

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

2020



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Ministerial Foreword

This document accompanies the Scottish Government's fourth annual update to Parliament on its support for the Veterans and Armed Forces community in Scotland since the last update in December 2019.

2020 has been nothing short of unforgettable for reasons that none of us could have envisaged. Not a single person in Scotland has been unaffected by a crisis which has undoubtedly been the single biggest challenge we have faced in our lifetimes. The past eight months have been unrecognisable in so many ways: balancing, and often conflating, home and work life in a way never experienced before; an unprecedented national lockdown; wearing face coverings to help reduce the spread of a virus; and mostly using virtual methods to connect with colleagues and at times family and friends.

Yet, in spite of the devastating impact COVID-19 has had on individuals, families and our society, this year has been a significant one for the Veterans and Armed Forces Community. We commemorated the 75th anniversaries of VE and VJ Day – the end of the Second World War – and the 80th anniversary of St Valery-en-Caux, events which allowed us to pause and reflect. At a time when we were being asked to make difficult and significant changes to almost every aspect of our daily lives, we had the opportunity to consider the sacrifices of generations past and the selflessness and courage of our Armed Forces. The safety, peace and freedoms that we so often take for granted today would not have been possible without these sacrifices.

This is the fourth annual update to Parliament on support for the Veterans and Armed Forces Community in Scotland and my third as Veterans Minister, a role I am extremely passionate about and take immense pride in. Despite the challenges

we have all faced this year, my focus remains the same: ensuring that our Armed Forces and Veterans communities in Scotland receive the best support and care; they are not disadvantaged as a result of their Service; and Scotland is the destination of choice for Service leavers and their families.

At the beginning of the year, following an extensive nationwide consultation, we published our response to the Veterans Strategy, [Taking the Strategy Forward in Scotland](#), which sets out how we will deliver our commitments between now and 2028. This provides us with a clear vision and aims against which we can focus our efforts and be held to account. Delivering these commitments will be a collaborative effort with partners across the sector and my Ministerial colleagues across government. Indeed, the Strategy itself was developed on the basis of close co-operation, collaboration and partnership. I am committed to continuing this joint-working approach to deliver holistic

outcomes which ultimately make better the lives and experiences of our Armed Forces personnel, Veterans and their families. We have progressed a number of our Strategy commitments which I am delighted to share in this report.

The format of this annual update follows last year's and broadly mirrors the themes of the Commissioner's reports and the Veterans Strategy. It covers the full breadth of work done across the Scottish Government and by public sector partners in support of the Veterans and Armed Forces Community. It contains chapters on health, housing, employability and skills, education as well as broader support, setting out progress since my last update.

The role of the independent, non-statutory Scottish Veterans Commissioner has now been firmly embedded and in June this year he published an interim, at-a-glance assessment of progress made against each of the former commissioner's 63 recommendations. I was pleased that, again, the picture was broadly positive and it was acknowledged that further progress had been made since his review last year. We will continue to prioritise the delivery of these recommendations and have been working closely with the Commissioner to contribute to his full 2020 progress report.

Going forward, the Commissioner has established his priorities and we welcomed his scene-setting paper on Transition last year and look forward to reviewing the recommendations in his forthcoming new Employability, Skills and Learning paper. I have been clear that supporting Veterans and their families to develop their skills and find fulfilling, meaningful employment is a priority. I was delighted to announce in September that the Veterans Employability Strategic Group was being refreshed with new co-chairs - Sue Bomphray from Barclays and the Scottish Government's Director for Fair Work, Employability & Skills, currently

David Wilson. The Group still has a vital role to play in improving the opportunities for, and lives of, Veterans in Scotland and is developing a new and ambitious purpose and vision.

I am also pleased to announce two key achievements in relation to employment. Firstly, the Scottish Government is offering work placements and Fixed Term Appointments (FTA) to Veterans through the Going Forward Into Employment (GFIE) programme. Working with the Career Transition Partnership to identify candidates, the initiative will give us the opportunity to take on Service leavers and Veterans through short placements and FTA which could subsequently be converted to permanent. Secondly, we jointly funded with the Welsh Government a Capitalising on Military Family Talent Toolkit which will be formally launched at the end of November. This includes information for employers on the benefits of employing military family members. It will encourage businesses to offer sustainable and good quality employment to Veterans and family members, particularly military partners.

We can be under no illusion that, despite our best intentions, clarity of purpose and real sense of optimism following the publication of our Strategy response, COVID-19 has been indiscriminate in its impact. Government was re-directed, priorities reviewed and work stopped. We had to be ruthless in our approach to prioritisation to guide Scotland through this colossal challenge. However, in spite of this, we have made real and sustained progress in a number of areas and against several Strategy commitments. There is no doubt that we have more to do, but the picture is still a positive one and I am encouraged with what we have achieved this year. In particular, I would highlight: the Scottish Government continues to invest in the Scottish Veterans Fund and in 2020-21, in partnership with Standard Life Aberdeen, funded 15 Projects totalling £166,127; we are contributing

£750k to the Unforgotten Forces Consortium over three years to improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life for older Veterans in Scotland; we facilitated the launch of the Veterans Railcard for use in Scotland and committed funding to offer an additional discount on the railcard; we provided £1.4m of funding to Combat Stress to provide a range of specialist and community-based services for Veterans and we've jointly funded with six local health boards for the Veterans First Point Network; and this year will launch the Scottish Veterans Care Network.

I am enthused by these developments which have made real improvements to the lives of the Veterans and Armed Forces Community. Going forward I am committed to continuing to better the experiences of serving personnel, Veterans and their families in Scotland and delivering on the vision, aims and principles of the Veterans Strategy.



Graeme Dey
Minister for Veterans

Overall Achievements

The Strategy for our Veterans

The Strategy for our Veterans, launched in November 2018, has raised the profile of Veterans issues and provided an opportunity for the Scottish Government to highlight the priority we place on promoting Veterans as assets to our society and to providing effective support to those Veterans who need it. We completed in 2019 an extensive round of face-to-face engagements with stakeholders throughout Scotland, engaging with more than 60 organisations across the public, private and third sectors, including groups of Veterans themselves.

Following a request from the UK Government we delayed publishing our response, '[The Strategy for our Veterans: Taking the Strategy Forward in Scotland](#)' from December 2019 until January 2020 to align the timing with the UK and Welsh Governments. Our response highlights the work that we are taking forward for Veterans and the Armed Forces community including to deliver against the recommendations in the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's reports.

HEALTH

Provided funding of £1.4 million to Combat Stress and jointly funded with six local health boards for the Veterans First Point Network.

Provided £3,000 of funding to Legion Scotland for Befriending and Mental Health First Aid Training.

The Scottish Veterans Care Network will be launched imminently.

During COVID-19, NHS Inform was updated to ensure the right information about Veterans' health and their rights was clear and accessible.

HOUSING

Continuing to offer funding from the Affordable Housing Supply Programme to Veterans Housing Scotland to support it as it progresses proposals to deliver additional homes for disabled ex-Service personnel.

Continuing to support Housing Options Scotland to provide its Military Matters project.

Committed to working with stakeholders, including the Veterans Scotland Housing Group, to develop a Veterans homelessness prevention pathway.

EMPLOYABILITY

Continuing to fund the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership to map military qualifications against those which are recognised by employers in Scotland and expanding this work to look at Royal Navy Catering Services branches.

Refreshed the Veterans Employability Strategic Group with two co-chairs and the development of a new purpose and vision.

Offered Service leavers fixed-term appointments in the Scottish Government, primarily within Health & Social Care, to support the response to COVID-19, and introduced the Going Forward Into Employment programme to increase the employment of Service leavers and Veterans in the Scottish Government.

Jointly funded a refresh of the Capitalising on Military Talent Toolkit to include information for employers on the benefits of employing military family members.

Continued to support the pilot project between Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Careers Transition Partnership to offer careers guidance to Service leavers.

EDUCATION

Every Scottish university and 85% of Scottish colleges have signed up to be part of the HE:FE Armed Forces Champions Network.

General Teaching Council for Scotland is working with the Navy Families Federation on a joint publication detailing the requirements for teaching in Scotland, specifically aimed at the Armed Forces community.

Service Children's Progression Alliance Scottish Hub are developing a range of digital resources for teaching and support staff to raise awareness of Armed Forces issues.

Skills Development Scotland established a pilot to retrain Scottish Veterans and address skills gaps in the nation's cyber security workforce.

WIDER SUPPORT

Published our response to the UK-wide Veterans Strategy, detailing the work that we are taking forward for Veterans and the Armed Forces community.

The Scottish Veterans Fund supported 15 Projects totalling £166,127.

Promoted and distributed Armed Forces and Veterans awareness training to all local authorities in Scotland.

Committed £750,000 of funding for the Unforgotten Forces Consortium to support older Veterans in Scotland.

Issued guidance to all local authorities and third sector stakeholders to support the delivery of safe Remembrance and ceremonial events during COVID-19.

Facilitated the launch of the Veterans Railcard, for use in Scotland and committing additional funding to offer a discount on the railcard during an introductory period.

Update Healthcare Including Mental Health

ACHIEVEMENTS

Scottish Veterans Care Network

The Scottish Government has established the Scottish Veterans Care Network (SVCN) which will help to support Veterans with issues accessing care and health inequalities. The Network will be formally launched in November 2020. Engagement with a broad range of stakeholders has enabled the Network to create a delivery strategy, setting out immediate priorities and a plan for their implementation. One of the first priorities of the Veterans Care Network will be the creation of a Veterans Mental Health Action Plan.

The SVCN has started work to map the range of existing health and care services available for Veterans across Scotland. This will include services provided by NHS Boards, Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs), Integrated Joint Boards (IJBs), Third Sector and Councils. This will be compiled along with existing published data on Veterans health, in order to develop a Mental Health Action Plan which will inform the planning of services for the future. A working group within the SVCN on data and information is in the development stages and the proforma around the Mental Health Action Plan will also go out to HSCPs and IJBs to gather intelligence around strategic planning for Veterans services, which will likely inform the planning of future services.

Identifying Veterans

It has been a core part of the curriculum for new GPs since 2019 to undertake training and demonstrate awareness of Veterans and their specific issues. GPs should therefore be better prepared to initiate a conversation with patients on their Service career history and any resulting

medical need(s). In addition, the Scottish Government is working with NHS Scotland to ensure declared Veteran status on a patient's medical record, so that this is immediately visible to the GP during each consultation. This work is being taken forward by the Implementation Group.

The Armed Forces and Veterans Health Joint Group

The Armed Forces Personnel & Veterans Health Joint Group (AFPVH JG) brings together NHS Champions, representatives of the Service community, Veterans organisations, Scottish Government officials and other stakeholders.

The Implementation Group provided a progress update to the Strategic Oversight Group in November 2019 and the National Clinical Director wrote to the Chief Medical Officer in September 2020 setting out progress against priority areas of work and other work that has been taken forward in relation to improving the health of Armed Forces personnel and Veterans working and living in Scotland. The Strategic Oversight Group has agreed three priorities for 2020-21: priority treatment; employment of Veterans in the NHS; and mental health. These groups remain pivotal in driving forward progress and although work has paused for much of this year we are pleased to be able to reignite it and rebuild momentum.

NHS Champions

The NHS Champions Network has been established and three events have been run, all of which have received positive feedback. We have surveyed Champions about next steps to

ensure the content of future events remains fresh, interesting and relevant. Through this group we have been able to disseminate information and gauge views on new Scottish Government work, such as Veterans Aware Hospitals. We have also approached Champions on an individual basis so that their local knowledge can enhance decision making. The Champions Network was unable to meet in April and much of the work was paused due to COVID-19 but the Network will meet virtually before the end of 2020.

Champions are also represented on both elements of our Armed Forces Personnel and Veterans Health Joint Group, which is critical to the strategic oversight and governance of policy development.

Hearing Aid Replacements

In late August 2020, a letter was sent from the Scottish Government’s National Clinical Director and Healthcare Science National Lead to all Audiology departments across Scotland. This set out the expectation that Veterans should receive like-for-like replacements of hearing aids. Previously, some personnel transitioning out of the Services had been given less effective hearing aids than those given during their Service.

A Veteran’s son told Action on Hearing Loss that his father was “delighted with the quick service” and that things at home had improved so much and that “it is a great relief” for the family.

Drug and Alcohol Information System (DAISy)

DAISy will be implemented before the end of 2020 and will record details of individuals receiving treatment for alcohol and drug problems with the facility to highlight Veteran status so that the scale and nature of those receiving treatment can be measured. After implementation, the first quarter of data collection will allow us to construct metrics around alcohol and drug treatment in the Veterans population.

The Scottish Government has established a Short Life Working Group on Prescription Medicine Dependence and Withdrawal. Its remit is to consider, in a Scottish context, the recommendations made in the Public Health England Prescribed Medicines review (of the evidence for the dependence on, and withdrawal from, prescribed medicines). The group has met virtually several times during the COVID period and after presenting its draft recommendations to the



Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport will run a public consultation between November 2020 and January 2021.

Chronic Pain Management

The Pain Association Scotland (PAS) ran a very successful pilot from 2018 to 2019 on chronic pain self-management for 41 Veterans. This was in the format of group meetings at Erskine House and through one-to-one sessions with 11 Veterans. The pilot received excellent feedback from participants, with some describing the course as “informative, educational and interesting”, and commenting that the course has “taught me to accept, manage and deal with” pain. Following the pilot, a group was established which met monthly and in March 2020, PAS secured a further 18 months of funding and will put the pilot findings before the National Advisory Committee for Chronic Pain with the aim of embedding the services going forward.

Veterans First Point & Combat Stress

In 2020-21, the Scottish Government will invest £1.4m in a range of specialist and community-based services for Veterans in Scotland, commissioned by NHS Ayrshire and Arran on behalf of NHS Scotland and provided by Combat Stress, and provided joint funding with six local health boards for the Veterans First Point Network. The Scottish Government has provided nearly £3 million to support the network of Veterans’ First Point Services since 2017-2018, including £664,383 in the 2020-21 financial year.

During 2020, Combat Stress have undergone an operational and clinical redesign and will focus their Scottish services exclusively on Scottish Veterans. This will better reflect the current need in Scotland and enable more Veterans to get the right help within their community, including by accessing digital services.

Mental Health First Aid and Befriending

In 2020-21, the Scottish Government provided £3,000 of funding to hold two one-day Befriending training sessions for up to 25 individuals as well as four two-day Mental Health First Aid training sessions per up to 12 individuals from the Veterans community. It is anticipated that they will now take place in spring 2021 following postponement due to COVID-19.

Support During COVID-19

During the COVID-19 response the Scottish Government worked closely with Veterans Scotland and its Health Pillar Group to ensure that up-to-date advice was shared quickly, that the Scottish Government understood what support was being provided by third sector organisations to Veterans and to offer support.

NHS Inform has pages dedicated to Veterans’ health and their rights and during the COVID-19 pandemic this information was maintained with advice so that the website remained the definitive information source for Veterans healthcare.

Early in the pandemic, the Scottish Government worked with Veterans Scotland to provide simplified and consolidated advice and help the third sector better understand the available funding packages. We developed guidance and signposting for organisations to identify quickly the different types of available support and where to go for more information.

Update Education

ACHIEVEMENTS

Early Learning and Childcare

The impacts of COVID-19 necessitated a delay to the full roll-out of the duty to provide 1140 hours of Funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC), which was set out in [a joint communique from COSLA and the Minister for Children and Young People to local authorities in July 2020](#).

We remain absolutely committed to delivering the expansion, and the return to 1140 as soon as it is reasonable to do so. Where local authorities are already delivering expanded entitlements, we have made clear that it is critical that this is protected and maintained. Full funding for 2020-21 to support the expansion has been - and will remain - in place for local authorities and flexibility has been given to enable a focused approach to address the needs of children and parents, in recognition of the differing challenges faced locally.

We continue to work with Local Government and the childcare sector to discuss and agree a realistic timetable for full roll-out of 1140 hours entitlement. This will allow us to bring legislation back to the Scottish Parliament to secure 1140 hours entitlement for all children and most importantly to make expanded ELC a reality for families.

Teaching

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) continues to develop their relationships with all three Services and carry on the successful work to overcome barriers experienced by spouses who qualified as teachers elsewhere in the UK, to allow them to teach in Scotland. In particular, GTCS are working with the Navy Families Federation (NFF) on a joint publication detailing the requirements for teaching in Scotland specifically aimed at those from the Armed Forces community. An advanced

draft of the publication is currently being reviewed by the NFF. The GTCS receives a number of enquiries from spouses of Service personnel and continue to identify routes to registration for them.



HE:FE Armed Forces Champions Network

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring all learners, including Veterans and their families, have the same opportunities to access Further and Higher Education and is working collaboratively with partners from the education sector and representatives from the Armed Forces to take forward work in this area.

The Veterans and Armed Forces Community Group (AFVCG) was established in 2017 and supports the work of the HE:FE Veterans Champions Network with Veterans Scotland. The AFVCG links with other key groups supporting the military and their families and over the next year will be exploring existing and potential research on children from military families as well as drawing on any data that may be available to provide additional support to this group.

The HE:FE Veterans & Armed Forces Champions Network was established in January 2019 by

Glasgow Caledonian and Edinburgh Napier Universities. Since its creation, every University in Scotland and around 85% of FE Colleges have joined the network. This is up from 70% and 60% respectively last year. The majority of members have now signed the Armed Forces Covenant and appointed Veterans and Armed Forces Champions. The Network has established geographical hubs and produced a toolkit for use by the staff.

From next year, SFC will collect data on Service leavers in University to help support a better understanding of Veterans representation in University, success rates and the number being supported by articulation and other routes such as the Scottish Widening Access Programme (SWAP).

Service Children

Scotland's education system is underpinned by policy and legislation designed so that services adapt to meet the individual needs of children, and work to identify and overcome disadvantage.

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that children from Armed Forces families get the additional support they need as a result of challenges related to the nature of their parent's Service. Service children in Scotland who need additional support for learning because of their parent's role in the Armed Forces will have their needs met through the Additional Support for Learning framework. Additional support needs encompass a wide range of issues, including those which might impact on children from Service families, such as bereavement, interrupted learning, and coping with parental deployment.

The Scottish Government published its joint response to the independently chaired review of implementation of Additional Support for Learning in October 2020 and, along with COSLA, has accepted the recommendations made by the review. We will continue to work with key partners to deliver these actions to ensure that children and young people can flourish in their learning and beyond. The Additional Support for Learning Implementation Group will oversee progress made against these recommendations and will report to Scottish Ministers and COSLA in October 2021. The action plan will inform, and help us to build on, work that is already being taken forward to enhance

the experiences of children and young people. This includes our investment of an additional £15 million to improve implementation of additional support for learning across Scotland. Furthermore, the Scottish Government will provide £48 million between 2020-2023 for education authorities to develop counselling services.

The Scottish Government and SFC are continuing to engage with stakeholders to explore the barriers to Further and Higher Education which may exist for children of Service families. This includes continuing to support the work of the Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance Scottish Hub. Established in 2018 and led by the Royal Caledonian Education Trust (RCET), the Hub is hosted by Heriot-Watt University and includes representatives from Scottish universities, colleges and the Armed Forces. It is working on a range of digital resources to raise awareness of Armed Forces issues aimed at teaching and support staff. The six learning steps will be: The Covenant; Armed Forces family life; The Emotional Cycles of Separation and Loss; Transitions; The Views of Children and Young People; and Research.

Furthermore, practitioner resources and case studies of supporting Armed Forces children have been included on [Education Scotland's National Improvement Hub](#).

SDS has, from the 2020-21 school year, included in its School Partnership Agreement (the annual agreement between schools and SDS which details agreed service delivery) a question about school/local authority Armed Forces champions. By identifying the Champion, SDS can have conversations with schools around their Armed Forces footprint, direct their service offer appropriately, and provide the best possible support to Service children.

Skills Development Scotland

Reskilling Veterans for Cyber Security Roles

Scottish Veterans are being retrained to help employers fill their growing demand for cyber security professionals. The partnership pilot project is funded by the Scottish Government and led by Skills Development Scotland in partnership with SaluteMyJob and Abertay University. The programme will reskill those with military security

training and experience for roles such as security consultants, incident and security operations centre managers, as well as more specialist roles such as penetration testers. The pilot has been developed following research commissioned by Skills Development Scotland, looking into ways career changers and the unemployed could be reskilled for cyber security careers using alternative, flexible and accessible pathways. 20 ex-military participants are taking part in the programme to learn ethical hacking and penetration skills at Abertay, as well as through online study and with employer input. The project's goal is to add technical cyber skills to the students' existing military training and experience, to help them fill some of the 13,000 digital job vacancies in Scotland each year. The programme began in January 2020, is currently ongoing and now involves more online delivery. Veterans Scotland, Skillzminer and the Scottish Business Resilience Centre are also supporting the project.



Royal Caledonian Education Trust (RCET)

During March 2020, SDS worked with RCET to trial military children resource boxes which are intended to assist professionals supporting Armed Forces children. SDS is currently exploring the use of these resources as part of their engagement with children and to support the development of its advisors.

Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES)

SDS worked with ADES and delivered in September 2020 an event to raise awareness of military children. It was designed to increase awareness of the School Partnership Agreement, explore areas where local authorities, ADES, SDS and schools can work together to increase awareness of Armed Forces children and promote organisational networking and collaboration.

The ADES National Transitions Officer has undertaken a pilot exercise to gather data on the number and distribution of Armed Forces children in Scotland, including children of Veterans. This work will build on the research base in Scotland on Armed Forces children and families' school education experiences.

Promoting Scotland's Apprenticeships

Scotland's Apprenticeships continue to be promoted across the Veterans and Armed Forces Community via partner and champions networks. This includes raising awareness of www.apprenticeships.scot, which is Skills Development Scotland's go-to site on all matters relating to Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships. Foundation apprenticeships are aimed at senior phase pupils and continue to be promoted and supported in schools. Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships are available to Service leavers and Veterans regardless of age and stage, providing valuable work-based learning and industry recognised qualifications while employed.

College and University Information

The Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) continues to review its existing Armed Forces Guidance as part of its annual 'Change of Session' activities. The content of the guide relates specifically to SAAS eligibility criteria and the exceptions applicable to members of the Armed Forces and their families.

Update Employability and Skills

ACHIEVEMENTS

Employability Initiatives

The Scottish Government, alongside delivery partners, will continue to ensure employment support services, for those facing significant challenges when leaving the Armed Forces, continue to be enhanced. The employability support programmes are open to all individuals who meet the eligibility criteria, including Veterans and Service leavers.

The Scottish Government's ambition is for a Scottish approach to employability that focuses on the needs of the individual first and foremost. As outlined in our *No-One Left Behind* review, which was published in 2018, we are developing a system that builds on an individual's strengths and capabilities; is more joined up; flexible and responsive to the needs of each person; and enables them to reach their potential.



Our approach will require more effective integration and alignment of support and services which fully recognise the wide range of barriers people can face when seeking employment. We know that many people face significant barriers to accessing sustainable work. Tackling these challenges requires us to develop pathways into fair work and to join up employability services with housing, justice, health and other provisions.

Mapping Military Qualifications

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) 2020-21 funding for the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Partnership includes support for continued and extended work on the mapping of military qualifications against those which are recognised by employers in Scotland. This work has so far published guides to Infantry, Royal Artillery, Royal Electrical & Mechanical Engineers and Royal Logistic Corps qualifications and is being expanded to look at Royal Navy Catering Services branches. This will help employers and educational institutions understand the range of skills and expertise that those leaving the forces have to offer, and in addition support individuals to articulate their skills clearly in order to find employment or education. The Scottish Government has committed to fund this valuable work through to 2023.

Veterans Employability Strategic Group

The Scottish Government this year announced that Sue Bomphray from Barclays will be the new co-chair of the Veterans Employability Strategic Group (VESG) alongside the Scottish Government's Director for Fair Work, Employability and Skills, currently David Wilson.

The VESG dates back to 2016, following the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's (SVC) report on Employability, Skills & Learning. The paper made 19 recommendations, the first of which was for the Scottish Government to establish a Veterans Employability Strategic Working Group of key partners to provide strategic leadership and to oversee activity to increase and improve employment opportunities for Veterans.

The VESG was announced in 2017 and has comprised representatives from the Scottish Government; Skills Development Scotland (SDS); Career Transition Partnership (CTP); Department for Work and Pensions; Veterans Scotland; Ministry of Defence/Army and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Partnership. Since its inception the Group has contributed to progressing some of the other SVC recommendations including:

- developing the relationship between CTP and SDS to avoid Service Leavers 'falling between the gaps' ensuring they have seamless access to SDS during and once their support from CTP ends;
- establishing the work being undertaken by the SCQF Partnership to map military qualifications to the Scottish Framework which are recognised by employers and educational institutions in Scotland;
- producing a Scottish Veterans Employability Concordat, which is a commitment set out in three principles for those involved in the employment and training of Veterans and their families to make Scotland the destination of choice for Service Leavers. This was launched in September 2018.

The Group still has a vital role to play in improving the opportunities for, and lives of, Veterans in Scotland. The future focus, vision and membership of the Group is being considered to ensure it can deliver the remaining Commissioner recommendations and establish its role beyond these.

Scottish Government Employment

During July 2020, the Scottish Government participated in an online session for the Officers Association Scotland. This session highlighted the opportunities that existed, predominantly within Health and Social Care roles, but also in the wider Scottish Government. More than 50 individuals signed up for the event which was recorded for those unable to attend. The genesis of this session followed the successful deployment of a military planning team to the Scottish Government to support the health response to COVID-19. Following the event, almost 20 expressions of

interest for fixed-term appointments were received. As of early October 2020, four had started roles within the Outbreak Management Directorate; three were due to start imminently; six others were being discussed in parallel to developing new teams to support COVID response and two others were being offered roles elsewhere within Scottish Government, including within Education.

Though the specific nature of these appointments will not permit conversion to permanent, this is another positive step in providing employment opportunities for Veterans.

Additionally, the Scottish Government is offering work placements and Fixed Term Appointments (FTA) to Veterans through the Going Forward Into Employment (GFIE) programme. We are working with the Career Transition Partnership to identify suitable candidates and the initiative will give us the opportunity to take on Service leavers and Veterans through short placements and FTA which could subsequently be converted to permanent. The initiative is sponsored by the Chief Executive of the Civil Service Commission and Veterans are one of a number of categories of people covered by the scheme, which is intended to help them overcome potential barriers in securing employment.

The Scottish Government Armed Forces and Veterans Staff Network continues to develop and this year provided advice and support directly to Veterans including mentoring, CV-writing, interview preparation and skills translation. Some of the mentored individuals were successfully offered fixed term appointments in the Scottish Government and at least one secured a job in the third sector.

The Scottish Government has worked with Armed Forces and Veterans stakeholders to share adverts for vacancies in the Scottish Government through their websites and job boards, including Forces Families Jobs, CTP, Poppyscotland, Veterans Scotland, 51 Brigade, SaluteMyJob, Officers Association Scotland, Regular Forces Recruitment Agency and British Forces Resettlement Services.

The Scottish Government's People Directorate and NHS Scotland were represented virtually at the CTP annual employment fair in September 2020 to promote job opportunities in the Scottish Government and NHS and to engage with Service leavers.

Jobs Within NHS Scotland

The NHS Scotland Careers website contains case studies from NHS employees who have previously served in the Armed Forces, giving a testimonial of their experience moving from Service to the NHS. A virtual insight day for Veterans during 2020 was well attended and a number were interested in NHS roles, with ten candidates being progressed into temporary contracts. In February 2020, the Chief Medical Officer wrote to the Head of HR within every NHS Scotland Board to highlight the importance and benefit of employing Veterans. Although paused by COVID-19, we are building a range of case studies to highlight the spectrum of employment opportunities available to ex-Service personnel. With the involvement of NHS Scotland's Chief People Officer and the Office of the Chief Executive for NHS Scotland, this work remains a priority.

Capitalising on Military Talent

In 2020, the Scottish and Welsh Governments jointly funded Business in the Community (BITC) to deliver a refresh of the Capitalising on Military Talent Toolkit to include information for employers on the benefits of employing military family members, particularly partners, and how to do so. The outcomes of this would be adding to the business case for employing military partners; increasing the knowledge of employers on how to do this successfully and enabling more military partners to secure good-quality employment and continue to participate and progress in the workforce. This will encourage businesses to offer sustainable and good quality employment to Veterans and their family members, particularly partners. The Capitalising on Military Family Talent Toolkit will be launched formally at the end of November 2020.

Skills Development Scotland

A96 Pilot Project

The Scottish Government has continued to support the pilot project, where, through partnership between Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Careers Transition Partnership, Service leavers

in the A96 corridor will be offered careers guidance during their Resettlement training. As of August 2020, 31 clients have accessed the Inverness & Elgin SDS centres and a further five spouses/partners have engaged with SDS services in the area. The Scottish Government will continue to work with SDS and the MOD to ensure that the service offer can be rolled-out across Scotland and become business as usual.

Future Skills

SDS worked with Scottish Water and Poppyscotland to design, develop and deliver a digital skills online event in September 2020. It included partners from the Highland Armed Forces Community Covenant group and the Covenant Employability sub-group. The event was in two parts - one for employers and one for Armed Forces personnel and Veterans. The first session was aimed at businesses and promoted the Highlands as a great place to build and establish a digital future, considering the Armed Forces community within their workforce. The second session raised awareness of a digital future, future skills and the availability of further learning and support.

SDS worked with 51 Brigade to deliver a number of future skills and personal resilience sessions to Serving personnel. One face-to-face session took place in January 2020 with approximately 200 personnel from 3 SCOTS. Four virtual sessions were delivered in May and July 2020 with approximately 20 personnel at each. These focused on future and transferable skills and developed around a personal resilience theme, focusing on skills both in and out of the Military and key areas of transition.

Regular Forces Employment Association (RFEA)

In July 2020, SDS hosted an RFEA awareness session to introduce their Military Women Programme which supports female Veterans find employment. The session also included a general update and information session about RFEA service delivery and supported SDS' thinking within its Equalities Action Plan and gender theme.



Spousal/Partner Employment - Can Do Hubs

Inspired by the Scottish Government's CAN DO Places programme, the Leuchars Co-Working Hub opened in 2017. It was the first hub in what was to become the Military Co-working Network, a network of co-working spaces close to military bases throughout the UK. Its members were instrumental in the work to develop a Co-working Hub in Helensburgh to support families based in Faslane. The development of these Hubs has been supported by CAN DO Places who work with community groups, Business Improvement Districts and Development Trusts to take over redundant buildings to create venues for collaboration and co-working. The programme has now created a scalable model to assist inclusive growth across urban and rural Scotland. Following the success of the Leuchars pilot, the Military is supporting the development of similar facilities across the UK and there are now over 40 hubs in development in UK military bases around the world and over 1,000 members.

In February 2020 a significant grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund has allowed the project to run a formal two year pilot which, if successful, could result in the MOD incorporating military co-working into its formal welfare offer. The co-working spaces were closed due to COVID-19 but began to reopen in September beginning with the Leuchars location.

Update Housing

ACHIEVEMENTS

More Homes

Through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme, the Scottish Government continues to offer funding from the £1.3 million grant award to Veterans Housing Scotland to support it as it progresses proposals to deliver additional homes for disabled ex-Service personnel – potential development opportunities in Wishaw and Brought Ferry are currently being actively discussed and taken forward.

Last year, we reported that we had awarded over £350,000 to East Lothian Council to deliver six homes for Veterans on the site of a former Council depot in Cockenzie (three of which will be fully wheelchair accessible). The homes were due to complete in spring 2020 but were delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions. Completion is now expected towards the end of 2020 with tenants, who will be nominated for the housing by Veterans Housing Scotland, moving in soon after.



Homelessness Pathway

The Scottish Government has asked the chair of the Veterans Scotland Housing Group to take forward the work to develop a Veterans homelessness prevention pathway. The knowledge and expertise which will be used to develop this pathway will ensure that the housing system in Scotland responds to the needs of Veterans and prevents homelessness. This work is expected to start towards the end of 2020 and will be supported by the Scottish Government.

Open Market Shared Equity

The Open Market Shared Equity scheme continues to be available to Veterans who have left the Armed Forces within the past two years so that they can buy a home that is for sale on the open market with assistance from the Scottish Government where they cannot afford the total cost. These households have priority access to the scheme, which means that they do not need to be first-time buyers to benefit from it.

Housing to 2040

In 2018-19 Programme for Government, the Scottish Government made a commitment to plan together with stakeholders for how our homes and communities should look and feel in 2040 and the options and choices to get there. In July 2019, the Scottish Government published a draft vision for 2040 and set of guiding principles. The Scottish Government consulted on these and the policy options to make them a reality with a wide range of stakeholders, including Veterans organisations, from 2 December 2019 to 28 February 2020. The Scottish Government is carefully assessing the outputs from the consultation alongside its COVID-19 recovery planning to help inform our Housing to 2040 vision and route map.

Military Matters

The Scottish Government continues 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 helped over 700 people, with 117 new referrals in 2019-20.

Update Wider Support

ACHIEVEMENTS

Veterans Railcard

We are committed to providing support for our Veterans and ensuring they can benefit from the same discounted travel as serving members of our forces. Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government launched in October the Veterans Railcard at a discounted price for Veterans in Scotland. The railcard, which offers a 34% discount on travel, will be available at an overall lower cost of £15 until March 2021 (the introductory price elsewhere in the UK is £21). This represents an overall potential investment of £160,000.

Wider Engagement

The Scottish Government continues to engage widely in considering the needs of the Veterans and Armed Forces Community in Scotland. Working closely with partners in the private and third sectors and across the public sector, including Local Authorities, remains key to improving the support and services for the Armed Forces and Veterans community. We also work collaboratively with the Armed Forces through, for example, the Tri-Service Firm Base Steering Group and participate in cross-Government forums with the UK Government and other Devolved Administrations. We worked closely with the three Services to contribute to and deliver commemorative events during 2020 including the 75th anniversaries of VE and VJ Day and the 80th anniversary of St-Valery-en-Caux.



Census

The Scottish Parliament agreed that Scotland's next census will include, for the first time, a question designed specifically to identify those who have previously served in the Armed Forces, providing accurate numbers of Veterans and their locations in Scotland. Analysis of this data will be used to support a programme of work to better identify and support the Veterans community in Scotland. The impact of COVID-19 has meant that the Census has been moved and will now take place in 2022.

Skills Development Scotland - Partners & Spouses Awareness Sessions

SDS delivered a bespoke information session to partners and spouses of 3 SCOTS in October 2019. The session focused on support and services available from SDS and included one-to-one time after the session. 20 partners/spouses attended the session and six individuals sought further discussions after the event. Engagement with partners and spouses has continued and will be adapted to suit circumstances and guidance. The sessions will be a blend of online and face-to-face as appropriate and within government guidelines.

Scottish Veterans Commissioner

The Scottish Government welcomed the Commissioner's scene-setting paper on Transition published in November 2019 and his at-a-glance progress report at the end of June 2020. We look forward to reviewing the recommendations in his forthcoming Employability, Skills and Learning paper and have been engaged in the development of his full 2020 progress report. We will continue to work with stakeholders to deliver the Commissioner's outstanding recommendations.



Scottish Veterans Fund

The Scottish Government continues to invest in the Scottish Veterans Fund and in 2020-21 funded 15 Projects totalling £166,127, in partnership with Standard Life Aberdeen. Since 2008, more than 170 projects have received more than £1.6 million from the Fund.

As of 2020-21, the Scottish Veterans Fund includes a requirement for organisations bidding into the fund to demonstrate their commitment to Fair Work Framework criteria. The criteria for bids into the fund for 2021-22 have been extended this year to include projects which address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Veterans Community within Scotland.

The Scottish Government has provided additional support to potential applicants this year, by staging two events offering support and guidance on applying for funding, with a particular focus on enabling smaller bidders to fully articulate the aims and desired outcomes of their projects.

Training for front-line Service Providers

During 2020, the Scottish Government, in partnership with local authorities, MOD and Veterans Scotland, promoted and distributed Armed Forces and Veterans awareness training to all local authorities in Scotland via the network of Armed Forces Champions. The e-learning is a simple, user-friendly resource which aims to raise awareness and understanding of the Armed Forces Covenant, how it is implemented in the community and how the principles should be applied at a local level. The training package also provides sources of further information and support for the Veterans and Armed Forces Community. Consideration is being given to expanding this across other front-line service providers including the NHS.

Unforgotten Forces Consortium

The Unforgotten Forces Consortium is a partnership of 16 civilian and ex-service charitable organisations with the purpose of delivering a wide array of services to Veterans in Scotland aged 65 and over. It delivered almost 8,608 episodes of support for older Veterans across Scotland during its first two years. The Consortium was funded by a £4m grant of LIBOR money from the MOD's Aged Veteran's Fund which ended in June 2020. From 2020-21, the Scottish Government will contribute £750,000 to the Consortium over three years until 2022-23 to improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life for older Veterans in Scotland.



Money and Pension Service

The Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) brings together three respected financial guidance bodies: the Money Advice Service, the Pensions Advisory Service and Pension Wise. Its mission is to ensure that everyone in Scotland can easily access the information they need to make the right financial decisions for them throughout their lives, making the most of money and pensions. To help make this happen, MaPS has a statutory remit to develop a 10 year strategy for the financial wellbeing of all people across the UK, including Scotland.

A key component of the strategy is to ensure that MaPS engages with stakeholders across Scotland, including with Veterans organisations, to understand if there are any particular challenges with regard to financial wellbeing that apply to them. This will then feed into MaPS' Delivery Plan for Scotland which will be published in March 2021. The Scottish Government is working in partnership with MaPS to develop the Delivery Plan and facilitated a virtual roundtable in September 2020 to inform the development of the Plan. Several Veterans organisations were represented at the roundtable including Poppyscotland, Legion Scotland, COBSEO, Families Federations, SSAFA, Ministry of the Defence, Army, Armed Services Advice Project, Forces Pension Society and Veterans Scotland.

Money Advice Trust

The Scottish Government funded the publication of the Money Advice Trust's guide "How to Deal with Debt" which is due for launch in late 2020 following postponement due to COVID. The Money Advice Trust worked with the Armed Services Advice Project, part of Citizens Advice Scotland, to ensure that the specific needs of the Veterans community were addressed in the guide.

Support During COVID-19

In the build up to the Remembrance, the Scottish Government issued guidance to all local authorities and key third sector stakeholders to support the delivery of safe Remembrance and ceremonial events during COVID-19.

Police Scotland

Police Scotland has been seeking to build upon commitments made under the Armed Forces Covenant and further engage with Wounded, Injured or Sick (WIS) Veterans. Police Scotland are trialling Veterans secondments and discussions have taken place with the Personnel Recovery Unit (PRU) for Scotland and Northern Ireland to formalise agreements to enable the PRU to support the rehabilitative programmes in place for individuals seconded to Police Scotland. This provides a safe environment for WIS Veterans to build confidence, use the skills gained during Service and to develop new skills to further support their transition from the military.

In addition, several Police Scotland recruitment events aimed specifically at military personal have been organised, including two online events in conjunction with the Career Transition Partnership.

Police Scotland have a well-established cadre of Veterans Champions. The Champions promote links between Police Scotland and military establishments, Veterans associations and military charities in their local area, whilst also publicising the established national referral scheme to divisional colleagues. This referral scheme exists to support any serving or former members of the Services who may have encountered challenging personal circumstances and would benefit from bespoke support from military charities.

In the past year, over 30 police officers and staff within the national custody estate volunteered to become Veterans Champions in support of local policing colleagues to promote this unique referral service, operated in conjunction with the Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP).

In November 2019, the first joint local Policing and custody Veterans Champions National Forum took place at the Scottish Police College with Poppyscotland, ASAP and Veterans Scotland all in attendance.



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