

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

2022



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans Foreword



This is the sixth annual update to Parliament on support for the veterans and Armed Forces Community in Scotland and once again I am pleased to be

able to provide an update on the excellent work that has been undertaken over the previous 12 months. As we continue to emerge from the pandemic, I have seen real progress being made this year across a wide range of areas of support provided to veterans, Service leavers and their families. Challenges clearly remain and I am aware that Covid is still very much present in our lives, however, we continue to see a return to a level of normality we have not seen since the start of the pandemic.

On a personal level I have undertaken numerous visits to veterans charities and organisations and have had meetings with some of our key partners in person over the last year, something which once was so routine but now signals real progress and a welcome return for us all. I was privileged to be able to attend a special memorial event with the McCrae Battalion Trust at the Contalmaison Cairn in Northern France to honour those who fell during the Battle of the Somme. We must remember the past but also not forget to support the current members of our veterans community. I am proud of the collaborative work we do in Scotland on this.

It is this coming together that is so important in our work to support our veteran community. I can confirm that this year the Scottish Government has continued to fund

the Unforgotten Forces Consortium, contributing £250,000 to support their work in improving the health, wellbeing, and quality of life for older veterans in Scotland.

We have also been able to increase the Scottish Veterans Fund pot to £500,000 per annum to provide greater support to veterans and their families. This year, we particularly prioritised projects offering support to Early Service Leavers and projects encouraging collaborative working in the veterans community.

In total, 14 new projects received funding across a range of organisations including employment support from Walking with the Wounded and outdoor counselling from the Venture Trust. We also continued funding for 11 other projects which had received multi-year funding awards previously through the fund. Support for small local projects includes funding for FirstLight trust to establish a new café hub for veterans and their families in Falkirk and funding for Network of Wellbeing to create a programme of away days for veterans in and around the Huntly area to help combat social isolation. I had the pleasure of visiting Networks of Wellbeing earlier this year and was very impressed with the facilities and support they offer to veterans in their area.

This year we have also published our refreshed Veterans Strategy Action Plan which reflects the important services and support that the Scottish Government and our partners are able to provide. Since the original plan was published in 2020, we used the opportunity to determine the extent to which our existing commitments remained

valid and where there were opportunities to add more detail to these commitments or add new ones. We identified seven important new commitments which will help us to expand our support to our veterans and their families. This includes over the coming months working with partners to ensure that the contributions of veterans are properly recognised and understood by wider society.

This year we marked a significant anniversary, that being the 40th Anniversary of the Falklands War, an event which touched many of us across Scotland and means so much to veterans and their families right across the country. The Scottish Government worked with Legion Scotland and Poppyscotland to fund the delivery of a national event to commemorate the anniversary in June 2022. We must never forget the debt of gratitude we all owe for the sacrifices these individuals made - not just those who lost their lives but also those whose lives were irrevocably changed by their experience.

As there was following that conflict and others before and since, there is still stigma associated with veterans mental health. To address this issue, since our last update to Parliament in 2021, the Scottish Government has published the Veteran Mental Health & Wellbeing Action Plan and an Implementation Board has been established to take the plan forward and provide real, tangible support for our veterans and their mental health. Linked to this of course is our commitment to continue to provide funding support to Combat Stress and Veterans First Point in 2022-23.

Veterans housing and homelessness continues to be a priority too. Earlier this year we published our Veterans Homelessness Prevention Pathway which aims to reduce the incidence of veterans without safe

and suitable housing. What is more, we continue to provide funding through our affordable housing supply programme to deliver homes specifically for veterans where Local Authorities identify this as a strategic priority and maintain support to Housing Options Scotland to provide its Military Matters project.

This year we have welcomed a new Scottish Veterans Commissioner, Susie Hamilton. Susie is a veteran and has a wealth of experience in the veterans sector. I know that she will work tirelessly to support our veterans and their families right across Scotland.

Helping veterans into employment as they transition out of Service is an enduring key priority for us and I am delighted that the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership's veterans skills and qualifications discovery tool went live in February this year. The Scottish Government is providing further funding this year to support the ongoing development of the tool.

This is just a small indication of all the of the work that has gone on. What follows in this report clearly shows that the appetite is as strong as ever to support our veterans with many organisations and individuals working to that end. As always, our work continues to improve, expand, and develop the provision for our veterans and their families. I am thankful for everyone who has contributed over the past year, and those who continue to contribute every day in support of our veterans community.



Keith Brown MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Justice

Key Highlights

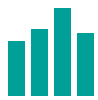


Collaboration and coordination

The Scottish Government continues to fund the Unforgotten Forces Consortium and has contributed £250,000 per year from 2020-21 until 2022-23 to support their work in improving the health, wellbeing and quality of life for older veterans in Scotland.

A new Scottish Veterans Commissioner was recruited and started in August.

The 2022-23 Scottish Veterans Fund pot increased to £500,000 per annum. The priorities this year were projects offering support to Early Service Leavers and projects encouraging collaborative working in the veterans community.



Data

Scotland's 2022 Census included for the first time a question on former Service in the Armed Forces. Scottish Government are now discussing with National Records of Scotland and stakeholders the outputs required from this question.

The three Scottish Government major household surveys have included the veterans Census question in their current sweeps and their findings will be available at varying points during mid-to late-2023. This will improve our understanding of the profile, circumstances and needs of veterans in Scotland which in turn will help inform policy and services.



Perception and Recognition

The Scottish Government worked with Legion Scotland and Poppyscotland to fund the delivery of a national event to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Falklands War in June 2022.



Community and Relationships

An updated version of [Welcome to Scotland](#) was published in April 2022 following extensive consultation with Military, third sector and public sector organisations.

The Scottish Veterans Fund has provided funding to a number of projects which provide support to veterans to integrate into the local community.



Employment, Education and Skills

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership's (SCQFP) qualifications and [skills mapping tool](#) went live in February 2022. The Scottish Government will provide a further £13,500 of funding this year to support the ongoing development of the tool.

The Scottish Government is committed to increasing the number of veterans it employs and continues to explore a number of ways to achieve this. Since 2021 at least 34 veterans have joined the Scottish Government.

The Scottish Government, through phase 2 delivery of No One Left Behind, continues to offer employment support services for those facing significant challenges when leaving the Armed Forces



Finance and Debt

Adult Disability Payment launched in August this year. The application form asks clients about their possible entitlement to Armed Forces Independence Payment, War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement and War Pension Constant Attendance Allowance.

Social Security Scotland are collaborating with the Department of Work and Pensions on an event for Armed Forces Champions based within Scotland, to promote all the benefits currently delivered by Social Security Scotland.



Health and Wellbeing

The Veteran Mental Health & Wellbeing Action Plan published in December 2021 and the Scottish Government has established an Implementation Board for the Plan.

The Scottish Government continued to fund Combat Stress and Veterans First Point during 2022-23.



Making a Home in Civilian Society

The Veterans Homelessness Prevention Pathway was published on 25 January 2022.

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

We continue to provide funding through our affordable housing supply programme to deliver homes specifically for veterans where Local Authorities identify this as a strategic priority.

Progress against Veterans Strategy Commitments

Cross-Cutting Factors and Themes

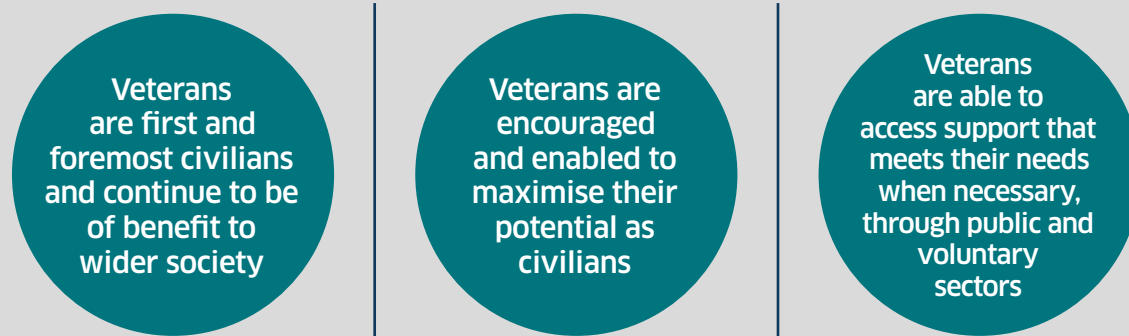
Vision

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

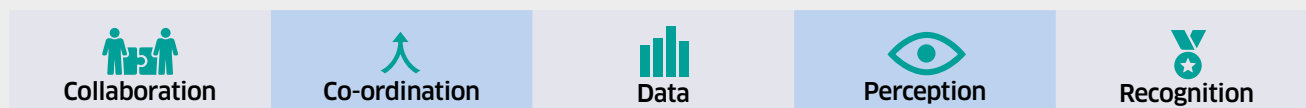
The Principles articulate in greater detail the strategic objectives of the Vision.



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.

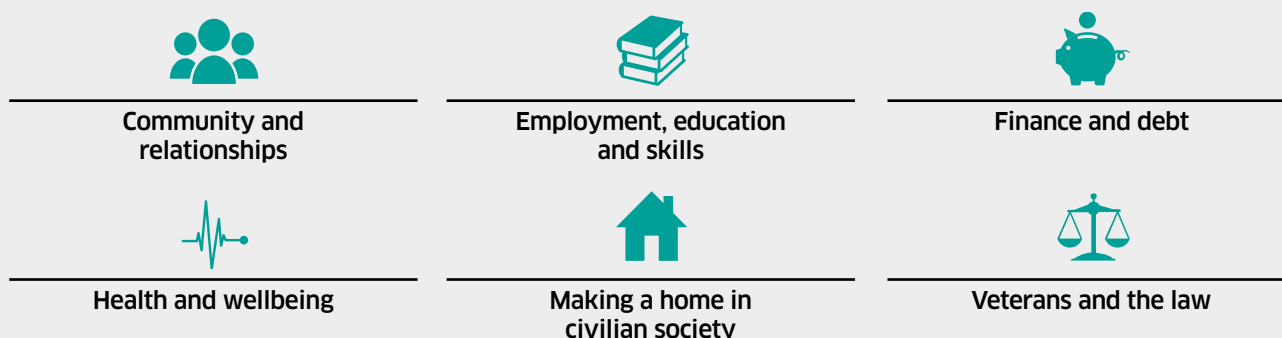
Cross-cutting factors

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.

Cross-Cutting Factors





Collaboration and Co-ordination

Cross-Government Working

The Scottish Government continues to be an active member of the Armed Forces Covenant's governance structure and has been engaged with the MOD and others this year in the structure's ongoing review. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans is a full member of the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board which last met in late 2021. Additionally, the Scottish Government contributes to the MOD's Covenant Annual Report and again provided a detailed contribution for the upcoming 2022 report.

Veterans and Armed Forces Champions

We continue to engage with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Champions primarily through the Veterans Employability Strategic Group. In addition, Social Security Scotland are collaborating with the Champions to promote the devolved benefits being delivered by Social Security Scotland with a specific focus on Adult Disability Payment.

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 May 2022, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans spoke at the Spring Gathering of the consortium to thank them for their hard work and to give an overview of the Scottish Government's priorities for older veterans.

Scottish Veterans Fund

The 2022-23 funding round saw the Scottish Veterans Fund grant pot increase to £500,000 per annum. The priorities this year were projects offering support to Early Service Leavers and projects encouraging collaborative working in the Veterans community. Six of the projects funded this year fell into one of these categories. Of the £500,000 total funding available for 22-23, £136,070 was set aside to continue funding for projects which had been approved for multi-year funding in previous years; leaving £363,930 available for new bids. In total, 14 new projects received funding allowing a range of organisations to be supported including employment support from Walking with the Wounded and outdoor counselling from the Venture Trust. Support for small local projects includes funding for FirstLight trust to establish a new café hub for veterans and their families in Falkirk and funding for Network of Wellbeing to create a programme of away days for veterans in and around the Huntly area to help combat social isolation.

Relationships with the Services and Families Federations

The Scottish Government has an excellent relationship with the Armed Forces and Service 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. The Scottish Government will be represented at the Firm Base Conference at the end of November

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans met with the three Families Federations late last year, which has led to joined-up working on topics such as childcare and family law.

Scottish Veterans Commissioner

The Scottish Government continues to fund the Scottish Veterans Commissioner role and team. During 2022 a new Commissioner was recruited with the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans appointing Susie Hamilton, who started in August. The Scottish Government continues to prioritise the delivery of the outstanding Commissioner recommendations, including those made by the previous Commissioner in his series of Transition-focussed papers and we again contributed to and welcomed the Commissioner's 2022 Progress Report.

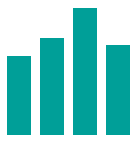
Armed Forces Covenant Legislation

MOD is introducing, through secondary legislation, statutory guidance and a definition of 'relevant family members' (RFM) for the purposes of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty. MOD consulted on the draft guidance and RFM definition with the Scottish Government, as well as other Scottish stakeholders. We and stakeholders gave substantial comments on the draft guidance which were primarily to ensure the guidance is clear and relevant to public bodies in Scotland and that it includes language and descriptions which will be familiar to the Scottish public bodies within scope. A draft Statutory Instrument has now been laid in UK Parliament which if approved will bring the Duty into force and guidance into effect.

Supporting the delivery of cross-UK Veterans Strategy commitments

The Scottish Government has an excellent working relationship with the Office for Veterans' Affairs which has responsibility for the UK Government's Veterans Strategy Action Plan. We continue to work closely with them through fora such as the Devolved Administrations Working Group and Data Working Group. In addition, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans met with Fighting with Pride this year to discuss the UK Government's review into the impact of the pre-2000 ban on homosexual personnel in the military. The Scottish Government promoted this review through a series of communications and is fully supportive of its aims.





Data

Scotland's Census

Scotland's 2022 Census included for the first time a question on former Service in the Armed Forces. Scottish Government are now discussing with National Records of Scotland (NRS) and stakeholders the outputs required from this question. Through attendance at the cross-government Data Working Group, and engagement with counterparts in Office for National Statistics and Office for Veterans' Affairs, we will also seek to learn from the analysis and outputs delivered for the England and Wales 2021 Census. Analysis from the Census will help to support a better understanding of the veterans community in Scotland, in turn informing policy development and targeted support.

Scottish Household Surveys

The three Scottish Government major household surveys: Scottish Household Survey (SHS); Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS); and the Scottish Health Survey (SHeS) have included the veterans Census question in their current sweeps. Together, the surveys form the Scottish Surveys Core Questions. Results from the three surveys on the core/common questions are pooled together each year to offer a larger sample size, enabling more precise and detailed breakdowns of results.

We are now considering analysis proposals from the surveys and their findings will be available at varying points during mid-to late-2023, with the pooled analysis to follow thereafter. Having a question in each of these national surveys will improve 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 be included in future research, giving us the option to utilise this sample to carry out more in-depth research in future with respondents who are veterans.

Additional Data Sources

The Scottish Government has been working with external stakeholders to better understand the veterans-related data being collected by them and how this data could be used to support the delivery of the Veterans Strategy and help to identify evidence gaps. This exercise will contribute towards an overview of veterans data collections, supporting the co-ordination of data across the community.

The Scottish Government is working with colleagues in ONS, OVA and the devolved administrations to develop the first UK-wide Veterans' Survey. The online survey will collect information from veterans of the UK Armed Forces to help us understand current access to and perception of services in addition to veterans' experiences and circumstances. The survey is due to be launched in late autumn 2022 and will be conducted by ONS in collaboration with OVA. Findings are expected by summer 2023.

We continue to be a part of the cross-UK Veterans and Covenant Data Working Group, engaging with veterans data champions in UK Government departments and the other devolved administrations.

This year the Scottish Government has also added a field on veteran status as part of the employee data voluntarily provided by staff. This is helping us to monitor the progress of activities aimed at increasing the number of veterans employed by the Scottish Government.

(credit Poppyscotland)





Perception and Recognition

Veterans ID Cards

The UK Government plans to undertake a scoping study for provision of digital verification of veteran status and during 2022 the Scottish Government supported and contributed to the project's Discovery Phase. We will continue to support the work as it progresses.

Promoting Veterans as Assets

The Scottish Government's 2021-22 Programme for Government 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. This includes increased opportunities for veterans to work for the Scottish Government and a public awareness campaign targeting employers and the business community to help increase employment opportunities for veterans.

Veterans' Contribution

The Scottish Government worked with Legion Scotland and Poppyscotland to fund the delivery of a national event to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Falklands War in June 2022. We continue to work with them and other key stakeholders to support a wide range of commemorative events.





Key Themes





Community and Relationships

Integration into local communities

The Scottish Veterans Fund has provided funding to a number of projects which provide support to veterans to integrate into the local community, such as an activity co-ordinator for veterans in FirstLight Café in Falkirk, or away days for veterans in the Huntly region through Networks of Wellbeing.

Welcome to Scotland

An updated version of Welcome to Scotland was published in April 2022 following extensive consultation with Military, third sector and public sector organisations to ensure that the guide is both up to date and contains the most important information for Service personnel and their families ahead of relocation to Scotland or those returning to Scotland after leaving the Armed Forces.





Employment, Education and Skills

Employability Initiatives

The Scottish Government, through phase 2 delivery of No One Left Behind (NOLB), continues to offer employment support services for those facing significant challenges when leaving the Armed Forces. NOLB provides tailored individual wrap-around support which some Service leavers may need. This can be holistic support as well as employability services support. Through employability support, the key aim of the work is to ensure that veterans and those leaving Service are able to access the full and extensive range of employability support in Scotland, much of which is delivered through Local Employability Partnerships (LEPs) at Local Authority level. The Scottish Government have been liaising with LEPs to ensure veterans remain a priority group as they were within the previous Community Jobs Scotland and Employability Fund programmes, and remain so under phase 2 of No One Left Behind. The Local Authority Armed Forces and Veterans Champions network will play a role in supporting LEPs, ensuring veterans remain a priority grouping in their local employability support offers.

Veterans Employability Strategic Group

The Veterans Employability Strategic Group (VESG) continues to implement its action plan agreed in 2021. Key activities this year have included:

- The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Skills Development Scotland (SDS), MOD and the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) to enable closer working between SDS and CTP including access to individuals transitioning from the Services to civilian life, and sharing of labour market information and other data;
- The launch of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership skills and qualifications mapping tool;
- The Employer Engagement Group, chaired by Officers Association Scotland (OAS), has developed a range of tools to help address negative employer perceptions of veterans which has included a series of infographics and videos which are being made to be presented at a series of regional roadshows.

Skills and Qualifications Mapping

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership's (SCQFP) qualifications and skills mapping tool went live in February 2022. The tool was tested with Service leavers and it was agreed that the number of job roles should be expanded. This work is currently taking place and an additional 19 jobs are ready for inclusion which are primarily Army roles. The next stage is to identify more Navy and Air Force roles. SDS is further developing the Skills Discovery tool to suggest suitable job roles for users and, eventually, actual job vacancies. SCQFP intends to organise a formal launch and wider promotion of the tool once this work is complete and is also working with the MOD to ensure information relating to qualifications contained within the tool remains current. MOD is looking at developing a database to support this. The Scottish Government will provide a further £13,500 of funding this year to support the ongoing development of the tool.

Skills Development Scotland

Following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between MOD and SDS in March 2022, an action plan has been developed and agreed and is now being implemented to facilitate closer working between CTP and SDS. SDS has now met with the new Early Service Leaver adviser and are looking to deliver a continuing professional development (CPD) package to raise awareness of SDS services and areas where SDS can support delivery. Actions agreed include: developing a joint customer journey, a joint referral process, service development and product promotion & joint CPD sessions for CTP/SDS colleagues.

Armed Forces and Veterans Community Group

The SFC-led Armed Forces and Veterans Community Group (AFVCG), which supports the work of the HE/FE Veterans Champions Network, continues to meet three times per academic year. A proposal to set-up a Scottish Military Research Hub was approved for funding by the Veterans Foundation in August. So far, the Hub includes 11 Universities.

The AFVCG continues to work closely with MOD's Directorate of Training, Education, Skills, Recruiting & Resettlement (TESRR) and CTP with a proposal to have dedicated educational opportunities briefing sessions at CTP online workshops agreed. Online and face to face sessions have been delivered in academic year 2021-22 with further sessions planned for the Academic Year 2022-23. Work to improve the Enhanced Learning Credits Administration Services (ELCAS) offering continues with some progress being made in terms of understanding institutional issues.

Scottish Funding Council (SFC)

The SFC's dedicated webpage outlining sources of information, advice and guidance for veterans, Service leavers and their families continues to be reviewed and maintained. SFC's communications teams continue to use social media channels to promote events relevant for veterans and the Armed Forces community.

A presentation to promote educational opportunities to the family members of the Armed Forces Serving community has been created and the priority for Academic Year 2022-23 will be its delivery. This work has been carried out by four universities (Edinburgh Napier, Glasgow Caledonian, Glasgow and Stirling). Collaborative work has been undertaken between Napier and Forces Children Scotland to promote educational opportunities to Service children.

The Service Children's Progression Alliance launched its [Thriving Lives Toolkit Online Platform](#) in April 2022.

For the first time, the SFC's Report on Widening Access (ROWA) 2020-21 published information on veterans and Service leavers college and university enrolment. The data showed that at least 290 Service leavers enrolled in a Scottish college or university in 2020-21.

Like veterans, Service children or children of military families are also one of the 'At Risk' groups. These are students at risk of not achieving their full potential, from aspirations through to successful outcomes and appropriate employment. Students from Service families are now being identified in the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Student return and data will likely be available in 2023. 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.

Scottish Government Employment

The Scottish Government is committed to increasing the number of veterans it employs and continues to explore a number of ways to achieve this. Since 2021 at least 34 veterans have joined the Scottish Government. We are considering whether we can replicate the wider Civil Service Great Place to Work scheme, which allows veterans who meet the minimum criteria to progress to the next stage with their application for most vacancies, and we continue to offer work placements and Fixed Term Appointments to veterans and the partners/spouses of veterans and Serving personnel through the Going Forward Into Employment (GFIE) programme. This programme is ongoing with plans to identify more vacancies and match these to suitable veterans, their partners or partners of currently serving personnel.

Furthermore, the Scottish Government had a stand at the CTP Careers Fair in May where we had the opportunity to engage with several Armed Forces personnel, Service leavers and veterans to discuss the type of roles within the Scottish Government, where to find them and how to apply.

NHS Employment

A five-year project is currently in-train that will specifically focus on attracting veterans to employment within the NHS. This work is being led by National Education for Scotland (NES) and the Scottish Government will continue to engage with this project as it develops.

Furthermore, NHS Scotland have had their Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award renewed. The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the Armed Forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

Police Scotland Employment

Opportunities to volunteer as a Special Constable are included as part of the attraction work being carried out by the Positive Action Recruitment Team with veterans. Work has also commenced to investigate whether it would be possible for Military Police Reservists to become Special Constables via Employer Supported policing, both as a way of expanding reservists' exposure to policing and to bring their skillset into policing.

In support of the Armed Forces Covenant, the Positive Action Team have established a close relationship with the Wounded-Injured-Sick Programme (WISP) which supports veterans who have been discharged from the Armed Forces on medical grounds and seeks to identify employment opportunities in civilian roles. The purpose of the WISP is to engage with veterans and support injured veterans leaving the Armed Forces. Five veterans have engaged with the programme to date.

The Positive Action team are also actively supporting any veteran or Service leaver who wishes to pursue a career with Police Scotland either as a police officer or within Police Scotland's staff network.

Police Scotland were also represented at the Career Transition Partnership employment fair in Edinburgh in May to highlight to veterans and Service leavers the opportunities within Police Scotland.

Scottish Armed Forces Education Support Group (SAFESG)

The SAFESG continues to take a lead in developing and supporting best practice for Armed Forces Children and Young People (AF CYP).

The Scottish Government has provided £50,000 to support the continuation of the National Transitions Officer (NTO) role. As part of this, the NTO will work with local authorities to gather and collate data on children from Armed Forces families in Scotland. This will be used to inform both national and local policy as well as providing a useful dataset for research on these learners. The first report is due at the end of December 2022. Working closely with the Centre for Military Research, Education and Public Engagement (CMREPE) at Edinburgh Napier University, the NTO will identify and support relevant research into barriers to learning.

Education Scotland, working collaboratively with the Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES) NTO and Forces Children Scotland, developed a [professional learning resource](#). This resource provides information about deployment, mobility, transitions and the impacts these can have on children from Armed Forces families.

As part of our broader work on implementation of the Additional Support for Learning action plan, we will continue to engage both Armed Forces stakeholders and young people directly to ensure the unique characteristics of mobility and deployment are fully considered in this work.



Finance and Debt

Signposting and Entitlement to Devolved Benefits

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

Adult Disability Payment launched in August this year. The application form asks clients about their possible entitlement to Armed Forces Independence Payment, War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement and War Pension Constant Attendance Allowance. Where appropriate, clients are then directed to Veterans UK for further advice. We have also worked with Veterans UK to develop an information sharing process between the organisation and Social Security Scotland. This is intended to ensure that veterans can efficiently access the support to which they are entitled.

We hold regular discussions with Veterans UK and the Ministry of Defence to ensure there is consistency in the messaging provided to veterans. Furthermore, as part of our stakeholder communications plan, we ensure that third party organisations, including those that support veterans, understand the overlaps and are in a position to adequately advise and assist veterans during their interactions with Social Security Scotland or the UK Government agencies administering reserved benefits.

(credit Poppyscotland)



Social Security Scotland (SSS)

SSS is continuing to work towards making the organisation more communication inclusive and has recently completed a full review of its progress towards implementation of its legal and organisational commitments.

Throughout 2022, SSS has held monthly service design workshops with its Inclusive Communication External Stakeholder Reference Group who provide expert comment and advice to make sure SSS' services are designed inclusively. The British Limbless ex-Serviceman Association (BLESMA) are members of this group.

Social Security Scotland continues to incorporate Seldom Heard Voices, which includes veterans, within its strategic stakeholder engagement. In the lead up to changes to Scottish Child Payment and Best Start Grants, SSS ensured that stakeholder organisations working with veterans and their families were included in planned communications activity.

Social Security Scotland are collaborating with the Department of Work and Pensions on an event for Armed Forces Champions based within Scotland, to promote all the benefits currently delivered by Social Security Scotland with a specific focus on Adult Disability Payment. SSS are also in the early stages of discussing a bespoke event for the Veterans Welfare Service in Scotland, working alongside the Department of Work and Pensions to build greater awareness and understanding of the benefits delivered by our organisations and promoting the take up of Social Security Scotland benefits.



Health and Wellbeing

Armed Forces Personnel & Veterans Health Joint Group

Significant progress has been made on the priorities of the Armed Forces Personnel & Veterans Health Joint Group (the Joint Group) which were set last year. However, due to the ongoing pandemic-related pressures on the NHS, we have been unable to complete some of these projects. It was therefore agreed at the recent meeting of the Strategic Oversight Group (SOG) in May 2022 that progress is continued on much of the work that was started last year. As a result, the focus for the year ahead is on the following areas: General Practice Armed Forces and Veterans' Recognition Scheme; identification of veterans within Primary Care; and progressing work on developing a Scottish Veterans' Treatment Pathway.

NHS Champions

The NHS Champions' Network meetings have been reconvened and now meet every 3 months. The Network meetings provide an opportunity to share areas of common interest and to create a forum for updating on pertinent policy developments. The expertise that Champions have around health services and the Military provides a unique perspective, and there are Champions attached to our Joint Group priorities.

Health Data

We are working with a General Practice in Fife to improve the consistent coding of veterans. It is exploring ways to encourage veterans within the practice to self-identify that they have served in the Armed Forces. In addition, as highlighted earlier, the veterans Census question is included in the Scottish Health Survey which will improve our understanding of veterans' health.

Drug and Alcohol Information System (DAISy)

Since DAISy was implemented, Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland (PHS) have worked together alongside local areas to ensure the data it gathers is robust and useful. We have devised a set of research questions to understand how many veterans are presenting to treatment services, the nature of their drug use and what outcomes they are experiencing. This data will help us to better understand the impact of alcohol and drug use on veterans and how we might better support veterans who have an alcohol or drug problem.

Veteran Mental Health & Wellbeing Action Plan

The Veteran Mental Health & Wellbeing Action Plan published in December 2021. It identified three core principles for future services: Equal access to service, clear and timely pathways to correct help and improved support to providers. At the debate held in the Scottish Parliament on 1 March 2022, The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans and the Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care agreed these core principles. The Scottish Government has now established an Implementation Board for the Plan, chaired by Dr Charles Winstanley. The Board will report to the Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care on a quarterly basis.

The Action Plan identified the need to establish systems and structures that deliver on the core principles across Scotland. These will provide consistency of service quality, effective communication, and clear data on needs and trends. Progress to date is as follows: Discussions are taking place with each NHS Health Board to identify need and potential local contribution to the new service; the post of 'Navigator' in each Health Board is being developed, which will be able to triage veterans to the appropriate service; See Me is developing a campaign to address the barriers veterans have in accessing mental health help. A name and a brand identity for the new service is in development.

Raising awareness of veterans' health issues

We have convened a sub-group to take forward the work on raising awareness of issues that may impact veterans' health. Recognising that the general practice is often the first port of call for health-related issues, we have started to develop training which will also reflect the multi-disciplinary team model found within general practice. As a result, the training is being targeted towards different roles within the practice and will be initially piloted in three Health Board areas. This approach will enable adjustments to be made to the scheme prior to wider roll out to ensure that it has a positive impact for both the patient and the practice.

Combat Stress and Veterans First Point

Funding for Combat Stress is continuing in 2022-23 to deliver veteran mental health services across Scotland. Combat Stress has successfully opened new premises in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Additionally, funding for the six Veterans First Point (V1P) centres is continuing in 2022-23 and the local Health Boards have agreed to match fund this award.

Both Combat Stress and V1P will play an important role in the implementation of the Veteran Mental Health & Wellbeing Action Plan.



Making a Home in Civilian Society

Housing Needs

We are engaging with Scotland's Housing Network's Local Housing Strategy Group to encourage local authorities to identify the housing needs of the veterans and Armed Forces community. This will include local authorities sharing examples of best practice.

Affordable Housing Supply Programme

We continue to provide funding through our affordable housing supply programme to deliver homes specifically for veterans where Local Authorities identify this as a strategic priority.

(credit Emma Sanderson Photography)



Case Study: Riverside Scotland - Supporting the provision of affordable and suitable housing for Veteran households

In 2021 Riverside Scotland worked closely with Veterans First Point Ayrshire (V1P) and NHS Ayrshire and Arran to develop a Service Level Agreement, committing each organisation to the provision of new housing and support provision for veteran families, to increase the housing options available to these households, and secure the provision of support to successfully manage and sustain their tenancy in the long term. With the agreement in place, Riverside Scotland has committed more than 10% of new affordable homes at its latest housing developments specifically for military veterans and their families who are being supported by V1P.

In summer 2021 the organisation started work on the second phase of its Tarryholme development in Irvine where it is building 77 new homes on the back of a hugely successful phase 1 development of 87 homes. This project is being delivered with the support of £6 million of Scottish Government funding through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme. Within phase 2, up to ten homes will be allocated to veteran households who are in housing need through the partnership agreement with V1P.

At its second major development, the country's first large-scale affordable modular housing development, in Dundonald, South Ayrshire, Riverside Scotland housed ten veteran households in the period December 2021-August 2022. This number exceeds its 10% target at Dundonald with 16% of homes on the 63-unit development allocated to veteran households. The Dundonald project was delivered with £4.65 million of grant funding through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme.

Nathan and Lauren Cairns were on the South Ayrshire waiting list for 7 years and moved into a three-bed house at Dundonald in January 2022.

Lauren said, "Nathan served in the infantry and on leaving the army we were faced with the difficulty of finding a permanent home. We moved into a small two-bedroom top floor flat. Our son and daughter were sharing a room and we didn't have any outdoor space. We couldn't even open the windows fully.

"We were absolutely thrilled when we were allocated a new modular home. We've been here six months and it's safe to say it has improved and transformed all aspects of our life significantly. It's so much more peaceful than the flat, the kids love playing in the garden and we know they are safe. Our home is so light and spacious - such a contrast to before. It's given Nathan a chance to breathe and we are enjoying the lovely countryside views - we absolutely love it!

"We really appreciate the support from Riverside Scotland, South Ayrshire Council and Veterans First Point in getting us to our happy place."

Open Market Shared Equity Scheme

Open Market Shared Equity Scheme continues to classify veterans as a priority access applicant group who do not need to be first time buyers to qualify for support. In August changes were made to the scheme to reflect market conditions, permitting offers over valuation and also an interim uplift of scheme thresholds by 9% to reflect the sharp increase in house prices. The full review of thresholds will go ahead in December 2022 to identify if there are any changes required at that point.

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 over 1000 people in total. In 2021-2022, the service received 207 new referrals.

Veterans Homelessness

The Veterans Homelessness Prevention Pathway was published on 25 January 2022 and we have accepted all 24 recommendations in principle.

Official national homelessness statistics in Scotland, published on 18 August 2022, show that during 2021-22, 639 (out of 28,882) households assessed as homeless had a household member that was formerly a member of the armed forces (2% of all households assessed as homeless). These statistics show a decrease of 7% compared to 2020-21 (685 out of 28,042).

(credit Veterans Housing Scotland)





Veterans and the Law

Veterans in Custody Support Officers (VICSOs)

The Scottish Government attended the VICSO meeting at HMP Castle Huntly in May where we highlighted the work we are doing to support veterans in Scotland and discuss how we can better support the work of the VICSOs, including future attendance at a Breakfast Club event. Furthermore, we are working with the MOD to support the VICSOs to raise awareness of their work within the Armed Forces.

Scottish Prison Service

We continue to have good relationships with the Scottish Prison Service and Napier University and discuss regularly how the Scottish Government can support research into the veterans population in prison.

Scottish Government have analysed the Scottish Prison Population Statistics dataset, which includes a veteran marker (derived from prisoners self-declaring on arrival), in order to improve our understanding of the number and characteristics of veterans in prison. The analysis will be refreshed following the release of the latest prison statistics. We are also in contact with relevant stakeholders, including the Scottish Prison Service, academics and colleagues in England and Wales (including Ministry of Justice, Office for Veterans Affairs, Ministry of Defence and academics in Kings College London and Northampton) to keep abreast of research

developments on veterans and the justice system, including issues such as the identification of veterans and sexual offending.

Police Scotland

Police Scotland's long standing internal programme of Veterans Champions continues and more Champions have been appointed throughout Scotland this year. Their primary role continues to be promoting the bespoke referral mechanism with the Armed Services Advice Project. On Friday 11th November 2022 Police Scotland hosted the National Forum of Veterans Champions.

In addition, several policing divisions have developed close working relationships with third sector organisations. For example, charity Who Dares Cares have delivered PTSD awareness sessions throughout Lanarkshire to police officers of all ranks. These sessions have since been extended to City of Edinburgh. The sessions are delivered by a mental health nurse and offers police officers and staff valuable tools to assist those with PTSD.



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