L4)	Verified	C061-C063
Identity psychology	Social identity, narrative, role exit	Theory (L2/L6)	Verified	C023-C025
Motivation/behaviour	SDT, self-efficacy, COM-B	Theory/review (L1-L2)	Verified	C026-C028
Implementation science	CFIR, RE-AIM	Framework (L1)	Verified	C031, C045
Addiction recovery	Social-identity recovery, recovery capital	Review/mixed (L2-L4)	Verified	C018
Elite sport	Athlete career-transition comparator	Systematic review (L1)	Verified	C020
Author's papers	Original conceptual contribution	Original (L8)	Verified (live DOIs)	C033-C034
Identity After the Uniform	22 interviews — emerging themes	Original emerging (L7)	Coded, emerging	C035, C064-C066
Confirmed pilots	Implementation status only	Implementation	Safe (status)	C036-C039

Cross-sector comparison is permitted; cross-sector equivalence is not. Pilot delivery is recorded as implementation status only and must not be presented as proof of effectiveness.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Appendix C — Master Claim Register

Every substantive claim in this report is traceable to a controlled register entry. All 60 original claims (C001-C060) have been individually re-checked against the current evidence base; 59 remain valid without amendment. Four required a status update, shown below, alongside six new claims.

Updated Claims

ID	Claim	Change
C035	22 interviews (was 18) provide emerging qualitative themes.	Count updated; caveats unchanged
C036	Trafford Veterans CIC is a confirmed pilot partner.	Now delivering (12 Jul 2026), not just confirmed
C037	Red Rose Recovery is a confirmed pilot partner.	Operational readiness explicitly still pending
C038	Out in the Bay is a confirmed pilot partner.	Population specified: LGBTQIA+, Morecambe/Bay area

New Claims

ID	Claim	Strength	Status
C061	Coaching has direct empirical support for identity formation in medicine and policing.	Moderate-to-strong	Safe with caveat
C062	Coaching-mechanism evidence for fire, ambulance and elite sport remains an open gap.	N/A — gap	Safe (limitation)
C063	No head-to-head coaching-vs-therapy study exists for this population.	N/A — gap	Safe (limitation)
C064	A low-fusion starting condition is documented in some participants.	Low — emerging	Safe with caveat
C065	Pre-emptive identity work is documented in one case.	Very low — single case	Safe with strong caveat
C066	Role-replication stability is documented; durability unknown.	Low — open question	Safe with caveat

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Appendix D — Research Methodology

The programme adopts a pragmatic, evidence-led philosophy, treating occupational transition as a multidimensional process. Evidence is gathered through structured searches across academic databases, government publications and grey literature, logged with a stable identifier (DOI or official URL) where available. Chapters are written only from claims marked Safe or Conditional with caveats in the Master Claim Register.

Limitations

Much identity-related evidence remains qualitative; longitudinal and intervention evidence remains limited; the author originated the framework under review, and this conflict of interest is declared and managed by separating original work from independent evidence; the 22 interviews completed at this update remain emerging qualitative evidence only, conferring no population-level conclusions.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Appendix E — Identity After the Uniform™: Interview Schedule

Participants are adults who have left, or are preparing to leave, an identity-defining occupation, including the Armed Forces, emergency services, healthcare, elite sport and comparable roles, together with family members where relevant. Written or recorded informed consent is obtained before any interview begins.

Current Status

At the time of writing, 22 of the planned 108 interviews are recorded, transcribed and fully coded. Consent-for-use status is confirmed for all 22. No participant is identified and no direct quotations are used at any point in this report.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Appendix F — Pilot Programme Methodology

The pilot programme evaluates the AURIS Identity System™ through recognised implementation-science methods, assessing feasibility, acceptability and fidelity — not effectiveness.

Pilot Status

Confirmed pilot partners are Trafford Veterans CIC, Red Rose Recovery and Out in the Bay. Trafford Veterans CIC is delivering (Op Re Muster, commenced 12 July 2026, Claire Squires as Designated Safeguarding Lead). Out in the Bay is confirmed with a Designated Safeguarding Lead (Tracie Ann Copell) but awaiting a delivery date. Red Rose Recovery is confirmed but awaits both a Designated Safeguarding Lead and a delivery date. The Ambulance Staff Charity remains in exploratory discussion, with a formal meeting scheduled 23 July 2026. No outcome claims may be made until evaluation is complete.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Appendix G — Ethics, Safeguarding and Data Governance

Ethical principles: respect and dignity for every participant; autonomy and informed, voluntary participation with a clear right to withdraw; confidentiality with limits explained in advance; transparency about the non-clinical nature of the work.

Data Protection

Processing complies with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2026. Gemma Gardner / AURIS Identity System has completed registration with the Information Commissioner's Office as a data controller (application reference C1978474).

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Appendix H — Evidence Strength Framework

An eight-level framework is applied to every repository row and every claim, from systematic reviews (Level 1) to original conceptual work requiring evaluation (Level 8).

Category	Prior Count	Current Count
Verified external sources	14	23
Author's own work	3	3
Emerging primary data	1 (18 interviews)	1 (22 interviews)
Outstanding source blockers	0	0

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Appendix I — Systems Diagrams, Tables and Figures

The original report contains 13 original figures and 15 tables, unchanged in content and valid as originally produced, with one exception: Figure 13 ("Emerging Cross-Cutting Pattern") is captioned as based on 18 of 108 interviews and requires recaptioning to 22 of 108, with the three qualifying patterns added to its supporting text before further publication.

Honest Note on Visual Design

All 13 figures currently exist as text descriptions within the report, not as designed graphics. A parliamentary-standard version of this report would benefit from professionally designed infographics — particularly for Figure 8 (The AURIS Identity System™) and Figure 13 (Emerging Cross-Cutting Pattern) — communicating the framework and emerging findings at a glance for a busy policymaker audience. This is flagged as outstanding design work, not completed here, since it requires actual graphic design rather than document assembly.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Appendix K — Future Outcomes Reporting (Structure Only — To Be Populated)

This appendix is deliberately empty of data. It sets out, in advance, exactly what a future edition of this report will report once AURIS's pilot programmes have progressed far enough to generate real outcome data. Publishing the structure now — before the data exists — is a governance choice: it commits in advance to what will be measured and reported, rather than allowing the questions asked to be shaped by whatever the data happens to show.

What This Appendix Will Report, Once Data Exists

- Retention — how many participants who started a pilot cohort completed it, by partner and by week, including honest reporting of drop-off and, where known, why.
- Participant feedback — themes from the open feedback prompts in the Evaluation Toolkit, reported thematically, never by direct quotation or in a way that could identify an individual.
- Identity-stability measures — the five-item baseline-to-Week-5-to-follow-up comparison, reported as aggregate, anonymised change, with the same denominator discipline applied throughout this report (how many participants contributed data, not just the headline average).
- Mechanism findings — aggregate patterns from the Mechanism Reflection field now built into every Session Log and 1:1 Check-in Guide (AURIS-PROG-COL-076-v2.0), which is the specific evidence gap this report's Chapters 7 and 8 identify: not just whether coaching worked, but what about it appeared to work.
- Implementation findings — acceptability, feasibility and fidelity findings per AURIS-RES-PIL-008-v2.0, reported honestly including anything that did not go to plan.

When This Will Be Populated

Not before Trafford Veterans CIC's Op Re Muster cohort (commenced 12 July 2026) reaches at least its Week 5 review point, and ideally not before a follow-up measure exists too. Populating this appendix with partial or early data before that point would risk exactly the overclaiming this report has been built throughout to avoid.

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.

Appendix J — Reference List (Verified)

Every external source cited in this report has been checked against the published record.

Author's Own Work (Verified — Zenodo, CC BY 4.0)

- Gardner, G. (2026a). Behavioural Change Through Structured Awareness: An Applied Study of the AURIS Identity System. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19495441
- Gardner, G. (2026b). Identity Performance Psychology: White Paper Vol. 2. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19818258
- Gardner, G. (2026c). The Science of Sustainable Human Change. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19918563

© 2026 Gemma Gardner. AURIS Identity System™, Identity Performance Psychology™ and the Identity After the Uniform™ research programme are the intellectual property of Gemma Gardner. Internal — Controlled Document. Coaching, not therapy.