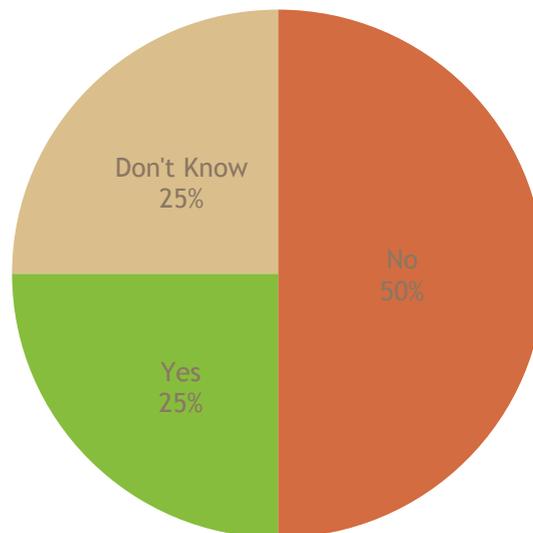




Discrimination in Employment Quick Poll

Q. In the last two years, have you been told you have been turned down for an interview or not got job because you are an Army spouse?

52 responses



Army spouses and partners face disadvantage when seeking employment. The Army Families Federation (AFF) is pleased that an MOD Partner Employment Project (PEP) has been established to look at the issues and to find solutions to this problem.

One area of disadvantage is discrimination: some employers do not want to employ spouses due to their military connection. They are concerned that spouses may move on quickly or that their employee commitments may be compromised by Army activities, such as deployments.

AFF believes that this discrimination is wrong and are keen that both national and regional employers are aware that they must not discriminate against the Army community. We have raised this issue to the MOD PEP and are also looking to work with the Government's Equality Office and the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) to stop this discrimination.

The 2010 Equality Act lists the groups of people who have the right to not be discriminated against - they are classed as protected characteristics. These do not currently include those linked to the Armed Forces. The current Protected Characteristics are: age, disability, gender identity and gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership (in employment only), pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

AFF has sought advice from both ACAS and the Equality, Advisory and Support Service (EASS) to gain some understanding on the discrimination against "marriage" to see

whether being married to someone in the Armed Forces could fall under this protected characteristic. Unfortunately, EASS confirmed that this was not currently the case and advised that the law would need to be changed to include discrimination against military spouses and suggested that AFF pursues this course of action through our Chief Executive.

AFF is aware of a perception of direct discrimination against Army spouses seeking employment. Although, in many cases, the employer may not have explicitly stated that they were turned down for a job due to being an Army spouse, there is some evidence that their application was unsuccessful following direct questions at job interview concerning their partner's Service employment; for example, posting dates, likelihood of operational deployment or rank. Employers have expressed concern about recruiting an Army spouse and the financial and time cost to them in investing in an employee who may move on after a short time.

There was a perception that the spouse's CV can highlight either their address at Service Families Accommodation (SFA) or a number of previous jobs at Army locations and therefore employers can reject their application on that basis. This can be particularly highlighted in areas such as Northern Ireland, where an address or accent can reveal an applicant is married to a Service person. Another clear example of this is at Colchester Garrison where the Job Centre has explicitly advised spouses not to put their SFA address on their CV as it will deter employers.

There is also evidence of indirect discrimination against Army spouses. Spouses may have to commute a considerable distance away from the unit area in order to obtain employment, to an area where their marital situation may be less obvious. Spouses may also have to accept taking temporary work or roles that they are over qualified for, to enable them to remain in employment.

In addition, even if employers do not discriminate against a potential or current employee for being an Army spouse, the nature of their Service partner's work can mean that they are indirectly discriminated from pursuing jobs or career paths they would wish to; for example, unable to undertake shift work as they cannot guarantee childcare support as living away from family and husband often away on exercise or deployments.

“A national recruitment agency told me that they would not consider putting me forward for permanent employment as they knew that the RAF base my husband works at is closing down. They asked if I'd consider tempting for the next however many years”

“I've been turned down for 2 jobs that I was down to the final two. I was told by each that weighing the two of us up, they chose the other as I was likely to move away or have children soon (all the time neither were on the cards!)”

“Apparently I was not suitable for the post as it would cost too much both financially and time wise to take me on and train me up when I would only leave anyway”

“I went for an interview in January. It was glaringly obvious from my CV that I'm an Army wife from the locations I've worked. I didn't get the job and was told they were looking for someone with long term prospects of living in this area”

AFF View: AFF welcomes the MOD Partner Employment Project as we have consistently campaigned on the subject of discrimination in spousal employment. AFF suggests that there are two key elements of a strategy to combat against discrimination - the introduction of national legislation to prevent discrimination against employing someone because of their partner's Army employment and a campaign to educate employers at both local and national level that it is not only wrong to discriminate against military spouses but to recognise the skills and abilities they can offer to their organisation.