

Scottish  
Government  
**Support for the  
Veterans and  
Armed Forces  
Community**

**2021**



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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# Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans Foreword



This is the fifth annual update to Parliament on support for the Veterans and Armed Forces Community in Scotland. I previously served

as Minister with responsibility for Veterans affairs, and I am extremely proud to once again be appointed to the role, one which enables me to support our veterans and Armed Forces community right across Scotland. I am pleased to provide this update which showcases the wide range of activity and the sheer volume of work undertaken across the Scottish Government and by public sector partners over the last 12 months in support of the Veterans and Armed Forces Community.

As with much of 2020, this last year has seen Scotland face significant challenges. Life has changed to a degree that could not have been predicted even 18 months ago. The effects of the pandemic have been felt across all sectors of society, from our children facing significant interruptions to their education, to the serious impact on the health and wellbeing of the population. But there have also been huge strides in our efforts to fight this disease, not least an effective vaccination campaign which has had a dramatic impact on hospitalisation rates. As life begins to return to normal, I very much look forward to ensuring that our veterans and their families face no barriers in accessing the support that they require, and

that the effects of the pandemic are overcome as promptly and effectively as is possible.

2021 has also seen many charities facing severe financial difficulties. To help address this, the Scottish Government has made available £1 million to create a fund to provide direct financial relief to third sector organisations that provide support to the Armed Forces community in Scotland. I am pleased that we have been able to award funding to 19 organisations providing support for the Veterans and Armed Forces Community across Scotland.

This year also marks some truly significant anniversaries, including the centenary year of the Royal British Legion, Legion Scotland and the iconic Poppy appeal by Poppyscotland. I am thankful that this year we will be able to hold a special concert marking the occasion and that all of our veterans who were unable to jointly mark the anniversaries of VE and VJ day last year will finally be able to gather together in celebration. The role of our veterans charities cannot be overestimated and the vital support that they continue to provide to our veterans and their families across Scotland.

In addition, earlier this year also marked the 80th anniversary of the Clydebank Blitz in which the town was largely destroyed and suffered the worst destruction and civilian loss of life in all of Scotland during World War 2. I will be attending a memorial service at the end of November to remember those who

were injured and killed in the raids and to pay tribute to all residents of Clydebank and survivors of the blitz for their resilience and determination, and willpower to rebuild their town.

As we continue to emerge from the pandemic, I am delighted to announce that we will also be taking the opportunity to review and refresh our initial response to the Veterans Strategy, published in January 2020. We will look at the extent to which our existing commitments remain valid and if there is an opportunity to add more detail to existing commitments and/or add new commitments.

I am acutely aware of the impact that COVID has had on our mental health and wellbeing, and that the pandemic has prevented many of the social events which are a vital lifeline for our veterans. As restrictions are slowly eased and our veterans are able to come together in a safe and secure manner, efforts to tackle social isolation will be resumed in earnest and in 2022 we look forward to contributing to the implementation of the Veterans Mental Health Action Plan.

I am pleased that the Scottish Veterans Commissioner has published two new reports on Employment, Skills and Learning, and Housing. These contain a number of recommendations for the Scottish Government and, for the first time, the UK Government. I look forward to enacting the plans we have in place to deliver the recommendations to the Scottish Government. As in previous years, addressing these recommendations is a key priority and one which I believe is hugely important.

I would like to thank the current Commissioner, Charlie Wallace, for his work and unfailing support to our veteran community.

Over the past year, The Veterans Employability Strategic Group continues to make good progress in improving employment opportunities for veterans. Representatives of the private sector are now working within the Group, and I look forward to continuing to highlight the huge benefits which employers stand to gain by offering sustainable and good quality employment to veterans and their family members. We continue to welcome a number of veterans into employment with government and I look forward to building upon the early success of the Going Forward Into Employment programme.

In closing, I am heartened by, and hugely proud of, what has been achieved in such a challenging time. I hope that the information which follows in this report goes to show that despite the limitations which have been placed on us all, we have made great strides in ensuring that our Veterans and Armed Forces community in Scotland receive the best possible support and care. But as always, there is more that can be done and we will continue to enhance our provision for veterans, Service personnel and their families across Scotland. They contribute a huge amount to our society and I look forward to ensuring that Scotland is the destination of choice for our Service leavers and their families.



**Keith Brown MSP**

Cabinet Secretary for Justice  
and Veterans

# Key Highlights



## Collaboration and coordination

The Scottish Government has contributed £250,000 per year from 2020-21 until 2022-23 (for a total of £750,000) to the Unforgotten Forces Consortium.

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The Scottish Veterans Fund continued in 2021, with a further £200,000 awarded to 16 projects across Scotland, with a specific focus on projects that supported recovery from the COVID pandemic.

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## Data

The Scottish Parliament agreed that Scotland's Census, which will take place on 20 March 2022, will include for the first time a question on previous service in the UK Armed Forces.

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Recognising that the Census only takes place every ten years, we have identified opportunities for more regular data collections by including the same question from the Census in the Scottish Government's three primary surveys.

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## Perception and Recognition

For the first time, the Veterans Employability Strategic Group now has membership from private sector employers.

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The Scottish Government's 2021-22 Programme for Government has committed to securing improved opportunities for veterans.

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The Scottish Government accepted the recommendations within the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's new reports on Employment, Skills and Learning and Housing.

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## Community and Relationships

The Scottish Government will develop a plan to tackle social isolation and loneliness backed by £10 million across the lifetime of this parliament.

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An updated version of Welcome to Scotland was published in March 2021 following extensive consultation with the Military as well as third and public sector organisations.

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## Employment, Education and Skills

The Veterans Employability Strategic Group has developed an action plan giving the group a clear focus on enabling Service leavers and veterans to access, sustain and progress in good jobs.

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The Scottish Government continues to offer work placements and Fixed Term Appointments to veterans through the Going Forward Into Employment programme.

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The Scottish Government provided £35,000 of additional funding to SCQF to develop a skills recognition tool.

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## Finance and Debt

The Scottish Government published the second Benefit Take-up Strategy in October 2021 and veterans stakeholders were consulted during its development.

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The Scottish Government funded the publication of the Money Advice Trust's new guide on '**How to Deal with Debt**'.

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## Health and Wellbeing

The Scottish Veterans Care Network was launched in November 2020, with an initial priority to develop a Mental Health Action Plan, which will be available in December 2021.

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The Scottish Government continued to fund Combat Stress and Veterans First Point during 2021-22.

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The Drug and Alcohol Information System was implemented on 1 December 2020 and went live across Scotland on 1 April 2021.

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## Making a Home in Civilian Society

Funding continues to be available to deliver homes specifically for veterans where Local Authorities identify this as a strategic priority. Since 2012 over £6m has been made available through the programme to deliver over 100 homes for Veterans.

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A pathway to prevent homelessness for veterans is currently being developed by members of the Veterans Scotland Housing Group and will be published by the end of 2021.

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We continue to support Housing Options Scotland to provide its Military Matters project.

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# Veterans Strategy Cross-Cutting Factors and Key Themes

## Cross-Cutting Factors and Themes

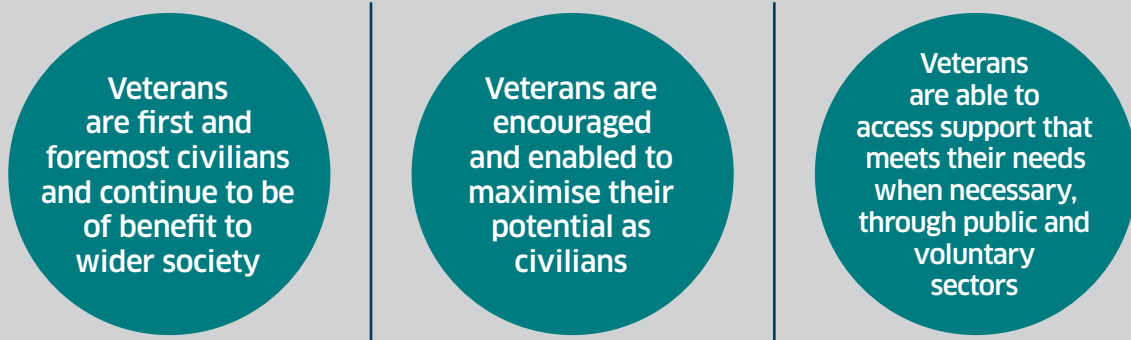
### Vision

This Strategy has a 10 year scope. Through the 10 year timescale, the Strategy addresses the immediate needs of older veterans as well as setting the right conditions for society to empower – and support – the newer generation. Initiatives and proposals will work towards an enduring Vision articulated by three key principles.

Those who have served in the UK Armed Forces, and their families, transition smoothly back into civilian life and contribute fully to a society that understands and values what they have done and what they have to offer.

### Principles

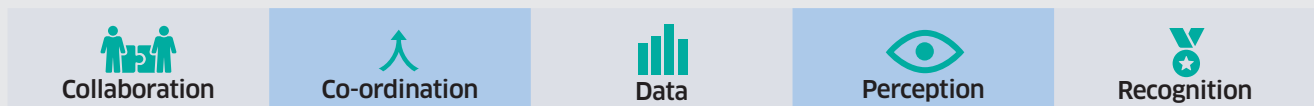
The Principles articulate in greater detail the strategic objectives of the Vision.



These Principles encompass Regular and Reservist Veterans and where appropriate, their families and the bereaved. The focus is on those Veterans of the UK Armed Forces resident in the UK. In due course, we will consider encompassing Veterans who return to or choose to live overseas. These Principles are consistent with, and underpinned by, the Armed Forces Covenant.

### Cross-cutting factors

That affect service provision for Veterans across all Key Themes



### Key themes

That emerged as affecting Veterans' lives





## Summary of 10 Year Outcomes

### Cross-Cutting Factors

1	Collaboration between organisations	Improved collaboration between organisations offers Veterans coherent support.
2	Coordination of Veterans' services	The coordination of Veterans' provision delivers consistent aims and principles over time and throughout the UK, ensuring Veterans, their families and the bereaved are treated fairly compared to the local population.
3	Data on the Veteran community	Enhanced collection, use and analysis of data across the public, private and charitable sectors to build an evidence base to effectively identify and address the needs of Veterans.
4	Public perception and understanding	The UK population value Veterans and understand their diverse experiences and culture.
5	Recognition of Veterans	Veterans feel that their service and experience is recognised and valued by society.

### Key Themes

1	Community and relationships	Veterans are able to build healthy relationships and integrate into their communities.
2	Employment, education and skills	Veterans enter appropriate employment and can continue to enhance their careers throughout their working lives.
3	Finance and debt	Veterans leave the Armed Forces with sufficient financial education, awareness and skills to be financially self-supporting and resilient.
4	Health and wellbeing	All Veterans enjoy a state of positive physical and mental health and wellbeing, enabling them to contribute to wider aspects of society.
5	Making a home in civilian society	Veterans have a secure place to live either through buying, renting or social housing.
6	Veterans and the law	Veterans leave the Armed Forces with the resilience and awareness to remain law-abiding civilians.

# Veterans Strategy Cross-Cutting Factors





# Collaboration and Co-ordination

## Armed Forces and Veterans Champions

The previous Veterans Minister met with the network of Local Authority Armed Forces and Veterans Champions at the end of 2020. During this roundtable discussion, the Champions' Role Description was agreed and defines how they will deliver their role in support of the Armed Forces and Veterans community in their Local Authorities. Furthermore, we continue to engage Champions to leverage their local knowledge and expertise, for example in support of the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's latest recommendations on Employability, Skills and Learning.

In addition, during 2021 we have established relationships with the new network of Champions in the Department for Work and Pensions in Scotland to determine how they are supporting the Armed Forces and Veterans community and how the Scottish Government can best support their efforts.

## Supporting the Armed Forces Covenant

The Scottish Government continues to be an active member of the Armed Forces Covenant governance structure, including the Covenant Reference Group.

Furthermore, the Scottish Government continues to contribute to the Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans annual report, which details how the principles of the Covenant are being delivered across the UK.

The Scottish Government continues to engage with the MOD as it seeks to further embed the Armed Forces Covenant into legislation through the Armed forces Bill introduced in January 2021. We worked closely with the MOD in advance of introduction to try to ensure the legislation is fit for purpose in Scotland and we will continue to work with MOD as they develop the Legislation's statutory guidance.

## Unforgotten Forces Consortium

The Scottish Government continues to fund the Unforgotten Forces Consortium, a partnership of 16 civilian and ex-service charitable organisations with the purpose of delivering a wide array of services to Veterans in Scotland. The Scottish Government has contributed £250,000 per year from 2020-21 until 2022-23 (for a total of £750,000) to support their work in improving the health, wellbeing and quality of life for older Veterans in Scotland. In 2021, the consortium expanded the targeting of their support to include all veterans over 60 years of age, instead of the previous 65.



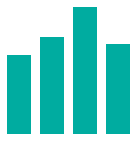
## Scottish Veterans Fund

The Scottish Veterans Fund (SVF) continued in 2021, with a further £200,000 awarded to 16 projects across Scotland, with a specific focus on projects that supported recovery from the COVID pandemic. From 2022-23, the funding available through the SVF will increase to £500,000.

## Relationship with the Services and Family Federations

The Scottish Government has an excellent relationship with the Armed Forces and Families Federations in Scotland. We continue to hold regular discussions with the three Services to ensure a joined up approach to supporting the Services in Scotland at both Official and Ministerial level. We worked closely with the Military during 2021 to support the delivery of Defence and national security priorities within the various and ever-evolving COVID restrictions, helping the Services to better understand where, and how, the various restrictions applied and how essential Defence business could continue to be delivered safely and appropriately.

We continue to have regular discussions with the Family Federations across all three Services and worked with them in 2021 to address issues around the rollout of the COVID vaccine in Military Bases and in the development of the latest version of the **Welcome to Scotland** document.



# Data

## 2022 Census and other surveys

The Scottish Parliament agreed that Scotland's Census, which will take place on 20 March 2022, will include for the first time a question on previous service in the UK Armed Forces. This will help to support a better understanding of the veterans community in Scotland including numbers, location, employment status, housing and other needs such as healthcare and education. Analysis of the Census Outputs will help to inform policy development and targeted support.

Recognising that the Census only takes place every ten years, we have identified opportunities for more regular data collections by including the same question from the Census in the Scottish Government's three primary surveys: Scottish Household Survey (SHS), Scottish Health Survey (SHeS) and Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS). All three surveys intend to include the veterans Census question in their next sweeps with subsequent Scotland-level analysis expected to be available at varying points during 2023. Having a question in each of these national surveys will improve considerably our understanding of the profile, circumstances and needs of veterans in Scotland, which in turn will help inform policy and services. Each of the surveys also collate re-contact samples, consisting of respondents who consent to being included in future research. This

will give us the option to utilise this sample to carry out more in-depth research with respondents who identify as veterans.

## Research on the veterans community

We have built strong relationships across the wider academic and research community to better understand and, where appropriate support, the delivery of research on the veterans community in Scotland. This close engagement will help us to recognise research being delivered and whether there is any need/scope for policy interventions to address the findings.

We are developing a proforma to be sent to veterans stakeholders to better understand what data, if any, is currently collected by different organisations across Scotland. This exercise will contribute towards an overview of veterans data collections, supporting the co-ordination of data across the community. It will help us to identify what data might be used to measure progress against the Veterans Strategy and help us to identify evidence gaps and areas for development. In addition, we are exploring options to understand how relevant data held and/or published by the Scottish Government could be developed to improve the evidence base on veterans' interactions with the justice system, which would in turn help measure progress against a number of outcomes linked to the Veterans Strategy.

## Exploring data-sharing opportunities

As part of the Administrative Data Research Scotland (ADR-S) programme, the Scottish Government has been working with the MOD to gain access to their Service Leavers Database (SLD) in order to enable public benefit research on Scotland's veterans population. Information Governance documents to enable the data share are in the final stages of review between SG and MOD. Once acquired, the SLD dataset will be indexed against the National Registers of Scotland's population spine and the NHS Central Register to provide a best estimate of veterans residing in Scotland. Edinburgh Napier University is leading on an ADR-S project proposal to link the SLD with Scotland's 2011 Census. The analysis of this data linkage project seeks to answer key questions on the social and personal circumstances of our veterans community, and compare and contrast these to non-veterans. Those questions are based on the themes of the Veterans Strategy.

Additionally, the Scottish Government is an active member of the new Veteran and Covenant Data Working Group, which aims to co-ordinate efforts to build a better evidence base in support of delivering the Armed Forces Covenant and the Strategy for our Veterans. Scottish Government officials have presented on the Veterans Strategy monitoring work and have established good relationships with counterparts in the OVA, MOD and Welsh Government. The group is actively exploring options to work collaboratively to improve the available evidence on veterans in Scotland.



# Perception and Recognition

## Promoting veterans as assets to employers

For the first time, the Veterans Employability Strategic Group (VESG) has membership from private sector employers. This is an important step towards bridging the gap between public sector policy, service delivery partners and employers to support an improved understanding of the benefit of employing veterans and thus ensuring they are better supported to find suitable employment. The VESG is currently establishing working groups as part of its future focus, one of which is an employer-led group.

In addition, the Scottish Government's 2021-22 Programme for Government has committed to securing improved opportunities for veterans, ensuring that those who have risked their lives in the service of the nation can access good jobs once their time in the military is over. We will launch a public awareness campaign next year, targeting employers and the business community to help increase employment opportunities for veterans.





# Transition

In addition to the five primary Cross-Cutting Factors, our Veterans Strategy consultation told us that Transition remains a key issue for some of our Service leavers. It was clear from our engagement that veterans felt that little priority had been given to the Transition process in the past, but that it has come a long way since then. Stakeholders were clear that the process needs to start earlier and go beyond employment into wider support, including education options, finding suitable housing and managing money.

## Holistic Transition Policy

The Scottish Government provided comments to the MOD in advance of a refresh of its Holistic Transition Policy in April 2021. The policy is intended to support Service personnel and their families better prepare for life after the military on a through-career basis. It recognises that transition is far wider than employment and that a wide range of life changing issues can affect both the Service person and their immediate family as they leave the Armed Forces. Through the policy, the single Services will identify potential vulnerable Service leavers and facilitate a referral to the new Defence Transition Services.







## Engagement with Defence Transition Services

We have built strong relationships and engage regularly with the Defence Transition Services (DTS) which has ensured that DTS can better support its clients in Scotland with a good understanding of the devolved services and support which are available to veterans in Scotland. In addition, DTS have the opportunity to raise with us issues experienced by their clients which we can then take forward as necessary, including improving guidance and signposting and through the provision of advice. This year, following an issue raised by DTS, we worked with partners to better ensure that veterans do not face disadvantage when applying for social housing.

## Scottish Veterans Commissioner – focus on Transition

Following the publication of the Commissioner's Transition scene-setting paper in December 2019, he has since published two additional reports on Employment, Skills and Learning (December 2020) and Housing (June 2021), both in the context of Transition. These reports contained a number of recommendations for the Scottish Government and, for the first time, the UK Government.

The Scottish Government welcomed both reports and accepted their recommendations. We continue to work with partners to prioritise the delivery of the Commissioner's recommendations and again contributed to his annual progress report. We look forward to his report on veterans Health, the final paper in the series focused on Transition.

# Veterans Strategy Key Themes





# Community and Relationships

## Social Isolation and Breakfast Clubs

COVID restrictions have prevented in-person breakfast clubs from proceeding this year, however Legion Scotland and many other charitable organisation carried out virtual clubs throughout the pandemic to help combat social isolation.

More broadly, the Scottish Government will develop a plan to tackle social isolation and loneliness backed by £10 million across the lifetime of this parliament. As part of our first 100 days we have already announced the first £1 million to tackle issues in communities across Scotland now.

## Befriending and Mental Health First Aid

We reported last year that in 2020-21 the Scottish Government provided £3,000 of funding to hold two one-day Befriending training sessions for up to 25 individuals as well as four two-day Mental Health First Aid training sessions per up to 12 individuals from the Veterans community. COVID-19 has thus far precluded the delivery of this training, but it is now anticipated that this will now be delivered by the MOD, in conjunction with Legion Scotland, before the end of this year.



## Welcome to Scotland

**Welcome to Scotland** is a Scottish Government guide created in 2018 to ensure Service Personnel and their families are fully equipped with the correct information and support upon their move to Scotland.

An updated version of **Welcome to Scotland** was published in March 2021 following extensive consultation with the Military as well as third and public sector organisations to ensure that the guide is up-to-date and contains the most relevant information for personnel and their families ahead of relocation to Scotland.



# Employment, Education and Skills

## Veterans Employability Strategic Group (VESG)

During 2020 the VESG was refreshed with two new co-chairs and members from private sector employers. The group has agreed key areas for action linked to the SVC Employment, Skills and Learning report on Transition. An action plan for implementation is being developed with its key themes focusing on:

- Upskilling and retraining to enable Service leavers and veterans to address skills gaps;
- Understanding the Labour market;
- Positive employer practice;
- Data; and
- Third sector support.

The action plan will give the group a clear focus on enabling Service leavers and veterans to access, sustain and progress in good jobs, building on a clear understanding of job opportunities available to them in Scotland. The Group will work with employers to promote the skills they bring to the labour market and promote alignment of services to ensure their accessibility.

## Employability Initiatives

The Scottish Government, alongside delivery partners, will continue to ensure employment support services for those facing significant challenges when leaving the Armed Forces continue to be enhanced.

The employability support programmes are open to all individuals who meet the eligibility criteria, including veterans and Service leavers. Implementation of No One Left Behind phase 1 is now complete with phase 2 implementation planned for April 2022, drawing on the best practice of Community Jobs Scotland (CJS) and the Employability Fund (EF).

Employability support funding will be transferred to Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs), where local decisions will be based on the needs, strengths and capabilities of the individual and taking on board regional local employer needs and demands. LEPs are made up of public, private and third sector bodies. Veterans are priority groups within both CJS and EF programmes, and will remain so under phase 2 of No One Left Behind. The network of Local Authority Armed Forces and Veterans Champions will play a role in supporting LEPs and veterans into accessing the support and addressing any barriers to fair and sustainable employment.

## Skills and Qualifications Mapping

Since 2018 the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP) has undertaken a substantial amount of work to map military qualifications to those recognised by employers and education institutions including:

- A scoping report on priority job roles within the Armed Forces;
- Development of a number of information leaflets for different job roles;
- Development of a dedicated webpage on the SCQF website to support Service leavers;
- Revision of the MOD's qualifications matrix to ensure accuracy of qualifications being offered within the Armed Forces; and
- Conversations with a range of awarding bodies to encourage more qualifications to be recognised on the SCQF.

During 2021, the Scottish Government provided £35,000 of additional funding to SCQF to develop a skills recognition tool for use on My World of Work. The SCQF Partnership are working with key partners in Skills Development Scotland and MOD to deliver the project. Its aim is to develop a skills profiling tool specifically for Service leavers that supports them in understanding the skills they have gained in the military and how these skills translate into language easily understood by civilian employers/institutions in order to gain a job or move into further learning. The initial phase will examine around 20 job roles within the Armed Forces that were considered both priorities in terms of needing transitional support and roles typically held by those Service leavers predominantly settling in Scotland. The project commenced on 1 April 2021 with a completion date of 31 January 2022.

## Further and Higher Education Champions

The SFC-led Armed Forces and Veterans Community Group (AFVCG), which supports the work of the HE/FE Veterans Champions Network, meets three times per academic year. At the June 2021 meeting the group agreed the priority working areas for the upcoming academic year (2021-22) which are closer collaborative working with MOD's Directorate of Training, Education, Skills, Recruiting & Resettlement (TESRR) and Career Transition Partnership (CTP) collaborative working.

Two members of the AFVCG sit on, and have presented to, an international veterans committee which includes participants from New Zealand, Australia, Canada and United States, and supports the sharing of best practice, ideas and common understanding.

The HE/FE Veterans Champions Group was used to determine the appetite for developing a Scottish Military Research Hub, the concept for which is Scottish universities delivering research in partnership. Thus far, nine universities have expressed an interest and representatives from the universities met in June 2021 to explore funding options for the hub and discuss potential themes. These themes are still being considered but will likely focus around key transition areas such as health, housing, education, families, etc.

## Barriers to HE/FE for Service Children

Scotland's Community of Access and Participation Practitioners (SCAPP) arranged a presentation to members of the HE/FE Widening Participation community to highlight the importance of support to the Service families community. Work continues with the Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance to create a dedicated presentation and information toolkit to allow the presentation of HE/FE as an opportunity to Service children.

## Scottish Funding Council's Data Analysis

SFC has collected data on veterans accessing colleges since 2017-18. Since 2020-21, Service leavers have been identified in the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student return, data from which will be available from December 2021.

Like veterans, Service children or children of military families are also considered one of the 'At Risk' groups. These are students at risk of not achieving their full potential, including from aspirations through to successful outcomes and appropriate employment. Students from Service families are to be identified in the HESA Student return from 2021-22, however this data will not be available until at least 2022-23. The data on Service children or military families will in future enable SFC and other public bodies to plan and make informed decisions about students from Service families.

## Forces Families Jobs

The Forces Families Jobs website is a central portal for employment and training opportunities for military spouses and family members, which was launched in 2019. All employers who advertise on the Forces Families Jobs website have signed the Armed Forces Covenant and a profile is provided for them to explain their individual commitment to being forces family friendly. The Scottish Government continues to work with Forces Families Jobs to post vacancies by directing to Work for Scotland, our own job website.

## Work Placements in Scottish Government

The Scottish Government continues to offer work placements and Fixed Term Appointments (FTA) to veterans through the Going Forward Into Employment (GFIE) programme. Working with the Career Transition Partnership and other partners to identify candidates, the initiative is giving us the opportunity to take on Service leavers and veterans through short placements and FTA which could subsequently be converted to permanent. Three veterans have thus far been recruited successfully through this route and we are working with partners to further embed GFIE into our recruitment practices.

Additionally, the Scottish Government is exploring the possibility of including a field on veteran status as part of the employee data voluntarily provided by Scottish Government staff through its HR system. This would help monitor the progress of activities aimed at increasing the number of veterans employed by the Scottish Government.

## NHS Careers Website

A dedicated NHS Scotland Careers webpage, designed to support veterans and promote the NHS as a post-service career, launched during Armed Forces week 2021. The page includes support for veterans to apply to NHS jobs, guidance on communicating transferrable skills, career case studies from veterans and Armed Forces family members who have transitioned and work in the NHS, information on mapping Armed Forces skills to the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF), and more. The launch of the website was accompanied by a series of social media activities, including the sharing of career case studies across social media channels.

## Police Scotland – Employment and Partnerships

During the past year, Police Scotland's National Recruitment Team have undertaken several activities to focus recruitment of veterans into Police Scotland including engagement with CTP and the Officer's Association and utilising Local Policing Veterans Champions to arrange bespoke career transition events.

Both the National Recruitment and Talent Acquisition Teams support the Wounded, Injured or Sick Programme (WISP), whereby Police Scotland secondment opportunities are provided to personnel coming to the end of their Service. Additionally, Police Scotland recently announced the new Volunteering Strategy which provides more defined opportunities for those wishing to bring their experience and transferable skills

into the challenging and rewarding environment of volunteering in policing. This could either be as a Special Constable within local communities, or as an Adult Volunteer in mentoring and supporting our cadre of Police Scotland Youth Volunteers (PSYV).

### University of Strathclyde's Articulation Route

An articulation mechanism has been developed and this will allow those with HND qualifications to enter initial teacher education. Since 2020 three veterans have been awarded a STEM bursary whilst on the one year PGDE programme. The bursary scheme is an SG sponsorship for STEM students accepted on PGDE programmes, who receive £20k for the year.

### Cyber Skills Pilot

Last year, we reported that Scottish veterans were being retrained via a cyber-skills pilot led by Skills Development Scotland, in partnership with SaluteMyJob & Abertay University. The pilot concluded this year with 14 individuals completing the course. We are working with partners to determine the employment destinations of those who completed the course.

### Scottish Armed Forces Education Support Group

The Scottish Service Children Strategy Group (SSCSG) was re-constituted to take a more strategic approach in improving the support to Children and Young People (CYP)





from Armed Forces backgrounds. The group updated its term of reference and was re-named the Scottish Armed Forces Education Support Group (SAFESG). This group's work and minutes are now available [here](#) to raise the profile of this work. This website will also share information and resources on best practice and support for AF CYP. The SAFESG also aligns their work with the Morgan review of Additional Support for Learning and action plan.

Additionally, in conjunction with the Association of Directors of Education (ADES) National Transitions Officer (NTO), the SAFESG invites head teachers from schools across Scotland to share their insights, best practice and develop ideas with the strategic group.

Some areas of best practice the group has been working on include:

- Safeguarding: SAFESG facilitated MOD input into the recently updated Scottish Government Safeguarding guidance to ensure the needs and considerations of AF CYP and personnel were reflected. SAFESG also facilitated discussions on Safeguarding between stakeholders to ensure alignment with the various internal processes related to this area.
- Developing strategies to support dispersed families.
- Considering approaches to support families moving into Scotland and their engagement with the school and the Scottish education system. SAFESG has hosted sessions with Forces Families Federations to share the knowledge and experiences of families moving to Scotland.



SAFESG is also working closely with the NTO to support the next round of data collection on Armed Forces children and young people via Seemis. Data collection is due to take place in autumn 2021 and results will be used to further enhance and develop the support available to these children and young people.

The group is also working with local authorities to understand and support local data gathering, with a view to developing and sharing best digital practice.

In alignment with the Morgan review, SAFESG is considering research opportunities to further understand barriers to learning experienced by these learners and develop approaches to mitigate them.



# Finance and Debt

## Benefits

The Scottish Government has designed the application guidance for devolved benefits to provide comprehensive information on entitlement. Similarly, signposting will be included to refer clients to the relevant agencies for reserved benefits where appropriate.

The Adult Disability Payment (ADP) application form will ask clients about their possible entitlement to Armed Forces Independence Payment, War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement and War Pension Constant Attendance Allowance. Where appropriate, clients will be directed to Veterans UK for further advice, with whom we have worked to develop an information sharing process. This is intended to ensure that veterans can efficiently access the support to which they are entitled. Furthermore, we engage regularly with Veterans UK and MOD to ensure that there is consistency in the messaging provided to veterans.

## Social Security Scotland

Over the last year, Social Security Scotland (SSS) has undertaken a number of actions to further embed inclusive communication principles. This has included close engagement with its Inclusive Communication External Stakeholder Reference Group, of which BLESMA is a member. Together, they will ensure that the agency communicates in ways that meet all of its clients' communication needs and preferences, including veterans.

Furthermore, Social Security Scotland will develop signposting and referral arrangements with a range of organisations which will make it as easy as possible for clients, including veterans, to access services. SSS will also ensure that it is able to refer clients to partner organisations that deliver other sources of financial or emotional support and will aim to make that referral process as simple as possible so that clients do not have to repeatedly give the same information to different people in other organisations.

## Benefit Take-Up Strategy

The Scottish Government published the second Benefit Take-up Strategy in October 2021. Since the publication of the first Take-up Strategy in 2019, several Seldom Heard groups have been identified as being key to the development of the second Strategy. These groups are likely to experience reduced access to, or take-up of, the Scottish benefits to which they are entitled. Extensive engagement has been carried out with stakeholders representing these Seldom Heard groups, and the outcomes of this engagement has been intrinsic to the development of the Strategy. In order to ensure the inclusion of veterans in the development of our Strategy, both BLESMA and Veterans Scotland have been engaged, and representatives from both organisations attended the Benefit Take-up Round Table Event for Seldom Heard groups, held in August 2021. Going forward, we will continue to work with these organisations and build lasting relationships with the aim of increasing benefit take-up.

## Money Advice Trust

The Scottish Government funded the publication of the Money Advice Trust's new guide on '**How to Deal with Debt**'. This was published in January 2021 and can be found [here](#). This includes specific signposting advice for veterans and Service personnel.

## Money and Pension Service (MaPS)

The Scottish Government co-ordinated in 2020 a Serving personnel and veterans virtual roundtable which was attended by stakeholders and organisations from across the Armed Forces and veterans community. During the session, participants shared their perspectives about current challenges relating to financial wellbeing to inform the development of MaPS' Financial Wellbeing Delivery Plan for Scotland. The intention is that this will be published before the end of 2021.

Throughout the pandemic MaPS established partnership relationships with teams including Defence Transition Services and Veterans Welfare Service. This provided the opportunity for MaPS to deliver webinar presentations to raise awareness and signpost to the practical support and guidance offered by MaPS/MoneyHelper across various delivery channels.



# Health and Wellbeing

## Armed Forces Personnel & Veterans Health Joint Group

The Implementation Group (IG) continues to regularly meet to drive forward progress on priorities set by the Strategic Oversight Group (SOG). The IG provided an update to the SOG in May 2021, and priorities were refreshed. The 2021-22 priorities are a continuation of the October 2020 priorities - Mental Health, employability of veterans in the NHS, and Priority Treatment - plus the addition of Veteran Aware GP Accreditation and exploring the setup of a veterans trauma network within the Scottish health landscape.

## Armed Forces and Veterans NHS Champions

Utilising their knowledge of local health systems, NHS Champions

provide support to veterans who are struggling to gain Priority Treatment, access to health services, or are encountering other health-related issues. We are in frequent contact with NHS Champions on a range of matters, drawing upon their knowledge of local health systems and professional expertise. Through representation at the Joint Group, Champions contribute local expertise and insight to policy development and other areas of work. For example, this year a veteran was attending a local hospital for an ongoing condition. He had been in the area for some time, but due to enduring COVID restrictions was isolated and struggling with other issues related to housing. The veteran was connected with the local NHS Champion who put SSAFA and the Royal British Legion in touch with him to offer their support and guidance.



## Cross-Border Networks

We continue to participate in and reinforce mutually beneficial relationships and networks with organisations in England and the devolved nations. We continue to participate in the MOD/DHSC/Devolved Administrations Partnership Board, including continued input into the cross-nation Priority Treatment Working Group. Recognising the value of collaboration, we provide frequent updates to the Partnership Board and have brought papers for cross-nation agreement. These actions facilitate cross-nation sharing of best practice. Through the UK-wide Priority Treatment Working Group, there has been agreement to review and work on engaging with veterans/clinicians on the current terminology and opportunities for improvement.

We also have quarterly meetings with the Office for Veterans Affairs and partake in cross-nation meetings centred on health IT alignment between NHS Scotland and the Defence Medical Service. Programme Cortisone is due to rollout later in 2021, with pilots scheduled to take place across the UK. Programme Cortisone will further align IT systems within Defence Medical System and the NHS, and allow quick electronic transfer of records.

## Drug and Alcohol Information System

The Drug and Alcohol Information System (DAISy) was implemented on 1 December 2020 and went live across Scotland on 1 April 2021. Public Health Scotland are developing a series of reports for use at a local and national level to better understand the issues related to alcohol and drug harms. This will include issues for veterans.

The Short Life Working Group on Prescription Medicine Dependence and Withdrawal presented its draft recommendations to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport at the end of 2020. These recommendations were then published as a consultation in spring 2021. The consultation has now closed and Scottish Government is considering the responses together with the Short Life Working Group prior to making finalised recommendations to the Cabinet Secretary.

## Scottish Veterans Care Network (SVCN)

The SVCN was formally launched in November 2020, with an initial priority to develop a Mental Health Action Plan (MHAP). The Plan will be available in December 2021. Contributions to the plan have come from over 80 veterans and their representatives, NHS Boards and Integrated Joint Boards (IJBs). There has also been extensive consultation with Third Sector veterans mental health and wellbeing providers, the MOD and the Scottish Veteran Care Network Health and Wellbeing Group. The Network has linked with colleagues in England and Wales to share knowledge and experience and conducted an extensive literature review. The completed plan will aim to support veterans in Scotland to live a healthy life and be able to reach their full potential. When required, they will be able to access high quality mental health and wellbeing services that are tailored to meet their needs.

## Suicide Prevention

Under Action 7 of the Suicide Prevention Action Plan, work has been undertaken to identify groups at elevated risk of suicide and facilitate specific preventative interventions to target them. The Scottish Government's Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan, published in October 2020, featured a commitment to identify prevention opportunities for veterans, alongside existing work on at-risk groups.

Additionally, the National Suicide Prevention Leadership Group (NSPLG) undertook an academic review of existing literature on veterans' suicide, and sponsored further research into their experiences with suicide and suicide prevention services, which is currently under review. This and other relevant research will be considered in the development of the new suicide prevention strategy which will be published in September 2022.

## Veteran Aware Status for GPs and Hospitals

The Joint Group have decided that, as a primary entry into the health system, it would be useful to begin with General Practice accreditation. A sub-group – featuring representation from NHS, Scottish Government, Royal College of General Practitioners, and Veterans Scotland – has been established to take forward our 2021-22 priority on Veteran GP Accreditation. The accreditation will seek to further embed good practice, raise awareness of veterans' issues, and promote learning across General Practices. This work will align well with the NHS Fife Pilot Project, centred on improving methods of identifying and clinical coding veterans.

## Data on Veterans Health

If expanded across Scotland, the NHS Fife Pilot Project, centred on improving clinical coding within General Practices, will provide a basis for identifying veterans within healthcare and, in turn, hopefully improve data on veterans in Scotland. Complementing this work, the Veteran Aware GP Accreditation will encourage clinical coding of veterans in practices. Additionally, the inclusion of a veterans question in the Census and the Scottish Household and Health Surveys will improve health data on veterans.

## NHS Inform

The NHS Inform veterans page remains up-to-date. We frequently share emerging information with our networks, such as the Veterans Scotland Health and Wellbeing Group, as appropriate.

## Combat Stress

Funding for Combat Stress has continued in 2021-22 at the same rate as the previous year. Any future funding will be determined by the recommendations from the Veterans Mental Health Action Plan. Combat Stress is in the process of closing Hollybush House in South Ayrshire with a view to opening more accessible facilities in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

## Veterans First Point (V1P)

The six health boards that host V1P in Scotland have agreed to match fund the Scottish Government award to V1P for this financial year (2021-22). The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans opened a new facility for V1P Fife on 20 July 2021. Any future funding will be determined by the recommendations from the Veterans Mental Health Action Plan.





# Making a Home in Civilian Society

## Housing to 2040

Scottish Government published *Housing to 2040*, Scotland's first long-term housing strategy, in March 2021, following extensive consultation with the housing sector and people of Scotland, including Veterans Scotland's Housing Group. *Housing to 2040* sets out a vision that everyone in Scotland should have access to a safe, warm, affordable and energy efficient home that meets their needs in the place they want to be, regardless of tenure. Equality is at the heart of the strategy and the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living, including the right to adequate housing, will be included in a new

Human Rights Bill to be introduced in this Parliamentary term.

## Local Housing Strategies

Following the refresh of Local Housing Strategy (LHS) guidance in 2019, which requires consideration of the needs of Armed Forces communities, local authorities are demonstrating this in their Local Housing Strategies. For example, in North Lanarkshire Council, consultative LHS for the period 2021-2026 proposes to strengthen support for the Armed Forces community through further engagement and consultation with the community and their representatives.







## Social Housing Allocations

The position remains in Scotland that in law, the responsibility for the allocation of social housing lies with social landlords (local authorities and registered social landlords). Each landlord sets out in their allocations policy how they allocate their social housing. Our guidance for social landlords in Scotland on allocations is practice guidance to support landlords in complying with legislation and statutory guidance. It also covers areas of policy and practice where landlords set out their own criteria and priority categories in accordance with local needs.

The allocations practice guidance encourages landlords to consider giving priority to Service personnel and ex-Service personnel appropriate to the context in which

they are allocating homes. This priority is over and above any priority for those Service leavers who are homeless, threatened with homelessness or have a high level of housing need as set out in the reasonable preference categories. Landlords should also ensure Service personnel and ex-Service personnel are not disadvantaged in accessing social housing because of their time in Service.

## Affordable Housing Supply Programme

Funding continues to be available to deliver homes specifically for veterans where Local Authorities identify this as a strategic priority. Since 2012 over £6m has been made available through the programme to deliver over 100 homes for Veterans.

Earlier this year Riverside Scotland began the construction of 19 homes specifically for veterans across two sites in North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire and Hillcrest Housing Association are due to complete five homes for veterans in Edinburgh in January 2022. These projects are being supported with over £1.8 million of Scottish Government grant.

### Housing Options Scotland

We continue to support Housing Options Scotland to provide its Military Matters project. This service focuses on housing issues affecting people serving in the Armed Forces in Scotland; all UK Service personnel transitioning into civilian life in Scotland, and veterans - helping them to find the right home in the right place. Since it began in 2012, the project has supported just under 1000 people in total. In 2020-2021, the service received 266 new referrals.

### Homelessness Prevention Pathway

A pathway to prevent homelessness for veterans is currently being developed by members of the Veterans Scotland Housing Group. This has included wide consultation with a range of homelessness, housing and Armed Forces and veterans organisations and veterans with lived experience.

The report, with recommendations, is expected to be published by the end of 2021.



# Veterans and the Law

## Veterans in Custody Support Officers (VICSOs)

We have regular engagement with stakeholders from the VICSO network to better understand how they are supporting veterans in custody, if there are opportunities for collaborative efforts and if the Scottish Government can provide support. Furthermore, we have developed good relationships with the Scottish Prison Service and Edinburgh Napier University to understand and, where appropriate support, research into the veterans population in prison. We will consider research as it is published, including any recommendations made.

## Breakfast Clubs

The Scottish Government supports the use of Breakfast Clubs in prisons to encourage veterans to socialise in the prison community. We are working with the VICSO network, in particular the Governor of HMP Perth to understand how we can support breakfast clubs being rolled out across the prison estate in Scotland. We will attend a veterans Breakfast Club event and VICSO gathering when we are able to do so.

## Supporting the work of Sacro

Sacro has recently established a strategic oversight group for its Veterans Mentoring Service which will oversee the work of the Service in supporting veterans who are in

or at risk of becoming involved in the criminal justice system. The Scottish Government is a member of the Strategic Group, which will help ensure that we can support Sacro and the veterans for whom they provide support. The group last met in late September 2021.

## Police Scotland – Champions and Support

Police Scotland continues to invest in its cadre of Veterans Champions across the country, located in each Local Policing Division and across the custody estate within the national Criminal Justice Services Division (CJSD). The core role of Veterans Champions is to promote, amongst their divisional colleagues, the existence of Police Scotland's bespoke referral mechanism with the Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP) for serving and former members of the military.

In November 2020, Police Scotland's National Forum of Veterans Champions became a virtual event, which resulted in enhanced sharing of information, ideas and innovation which has ultimately led to an increase of over 375% in the number of referrals being submitted by police officers in the past nine months. The Champions have promoted the referral mechanism within their respective communities and frontline police officers are better informed and equipped to support serving and former members of the military when they need it.

# Wider Achievements and Support



## Armed Forces Third Sector Resilience Fund

The impact of the pandemic has meant that many charities have been facing severe financial difficulties. Cobseo, the Confederation of Service Charities, ran two surveys of their membership across the whole of the UK last year, which estimated a shortfall of £250 million in fundraising when compared to a normal year; they expect a similar financial impact on the sector this year.

To help address this, £1 million has been made available by the Scottish Government to create a fund to provide direct financial relief to third sector organisations that provide support to the Armed Forces community in Scotland. The Corra Foundation, specialists in grant management and support, were brought in to help administer the fund. Nineteen organisations were awarded funding.

## Skills Development Scotland

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) has co-ordinated Armed Forces Community-focused Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE) webinars with key Armed Forces Community partners, compered by Scottish Water. To date, two webinars have been held in March and July 2021. The first webinar included sessions from PACE, The Army in Scotland, Career Transition Partnership, Tri-Service Family Federations & Veterans Scotland. The event focused on transition and wider support for veterans & families during a period of uncertainty and possible

redundancy. The second event was focused on the support available from Veterans UK, specifically from the Defence Transition Services and Veterans Welfare Service. The partnership event also had a session on the support available from Poppyscotland and SDS.

The webinars were both recorded and are available on the [My World of Work website](#). More webinars are planned for the future on relevant AFC- Civilian partnership topics.

Furthermore, SDS has continued to work in collaboration with the Army in Scotland to deliver virtual Future Skills sessions for Serving personnel. These sessions focus on skills for the future, competency-based interviews and using the STAR model to articulate the meta skills used every day by those serving in the military. Three sessions have been held between September last year and August 2021.

## Women's Returner Programme

The Scottish Government provided £500,000 in 2020-21 to the Women's Returner Programme. In 2020 the programme's criteria was extended to include female veterans and spouses/partners of Serving Personnel. The purpose of the programme is aimed at helping women back into work and to work with employers to provide valuable advice, peer support and access to training and work experience which will open up opportunities for women in sectors where they are under-represented. Last year there was one successful award to an organisation supporting female veterans, spouses and partners.

## Migration

The Scottish Government responded to the Ministry of Defence and Home Office's recent Immigration Fees for Armed Forces Consultation, outlining the Scottish Government's firm position on immigration fees for Armed Forces Personnel. Our position is that the migration system should not be predicated on a migrant's ability to pay, and that the UK Government should conduct a meaningful review of all immigration fees as soon as possible, as well as changes to family migration policy, to ensure that it is best supporting all new Scots, including veterans and their loved ones. The outcome of the consultation is yet to be published.



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