

BATTLE BACK

MULTI ACTIVITY

COURSE IMPACT

REPORT

July 2018 – December 2018

Conducted for the Royal British Legion by the
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BATTLE BACK

24 five-day Battle Back Multi Activity Courses (MACs) are delivered annually. The courses are provided for armed forces personnel who are recovering from becoming wounded, injured or sick (WIS). The MAC aims to support participants to achieve their best possible recovery to return to duty or make a smooth transition to civilian life.

This is achieved through a participant-centered experience aimed at encouraging and equipping participants to improve their physical and mental health and promote self-management. Adaptive sports and adventurous activities are used on the courses as a context to facilitate this teaching.

MACs are a unique recovery course which are now mandatory for WIS personnel in the British Army and Royal Air Force that use adaptive sport and adventurous training to support participants in their recovery and facilitate personal development and growth.



This document is a research summary of the information provided by participants who attended a MAC between July and December 2018. Information regarding their perceptions of how the course benefited their recovery and mental well-being were gathered before, during and up to 3 months after the courses.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Between the 1st July and 31st December 2018, 75% were male and 25% were female (Figure 1).

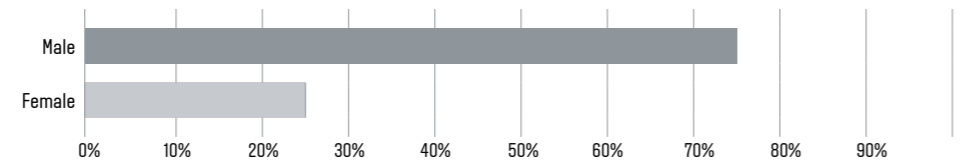


Figure 1: Gender of participants between 01/07/18-31/12/18

The majority of participants were aged '25 to 34 (122) with a range from as young as 18 to 59 years of age (table 1).

Under 18.	0
18-24 years old.	36
25-34 years old.	122
35-44 years old.	54
45-54 years old.	28
54 +	1

The distribution of service personnel who attended courses during this time period included; 59% Army, 23% RAF and 18% Navy (Figure 3). 5% of respondents reported they were wounded (battle casualty), 44% (N=127) were injured (non-battle casualty), 61% (N=177) were sick (mental health problem/physical illness) and 2% (N=7) claimed they were 'none of the above' (Figure 4). The excess of responses above the number of participants is representative of the participants stating they consider themselves to identify with more than one category.

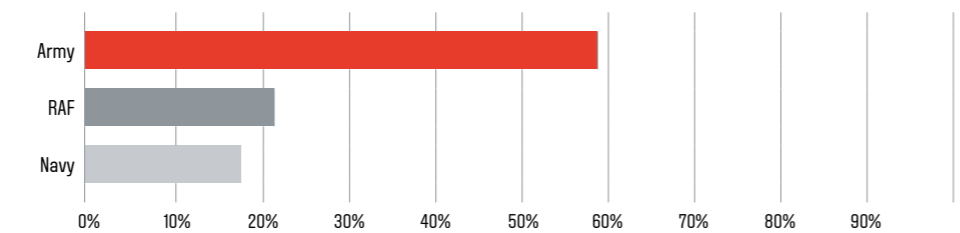


Figure 3: Service branch of personnel

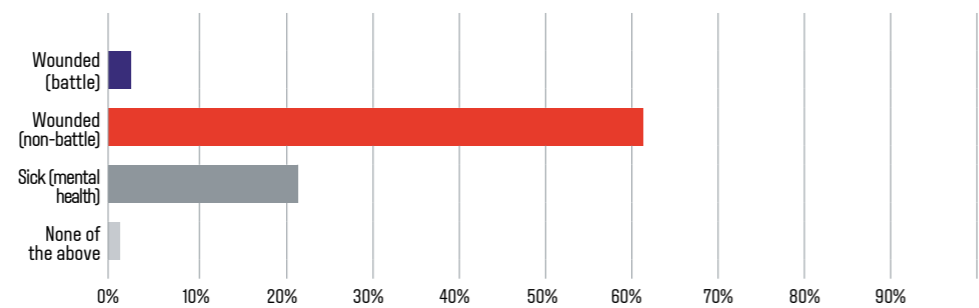
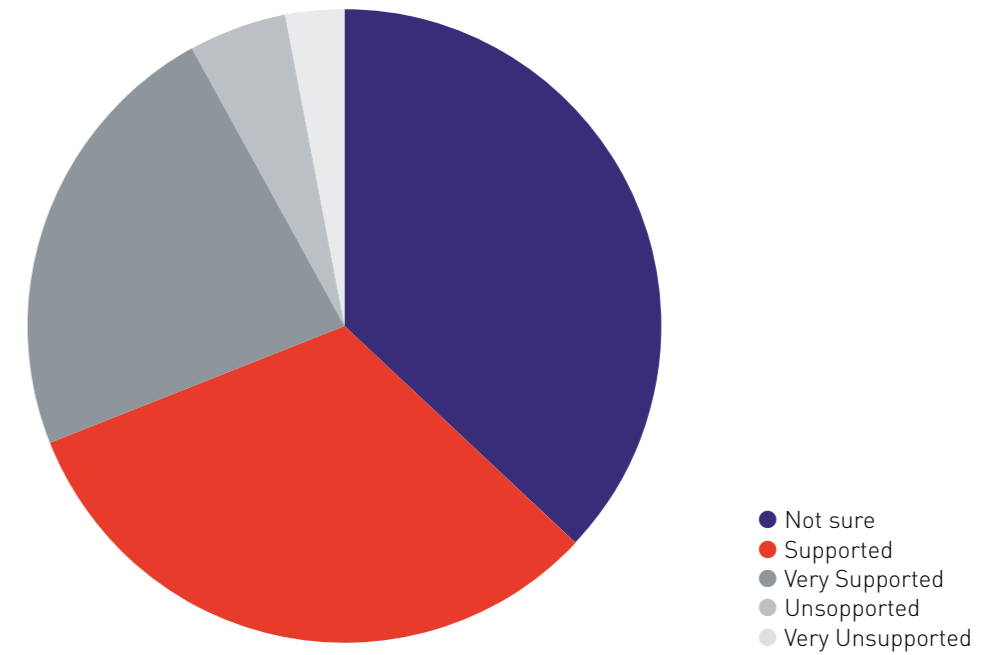


Figure 4: Type of injury

LEVEL OF SUPPORT

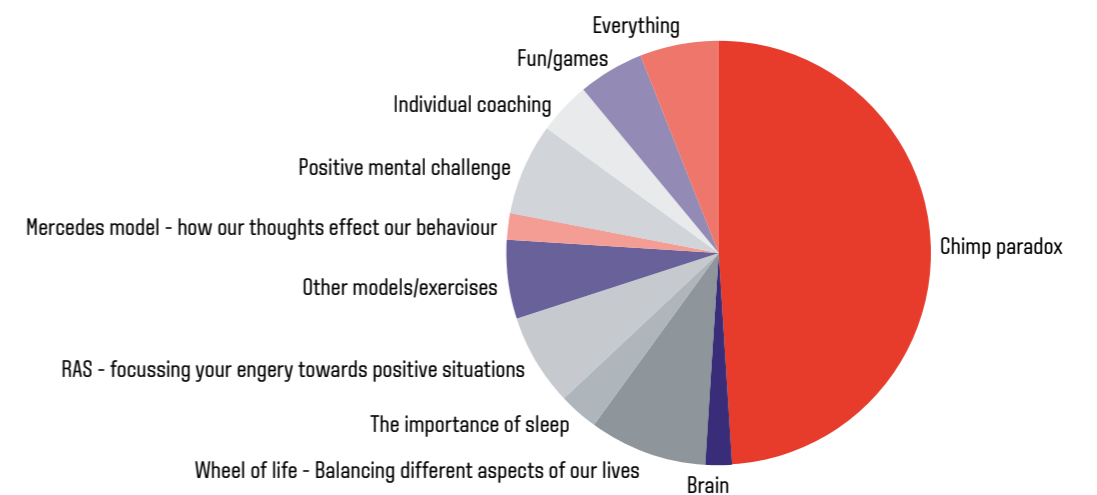
Prior to beginning the MAC participants are asked to comment on the level of support they feel they have received from TRBL before coming to Battle Back. The majority of participants responded that they were 'Not sure' (104), implying that many have had little interaction with TRBL prior to Battle Back, Others mostly felt 'Supported' (85), 'Very supported' (66)

Figure 5: Level of support from the RBL



EDUCATIONAL COURSE CONTENT

What has been the most useful discussion/model/ topic during the morning brief and daily review?



THE EFFECTS OF THE MULTI ACTIVITY COURSE ON PARTICIPANTS' MENTAL WELLBEING

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)

The WEMWBS scores were measured across four time points; immediately before and after the course, 2-weeks after the course and 3-months after the course to investigate the longevity of the impacts to participants' mental health.

During the MAC

The WEMWBS were completed during the Monday arrival and Friday final evaluation session of each course. A paired sampled t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the MAC courses between 1st July 2018 and 31st December 2018 to determine the impact on participant's mental health. Analysis identified a statistically significant increase in positive mental health from before the course (40.82 + 12.68) to the end of the course (53.72 + 9.81).

2-weeks after the MAC

The WEMWBS were sent to participants 2-weeks after each course ended. An unpaired sampled t-test was conducted to evaluate the lasting impact to determine the impact on participant's mental health. Analysis identified an increase in positive mental health from baseline (40.82 + 12.68) to 2 weeks after (46.58 + 8.59).

3-months after the MAC

The WEMWBS were sent to participants 3-months after each course ended. Analysis identified an increase in positive mental health from before the course (40.82 + 12.68) to 3 months after (45.67 + 9.26).

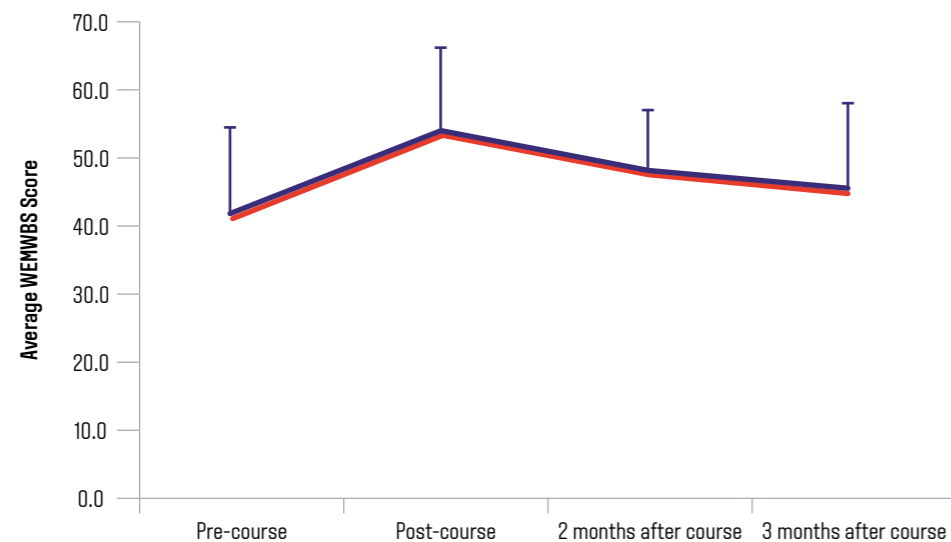


Figure 6: WEMWBS scores across time points

	Wellbeing score Before the course	Wellbeing score End of course	Wellbeing score 2 weeks after	Wellbeing score 3 months after
Average Score	40.82	53.72	46.58	45.67
Standard deviation	12.68	9.81	8.59	9.26

Table 2: WEMWBS scores across four time-points (before, immediately after, 2-weeks after, 3-months after).

HOW WAS THE COURSE HELPFUL? 3 MONTHS AFTER ATTENDING A MAC

Looking in (N=38)

"It has steered me towards the right path of me finding myself again"

"It showed me I can do things if I try"

"Improved my confidence and given me new impetus"

"It has given Me a good insight into how to deal with certain situations"

"I have come out of my shell in so many different ways. The coaching points and conversations I have had with certain individuals have really picked me up and made me feel I am worth something. Something the military has stripped of me recently"

"Made me realise I'm not useless"

"Help me to reduce my stress"

Looking out (N=40)

"The instructors were remarkably supportive"

"Everyone at battle back is there/here for you and will help in any way they can to give you support"

"I have been around people of a similar mindset without judgement"

"I have felt part of a team again"

"It has allowed me to spend time with people in similar situations"

"I have felt included in all aspects of the course"

Looking forward (N=27)

"I've learnt a lot of skills that will make my life and outlook better"

"It has gave me tools and knowledge to move forward"

"Opened my eyes to resources out there for injured soldiers"

"I have learnt a lot that will help me for the future"

"Reset and planning for the future"

"It's made me more motivated to get out and try new things and start to do things that I previously enjoyed"

"It helped me appreciate the effect of being around people and gave me hope of a better tomorrow"

Taking stock (N=13)

"I have been able to take a step back from my day to day activities and realise what I can change"

"I really found myself"

"Relaxed get away from my problems for a week"

"It has given me some much needed respite and has helped me take my mind off of the issues that are going on in my life at the minute"

"It has refreshed me during a hard time and given me new outlets to explore for my recovery"

Looking after self (N=13)

"It has allowed be to get out be active with like minded people"

"It's a good mix of activity and helpful life skills"

"It has allowed me to discover the limits of my injury and be more confident in trying new things"

"It's help me deal with my injury and accept that it's ok when you can't do things. More importantly explore the things you can do and work on them"

"It's helped me to understand the different activities I can still do"

Looking up (N=33)

"It has forced me to face some aspects of my own illness that I was ignoring. I've really benefited from being in a routine, trying new things, stretching myself and been part of a team again"

"It has pushed me to realise what I can do"

"It took me out of my safe zone at home"

"I have not only participated, I have enjoyed myself and done really well in certain skills"

"It has confirmed I can still do things and new things"

"It has opened my eyes to my abilities. Helped me with my confidence, I've done activities that I wouldn't have done normally"

"It has allowed me to find a renewed sense of purpose"

EXPECTATION INFORMATION

Out of 209 participants between July and December 2018, there was a very equal divide between those experiencing the course as 'Exactly what I expected' 47.37% and 'Similar to what I expected' 41.15% with 11.48% considering to be 'Not what I expected'. The following tables identify themes on whether the course was 'What I expected' or 'Not what I expected'.

TABLE 3: 'NOT WHAT I EXPECTED' QUOTES

Staff (N=9)	<i>"I was positively surprised by how friendly the staff are and how relaxed and modern BBC is"</i> <i>"The staff make sure you can be involved no matter what"</i> <i>"Staff are extremely approachable and helpful"</i>
Military Presence (N=14)	<i>"I assumed it was going to more military but it's really chilled and approachable"</i> <i>"It is modern and the staff are not regimented"</i> <i>"Thought it would be more military oriented"</i> <i>"So much of it is shared with civilians"</i>
Lack of awareness (N=2)	<i>"I knew so little about BBC I had never heard of until I was WIS'd"</i> <i>"Didn't know what to expect"</i>
Facilities (N=23)	<i>"The accommodation is superb"</i> <i>"It's much better, funded and resourced"</i> <i>"Facilities much better, especially the beautiful hall. The gardens are quite serene in particular"</i> <i>"The facilities are excellent and the food is outstanding"</i>
Above expectation (N=18)	<i>"It has exceeded expectation, with the right approach to IRP"</i> <i>"It's much better than I thought it would be"</i>
Course structure/focus (N=7)	<i>"It seems more angled towards coaching and development"</i> <i>"I suffer from mental health issues and thought the course would be more physical injury orientated"</i> <i>"It is more organised and structured than I thought"</i>
Enjoyment (N=3)	<i>"I had a good time"</i> <i>"It's fantastic, physical but you control the boundaries, it's fun"</i> <i>"It's amazing"</i>
Atmosphere(N=22)	<i>"It's a lot more welcoming and relaxed"</i> <i>"It is less rigid than I would have thought"</i> <i>"It's actually a very positive atmosphere"</i> <i>"The general atmosphere of the centre is relaxed"</i>

TABLE 4: 'WHAT I EXPECTED' QUOTES

Prior information (from peers)/ knowledge (from PRU's) / experience of similar recovery course (N=36)	<i>"As it was similar to other courses I have attended"</i> <i>"I have been fully briefed by PRO and other WIS personal who have attended"</i> <i>"I heard from friends what to expect"</i> <i>"My experiences with the mandatory recovery courses have been great so far"</i> <i>"I seen pictures and heard good things"</i>
Pre-course information(N=7)	<i>"After reading the joining pack I fully had a understanding of what to expect"</i>
Met personal standards (N=14)	<i>"It has met all of my expectations"</i> <i>"It is what I expected as I had high hopes prior to arriving"</i>
Staff (N=21)	<i>"Friendly and adaptable and very empathetic and understanding staff"</i> <i>"Lots of staff who understand everybody's different difficulties"</i> <i>"The instructors are remarkably supportive"</i> <i>"The staff are friendly, approachable, knowledgeable and are already getting the group to work well together, despite our differences"</i>
Facilities (N=17)	<i>"Food is amazing"</i> <i>"High quality facilities"</i> <i>"It is better than a military base"</i> <i>"The accommodation is brilliant"</i>
Activities (N=7)	<i>"It focuses of indoor and outdoor activities"</i> <i>"It involves activities for everybody"</i>
Enjoyment (N=7)	<i>"I am not thinking to much of anything but having fun"</i> <i>"I have had a fantastic start to the week"</i> <i>"It has been fun and challenging"</i>
The non-judgemental and person-focused approach (N=8)	<i>"It's all designed to help you in a difficult time"</i> <i>"It's promotes the right attitude and environment for recovery"</i> <i>"The course is around individual needs"</i>
Social connection (N=5)	<i>"Alongside likeminded people"</i> <i>"Likeminded people going through a similar journey"</i>
Positive impact (N=5)	<i>"I feel better already"</i> <i>"It's a step in the right direction"</i> <i>"My own personal journey"</i>
Relaxed environment (N=9)	<i>"It's a place to chill out"</i> <i>"It's a very relaxed establishment"</i> <i>"I have never experienced first hand this sort of environment in the Army"</i>

PERCEPTION OF STAFF

Overall Figures 8-10 demonstrate positive feedback for all staff, in particular for the coaches who have the greatest opportunity to spend time with and positively influence the participants. The majority of respondents felt all staff were 'Very caring' and 'Very helpful' majority response of 'Excellent' the coaches' knowledge.

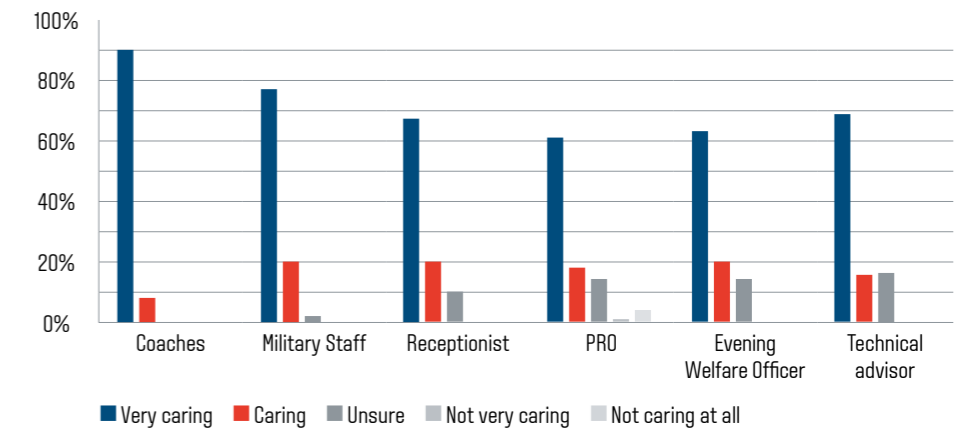


Figure 8: Level of care from staff

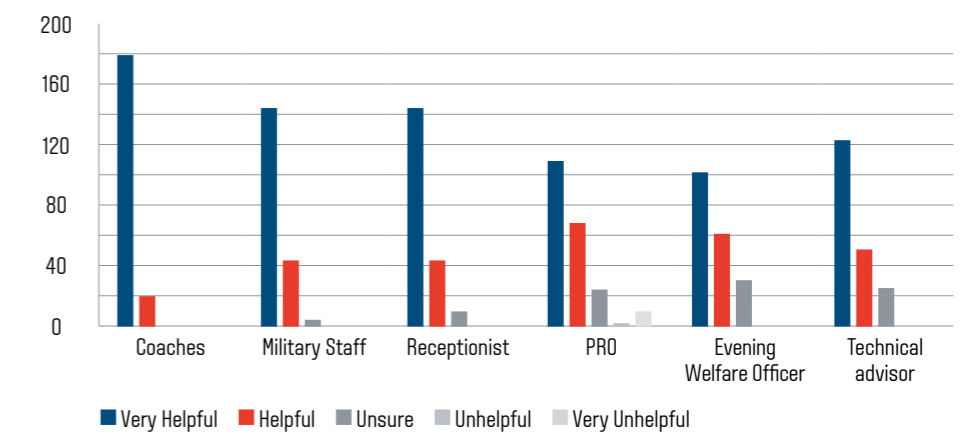


Figure 9: Level of helpfulness of staff



Figure 10: Coaching staff's level of knowledge

HOW COULD THE COURSE BE IMPROVED?

Nothing

Out of 98 comments, 72 participants said 'No improvements can be made'; e.g. "No improvement required", "I believe the staff are excellent and I can't think of anything that could be improved on" and "Couldn't improve in my eyes".

Awareness of specific physical injuries

Four participants said the coaching staff could be more aware of specific WIS information and the medical backgrounds of the participants in their coaching groups; "More aware of injuries", "Situational awareness of certain medical issues"

More coaching

Seven participants commented on the need for smaller coaching groups and increased coaching time; "More one to one time and group discussions", "More smaller group discussions", "One on one session" and "The ratio of 1 instructor to 2 people where needed as some struggled".

Military and Civilian staff

Two participants had conflicting opinions about the balance between military and civilian staff; "Don't know there is merit in military continuity", "The civilian coach model works I think" and one would prefer if "They were all ex military".

Evening activities

Three participants expressed improvements for the evening activities; "Bowling evening, it was different. Staff could get involved", "Less evening briefs" and if "They led optional yoga sessions at the end of the day".

Other

Other specific comments included; "No detriment to the staff but the provision of a DMWS counsellor during the day activities may assist the course and not tie up any staff" and "there was a female coach"

IN COMPARISON TO OTHER RECOVERY COURSE

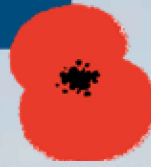
TABLE 5: 'IN COMPARISON TO OTHER COURSE' QUOTES

A positive experience (N=47)	"A great experience that showed me what was available for soldiers who are injured and struggling mentally" "Very very good and beneficial" "Extremely rewarding for myself as it was just an amazing all round experience both physically and mentally, I'd highly recommend this to others in the future and I'd love the opportunity to do future MAC2 courses if time allows it"
Better than other course (N=43)	"Excellent overall, the best and most beneficial" "Far superior and 100% relevant" "Much better and much more beneficial. The support staff and coaches helped me understand myself and my situation in a way that I have never been able to and helped me experience things I would never have the confidence to do on my own" "This is hands down the best support programme I have been on and am in awe of the facilities and activities that have been provided this week"
A relaxed atmosphere (N=31)	"Very welcoming and I felt instantly relaxed which is the opposite to what many military experiences are" "The most relaxed, understanding and most importantly I didn't feel like a number!" "Relaxed, no pressure and helped me take back control of my injury and life" "A very welcoming and relaxed environment to be in, where all the staff were extremely welcoming and good at what they do"
No experience of other recovery course (N=20)	"I can not compare to others as this is the first I have attended" "Much better and much more beneficial. The support staff and coaches helped me understand myself and my situation in a way that I have never been able to and helped me experience things I would never have the confidence to do on my own" "Much better than anything I have done because it was in smaller groups and focuses more on the individual needs. There is much more support and understanding and everyone who works here is very good at what they do"
Supportive staff (N=29)	"Welcoming and friendly and genuinely cared about me" "Very professional and tailored to the individual" "The most relaxed, understanding and most importantly I didn't feel like a number!"
Focused on each individual (N=9)	"Very unmilitary and friendly, is a crucial part of my recovery" "More relaxed and removed from the military aspect that has been attached to other courses, which has helped make a friendlier atmosphere"
Less military presence (N=5)	"No information overload which with my condition, I find difficult to deal with" "Aimed at the right level with compassionate instructors"
Completely different to other programmes (N=2)	"A whole new experience and should be pushed out to daily military activities"
More activities (N=4)	"A lot more active as opposed to being constantly sat in the classroom for hours on end but, the coaching sessions were just the right amount of time"
More structured and organised (N=4)	"Very well run and structured without being too regimental"
High standard of facilities (N=4)	"Well run. Well stocked with modern, serviceable equipment. Superb coaching staff"
Similar to other programmes (N=3)	"As beneficial as the rest"



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