

Renewing Our Commitments



**The Scottish
Government**
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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Renewing Our Commitments

The Scottish Government, Edinburgh 2016

Scotland has a military tradition that is centuries old. Scottish soldiers, sailors and airmen and women have served, and continue to serve with distinction and courage. They can be justly proud of their reputation as amongst the best in the world. The people of Scotland are proud of our Service personnel, past and present, who have defended our freedoms and way of life.

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Foreword



Our Armed Forces, veterans and their families are a true asset to Scotland. I am passionate about championing their interests and ensuring that they receive the best possible levels of support both while serving and when they move to civilian life.

That is why, in 2012, I commissioned 'Our Commitments' setting out our strategic direction, complementing the values of the Armed Forces Covenant. As we near the end of this Scottish Parliament, this is a chance to renew our commitments and reflect on how we should direct energies and resources. This Scottish Government has a proud track record of working in partnership with a close-knit community of local authorities, wider public sector and charities, delivering support to our Armed Forces and veterans. We now have a widespread network of Armed Forces and Veterans Champions, hard-wiring consideration of their needs into the public sector.

Levels of scrutiny have been enhanced. We have had an active cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament and, in 2014, the First Minister appointed the first ever Scottish Veterans Commissioner. This ground-breaking appointment is the first of its kind in the UK. The Commissioner – Royal Navy veteran Eric Fraser CBE – is operationally independent from the Scottish Government and charities, giving freedom to offer an impartial view and the clout to make authoritative recommendations for improvement. Scotland has created truly innovative models of collaborative working, especially in healthcare and housing.

I am proud of Scotland's achievements, but we must not be complacent – there is more we can and should do. We must take our Champions network to the next level arming them with better advice and support. We must engage more effectively with private sector employers to improve veterans' chances of securing high quality employment. Many have truly remarkable experience under their belts and they should aim high after they leave the military, securing a fulfilling career. I am determined that we should focus efforts to remove any barriers for those seeking civilian employment, and to promote veterans as a valuable resource with employers. My ambition is to make Scotland the most attractive destination for Service leavers and their families, offering high living standards, great job prospects and a society that respects and values their contribution.

There is also a small but important number of veterans who struggle to make an effective transition to civilian life. I am adamant that no one should suffer disadvantage as a result of service, and they deserve the best possible help that society can offer. We have made significant progress over the course of this Parliament to address gaps in service provision and to improve support for those who need it most. I give my assurance that, despite the financial pressures we all face, the Scottish Government will continue to support and champion our Armed Forces and veterans.

Those of whom we ask so much, deserve nothing less.

Keith Brown MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Veterans

Introduction

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that no member of the Armed Forces, Service family member or veteran in Scotland faces disadvantage when accessing services and support.



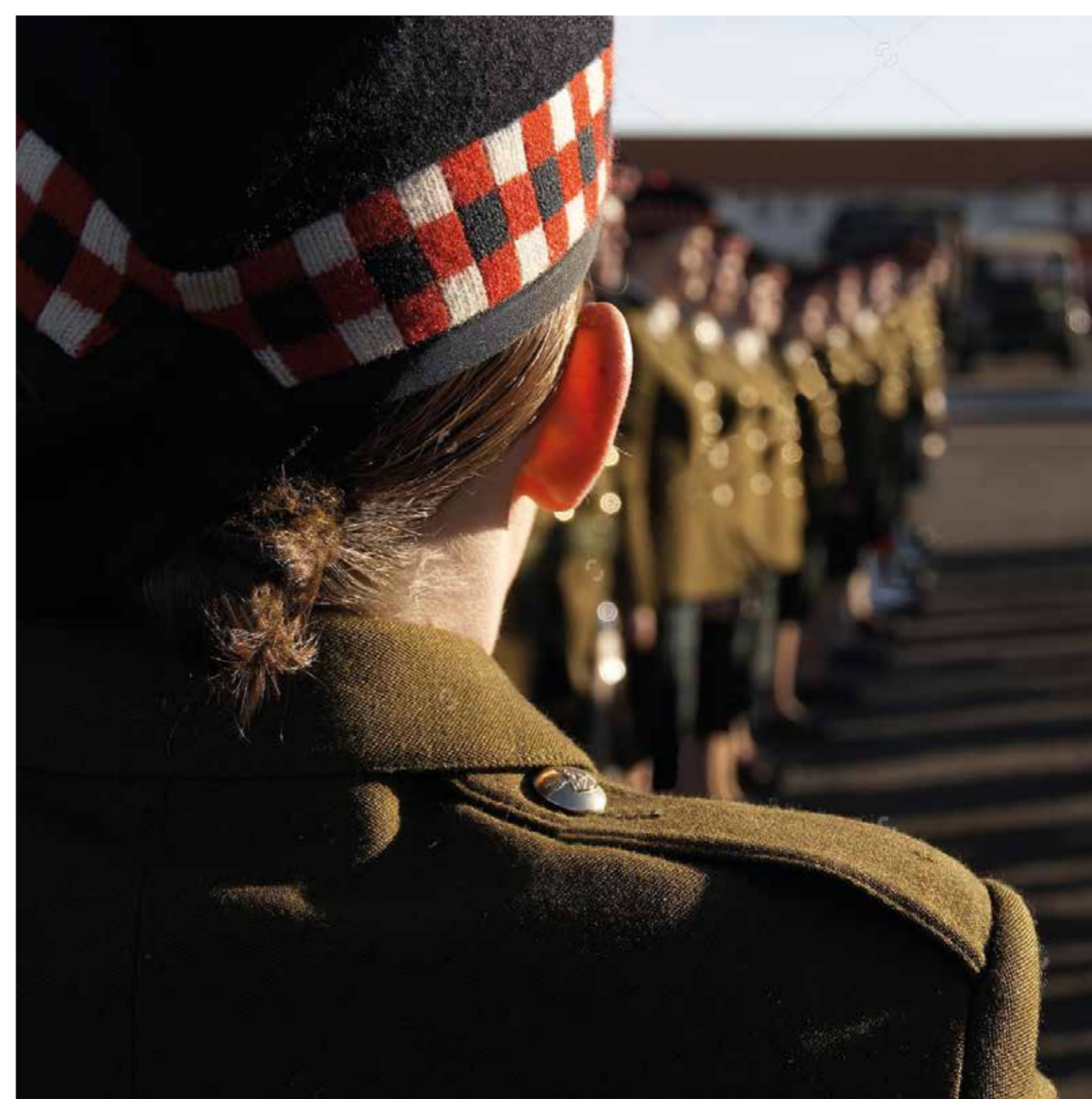
Scotland has a large and vibrant Armed Forces community, encompassing Regular and Reserve personnel, veterans and their families. According to Poppyscotland's 2014 survey, the size of the community is estimated at around 530,000 including dependants; almost 10% of the population. Many are people who were born in Scotland, had a full and fulfilling military career, and then returned to their homes and families. More and more however, they are people who grew up elsewhere but have chosen to make Scotland their home.

What often sets the Armed Forces community apart is the demand placed upon them in the course of their duties and the hardships this can and does place upon them and their families. While serving, personnel benefit from dedicated arrangements for healthcare, accommodation and a range of other services. However when transitioning to civilian life, this can mean additional support is sometimes needed. A small minority occasionally need specific support to access those public and support services we all take for granted. This is a disadvantage that Scottish Ministers firmly believe should be addressed and removed.

“...the size of the community is estimated at around 530,000 including dependants; almost 10% of the population.”

Public services should be available in such a way that meets the needs and aspirations of all those who require them. That is why the Scottish Government published 'Our Commitments' in September 2012 to set the strategic direction of how the Scottish Government and its partners would support the Armed Forces community in Scotland. Collaboration has been vital, bringing in partners in the public, private and third sectors, as well as local authorities, the Armed Forces in Scotland, and the Ministry of Defence. Veterans Scotland and its four pillar heads have worked hard to deliver valued support and shape the agenda, as well as a wide range of other charities and organisations across Scotland.

As we near the end of this Scottish Parliament, this is an opportunity to renew our commitments: to reflect on the progress made since 2012 and to identify future priorities.



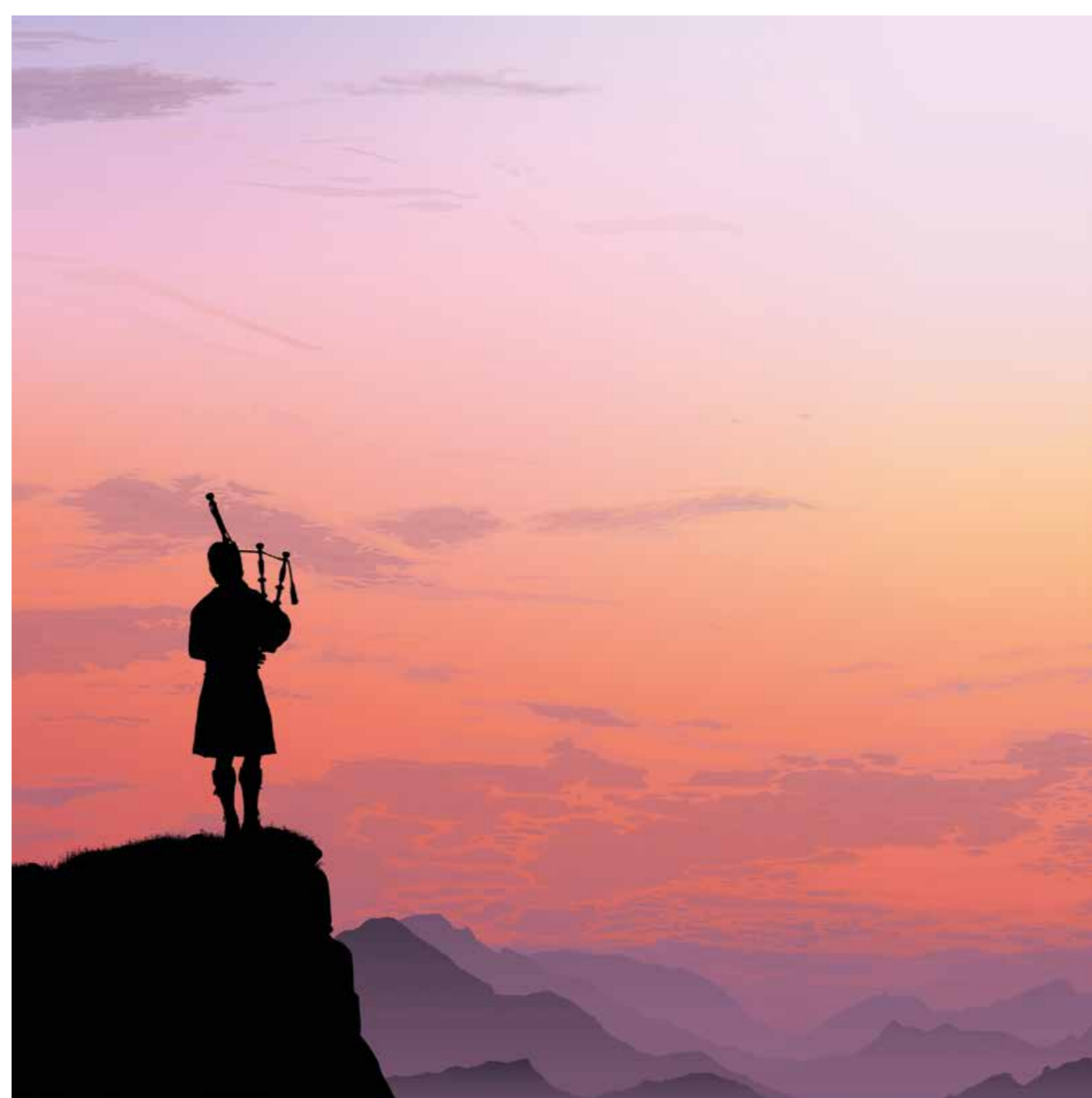
Overarching measures

Since 'Our Commitments' was published in 2012, there have been big changes in the institutional landscape in Scotland and solid progress on policy and service delivery.

Some achievements include:

- Establishment in 2014 of the **first ever Scottish Veterans Commissioner**, with operational independence, dedicated funding and a wide remit to improve outcomes for all veterans. To date, the Commissioner has published a strategy, workplan and two reports making recommendations on transition arrangements and housing, as well as extensive regular engagement to promote veterans.
- Establishment of a **Scottish Government Armed Forces Advocate**, and expansion of a comprehensive **Scottish Armed Forces and Veterans Champions network** to include senior level representatives in the Scottish Government, all 32 local authorities, NHS Boards, Police Scotland and other bodies, embedding support for the Armed Forces community throughout the public sector.
- **Over £1 million in direct support** to Scottish projects or organisations working with veterans. Since 2008, over £700,000 has been awarded from the Scottish Veterans Fund, with £120,000 allocated for 2016/17, bringing total investment to over £830,000. The Scottish Government has also provided Veterans Scotland with £200,000 over the past three years, to boost its capacity and increase support to the third sector in Scotland, and funded development of the Veterans Assist website.
- We committed **over £3.6 million funding over three years from 2015 for specialist mental health services** for veterans resident at the Hollybush House Combat Stress facility in Ayr, in partnership with NHSScotland and Combat Stress.
- We have invested **over £1.6 million in Veterans First Point Lothian** - an innovative one-stop-shop drop-in centre for veterans and families, confirming a further £200,000 for 2016/17. The strengths of this model has been recognised across the UK, resulting in awards from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund to help roll-out Veterans First Point Scotland.

- Former Service personnel aged 16-24 have been identified as a priority group eligible for support under Scotland's Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI). SERI offers employers up to £3,963 over the first 12 months of employment, supplemented by £500 if the employer pays the participant the living wage.
- The Scottish Government confirmed **£1.3 million additional funding to create 100 places within the Community Jobs Scotland programme. This includes 50 targeted at Early Service Leavers** and is delivered by the Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations, working in partnership with Poppyscotland and others.
- The Scottish Government contributed **£2.59 million to the Bellrock Close development**, a 51-flat complex in Cranhill, Glasgow. This facility is run by Scottish Veterans Residences and provides 21 affordable rental homes exclusively available for former Armed Forces members and their families, as well as temporary accommodation for veterans in need of dedicated support.
- The Scottish Government provided **£1.3 million to the Scottish Veterans Garden City Association (SVGCA) to help build 38 homes** across six local authority areas to support physically and psychologically impaired Ex-Service personnel. Twenty of these homes are complete in Carnoustie, Inverness, Motherwell and Wishaw, with a further five homes at Salvesen, Edinburgh on site and due to complete in 2016. SVGCA is also working to secure other development opportunities across the country, with all 38 units expected to completed within the next two years.
- The Scottish Service Children's Strategic Working Group has developed exemplary partnership working, **raising the profile of Service children** in the education system, and focusing action to address their particular needs and challenges.



Scottish Veterans Fund

We have a dynamic set of charities and other organisations, large and small, delivering valuable support to veterans right across Scotland. The Scottish Veterans Fund was established by the Scottish Government in 2008 to award grants of up to £10,000 to worthy projects.

Decision-making is done in partnership with the sector, with Veterans Scotland administering the scheme and making recommendations to the Cabinet Secretary for Veterans. In 2016/17, the Fund will be £120,000, bringing total investment to over £830,000.

So far the Fund has supported 103 projects across Scotland that provide advice, help and support to the thousands of people leaving the Armed Forces. Projects supported by the Fund have included direct advice through drop-in centres, provision of information campaigns and conferences, roll-out of lifestyle management courses and efforts to promote civilian employment for Service leavers. Other activities include:

- ex-Service community respite support
- Occupational therapy
- Woodworking workshops
- Physical fitness
- Comradeship activity
- Outreach work

The majority of Service leavers settling in Scotland each year integrate seamlessly. However, a small number experience difficulty in accessing some services and require additional support tailored to their needs. This funding provides even more resources to local and national organisations working to support them.

The Scottish Government also supplied £200,000 over three years to Veterans Scotland, aiming to boost the organisation's capacity and ability to support the veterans' charity sector.

Looking to the future, we are committed to support the Scottish Veterans Fund, which has offered valuable support for a wide range of organisations, including smaller, locally-based projects.

Beneficiaries of the Scottish Veterans Fund



Scottish Veterans Commissioner



www.gov.scot/veteranscommissioner

In August 2014, the First Minister appointed Eric Fraser CBE to serve as Scotland's first Veterans Commissioner, dedicated to promoting the interests of the ex-Service community. Scotland is leading the way for the rest of the UK by establishing this unique role. As a Royal Navy veteran with 37 years of service life, Eric Fraser is well-placed to lead this collaborative and progressive endeavour.

The Veterans Commissioner is appointed by Ministers but operationally independent of the Scottish Government, giving him the space and authority to probe and challenge policy and delivery of public services effectively. He has pursued a collaborative approach, listening to and acting on the direct experience of veterans and the organisations that represent them, fostering partnerships and working with policy-makers and providers to join up support.

His work aims to be progressive, pushing at the barriers that prevent Service leavers and veterans from realising their full potential, shifting thinking about veterans and forging a new image of them as tremendous assets to Scotland's economy and communities.

Engagement sits right at the core of the Commissioner's work. His dialogue with veterans, charities, local authorities, NHS, criminal justice services, academics, skills and learning providers, business leaders, political representatives and members of the public right across Scotland is helping to build a picture of what it means to be a veteran in Scotland today. This in turn has shaped his vision and approach, and directly influenced his ambitious Strategy and Work Plan, and two reports, the first of which focused on Transition in Scotland, and the second on Housing Information for Veterans.

Using first-hand evidence, the Commissioner's reports have produced a suite of recommendations for improvement on transition and housing which are being taken forward by the Scottish Government and its partners.

Forthcoming priorities for the Commissioner's work include skills and education, and healthcare provision.

“Working with Ministers and partners in the public, private and third sectors, I aim to create a platform for change in the way we understand and engage with the ex-Service community in Scotland. The agenda is shifting, new ways of thinking and talking about ex-Service personnel are gaining traction and policy is stepping into a new phase. Key themes are emerging so far, on the need to:

Understand - that Scotland is different for veterans and this demands a distinctive approach. There are fundamental differences in demography, legislation, administration and culture, all of which impact on the wider community, so policy and delivery need to reflect this.

Protect - the extensive and impressive support that is currently provided for veterans across Scotland while seeking to make improvements where necessary. Lots of dynamic, innovative projects and services offer support and advice for those in need but this is not always widely known or fully exploited.

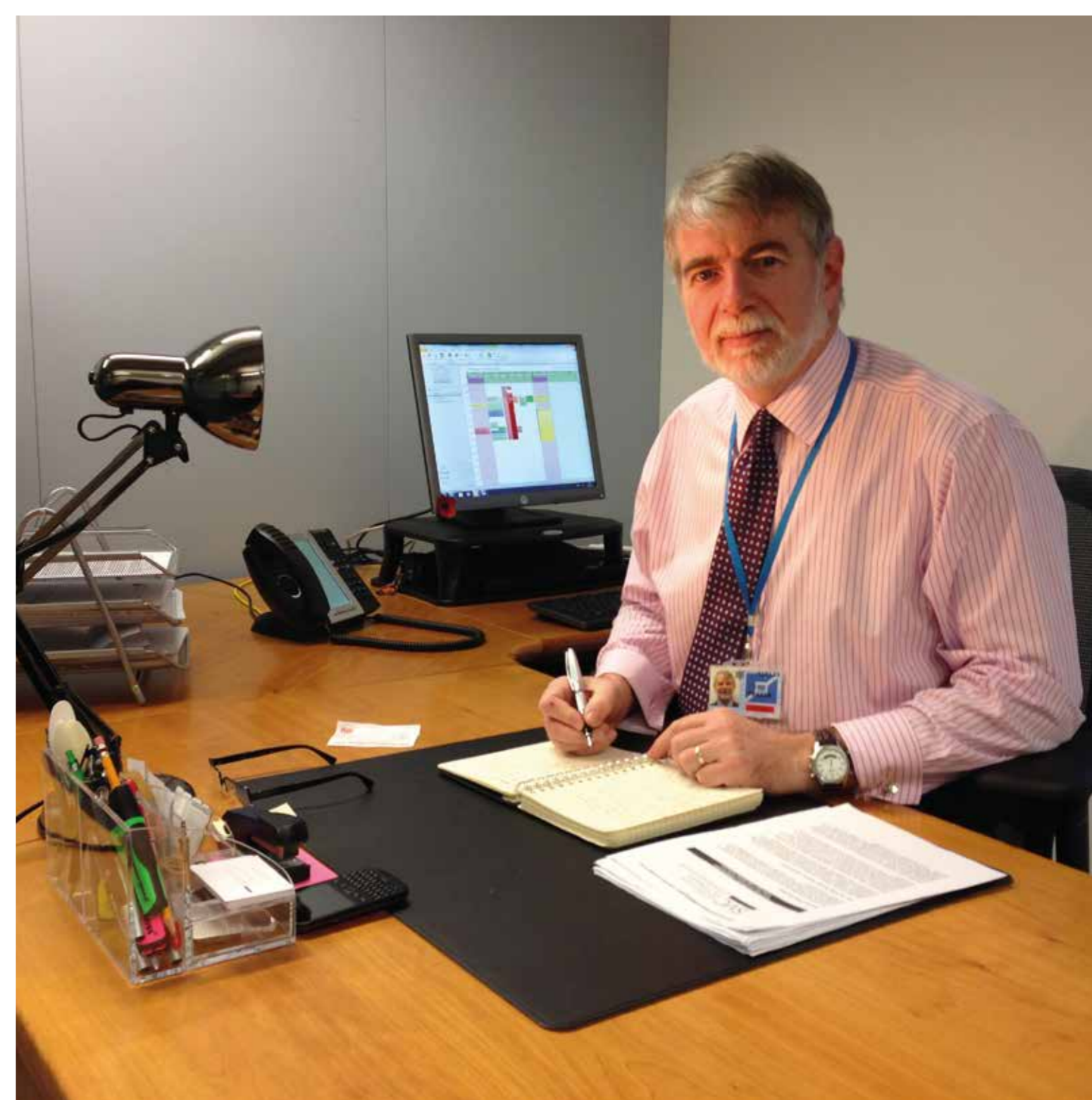
Change - acknowledge that change will be required to ensure policy and service delivery reflect the emerging needs of veterans and their families. This is especially important in the provision of information which remains a significant challenge in all sectors.

Promote - partnership as this is key to successful delivery for veterans, from all backgrounds and in all circumstances. The most ground-breaking and effective initiatives are undoubtedly those in which people and organisations have stepped out of professional silos, combine efforts and work together towards a common goal.

Recognise - the many benefits veterans and their families bring to our communities and workplaces. There is an urgent need to stop seeing these individuals through the prism of need and obligation and recognise them far more for their strengths, qualities and the contribution they make across Scotland.

I have aligned this direction of travel with the Scottish Approach, building in the language of asset-based approaches to promote the contribution of veterans, championing improvement and advocating a more strategic and holistic policy framework that drives change on the macro level. The time is right to shift the vision and working with the Scottish Government and partners, I aim to be at the forefront of that movement for change.”

Eric Fraser CBE
Scottish Veterans Commissioner



Healthcare

Healthcare provision is a vital service both for wounded personnel returning from operational duty, and for personnel, veterans and families resident in Scotland.

Priority NHS treatment is provided for veterans with a service-related condition, based on clinical need. During active operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, injured personnel requiring urgent or complex treatment accessed the NHS in Scotland and third sector organisations more frequently. Now that operations have concluded, numbers of wounded personnel dealing with immediate trauma have fallen and there is greater emphasis on long-term clinical needs.

Scotland has made notable progress on specialist healthcare provision, with particular emphasis on mental healthcare.

Some progress included:

- **Prosthetics:** Scotland provides a state-of-the-art National Specialist Prosthetics (SOTA) Service. Announced in June 2013, the service became fully operational in April 2014. This is now well established and working well through a single multidisciplinary team approach across two specialist centres (Edinburgh and Glasgow) with links to all other limb-fitting centres in the country. The relationship with the Personnel Recovery Unit continues to be very positive. In the region of £5 million has been provided to the service since 2013, including funds for staff, facilities, training and new prosthetic limbs for 35 amputees. A top priority has been to ensure that Service personnel have full equity of access to the NHS in Scotland, putting systems in place to register them and share data safely and efficiently.
- **Mental healthcare provision:** In 2015, in partnership with NHSScotland and Combat Stress, the Scottish Government committed over £3.6 million funding over three years for specialist mental health services for veterans resident in Scotland at the Hollybush House Combat Stress facility in Ayr. This will fund a range of specialist clinical, rehabilitation, social and welfare support at the facility. Evidence-based treatment programmes include an intensive Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) programme, trans-diagnostic programme, stabilisation and anger management programmes.

- **Veterans First Point:** The expertise and knowledge developed by Veterans First Point Lothian (a one-stop-shop drop-in centre for any veterans issue providing clinical, welfare, housing and other support) informed the Scottish Government's mental health strategy commitment to explore the development of similar services in other areas of Scotland. The Scottish Government has provided £1.6 million to support this service to date and has now announced a further £200,000 for 2016/17. In recognition of the strengths of this model, NHS Lothian secured £2.5 million of Armed Forces Covenant funding to support the commitment and establish Veterans First Point Scotland to work with local partnerships to explore how the strengths of the Lothian service could be delivered in other localities with evaluation, training and other support from the national hub. Over the last year, work has been taken forward in 10 health board areas across Scotland to assist each local area establish key partnerships, identify premises, plan requirements and recruit and select staff. This work continues, with the service in Tayside operational at September 2015 with others to follow.
- **Allocation of Community Health Index (CHI) numbers** has been an essential element. Electronic synchronisation between the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system and the allocation of CHI has taken place, and the new system went live in September 2015. This is a one-way secure link to provide transfer of demographic information, and ensures that all Service personnel based in Scotland have access to NHS services in Scotland, on the same basis as members of the general population, including services such as bowel, breast, cervical and other screening programmes. Arrangements have also been put in place to provide and record screening data within Service health records.
- **Scottish Care Information Gateway (SCI):** Hardware has been installed to ensure that Military Health Centres have access to the same system as any Scottish GP and training to extend access is underway.

Looking ahead, we want to ensure that long-term clinical needs of Service personnel and veterans are better understood and supported within the NHS. Sharing patient data will remain a high priority - we want to streamline transfer of military health records to local GPs for Service leavers, working with the Ministry of Defence to improve transition plans and early GP registration.



Housing

Creating a fairer Scotland goes hand in hand with creating a prosperous one, and housing is at the heart of the Scottish Government's drive to secure economic growth, promote social justice, strengthen communities and tackle inequality.

Housing is an essential concern for the defence community, and we continue to work towards the vision that all people in Scotland live in high quality sustainable homes that they can afford and that meet their needs.

Priority access to our Low Cost Initiative for First Time Buyers (LIFT) schemes (comprising the 'Open Market Shared Equity Scheme' and the 'New Supply Shared Equity Scheme') is provided to serving members of the Armed Forces, veterans who left the Armed Forces within the past two years, and widows, widowers and other partners of Service personnel for up to two years after their partner has been killed whilst serving.

The Scottish Government allocated £80 million to the Open Market Shared Equity Scheme in 2015, with applications being administered by five registered social landlords. These organisations recently promoted the Scheme to Service personnel in several military publications, including 'Engage', 'Legion Scotland', 'The Informer', and 'The Highland Service Community Official Guide'.

The Scottish Government has legislated to allow ex-Service personnel to establish a local connection to the area in which they served, enabling them to be treated fairly in housing assessments by local authorities. The Scottish Government has published a national housing guide for Service leavers, distributing over 14,000 copies. In order to raise awareness of issues faced by ex-Service personnel, the Scottish Government has also issued social housing allocations guidance, promoting flexibilities available to landlords for housing allocation, and encouraging fair and sympathetic consideration to applicants leaving the Armed Forces.

While almost all servicemen and women make a successful transition to civilian life, a number will sadly struggle and need extra support. Many organisations make a valuable contribution by providing a safety net for those who need it most. For instance, Scottish Veterans Residences (SVR) provides valuable housing support services to vulnerable ex-Service personnel, with facilities in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee. The Scottish Government contributed £2.59 million to the Bellrock Close development, a 51-flat complex in Cranhill, Glasgow, providing 21 affordable rental homes exclusively available for former Armed Forces members and their families, as well as temporary accommodation for veterans in need of dedicated support.

The Scottish Government provided £1.3 million to the Scottish Veterans Garden City Association (SVGCA) to help build 38 homes across six local authority areas to support physically and psychologically impaired ex-Service personnel. Twenty of these homes are completed in Carnoustie, Inverness, Motherwell and Wishaw, with a further five homes at Salvesen in Edinburgh on site and due to complete in 2016. SVGCA is also working to secure other development opportunities across the country, with all 38 homes expected to complete within the next two years.

Looking to the future, housing provision has been subject to examination by the Scottish Veterans Commissioner, who made a number of recommendations for improvement in his report. Work is underway to implement those recommendations, in collaboration with partners.

A number of social landlords in Scotland have adopted a progressive approach on housing, for instance, dedicating a portion of housing stock for veterans or allowing flexibility on how local connection is established. We want to raise awareness and encourage social landlords across Scotland to secure appropriate housing, working through local Champions and other routes.



Some views from Service families assisted by the Open Market Shared Equity Scheme in 2015

Household one - contains a serving member of the Royal Navy:

“We have been happy with the support we have received from Albyn Enterprises and without the help from them we would not have been able to purchase our dream home. Initially the process appeared complex and we felt the criteria was a little unclear but with help from the team and our financial advisor we were able to make the application.

“We are pleased to have had the opportunity to use the scheme as without it we would not have been able to purchase our family home and for this we are very grateful.”

Household two - contains a serving member of the Armed Forces:

“After finding out we were expecting again we thought it was time to move from our two bedroom, third-floor flat. We decided that now was the right time to buy our own home and the one we wanted had just come on the market so we began to look into 95% mortgages as we didn't have a huge deposit, unfortunately we didn't qualify. Then we found out about the LIFT shared equity scheme - we looked into it and decided it could work for us so we applied and were over the moon when we were accepted!

“Without the LIFT scheme it wouldn't have been possible to own our own home, at least not for a good few years anyway, now we have a lovely up and downstairs house with our own back garden for our son to play in and an extra bedroom for our little girl due in February. Would highly recommend this scheme to anyone who is looking to get on the property ladder but who doesn't have a huge deposit. I am sure we will have many happy years in our new home!”

Education

Children and young people from Service families may, at times, face challenges and need extra support to make the most of their learning and to overcome obstacles in accessing the curriculum.

The Scottish Government, local authorities, schools and the Armed Forces in Scotland work closely to make sure that children and young people in Service families benefit from the same standard of, and access to, education as any other child or young person in their area.

Scotland's schools aim to provide a comprehensive package of personalised support and guidance for these children and young people. Scotland's policy framework includes a statutory requirement to identify, provide for and review additional support for learning for a range of issues, including those which impact on children from Service families, such as interrupted learning, coping with transitions and dealing with bereavement.

Changes made by the UK Ministry of Defence on basing had an impact on Service families and Scottish schools, due to movement of personnel and families. The Scottish Government set up the Scottish Service Children's Strategic Working Group (SSCSWG) to focus on the challenges faced by children and young people of Service families, to share best practice and to make support available.

The Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) has created a dedicated National Transitions Officer (NTO) to work with Scottish local authorities, schools and Service families. This has been a very positive initiative, resulting in work with local authorities to set up systems to record numbers of Service children, piloting a pupil information profile in two local authorities, planning for a number of education forums aimed at parents, and building a support network for practitioners across all 32 local authorities.

- **Funding & support:** SSCSWG has encouraged applications to, and supported assessment of applications for, MoD's Education Support Fund. Scottish applications have performed well, with some excellent work in schools and communities. The latest round saw the highest number of bids submitted in a single year in Scotland.
- **Guidance:** In consultation with schools, Education Scotland and the NTO published a professional learning resource to help practitioners respond to the needs of Service families and their children, revised the Parentzone website to make it relevant to Service families. SSCSWG helped develop a fact sheet covering Higher Education funding for members of the Armed Forces, published by the Student Awards Agency for Scotland.

- **Transition:** SSCSWG worked with the MoD to develop a universal transition document to capture and share key information at the point of transition for all Service children. The document was piloted in two Scottish local authorities and findings will inform future developments.
- **Inspection:** Through Education Scotland’s inspection programme, HM Inspectors evaluate quality of provision of support for all children and young people, taking into account family circumstances, within Scotland’s inclusive practices in schools. They comment in published reports on provision for Armed Forces children where appropriate. School inspection evidence shows that many schools and local authorities are working hard and effectively to support Service children and their families.
- **Integration and employability:** Education Scotland has linked closely with SkillForce, a charity that works in schools, drawing on the skills of ex-Forces personnel, to inspire young people to succeed. This partnership has provided valuable support to children and young people facing challenges within Scottish schools. Education Scotland also works closely with the Combined Cadet Forces in Scotland who are working with local schools to deliver parts of Curriculum for Excellence as part of the Cadet Experience Programme.

“Commendably, the school provides considerable enhanced support for children from Armed Forces’ backgrounds.”

Firrhill High School, Edinburgh, HMIE Report, June 2015

“For most Forces’ children and their families, especially those with additional support needs, transitions can be a stressful experience. Staff at this school recognise this and work very effectively with a range of partners including the National Transitions Officer for children of Armed Forces’ families in Scotland and the Children’s Education Advisory Service (CEAS) for children of Forces’ families to ensure continuity and progression.”

Leuchars Primary School, Fife, Report to Scottish Parliament, April 2014



Justice

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring ex-Service personnel are properly supported when in custody or involved with the criminal justice system. Strong working relationships are in place with the third sector to make referrals, enabling holistic support for their needs.

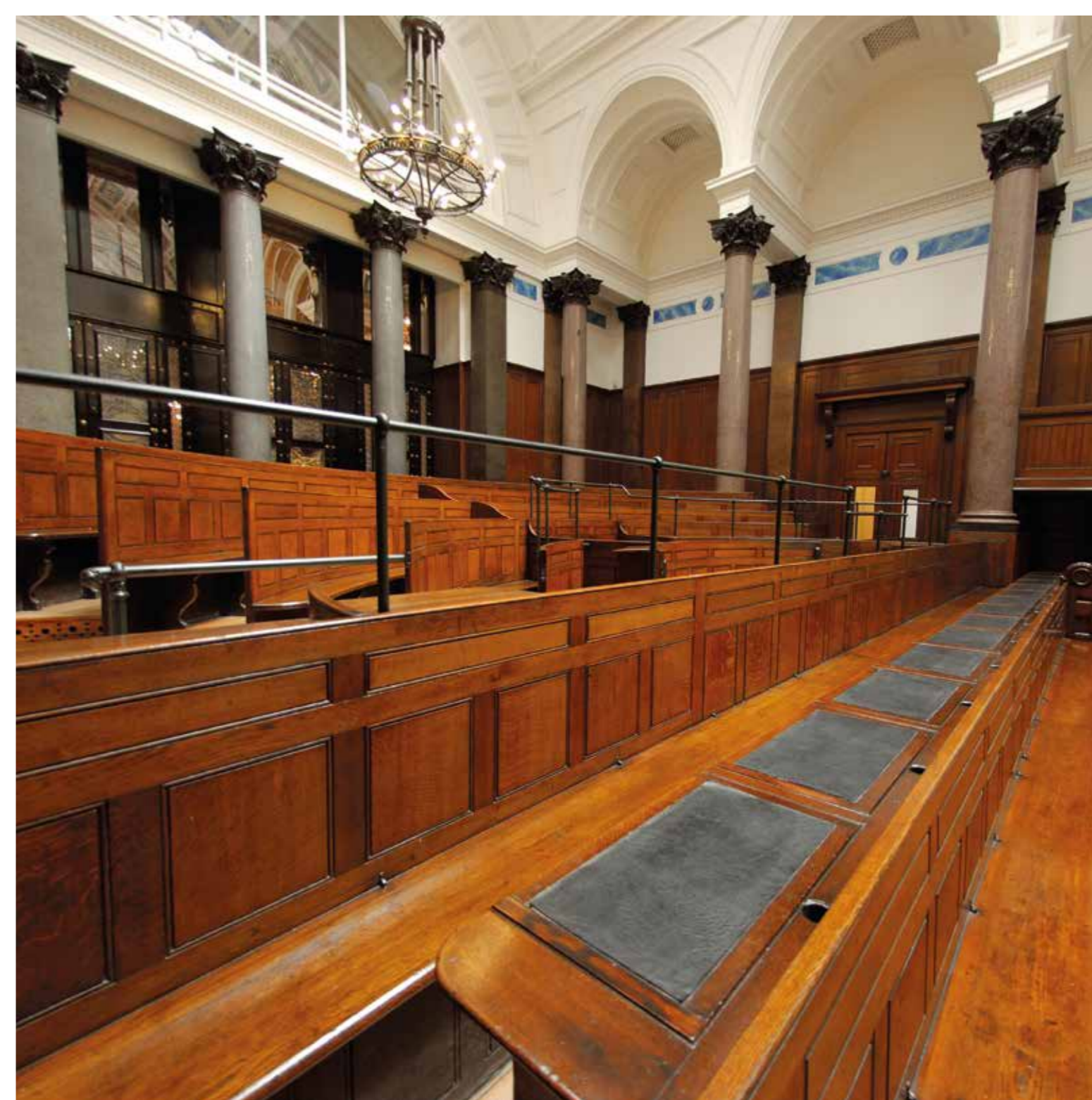
The Veterans in the Criminal Justice System Working Group was established in November 2015 to bring together agencies and voluntary sector involved in working with veterans, and building up greater cohesion and collaboration. Supported by Veterans Scotland, Poppyscotland, Police Scotland, Scottish Prison Service, SACRO, NHS and others in the public and third sector, this group will encourage future partnership working.

Some excellent examples are already underway. Intensive work has taken place involving Police Scotland, Poppyscotland and Citizens Advice Scotland to extend the reach of the Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP). Work aimed to establish a referral route for former Service personnel to help them receive specialist care and support, whatever their set of circumstances.

Since April 2014, whenever a police officer or member of police staff is speaking to a member of the Armed Forces community and considers that they would benefit from a referral to ASAP, then, with that individual's consent, they refer them to ASAP via Citizens' Advice Scotland. ASAP works with a wide range of organisations who provide advice and a network of support, including but not limited to benefit entitlement, debt and money advice, housing, homelessness, employment and relationships. The service is now well established, with an increasing number of people taking up help in the second year of operation. Police Scotland, through its network of Local Policing Veterans Champions, raise awareness and record data to evaluate the success of the programme.

In terms of those in custody in the Scottish Prison Service, surveys indicate that between 3-8% of prisoners report having been a member of the Armed Forces – broadly consistent with estimates in England and Wales. Approximately three-quarters (78%) had been in the Army; 9% in the Royal Air Force; 7% had been Reservists; and 6% had been in the Royal Navy, according to the 2013 Prisoner Survey. Structures are firmly in place to make sure that referrals are made to charities, regimental associations and other support networks.

- The Scottish Veterans Prison In-Reach Group (SVPIRG) considers the needs of former Service personnel within the criminal justice system, especially those receiving custodial sentences. It comprises Scottish Prison Service (SPS) staff and third sector representation (such as Poppyscotland and Combat Stress). It acts as a conduit for communication by gathering and disseminating information to veterans and families. It also pursues research to inform policy and practice. The SVPIRG aims to ensure that incarcerated ex-Service personnel benefit from the full range of services and interventions currently provided by SPS and partner agencies.
- A Veteran in Custody Support Officer (VICSO) is now established in each Scottish prison to provide information and co-ordinate activities and services. Community veterans groups are encouraged to 'reach in' to ex-military prisoners to promote services and assistance they can provide to them and their families, while serving a custodial sentence and also, equally importantly, on release back into the community. It is an information and 'sign posting' initiative for those veterans who wish to avail themselves of the services on offer in respect to issues such as accommodation, pensions and finance, substance misuse and stress.
- As well as the local VICSO Champion working with known veterans, they also have an equally important role in encouraging - through posters, leaflets, publicity and 'word of mouth' - those veterans who may have chosen not to reveal their service record to come forward to benefit from the specialist assistance on offer from veterans associations.
- Veterans in custody also have full support and access as needed to therapeutic interventions and services such as the Substance Related Offending Behaviour Programme, Violence Prevention Programme and Constructs. Mental health issues associated with veterans and offending behaviour can also be addressed through channels of referral provided by SPS, the NHS and partner agencies.



Jobs, skills & employability

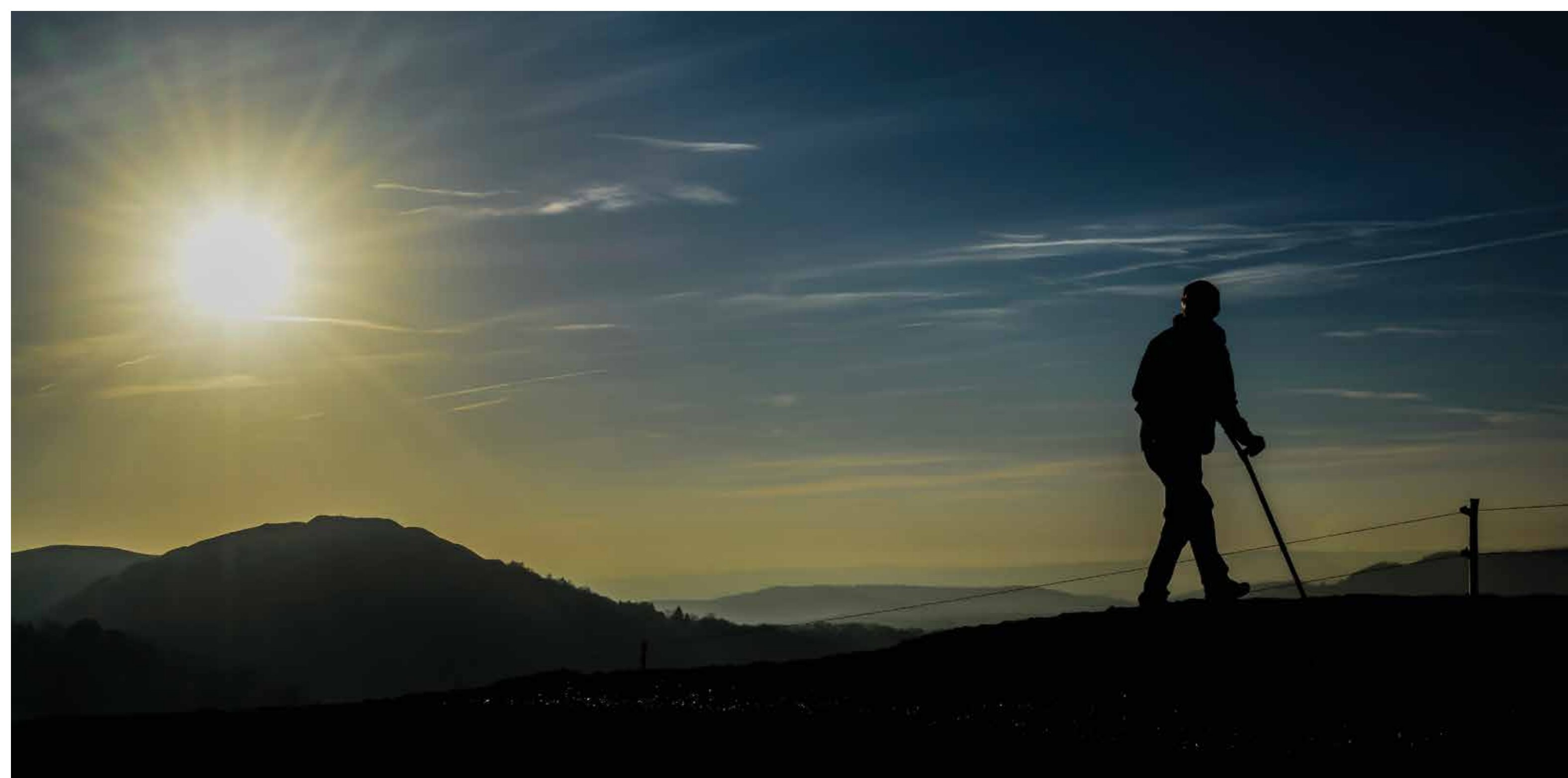
The Scottish Veterans Commissioner's report on 'Transition in Scotland' reinvigorated efforts to promote veterans as an asset to employers. More than 2,000 personnel are estimated to leave the Armed Forces and choose Scotland as their home every year.

Military service fosters leadership, organisational skills, resilience and specialist skills such as medical or technical expertise. Veterans – and their families – are a great asset for the private sector, and a growing number of employers are actively targeting veterans to fill their skills gaps.

The Scottish Government, third sector, Careers Transition Partnership and others have engaged with employers and worked together to help veterans adapt their skill set to the civilian environment. We have taken steps to ensure that veterans are eligible for Job Training programmes such as Community Jobs Scotland (CJS) and Scottish Employer Recruitment Incentive SERI:

- Former Service personnel aged 16-24 have been identified as a priority group eligible for support under **Scotland's Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI)** (extended to 29 years, where the young person has additional support needs). SERI offers employers up to £3,963 over the course of the first 12 months of employment, supplemented by £500 if the employer pays the participant the living wage. It responds to the demands of employers, by delivering a consistent and simple recruitment incentive, thus ensuring that employing a young person remains an attractive proposition.
- The Scottish Government has announced **£1.3 million additional funding** to create 100 new places within the **Community Jobs Scotland programme**, including 50 targeted at Early Service Leavers. Our delivery partner Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) is working with PoppyScotland, Regular Forces Employment Association and other charities that support veterans to offer specialist support to this group of young people. This has been extended to offer up to 12 months tailored support for vulnerable young people.
- Veterans of all ages can benefit from support from the **Employability Fund (EF)** to move towards and into work. The EF has marked a significant move away from prescribed programmes to a more flexible approach to training, giving training providers the flexibility to tailor provision to the needs of individuals, employers and local labour markets. Should training providers identify the need for a specific training intervention targeted at veterans, there is scope within the EF model for this to be supported (subject to procurement rules).

Looking ahead, boosting career prospects for veterans and families will be treated as a high priority. We will work with supportive employers and organisations such as Forth Valley Chamber of Commerce and Scottish Business in the Community to build up links with the private sector, aiming to promote veterans as an asset and to fill skills gaps.



Future priorities – making Scotland the destination of choice

Scotland is a society that holds the Armed Forces in high esteem. With high living standards and close-knit communities who recognise the value of military service, Scotland has become home to many personnel, veterans and their families.

We are proud of our track record, delivered collaboratively with strategic partners in the public, third and private sectors. But there is always more we can do.

Our ambition is to make Scotland the destination of choice for those leaving the military who can decide to settle here and enjoy fulfilling lives, contributing to our society. We commit to promote our defence community as a **true asset** to Scotland, recognising the contribution that Regular and Reserve personnel, the civilian workforce, veterans and their families bring to our society, through their skills and public service ethos.

We reaffirm and renew our 2012 commitments, and we will inject fresh energy to make Scotland the most attractive place to be for those leaving Service life – offering good jobs, affordable homes and excellent public services. We will focus on a set of priorities which will guide the agenda in a variety of ways, including direct funding (such as the Scottish Veterans Fund), policy and/or service reforms or dedicated initiatives with partners.

Jobs, skills and employability

Military service promotes leadership, a ‘can-do’ attitude and many other general or specialist skills that are readily transferrable to the civilian workplace. A growing number of employers in all sectors recognise the experience and benefits Service personnel can bring to their organisations, offering an excellent way to fill their skills requirements. But too often military personnel underestimate the value that they can bring to employers and, for one reason or another, settle for a civilian role that might not fully recognise their skills, experience or true potential.

We want military personnel to have the confidence to aim higher when they leave service, getting a fulfilling civilian job where they operate at a level that is commensurate to their experience. We also need better engagement with the private sector, promoting veterans as an asset, removing any barriers to civilian employment and improving access to veterans as a pool of employable people.

With this in mind, we plan to develop a programme of work led by the veterans community and partners in the private sector. **This work will aim to identify and tackle barriers experienced by military personnel when seeking civilian employment and build up strong working relationships with private sector employers in Scotland.**

Through the office of the Scottish Veterans Commissioner, work is planned to examine skills and education provision for ex-Service personnel, and to identify ways to improve access and standards.

Cohesion and integration

We now have a comprehensive network of Armed Forces and Veterans Champions embedded in public bodies and local authorities across Scotland. This is yielding benefits in a number of areas, where Champions have seized on their roles with enthusiasm and creativity. **The Scottish Armed Forces and Veterans Champions network** is a valuable resource of individuals, serving as linchpins for these bodies and the Armed Forces community. There are excellent examples of good practice flourishing, and we want this network to get to the next level.

We will work with the Scottish Veterans Commissioner, Armed Forces, third sector, local authorities and others to organise a nationwide Champions Gathering and design a programme to share learning and support further integration of the Armed Forces community. We want to **foster best practice**, enabling other areas to cooperate and, if appropriate, pool resources.

At a national level, there is a lot of support out there that is under-exploited. We will support moves to promote **clear signposting** for service delivery through the Veterans Assist website and other channels. Whatever the need, the support is out there, and we need to prioritise initiatives that clarify the options available, using up-to-date technology and good communication.

No disadvantage

No one should suffer disadvantage as a result of military service. As well as serving and former personnel, we must be aware of the needs of families whose lives have also been geared around the demands of the Armed Forces.

Ensuring no disadvantage is an overriding priority of the Scottish Government and its strategic partners, and we must continue to work energetically to ensure that it is a key component of decision-making on policy-making and service delivery. We have a good record of supporting Service families, especially in the education system, and we plan to focus efforts on the **offer to families**.

Scotland has demonstrated great strengths in **mental and physical healthcare provision**, and this will continue to be a fundamental priority to support particularly in terms of improving awareness of long-term clinical needs and transfer of data. We also want to examine how we can **support wellbeing and rehabilitation through positive activities** such as sport and recreation, and building on comradeship activities led by Legion Scotland and other organisations to tackle loneliness and isolation. In terms of tackling individual cases or local service provision, the Champions network can make a real difference, and we will put effort in to making this work as effectively as possible.

On housing, we want to foster innovative models to meet housing demand, and to encourage a progressive, sympathetic approach by social landlords across Scotland. Implementation of recommendations of the Scottish Veterans Commissioner on housing, transition and other issues will be treated as a high priority.

Looking ahead, Scotland will receive new powers and we are conscious of the interaction the benefits to be devolved might have on the Armed Forces community. Consideration will be given to the opportunities this may present and how best to use new powers alongside existing ones to improve outcomes for people.

Measurable progress

We want to **drive up standards of service provision**, so we need an accurate picture to measure how we are doing and to identify any gaps. The Scottish Veterans Commissioner is a good route to identify need, and we will work closely with the Commissioner, Armed Forces, third sector, academia and other nations to generate a more robust evidence base to challenge assumptions and to make sure resources and efforts are prioritised in the right direction.

Scotland is a society that recognises and values our Armed Forces community as a true asset. We renew our commitments to support them and pledge to make Scotland the most attractive destination for the Armed Forces, Service leavers and their families.



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