

Where Identity Work Belongs: Positioning Identity-Focused Coaching Within the Continuum of Crisis, Recovery and Transition

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Abstract

Transition support for uniformed and public-service leavers is organised around two poles: crisis and clinical intervention at one end, and practical resettlement (employment, housing, finance) at the other. Between these poles sits a question this paper argues has no settled answer: where, if anywhere, does identity-focused, non-clinical coaching belong once a person is safe and stable but has not yet rebuilt a sense of who they are without the role that defined them.

This paper sets out that framing question (RQ-000) and the working hypothesis it generated: that identity-focused coaching may occupy a distinct, non-duplicative position after crisis intervention, clinical treatment and resilience-building, and before a person has re-established a durable identity. It reviews ten established psychological theories that each explain part of identity-defining role loss, and identifies two theoretical gaps neither individually nor collectively addresses: a dedicated account of trauma processing, and a dedicated account of performance under identity strain. It sets this alongside a competitive-landscape audit showing that existing UK transition and crisis services stop at the point this paper is concerned with, and grounds the position in emerging qualitative evidence, including one coded case of pre-emptive identity construction and an independent practitioner account of the same pathway from an external contact organisation.

The hypothesis is presented honestly as hypothesis: formed from a single practitioner conversation, not yet tested against the wider evidence base, and explicitly not a claim that identity coaching is proven to belong where this paper proposes. A disconfirming case against part of the paper's own framing is also reported in full, consistent with the standing rule that evidence contradicting AURIS's own position is never withheld.

Author Note

Gemma Gardner is the founder of the AURIS Institute and originator of Identity Performance Psychology, an applied framework for identity reconstruction during occupational transition. This paper is the fourth in a series building the evidence base for that framework, following Behavioural Change Through

Structured Awareness (Gardner, 2026a), Identity Performance Psychology: White Paper Vol. 2 (Gardner, 2026b), and The Science of Sustainable Human Change (Gardner, 2026c). It draws on the Identity After the Uniform qualitative interview programme, currently at 32 of 108 planned interviews coded, and on the AURIS Master Evidence Repository, the living evidence base against which every claim in this paper is checked before use.

As with the three prior papers, Gemma Gardner is both the developer and evaluator of AURIS. This is a standing conflict of interest, declared consistently across the evidence base, and is the reason independent academic review is built into the research programme rather than treated as optional. That review, led by an external academic reviewer, is scheduled to conclude once the full 108-interview dataset is coded; it has not yet reviewed the material in this paper, and nothing here should be read as independently validated.

Executive Summary

The UK's transition and crisis-support landscape is organised around a small number of well-established functions: crisis intervention when someone is in immediate danger, clinical treatment when a diagnosable condition is present, and resilience-building programmes designed to help people withstand future pressure. Each of these is evidenced, resourced, and clearly the responsibility of a named type of service.

What is far less clear is what happens next. A person can pass through all three, be assessed as safe, stable, and no longer in crisis, and still not know who they are without the role, rank, or uniform that shaped their identity for years or decades. This paper's central claim is that this is a real, distinct, and currently unclaimed position in the support landscape, and that identity-focused, non-clinical coaching is a plausible candidate to occupy it.

This claim is presented at the strength the evidence currently supports, which is a working hypothesis, not a finding. It originates from a single conversation with The Ambulance Staff Charity (TASC), a discovery-stage contact rather than a confirmed partner, on 21 July 2026, in which TASC's own clinical and leadership team independently described a Crisis → Recovery → Resilience → Identity → Sustainable Life pathway that matches this paper's argument closely, without prompting. That independent corroboration is a meaningfully different kind of evidence from AURIS describing its own theory, but it remains a single source and is treated as such throughout.

The paper is structured in four movements. First, it reviews the established psychological literature on identity, transition, and role loss, and shows that ten well-evidenced theories each explain part of the picture without any one, or their combination, accounting for identity-defining crisis-role loss as its own mechanism. Second, it audits the existing UK support landscape and shows that services explicitly built to address identity, where they exist at all, are crisis-led,

clinically gated, or population-specific in ways that leave the proposed gap genuinely open. Third, it sets out the emerging evidence for the position, from a single coded interview case, from cross-sector interview data on delayed onset and “crisis churn”, and from the TASC conversation. Fourth, it reports honestly on the limits of this evidence, including a disconfirming case against part of the paper's own framing that has not yet been resolved.

The paper does not claim that identity coaching works, that it is more effective than existing provision, or that the proposed position in the continuum is correct. It claims that the question is real, currently unanswered, and worth answering properly — and it sets out what would need to be true, and what evidence would need to exist, for the working hypothesis to become a finding.

Chapter 1 — The Question That Sits Above the Other Four

The scale of what is at stake is worth stating plainly, using government data rather than AURIS's own, before turning to the research questions themselves. The Office for National Statistics, working jointly with the Office for Veterans' Affairs and the Ministry of Defence, published the first analysis of its kind in 2024: of 5,175 suicides in England and Wales in 2021, 253 — nearly 5% — were UK armed forces veterans. The same data is precise about what it does not show: there was no evidence of an overall difference in suicide rate between male veterans and the male general population; the elevated risk it does find is specific to male veterans aged 25 to 44 compared with the same age band in the general population. That precision matters. This paper is not built on a claim that transition is uniformly dangerous — the evidence does not support that — but on a narrower, better-supported one: that for a specific, identifiable group, something in transition is going wrong in a way current provision is not reaching, and that identity is a plausible, under-examined part of what that something is.

The Identity After the Uniform research programme was built around four research questions. RQ-001 asks whether the Identity → Community → Purpose → Stability sequence observed in early interviews holds across sectors, not only the military. RQ-002 asks whether pre-emptive identity work before a transition reduces or prevents the disruption that follows it. RQ-003 asks whether internally generated regulation strategies are more durable than externally anchored ones. RQ-004 asks whether non-clinical coaching is an appropriate and effective delivery model for identity transition specifically, compared with therapy.

Each of these four questions shares an unexamined assumption: that identity-focused coaching already has a legitimate, defined place in the wider landscape of support for people navigating identity-defining transition. None of them asks whether that assumption is true, where the boundaries of that place might sit, or what happens when it is tested against how existing services actually describe their own work.

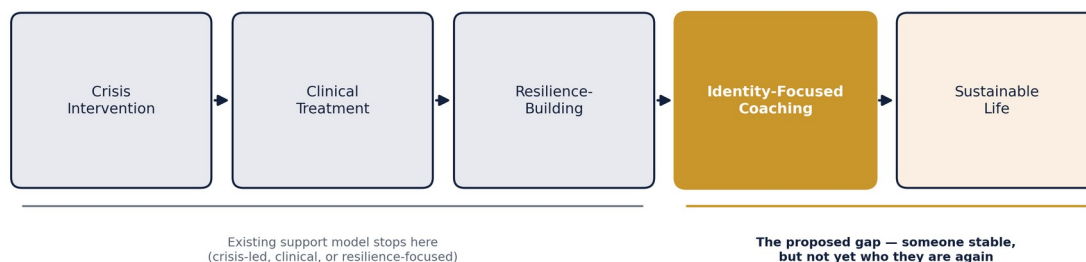
That question surfaced directly, and unprompted, in a conversation with The Ambulance Staff Charity (TASC) on 21 July 2026. TASC's clinical advisor and leadership team, describing their own service model rather than responding to any AURIS framing, set out a pathway: crisis, then recovery, then resilience, then identity, then a sustainable life. It closely mirrors the position AURIS has arrived at independently through its own interview data — close enough that it prompted a new framing question, now logged in the Research Questions Register as RQ-000, sitting prior to the other four rather than alongside them:

Where, if anywhere, does identity-focused coaching have a clearly defined place within the wider continuum of support for people navigating identity-defining transition — and for whom, when, and under what circumstances?

The working hypothesis this paper explores is that identity-focused coaching sits after crisis intervention, clinical treatment and resilience-building work, at the point where someone is stable but has not yet rebuilt a sense of who they are — rather than functioning as a standalone alternative to those earlier stages. Figure 1 sets this out.

WORKING HYPOTHESIS (RQ-000) — WHERE IDENTITY COACHING MAY SIT

Status: hypothesis only, single practitioner conversation (TASC, 21 July 2026) — not yet tested



Source: RQ-000, AURIS Master Evidence Repository, sheet 38 — informed by The Ambulance Staff Charity (21 Jul 2026)

Figure 1. The working hypothesis behind RQ-000: identity-focused coaching proposed as occupying a distinct position after crisis, clinical, and resilience-building support, and before a sustainable, self-defined life. Status: hypothesis only, formed from a single practitioner conversation, not yet tested.

This status label is deliberate and important. Everything that follows in this paper builds a case for taking the hypothesis seriously; nothing that follows should be read as evidence that it is correct. The remaining chapters test it against three different bodies of evidence: the established psychological literature (Chapter 2), how existing UK services actually describe their own scope (Chapter 3), and the emerging interview and partner evidence available inside the AURIS research programme (Chapter 4).

Chapter 2 — The Theoretical Landscape and Where It Stops

If identity-focused coaching is to claim a distinct position in the support continuum, the first test is whether existing psychological theory already accounts for it. This chapter reviews the theories logged in the AURIS Master Evidence Repository's theoretical register (sheet 03) against that question directly: not whether each theory is correct — they are, for the most part, well-established and widely cited — but whether any of them, individually or in combination, explains identity-defining role loss in a way that makes a dedicated intervention unnecessary.

Ten theories recur across the literature underpinning transition, occupational psychology, and identity research generally. Figure 2 sets these out in full, alongside the two gaps neither individually nor collectively closes.

THE THEORETICAL LANDSCAPE (1 of 2)

Tajfel & Turner (1979/1986) Social Identity Theory Explains: Identity derived from group membership, in-group norms. Where it stops: Does not reduce all identity to group membership.	Belonging
McAdams (2001) Narrative Identity Explains: Identity continuity through life-story reconstruction. Where it stops: One lens among several, not the whole mechanism.	Identity, Meaning
Deci & Ryan (2000) Self-Determination Theory Explains: Autonomy, competence, relatedness drive motivation. Where it stops: General motivational theory, not identity-specific.	Behaviour Change
Bandura (1977) Self-Efficacy Explains: Self-belief shapes behaviour and persistence. Where it stops: Self-efficacy is not identity; should not be conflated.	Behaviour Change
Ebaugh (1988) Role Exit Explains: Leaving a central role, forming an ex-role identity. Where it stops: Not developed for high-intensity, crisis-response roles.	Transition

Figure 2a. Established theories logged against identity-defining role loss (1 of 2) (source: AURIS Master Evidence Repository, sheet 03, 21 Aug 2026).

THE THEORETICAL LANDSCAPE (2 of 2)

Ibarra (1999) Provisional Selves Explains: Experimenting with new work identities in transition. Where it stops: Corporate/professional context, not uniformed populations.	Occupational Psych
Antonovsky (1979/1987) Salutogenesis Explains: Comprehensibility, manageability, meaningfulness. Where it stops: A health-coping model, not an occupational transition model.	Positive Psych
Frankl (1946/1959) Meaning & Adaptation Explains: Centrality of meaning after suffering and disruption. Where it stops: Conceptual/clinical, not an empirical outcomes study.	Meaning, Purpose
Tedeschi & Calhoun (1996) Post-Traumatic Growth Explains: Positive change following adversity, for some. Where it stops: Explains growth after trauma, not the mechanism itself.	Trauma (partial)
Clance & Imes (1978) Impostor Phenomenon Explains: Persistent self-doubt despite evident competence. Where it stops: A specific symptom pattern, not performance generally.	Performance Psych

Figure 2b. Established theories logged against identity-defining role loss (2 of 2) (source: AURIS Master Evidence Repository, sheet 03, 21 Aug 2026).

Taken individually, each of these theories is sound within its own domain. Taken together, a pattern emerges that is more informative than any single entry: every theory here explains a component of identity-defining transition — belonging, narrative continuity, motivation, meaning, role-specific identity work — but none was built to explain the mechanism by which an identity fused with a high-intensity, crisis-facing occupational role comes apart, and what determines whether it is rebuilt well or poorly. The Master Evidence Repository names this directly as two open gaps, summarised in Figure 3.

THE THEORETICAL LANDSCAPE — WHAT EXISTING THEORY COVERS

Ten established theories, each explaining a piece of identity-defining role loss

Tajfel & Turner	Social Identity Theory	Belonging
McAdams	Narrative Identity	Identity, Meaning
Deci & Ryan	Self-Determination Theory	Behaviour Change
Bandura	Self-Efficacy	Behaviour Change
Ebaugh	Role Exit	Transition
Ibarra	Provisional Selves	Occupational Psych
Antonovsky	Salutogenesis	Positive Psych
Frankl	Meaning & Adaptation	Meaning, Purpose
Tedeschi & Calhoun	Post-Traumatic Growth	Trauma (partial)
Clance & Imes	Impostor Phenomenon	Performance Psych

WHERE ESTABLISHED THEORY STOPS — TWO NAMED GAPS

GAP-001 No dedicated trauma-processing theory

Post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun) covers growth after trauma, not the mechanism itself. Parentification partially closes this for childhood-origin trauma only. The core gap remains open.

GAP-002 No dedicated performance-psychology theory

Nothing logged explains sustained performance under identity strain directly. Impostor Phenomenon is the strongest candidate — evidenced in the dataset (EP017, EP022, CC005) — pending Dr Alder's review before formal adoption.

This gap — not any single theory's absence, but the absence of an integrated account of identity-defining crisis-role loss — is the case for AURIS.

Figure 3. Where the theoretical landscape stops — the two named gaps (source: AURIS Master Evidence Repository, sheet 03, GAP-001 and GAP-002).

GAP-001 records that no dedicated trauma-processing theory is currently logged in the repository. Post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996) is the closest available theory, but it explains what can follow trauma for some people, not the processing mechanism itself, and its own literature treats it as a contested construct that should not be presented as though trauma is straightforwardly beneficial. Parentification theory (Boszormenyi-Nagy, originating theory; integrated review literature) was identified in August 2026 as a partial candidate, specifically for developmental, childhood-origin trauma patterns observed in one coaching case, but this does not resolve the wider gap; a general account of complex trauma processing, of the kind associated with authors such as van der Kolk or Herman, remains unlogged.

GAP-002 records that no dedicated performance-psychology theory is currently logged either. The strongest candidate identified to date is the Impostor Phenomenon (Clance & Imes, 1978), which has direct support in the AURIS interview dataset (see Chapter 4) and in confirmed UK NHS and veteran-specific literature. It is a stronger, more directly evidenced candidate than the alternatives considered — flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi) and identity foreclosure in elite performers — but it has not yet been formally adopted, and remains

pending review by AURIS's independent academic reviewer before any claim is built on it externally.

Neither gap, on its own, is the case for AURIS. The case is what sits underneath both: no theory in this landscape, individually or combined, offers an integrated account of what happens when a role that has come to define a person's sense of self, built through repeated exposure to crisis, ends — and what determines whether the person who is left rebuilds a stable identity, or does not. That is the specific space Identity Performance Psychology and the AURIS Framework are positioned to occupy, and it is the theoretical basis for asking, as RQ-000 does, where a practical intervention aimed at that space should sit relative to everything else already in place.

Chapter 3 — Where Existing Services Stop

A theoretical gap only matters practically if it is mirrored by a gap in delivery. This chapter sets out what AURIS's own competitive-landscape audit found when it examined UK organisations that address, or claim to address, identity during transition from uniformed or crisis-facing service.

The audit's central finding is structural rather than comparative: transition support in the UK is not so much competitive as fragmented by institutional design. Government-linked bodies handle official resettlement administration; charities handle welfare and crisis response, largely in silos by sector; the NHS handles clinical presentation once a diagnosable condition exists; and commercial providers handle career transition. No single organisation is responsible for the question of who a person is once the role, rank, or uniform that shaped their identity is gone, and the audit identified no UK organisation whose core product is built specifically to address identity reconstruction as its own outcome.

The audit examined nine organisations that either claim to address identity or are commonly assumed to. Two are worth setting out in full, since they are the most clinically credible providers in the space and therefore the strongest test of the claim. Combat Stress, a well-established and clinically credible provider, treats PTSD and complex trauma — addressing severe downstream outcomes of identity collapse, but only once someone has reached crisis, and its own service model is described internally, in AURIS's audit, as crisis-led only, with no preventative or proactive identity work offered before that point. Op COURAGE, the NHS veterans' mental health service, is similarly and appropriately clinical: it addresses identity-crisis symptoms once they present, requires a GP referral, and cannot by design reach someone before they hit crisis.

The remaining seven follow the same pattern from different angles, and are reported briefly for completeness rather than in the same depth. The Career Transition Partnership is entirely employment-centred; identity does not appear in its service model, and it assumes finding work resolves identity, which Chapter

4's evidence directly complicates. The Royal British Legion provides welfare, housing, and financial assistance, but no identity or psychological programme; it functions as a signposting route to other charities rather than a direct offer. Help for Heroes uses “purpose” language in its communications but its actual services are wound- and injury-focused rehabilitation, not identity reconstruction. Redeployable, a commercial AI career-matching platform, uses identity language in its marketing but has no psychological framework, no safeguarding, and no continuity beyond the job search itself. The Female Veterans' Transformation Programme funds research and a toolkit for service providers, not a direct-to-veteran service. Invictus Games and related sport programmes provide what the audit assessed as genuine community-based identity support, but only for disabled veterans, through sport specifically, and without a transferable structured framework. MeT4VeT, the King's College London feasibility trial discussed in section 3.1, tracks mental health symptoms, not identity, and was a research exercise rather than a deployed service.

Across all nine, the pattern is consistent rather than incidental: organisations either treat identity-related crisis after it has already happened, treat a narrower symptom adjacent to identity (employment, injury, finance), or reference identity descriptively without a structured means of addressing it. None combine a proactive, pre-crisis, identity-specific offer with a repeatable framework. This is what grounds the audit's headline finding — zero UK organisations whose core product is built specifically to address identity reconstruction as its own outcome — in a genuine sweep of the landscape rather than a small, convenient sample.

All nine organisations do valuable, evidenced work within their own remit. None claims to do what this paper is concerned with, and the audit found no organisation that does. This is precisely the shape of gap Chapter 1's working hypothesis proposes identity-focused coaching might occupy: not a replacement for crisis or clinical services, but a distinct function positioned after them, for people who are safe and stable but not yet who they were before the role-defining crisis-facing work ended.

This pattern is not limited to the military population from which AURIS's research programme began. Structurally comparable out-of-hours and crisis-facing roles exist across the wider public sector — for example, local authority Emergency Duty Teams, whose social workers attend out-of-hours crisis callouts including Mental Health Act assessments, safeguarding incidents, and homelessness emergencies, frequently alone. Initial evidence located for this population is general workforce and burnout evidence (Kinman & Grant, University of Bedfordshire; BASW's Emergency Duty Team Group) rather than identity-specific research, and no identity-specific study was located for this group in this pass. It is logged as an open scope question (Gap G029) rather than treated as an established part of AURIS's population, precisely because the evidence to support that extension does not yet exist.

A second, better-evidenced extension candidate sits closer to home. Spikol, McGlinchey, Fear, Armour and Gribble (2024), drawing on the UK Veterans Family Study, interviewed 37 partners and spouses of UK Armed Forces veterans and found long-term impacts on self-esteem and confidence, loss of personal identity, and identity that had sometimes been taken on from, or given by, the military community rather than self-directed; employment after the veteran's transition helped restore partners' personal identity, but often at the cost of the community service life had provided. Partners and spouses are entirely outside AURIS's current population scope, and this paper does not extend to them. It is worth noting, however, that the source study's own conclusion calls for its findings to inform the UK Armed Forces Family Strategy 2022-32 and the Veterans' Strategy Action Plan 2022-2024 — which places a population-scope question this paper has not yet addressed squarely inside existing government policy commitments, rather than outside them.

3.1 Precedent for AURIS's own research design

A separate question from where the gap in provision sits is whether AURIS's own method of studying it — combining coaching, workshops, qualitative interviews, and a digital platform with an in-built safeguarding pathway — is itself a credible way to generate evidence. It is worth setting out briefly why the answer is yes, since the honest answer is that AURIS is applying an established pattern to a new population, not inventing an unprecedented one.

Combining structured coaching with a digital platform to generate longitudinal outcome data is directly precedent. BetterUp, a corporate coaching platform operating at far greater scale than AURIS, has published peer-reviewed longitudinal research (Jeannotte, Hutchinson & Kellerman, 2021) showing statistically significant improvement across every wellbeing outcome tracked, with different outcomes maturing at different points in a coaching engagement — self-awareness early, purpose and resilience by six months. The mechanism AURIS is building toward with the Academy and App — coaching-plus-platform data generating valid outcome evidence over time — is not speculative; it is how a comparable, larger platform already operates.

Combining a digital pathway with embedded clinical safeguarding, specifically for military and veteran populations, is also directly precedent, including by funders AURIS is already engaging with. In the United States, the VA/DoD's PTSD Coach app embeds a Safety Planning Intervention module for suicide risk and has been tested in multiple randomised controlled trials with positive outcomes; a 2025 scoping review identified 69 comparable digital mental health tools across military, veteran, and public-safety populations. Closer to home, Forces in Mind Trust — the funder AURIS is engaging for future support — has itself funded a full RCT of a veteran-focused alcohol-reduction app, and King's College London's Centre for Military Health Research ran a feasibility RCT of a digital mental health toolkit built specifically for UK Armed Forces veterans (Parkes et al.,

2023). That FiMT already funds this category of research is a meaningful signal for AURIS's own funding conversations, not merely a comparator.

The claim that prevention is more cost-effective than crisis-point treatment, which underlies AURIS's own positioning, is real but should be stated at the strength the evidence supports, not beyond it. A 2021 systematic review of 65 economic evaluations (Le et al.) found the majority of mental health prevention and promotion interventions to be cost-effective or cost-saving, and found targeted prevention — aimed at a specific at-risk population, as AURIS's uniformed and crisis-facing focus is — performing better than universal prevention. This is not a unanimous literature, however: other reviews have found early intervention services failing to reliably reduce costs, and at least one recent UK school-based trial found a low probability of cost-effectiveness for the programmes it tested. The honest claim is that prevention is frequently, not universally, more cost-effective than treating crisis after it happens — a real and useful finding, without needing to be overstated into a guarantee.

None of this precedent validates AURIS's own findings; it validates the shape of AURIS's method. A larger coaching platform generating real outcome data, established funders backing app-based veteran research, and economic literature generally favouring targeted prevention, together answer a narrower but still important question: whether this kind of evidence base is worth building in the first place. The answer this precedent supports is yes — which is precisely why the interview, coaching, workshop, and Academy/App evidence streams set out in Chapter 4 are being built as a combined base rather than any one alone.

Chapter 4 — Evidence From the Field

Chapters 2 and 3 establish that a gap plausibly exists, in theory and in service delivery. This chapter sets out what the Identity After the Uniform research programme's own emerging evidence adds — and is explicit, throughout, about the difference between a single case, a cross-sector pattern, and independent corroboration from outside AURIS.

4.1 A single coded case of pre-emptive identity construction

Interview IAU-017 (George Kay, episode 17 of the Identity After the Uniform podcast series) is, to date, the clearest coded example in the dataset of identity work undertaken before, rather than after, a role-defining transition. Recorded while the participant was awaiting a medical discharge board rather than reflecting on a transition already completed, the interview captures pre-emptive identity construction in progress: the participant describes having already built a primary identity (“now I just say I’m a dad”) independent of his service role, ahead of leaving it.

This case is logged in the Contradiction Register as CR-002, against the Identity → Community → Purpose → Stability sequence that the wider AURIS framework

assumes: it suggests that identity work done in advance may prevent the disruption that sequence assumes happens first, rather than simply speeding recovery from it. The Master Evidence Repository is explicit that this is a single case, and that the status of RQ-002, the research question it bears on, is accordingly “hypothesis, single case so far, IAU-017”, not an established finding. It is reported here at exactly that strength: one coded interview, suggestive, not yet generalisable, and actively being sought as further interviews are coded toward the full 108.

4.2 A cross-sector pattern: delayed onset and “crisis churn”

Two further threads recur across multiple coded interviews and are treated as emerging patterns, not single-case findings. First, a consistent delayed-onset pattern: several participants describe a gap of years, sometimes a decade or more, between leaving a role and recognising that their sense of self had been disrupted by it, rather than any awareness arriving at the point of transition itself. Second, interview EP004 (John and Mandy Stephenson) names what the guest, founder of the Forces Transition Group, calls “crisis churn”: his organisation's own operational data shows that approximately 51% of military leavers change jobs three to four times in their first two years post-service, a pattern he links directly to identity disruption, homelessness, suicide, and relationship breakdown. This figure originates from the Forces Transition Group's own data, reported by its founder in interview, and is treated in this paper as reported organisational data from a named source, not as independently verified AURIS research.

Notably, EP004 also demonstrates that practical preparation does not, on its own, prevent identity disruption: the Stephenson family had prepared extensively — securing housing, maintaining Mandy's independent career, near-adult children — and John still experienced what he describes as profound identity collapse. This sits alongside the pre-emptive identity construction case (IAU-017) as an important qualification: it is specifically identity-focused preparation, not general life-administrative preparation, that the emerging pattern associates with reduced disruption.

4.3 Independent corroboration: the TASC conversation

The strongest single piece of evidence behind RQ-000 itself is not from AURIS's own interview dataset, but from outside it. On 21 July 2026, in a meeting whose original purpose was exploratory rather than confirmatory, The Ambulance Staff Charity's clinical advisor and leadership team independently described their own service model as following a Crisis → Recovery → Resilience → Identity → Sustainable Life pathway — without having been presented with AURIS's framework first, and without prompting toward that specific sequence. AURIS's own subsequent characterisation of that meeting frames the gap this way: “It isn't the job. It's the life outside the job.” This framing appears in AURIS's own stakeholder materials, not in a verbatim transcript of the meeting itself, and is

logged here as AURIS's own summary of the exchange, not as a direct quotation from TASC — a distinction that should be preserved in any further external use.

This corroboration matters because it comes from an organisation with no stake in AURIS's own theoretical position, describing its own service gap in its own terms. It remains, however, a single conversation with one external organisation — TASC is a discovery-stage contact, not a confirmed AURIS partner. AURIS's confirmed applied-delivery partners are a separate category, described in section 4.4 below, and the Master Evidence Repository is explicit that RQ-000 itself is “hypothesis only, newly formed” on this basis. No further conversation of this kind has yet tested whether the same pathway description recurs elsewhere; that test is set out as necessary further work in Chapter 7.

4.4 Applied delivery: an emerging second evidence stream

Alongside the interview programme, AURIS delivers its coaching framework directly inside partner organisations, in exchange for structured research access rather than payment. This is a genuinely separate evidence stream from the interview data reported above, and its current status should be stated plainly: it is early, and this paper does not draw findings from it.

Trafford Veterans CIC has been live since 12 July 2026, running Op Re Muster with a full evaluation framework and safeguarding routing in place. Out in the Bay, an LGBTQ+ community organisation in Morecambe, is a second confirmed partner, with workshops due to commence shortly on the same delivery model as Trafford: a seven-week programme delivered weekly. Red Rose Recovery, an addiction-recovery community in Lancashire, is confirmed as a third partner; delivery there has not yet commenced.

Two things should be said about this evidence stream honestly rather than left implicit. First, having three confirmed delivery partners across veteran, LGBTQ+, and addiction-recovery communities is itself a meaningful signal that AURIS's population relevance is not limited to the military-heavy composition of the interview programme — but it is a signal, not a finding, until outcome data exists to support one. Second, the AURIS Identity App's own in-platform measurement (the Identity Adaptation Index) is at too early a stage to cite as evidence of anything: at the time of writing it reflects two check-ins from a single learner. That figure is reported here for transparency, not as support for any claim in this paper, and no App or Academy engagement data is used to ground any conclusion above. This reflects timing rather than a structural weakness: Your Next Step Academy's free and paid course tiers launched only two weeks before this paper was drafted, and consented in-platform identity tracking is only beginning to generate data. Chapter 7 sets out how this platform is expected to change the shape of the evidence base going forward.

Chapter 5 — The AURIS Position

Bringing the theoretical, service-landscape, and field evidence together, this chapter states the position this paper is arguing for, at the strength the evidence currently supports.

The AURIS Framework operationalises identity reconstruction through five pillars — Awareness, Understanding, Regulation, Identity, and Stability — shown in Figure 4. These pillars are the practical delivery mechanism for the causal sequence Identity → Community → Purpose → Stability, set out in AURIS's Theory of Change and grounded in the Identity After the Uniform interview programme.

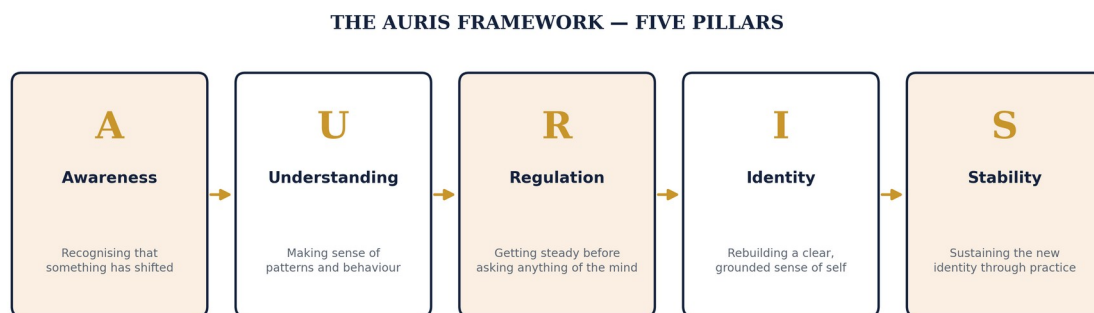


Figure 4. The AURIS Framework's five pillars (source: AURIS-FRM-COR-009, the AURIS Framework master reference document).

This paper's contribution is not a change to that framework, but a positioning claim about where it belongs relative to everything else already in place. The working hypothesis, restated at the strength the evidence supports it: identity-focused coaching may occupy a distinct, non-duplicative position in the continuum of support — after crisis intervention, clinical treatment, and resilience-building work, and before a person has re-established a durable, self-defined identity. It is not proposed as a replacement for any of the three earlier stages, and it explicitly does not run, or claim to run, a parallel clinical stream to any of them.

Three things distinguish this claim from a marketing position. First, it is falsifiable: further practitioner conversations, further coded interviews, and a formal test against the wider evidence base could each disconfirm it, and the research programme is designed to seek exactly that disconfirmation rather than only supporting evidence. Second, it is not claimed to be proven: the strongest evidence behind it is a single practitioner conversation and a single coded interview case, both reported in this paper at that strength, not inflated. Third, it does not depend on identity coaching being effective in order to be a legitimate research question — RQ-000 asks where coaching would belong if it works, which is a necessary question to answer whether or not RQ-004, on coaching's effectiveness relative to therapy, is ultimately answered favourably.

Chapter 6 — Limitations, Disconfirming Evidence and Governance

Consistent with the standing research governance rule that evidence contradicting AURIS's own position is never withheld or smoothed over, this chapter reports the limitations of the evidence in this paper in full, including one disconfirming case that has not yet been resolved.

6.1 A disconfirming case: does policy already name identity?

This paper's argument in Chapter 3 rests partly on the premise that identity is largely absent from official UK transition policy, leaving it unaddressed at the point of institutional handover. A newly logged contradiction (CR-006) qualifies this directly: the 2019 Defence Holistic Transition Policy, reported via an RAF news page, explicitly names identity, alongside housing, health and family life, as an element of transition. This document's relationship to the four previously analysed GREEN-tier policy documents underpinning the RQ-000 finding is not yet established — it may be a fifth, separate document, or a source document that the four analysed documents draw from without repeating the word.

This does not, on its own, overturn the claim that identity is absent from delivery-level transition documents; if confirmed as a distinct, current, GREEN-tier policy document, the honest revision is to nuance the claim from “identity is absent from MOD policy” to “identity is named at the strategic policy level but does not appear to translate into the delivery-level documents examined.” That revision would not remove the practical gap this paper describes, but it would materially change how the policy landscape should be characterised, and this contradiction is logged as requiring resolution, with independent academic review, before any wording addressing MOD policy is used externally beyond this paper.

6.2 What this paper does not claim

- It does not claim that identity-focused coaching is effective. RQ-004, on coaching's effectiveness relative to therapy for identity transition specifically, remains partially supported at best: coaching is evidenced as effective for non-clinical, goal-directed populations generally, but no study directly comparing coaching against therapy for identity transition specifically has yet been located in the literature.
- It does not claim that the working hypothesis behind RQ-000 is correct. It is hypothesis only, formed from a single practitioner conversation, and has not been tested against a second external organisation, a formal literature review beyond this paper's own scope, or the wider Identity After the Uniform dataset as coding continues.
- It does not claim that pre-emptive identity work prevents disruption. That claim (RQ-002) rests on a single coded case (IAU-017) and is explicitly

logged as a hypothesis worth seeking further evidence for, not a finding to build on.

- It does not claim that AURIS is the only, or the correct, candidate to occupy the proposed gap. It claims the gap itself is real and currently unclaimed; who or what should occupy it is a separate, further question.

6.3 Evidence base and denominators

Every finding drawn from the Identity After the Uniform interview programme in this paper carries the current coding denominator: 32 of 108 planned interviews coded at the time of writing. Two interviews (IAU-026, IAU-028) are confirmed not codeable due to recording or transcript failure; two further interviews (IAU-031, IAU-032) are transcript-only, with no formal research log yet built. This denominator, and these caveats, must travel with any external reference to findings in this paper, consistent with the standing rule applied across all AURIS research outputs.

Nothing in this paper has yet been reviewed by AURIS's independent academic reviewer. Content directly traceable to already peer-reviewed, published external research does not require that review before use, since the published research is its own authority; the positioning argument this paper makes — the RQ-000 hypothesis itself — is new theoretical synthesis, and does require that review before any claim in this paper is treated as validated or used in parliamentary, academic, or funding-facing contexts.

Chapter 7 — Implications and Next Steps

If the working hypothesis behind RQ-000 holds up under further testing, it has implications beyond AURIS's own programme. It would suggest that UK transition and crisis-support commissioning, which is currently organised around crisis response, clinical treatment, and practical resettlement, is missing a named function — not a gap in any one organisation's delivery, but a gap in how the continuum of support is conceived at a policy level. This is the argument this paper's evidence base is being built to support in future engagement with bodies including the Office for Veterans' Affairs and Forces in Mind Trust, and in the parliamentary evidence review already submitted.

The immediate research priorities this paper identifies, in order, are:

- Test the RQ-000 pathway with a second and third external organisation, beyond the initial TASC conversation, to establish whether the Crisis → Recovery → Resilience → Identity → Sustainable Life pathway is a general pattern or specific to one organisation's framing.
- Continue coding toward the full 108 interviews, with particular attention to further cases of pre-emptive identity construction, to test whether IAU-017 is an outlier or the first instance of a recurring pattern.

- Resolve the CR-006 contradiction on MOD policy language, including establishing the relationship between the 2019 Defence Holistic Transition Policy and the four previously analysed policy documents, before any wording on this point is used in parliamentary or funder-facing material.
- Complete Source Extraction and Risk of Bias review for all evidence newly added to the repository in support of this paper, none of which is yet citable externally in its current, located-but-unverified state.
- Secure independent academic review of the RQ-000 hypothesis and the theoretical-gap analysis in Chapter 2, both of which constitute new theoretical synthesis under AURIS's own research governance rules.

A structural change to how this evidence base grows is also worth flagging explicitly, since it did not exist when the interview programme began. Your Next Step Academy, AURIS's online course platform, launched its free and paid tiers only two weeks before this paper was drafted. Where the Identity After the Uniform interviews are necessarily slow, UK-based, and one-to-one, the Academy and the AURIS Identity App are digital, geographically unbounded, and capable of generating consented in-platform data at a scale no interview programme can match. That data does not exist yet in any usable volume — this paper draws none of its conclusions from it — but future waves of this research are expected to draw increasingly on Academy and App-based evidence alongside the interview programme, rather than instead of it, as cohort sizes and consented data grow.

This paper closes, as it opened, with the framing question itself. Identity After the Uniform's first four research questions all assume identity-focused coaching has a legitimate place in the landscape of support for people navigating identity-defining transition. This paper has not answered whether that assumption is correct. It has shown that the question is real, that no existing theory or service currently answers it, that early evidence points toward one plausible answer, and that at least one piece of evidence complicates that answer directly. That is the honest state of the research at this point in the programme, and it is the basis on which the next phase of interviews, further practitioner conversations, and independent review is designed to test it further.

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Note on citation status

Four categories of source in this paper have not been fully verified against AURIS's own evidence-quality process and should be treated accordingly. First, several external sources referenced in Chapters 2-4 (including sources supporting Impostor Phenomenon literature beyond Clance & Imes, and sources on coaching-versus-therapy comparisons) are logged in the Master Evidence Repository as AMBER — located but not yet run through the Source Extraction Template or Risk of Bias Register — and are therefore not included in the reference list above pending that verification. Second, the ten core theory

sources in Chapter 2 (Table 1 / Figure 2) are drawn directly from the repository's own theoretical register, but several of that register's own entries are themselves flagged “foundational, verify final source” or “needs exact source mapping” rather than fully verified — the theories and their authorship are correctly represented, but final page/edition-level citation details have not been independently re-checked by AURIS beyond what the register already states. Third, the two sources supporting the Emergency Duty Team population note in Chapter 3 (Kinman & Grant; BASW's Emergency Duty Team Group) were located during this paper's drafting and have not yet been entered into the repository's own verification pipeline at all. Fourth, the three methodology-precedent sources in section 3.1 (Jeannotte, Hutchinson & Kellerman; Parkes et al.; Le et al.) are logged in the Search Log as S051–S053, search-completed and source-verified, but similarly not yet run through Source Extraction or Risk of Bias review. None of this affects the accuracy of the claims those sources are used to support in this paper, which are all deliberately general (“workforce burnout evidence exists”, not a specific statistic); it does mean this reference list as a whole should be checked in full against the repository's Ready-to-Cite Status sheet before this paper is submitted for publication. Two further sources added in this revision — the ONS veteran suicide statistic (Chapter 1) and Spikol et al.'s partner-identity research (Chapter 3) — were independently verified directly against their primary sources (the ONS bulletin itself; the paper's DOI) rather than via a secondary summary, and are logged in the Search Log as S054 and S055 accordingly; they carry a higher confidence level than the AMBER sources above, though they have not yet formally passed through Source Extraction either.