

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

2019



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Foreword

This document accompanies the Scottish Government's third annual update to Parliament on its support for our veterans and the Armed Forces community in Scotland since the last update in September 2018.

2019 was a significant year for the Armed Forces community with the conclusion of the commemorations for the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War; the 80th anniversary of the start the Second World War and the 75th anniversary of D-Day, a pivotal moment in the War. We now look ahead to the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, allowing us to reflect again on the courage, selflessness and sacrifice of our Armed Forces.

We also saw the publication of the Veterans Strategy in November 2018, the response for which will be published soon. In Scotland the Scottish Government has consulted extensively about how we take the themes of the Strategy forward over the next 10 years and I am pleased that it gives us a clear way ahead; working collaboratively with our partners in the sector.

I am now in my second year as Veterans Minister, and my focus very much remains on making sure that veterans and the Armed Forces community are receiving the best possible support and care. I continue to take a cross Government approach to this, working closely with my Ministerial colleagues who have responsibility for key policy areas such as health, housing, social isolation and employment and skills. We are starting to see a positive change in the narrative in the way that veterans are perceived more widely, and it is

my priority that in addition to making sure that the support is there for those who need it, Scotland recognises the value and contribution the vast majority of veterans make to their communities. I am also keen that we continue to work with Armed Forces families to recognise the crucial role that they play in transition and beyond.

The first annual progress report from Charlie Wallace in his role as Scottish Veterans Commissioner was published in June 2019. His independent assessment looked across his predecessor's 63 recommendations made over four, in-depth, themed reports and considered how well the Scottish Government and its partners were delivering against these. I was pleased that his analysis showed tangible successes in a range of areas, but I know we can still do more to improve delivery of and access to services for our veterans.

The Commissioner has now established his priorities going forward and has identified Transition as the central focus to his work over the next few years. An introductory paper which will set the scene for a series of thematic papers published at the end of November. These papers will broadly mirror the six key themes and 2028 Outcomes of the Veterans Strategy.

This report therefore broadly mirrors the themes of the previous reports from the Commissioner and the Veterans Strategy. It contains chapters looking at health, housing, employability and skills, education as well as broader support, setting out progress since my last update.

I am encouraged by developments this year and

we have seen some real outputs that make a difference on the ground to the Armed Forces community. In particular I would highlight; the range of projects supported through the Scottish Veterans Fund in 2019-20 and our commitment to supporting the Fund over the next three years; funding through the Scottish Funding Council to continue the work of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership to map military qualifications against those which are recognised by employers in Scotland; and the guidance for practitioners responsible for certifying people as sight or severely impaired to signpost veterans to the free services and support provided by Scottish War Blinded. As we move forward I am committed to improving the lives of Service personnel, veterans and their families in Scotland.



Graeme Dey
Minister for Veterans

Overall achievements

HEALTH

Scottish Veterans Care Network established

Strengthened support for NHS Armed Forces and Veterans Champions network

Armed Forces and Veterans Health Joint group refreshed and restructured with addition of Implementation group to progress priority actions

Certificate of Vision Impairment signposting to additional support for veterans

Updated online information about veterans' health services on NHS Inform

HOUSING

Continued priority access to the Open Market Shared Equity scheme for Service personnel, veterans who have left the Armed Forces within the past two years, and partners of Service personnel who lost their lives while serving for up to two years thereafter.

New social housing allocations guidance for social landlords with advice on meeting the needs of veterans and ensuring they are not disadvantaged

Committed to developing a pathway to prevent veterans homelessness

Over £350,000 awarded to East Lothian Council to develop six homes for disabled veterans which are currently on site and are scheduled to complete by the end of the financial year

Private Residential Tenancy exemption for veterans charity housing in line with needs of veterans

EMPLOYABILITY AND SKILLS

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership awarded funding to continue the project to credit level military qualifications in Scotland

Skills Development Scotland and Career Transition Partnership project launched to promote career guidance to Service leavers

Scottish Government Armed Forces and Veterans Staff Network launched

Workplace Equality Fund criteria amended to include the Armed Forces community including spouses with funding awarded to create best practice when recruiting and employing veterans, particularly those with disabilities

EDUCATION

Scottish Service Children Strategy Group good practice event held for Education professionals and Armed Forces personnel

Education Scotland launched resources which will help support children affected by adversity and trauma

Approximately 70% of Scottish universities and 60% of Scottish colleges have signed up to be part of the HE:FE Armed Forces Champions Network

Scottish Funding Council launched a dedicated web page with sources of information, advice and guidance for veterans, service leavers and their families

WIDER SUPPORT

Scottish Veterans Fund supported 10 projects in 2018-19, and 7 projects in 2019-20 with a further £360,000 committed to the Fund to 2022-23.

The new Scottish Veterans Commissioner published his first annual progress report

Question on veterans proposed for the 2021 Census

Older veterans are recognised in '[A Fairer Scotland for Older People - A Framework for Action](#)' where we have committed to working with partners to take forward the Strategy for Our Veterans, which addresses the needs of older veterans

The Scottish Government's social isolation and loneliness strategy '[A Connected Scotland](#)' committed to continuing to work with veterans and veterans' organisations, to better identify how to support the Armed Forces community to strengthen social connections.

Update Healthcare Including Mental Health

ACHIEVEMENTS

Scottish Veterans Commissioner Report

The Scottish Veterans Commissioner's (SVC) report 'Veterans Health and Wellbeing – A distinctive Scottish Approach' has been the focus of our policy delivery since it was published in April 2018. The Commissioner's progress report in May 2019 shared our view that good overall progress is being made and provided further impetus as we head towards implementation of the more complex recommendations.

The Commissioner's reports are our main drivers to delivering better health outcomes for veterans and armed forces families ensuring they do not experience disadvantage when accessing health services in Scotland. The recommendations help us to deliver what is important to individuals and their families, and to foster continuous improvement.

We are working with stakeholders, NHS Armed Forces and Veterans Champions and through the refreshed Armed Forces Personnel and Veterans Health Joint Group to ensure we create the conditions for achieving the 'Distinctive Scottish Approach to Veterans Health'.

Collaborative Working

We actively participated in cross-border networks through the MOD/Department of Health (DH) Partnership Board and a number of sub-groups. A meeting of the MOD/DH Partnership Board was held in Scotland in November 2019. We have strengthened relationships with UK Government counterparts at policy level and we have used these links to engage with the Welsh Government on their priority care media campaign. In 2019 we have

been key in the inception of a cross border working group on the definition of priority care.

The Armed Forces and Veterans Health Joint Group also includes a Local Authority Champion and a third sector representative to help strengthen cross-agency links in health.

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. Refreshing the structure, role and remit of the Joint Group has been a priority over the last year, as it is central to delivering a number of the SVC's recommendations. In December 2018, the Chief Executive of the NHS approved a new structure for the Joint Group, consisting of a Strategic Oversight Group and an Implementation Group. The Strategic Oversight Group met for the first time in May 2019 with the Implementation Group meeting in June 2019. The Strategic Oversight Group set priorities for the Implementation Group, such as hearing aid provision and to review the guidance on wheelchairs. These groups will drive progress forwards on our commitments to meeting the health needs of Armed Forces personnel, veterans and their families.

Scottish Veterans Care Network

The Scottish Veterans Care Network was approved in September 2019 by NHS National Services Scotland. It will be a National Strategic

Network which will address a number of current issues, including access to specialist services such as Veterans First Point and mainstream services, awareness of veterans needs amongst health professionals and veterans data, with an expectation that it will allow sharing of good practice and expertise, as well as adding to the resilience of existing services. A key objective and early priority for the network will be the development of a Veterans Mental Health Action Plan, ensuring it complements Scotland's 10 year Mental Health Strategy and veterans have parity of care, no matter where they live in Scotland. Additionally the Action Plan will link to key strands of the Mental Health Strategy including work on suicide prevention.

NHS Inform

Ensuring that Veterans have sufficient information on where to access support, the Scottish Government has worked with Veterans Scotland and NHS24 to update online information about veterans health services on NHS Inform. In March 2019 NHS Inform, based on feedback, made comprehensive adaptations to the content and the way it was presented, to ensure that the information is as helpful as possible to veterans. A toolkit to complement the updated information has been produced for organisations who support veterans, and was distributed to all organisations who gave feedback.

Certificate of Vision Impairment

The Scottish Government has worked with Scottish War Blinded (SWB), Veterans Scotland and other relevant sight loss and veterans charities, to update the guidance for practitioners responsible for certifying people as sight impaired or severely sight impaired, to ask if the patient has ever served in the Armed Forces. If so, to direct the veteran to the free services and support provided by Scottish War Blinded. The patient information leaflet that accompanies the Certificate of Vision Impairment (CVI) Scotland form, also includes contact details for SWB.

NHS Champions

Two network events were held in 2019 for NHS Armed Forces and Veterans Champions, encouraging the sharing of good practice and providing the opportunity to make and build connections within the cohort. We will continue to provide these events on a regular basis, evolving the content to meet Scottish Government and Champions' priorities. 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.

Veterans First Point Network

The Scottish Government and six local health boards continue to fund jointly the Veterans First Point Network which offers a one stop shop for Veterans no matter their need. The Scottish Government has provided £1.6 million over 2018–19 and 2019-20. Discussions around funding beyond 2019-20 are ongoing.

Specialist Mental Health Services

The Scottish Government in partnership with NHS Scotland and Combat Stress are committed to provide funding of £1.4 million per year until 2021 for the provision of a range of specialist and community based services for Veterans resident in Scotland.

Veterans Health Data

NHS Information Services Division (ISD) Scotland have been tasked by Scottish Government to establish routine data transfer of information about veterans from MOD to ISD so that these can be linked and compared to health and social care datasets held by ISD Scotland such as mental health, social care data, hospital waiting times, A&E, drugs and alcohol. These linked datasets can then be used to evidence and inform services on improvements and outcomes for veterans living in Scotland; and to ensure that veterans access to services and health inequalities do not differ in comparison to the general population.

CASE STUDY

Veterans First Point

Bill engaged with V1P as he was struggling with his mental health and felt overwhelmed by circumstantial and past issues both related to his military career and personal life.

He found himself ruminating whether his life had any sense and feeling crippled by guilt and depression. He decided to ask for help through a friend who found V1P services beneficial and agreed to be assessed and then seen by the clinical team; his peer support worker also helped him to access different services (Citizens Advice Bureau, Scottish Association for Mental Health etc.). He underwent psychological therapy where he focused on regaining motivation and kick starting a new career as he chose to think about the future rather than the past.

He decided to get back into study and applied for a course through the Open University which offered funding for veterans, he also engaged with a V1P psychiatrist who reviewed his mental health and medication regime liaising with his GP to best attend his needs. Bill helped V1P in interviewing candidates as part of a service users panel and at the end of the treatment/engagement with V1P he reported feeling his situation is much improved and found motivation and meaning to get involved in his own development as a professional.

CASE STUDY

Scottish War Blinded

Royal Air Force veteran Del Tulloch survived a life-threatening stroke in January 2018, which left him in a wheelchair and with significant sight loss. Del, 75, of Inverness, was told he would not survive the night when his stroke hit – but after eight months in hospital the determined veteran is fighting back.

The grandfather-of-three became a member of Scottish War Blinded – a charity who support veterans in Scotland with sight loss, no matter the cause – while he was still in hospital. A Scottish War Blinded Outreach Worker and the charity's expert rehabilitation team worked closely with Del to establish what kind of support he and his wife Phyllis needed.

When he returned home, various specialist equipment – from talking clocks to magnifiers – was already there waiting for him, all provided by the charity free of charge. One particular electronic magnifier – a CCTV reader which magnifies onto a large screen – is helping the determined veteran to tie flies again on the road to regaining his life-long fishing hobby. He now also regularly attends Scottish War Blinded's monthly Inverness lunch group with fellow veterans with sight loss and continues to receive regular home visits and support from the outreach and rehabilitation teams.

Del said: *"It makes me feel tremendous. It's brilliant, the support I've had. It makes me feel like I've got somebody there if I need it."*

Update Housing

ACHIEVEMENTS

More Homes

The Scottish Government is working to increase the number of homes across Scotland so that everyone has a good quality home that they can afford and that meets their needs.

Funding is available through our affordable housing supply programme to deliver homes for veterans, where local authorities identify this as a strategic investment priority – for example, we have 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, which are due to complete by the end of the financial year, will be allocated to disabled veterans who will be nominated for the housing by Veterans Housing Scotland – a charity and private landlord specifically for disabled veterans in Scotland.

Open Market Shared Equity

The Open Market Shared Equity scheme is marketed in Armed Forces publications and continues to be available to members of the Armed Forces, veterans who have 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 lost their life while serving. These households have priority access to the scheme, which means that they do not need to be first-time buyers to benefit from it. The Armed Forces community have benefitted from this scheme over the last year.

Local Housing Strategies

Local authorities have a statutory duty to prepare and submit a Local Housing Strategy, which is

at the heart of the arrangements for housing and planning through its links with Development Plans and its strategic role in directing investment in housing and housing related services locally.

In September 2019 we published refreshed [Local Housing Strategy guidance](#) which encourages local authorities to fully consider the housing requirements of the Armed Forces community. The guidance has also been strengthened to encourage appropriate engagement with relevant organisations, such as Veterans Scotland, to better understand the needs of this Community when developing the Strategies.

Social Housing Allocations

The Scottish Government published new practice guidance on social housing allocations in February 2019. In response to the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's recommendations, [Social Housing Allocations in Scotland – A Practice Guide](#) contains practical advice for social landlords on allocations for people leaving the Armed Forces. It includes guidance on giving priority to Service leavers and on ensuring that veterans are not at a disadvantage when applying for social housing due to Service time spent out with an area. In addition, the guide reinforces the need for social landlords to have clear information and housing options advice services in place for all applicants, including veterans.

Military Matters

We continue to support Housing Options Scotland to provide its Military Matters project. This service focuses on housing issues affecting people serving in the Armed Forces in Scotland; all UK Service personnel transitioning into civilian life in Scotland,

and veterans – helping them to find the right home in the right place. Since it began in 2012 the project has helped over 600 people, with 75 new referrals in 2018-19.

Poppyscotland

The Scottish Government has also contributed to Poppyscotland and Veterans Scotland's [Supporting the Armed Forces community with Housing in Scotland - A Best Practice Guide](#) which was published in October 2019.

Future Accommodation Model

We continue to engage with the MOD to support the roll out of the Future Accommodation Model pilot at HMNB Clyde (Faslane). We also attend quarterly meetings between Argyll and Bute Council and MOD personnel at the base to discuss the implications for the housing market of the relocation of the UK's entire submarine fleet to HMNB Clyde by 2020.

Homelessness Pathway

In November 2018, we published jointly with COSLA the [Ending Homelessness Together: High Level Action Plan](#). This sets out our actions in response to the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group's final recommendations to end homelessness and transform temporary accommodation and includes an action to develop preventative pathways for the groups at highest risk of rough sleeping and homelessness.

We recognise that some veterans are at high risk of homelessness. We are therefore committed to developing a pathway to prevent homelessness for veterans. We will work with relevant stakeholders, including the MOD, local authorities and third sector partners to develop the pathway in 2020.

Housing to 2040

In last year's 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. This year we reaffirmed that commitment. We have been engaging extensively with stakeholders, including veterans organisations, to help shape a draft vision and principles for 2040. We will ensure that veterans organisations have the opportunity to further input into this work as it progresses. In July 2019, we published the [draft vision and the principles](#) which will underpin and inform the development of policy choices and options.

Private Rented Sector

The Scottish Government has been working with key veterans housing organisations over the last year to provide an exemption from the Private Residential Tenancy for charities providing accommodation to veterans. New regulations came into force on 1 July 2019 meaning that organisations can operate as originally intended within common law without conflict to their charitable purpose. The regulations ensure that a veteran may be offered temporary accommodation for a period of rehabilitation and training, or permanent accommodation in line with the organisation's charitable purpose and the needs of the veterans.

CASE STUDY

South Lanarkshire Council Housing Priority

Since August 2010, South Lanarkshire Council and registered social landlords in its area participating in the *Homefinder* Common Housing Register have given members of the Armed Forces who meet certain criteria the highest priority for housing, along with homeless applicants and those with an urgent medical need.

This priority status is now awarded up to six months prior to, and up to six weeks following, the date of discharge from the Service. To be awarded priority, the applicant must make reasonable choices about where they wish to live and the type of property they wish to live in.

Update Employability and Skills

ACHIEVEMENTS

Projects

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership Qualifications Mapping

The Scottish Funding Council allocated £20,000 for 2019-20 to continue the programme of work by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Partnership looking at how to match credit levels with military qualifications against those which are recognised by employers in Scotland. This followed a £20,000 award in 2018-19. SCQF have created a [Support for Veterans](#) page on their website and produced a guide to Infantry Qualifications and what they mean in Scotland. 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. SCQF are working with NHS Education for Scotland to jointly promote this work and identify areas where they can work together.

Skills Development Scotland

The pilot project in the between Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) continues its promotion of career guidance for Service leavers during their Resettlement training with Continuing Professional Development sessions for Service Resettlement Officers, CTP and SDS staff. Seventeen transitioning Service personnel have accessed the Inverness SDS centre in 2019. The majority have self-referred following Individual Education and Resettlement Officers briefings or through word of

mouth. This highlights the evolution of the process and partnership engagement to a business as usual approach. A dedicated Scottish-specific page developed collaboratively by the MOD, SDS and CTP is now live on the CTP website. Partnership work continues with Leuchars Co-Working Hub, and SDS piloted a career information, advice and guidance offer to the Co-Working Hub Helensburgh (Drumfork) when it launched in October 2019. This is specifically aimed at partners and spouses within the naval community.

The SDS website [My World of Work](#), which has a dedicated landing page for Service leavers and veterans developed in collaboration the Scottish Government, Veterans Scotland, Service personnel and the Covenant Officer Highlands & Moray. It has had nearly 4,000 page views since its launch in March 2018.

Workplace Equality Fund

The Scottish Government provided £800,000 in 2019-20 to the Workplace Equality Fund (WEF). The purpose of the Fund is to work with employers to address long standing barriers particular groups face in entering and progressing in the labour market so that everyone in Scotland has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. The criteria for the Fund has now been amended to include the Armed Forces community including veterans and spouses.

Scotland's Bravest Manufacturing Company (SBMC) have successfully secured funding for 2019-2020 from the WEF to work with Balfour Beattie, BEAR Scotland and other leading SMEs to help them to create Best Practice within their organisations when recruiting and employing

veterans particularly those with disabilities. SBMC will work with employers to ensure their policies, procedures, and guidelines are inclusive, fair and accessible and to ensure their staff are trained to work with veterans including those with disabilities and veterans spouses.

Service Families Support

Scottish Government Employment

We are providing links to adverts for vacancies in the Scottish Government through [Forces Families Jobs](#). Forces Families Jobs is an employment and training platform for Service spouses, partners and family members, offering employers free access to an untapped pool of talented employees. The advert links to [Work for Scotland](#) enabling Service family members to view easily employment opportunities in the Scottish Government.

We have also worked with the Career Transition Partnership to offer work placements in the Scottish Government for individuals transitioning from the Armed Forces with the first of those taking place in August 2019.

Spousal/Partner Employment

Opened in September 2017, the Leuchars Co-Working Hub was the first hub in the Military Co-working Network, a network of co-working spaces close to military bases throughout the UK. The Leuchars Hub continues to grow and strengthen and its members have been 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.

The Scottish Government are working with the Royal Navy and Army to promote and develop links to the newly launched Scottish Libraries Co-Working Hubs in five key Locations in Scotland

– Inverness, Dundee, Troon, Edinburgh and Dunfermline.

Teaching

On 1 October 2019 the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) published its returners booklet, providing information and support to those who wish to return to teaching in 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 closely 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. The GTCS receives a number of enquiries from spouses of Service personnel and continue to identify routes to registration for them. To date two spouses of Naval personnel have been registered to teach in Scotland.

Promoting Scotland's Apprenticeship Family

Scotland's Apprenticeship family of offerings continue to be promoted to Early Service Leavers, veterans and their families. 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.

Scottish Governments Armed Forces and Veterans Network

The Scottish Government successfully launched its first ever employee Armed Forces and Veterans Staff Network in February 2019. The network is open to veterans and anyone that would like to show their support to the Armed Forces community– regardless of whether or not they have served.

CASE STUDY

SDS/CTP Pilot

“Now I am getting help from a Veteran Officer (Careers Adviser) at SDS I am working my way towards a career that I want to do. I felt swamped and uncertain about work career prospects, the adviser made me feel at ease to discuss career prospects, I felt so much better. Lynne brought out so many good and useful points at the initial interview I was so delighted to come to the next one. I got excellent encouragement and I feel all the help I am getting is so beneficial. I realised after discussion I had so many more skills and achievements than I thought. It encouraged more confidence in myself. Straightaway Lynne put me in touch with Adult Literacy after I expressed concern. Knowing I can pop in and get useful advice is very helpful”.

Armed Forces veteran, Inverness Area, July 2019

CASE STUDY

Apprenticeships

The positive benefits of service leavers undertaking a Apprenticeships is clearly demonstrated in the case of Mark Mackay a Graduate Apprentice at Cortex Worldwide in Edinburgh. The Apprenticeship at Cortex offered Mark the chance to re-train for a career in technology outside of the ‘traditional’ route.

Mark is a former Force Protection Specialist in support of Medivac in the RAF Regiment, Mark undertook three tours of Afghanistan and one of Iraq. He was awarded a commendation for bravery after he formed a defensive line to protect American casualties during an ambush and was invited to Buckingham Palace.

Mark said that: *“An Apprenticeship was a great option for me to re-train... I’d always thought Apprenticeships were only for tradesmen, I’d never heard of Apprenticeships in IT - I jumped at the chance when I learned about them”.*

CASE STUDY

Work Placements in Scottish Government

A member of the British Army during his transition/resettlement training attended a one-week work experience with the Scottish Government.

He said: *“I was surprised at the breadth of activity within the Scottish Government which helped provide a steer towards my future career choices and showed that anyone can move between departments. I appreciated the friendliness and patience of everyone involved who were happy to discuss their personal experiences and challenges within the Scottish Government which I found refreshing. It also highlighted the help that is available for veterans outside the Forces. It had never occurred to me that there was any help outside other than a handful of charities that don’t much apply to me. To know that the Scottish Veterans Commissioner both represents my interests and holds government accountable is very reassuring.*

Update Education

ACHIEVEMENTS

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.

This year we have seen developments in these overarching policies which we expect will serve Armed Forces children and families well - for example: the expansion of early learning and childcare; further funding to support implementation of additional support for learning; and the SG commitment to develop counselling services for schools. In delivery of our policies, there has also been targeted work to support Service children and their families.

Early Learning and Childcare

The funded early learning and childcare (ELC) hours that all 3 and 4 year olds and some 2 year olds are entitled to in Scotland, is set to almost double from 600 to 1140 hours from August 2020. In addition to this increased entitlement, the introduction of the national standard and the funding follows the child model means that parents and carers will have increased choice and flexibility in terms of the type of setting and the way that ELC is accessed.

Two campaigns are being run in relation to the expansion of ELC. The first aims to help families make informed choices when choosing ELC. The parental information campaign includes a dedicated ELC hub within the [Parent Club website](#) along with leaflets and posters which have been distributed nationally to all ELC settings. In addition to working with partners, including colleagues in Skills Development Scotland, a targeted approach

has been taken in both Moray and Argyll and Bute with leaflets being distributed across Armed Forces welfare centres, families centres and outreach hubs.

The second is a national recruitment campaign which encourages people to consider a career in ELC. Similarly, it has a dedicated [website](#) and a number of resources which have been distributed. The Scottish Government are engaging with the Career Transition Partnership team to ensure relevant information on potential careers for Service leavers, as well as family members of Service personnel, is available and they are fully informed about career options within the ELC sector.

Scottish Service Children Strategy Group

In collaboration with the Scottish Service Children Strategy Group (SSCSG), which works with key stakeholders to support the education needs of children from Armed Forces families in schools in Scotland, we held a Scotland-wide good practice event for Education professionals and Armed Forces personnel in May 2019 to celebrate and share work and explore future priorities. We also: supported the National Transitions Officer to continue to develop resources for the [Forces Children's Education website](#), including guidance on Early Stages Transitions and a National Parent Forum for Scotland resource; and contributed to the Education Support Fund process, including managing and participating in the Regional Panel.

Education Scotland

Education Scotland has launched a suite of resources - 'The Compassionate and Connected Community and Classroom'. The first is a professional learning resource to raise awareness of the effects of adversity and trauma, and provides a range of supportive relational approaches to use with children and young people. All 32 education authorities were offered training in the use of this resource. A second free curricular resource is now available to support children in upper primary to cope with challenges and adversity and develop their confidence, resilience, compassion and empathy. These resources are beginning to be used in schools to support Service children.

Universal Services

To help improve the sorts of universal and targeted services which help mitigate some of the challenges Service children may face, the Scottish Government is providing £12 million in 2019-20 and £16 million in following years from 2020 onwards for education authorities to develop counselling services. We know that Service children are a particular group which may face challenges which affect their mental wellbeing. Should they need support, school counsellors will provide a quicker, more effective response.

We are investing an additional £15 million to further enhance capacity in education authorities and schools to respond effectively to the individual needs of children and young people. We are engaging with COSLA to agree how this commitment will be implemented across Scotland.

We are undertaking a review of the implementation of Additional Support for Learning to ensure every child and young person gets the support they need when they need it. This includes children and young people who need support for a short time – to help them transition to a new school, or because a parent is deployed, for example. Service families, their children and practitioners supporting them can feed into the review via the [Scottish Government website](#).

As committed to in *'Learning Together: Scotland's national action plan on parental involvement, parental engagement, family learning and learning*

at home 2018 – 2021', we are supporting the positive involvement and engagement of specific groups, including Service families.

Further and Higher Education

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring all learners, including veterans and their families, have the same opportunities to access Further and Higher Education. We are working collaboratively with partners from the education sector and representatives from the Armed Forces to take forward work in this area. A Veterans Group, first established in 2017 and led by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), is driving forward progress of specific actions around Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) for veterans.

The SFC has been supporting Veterans Scotland since January 2019 to work with key stakeholders to develop an HE:FE Armed Forces Champions Network; to date, approximately 70% of Scottish universities and 60% of Scottish colleges have signed up to be part of the Network. They launched a dedicated [web page](#) in March 2019 with sources of information, advice and guidance for veterans, service leavers and their families on the support and funding options available to those who may wish to study at a Scottish college or university. In addition, the SFC is funding a Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership project on mapping learning pathways and accrediting prior learning for Service leavers and veterans detailed in the Employability and Skills section.

Supporting Service Children into Further and Higher Education

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), it is hosted by Heriot-Watt University and includes representatives from Scottish universities, colleges and the Armed Forces. The Hub brings together stakeholders to work collaboratively with practitioners and

professionals to champion the progression of children and young people from Service families into Further and Higher education. The Hub is also developing an evidence base to inform what kind of interventions are required, and will coordinate existing practice and policy to address systemic issues impacting Scotland's Service families.

SFC identifies children from Service families as those who should be considered for participation in the activities of its schools programmes: Access to High Demand Professions and Schools for Higher Education Programme.

Work is underway to consider how to improve access through the use of data analysis including veterans data in the college sector SFC began collecting in academic year 2017-18. They have also arranged with Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) for the inclusion of a field in the 2021-22 Student Return to identify Service leavers in the university sector. Once the data is gathered and returned in the wider HESA record, SFC will be able to consider veterans representation, success rates, and how many are supported by articulation and other routes such as the Scottish Widening Access Programme (SWAP).

Student Support

SAAS, on behalf of the Scottish Government, is developing an information portal that will cover Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) on funding across Further and Higher education. This will be delivered within the 2019-2020 academic year and will function as a signposting tool which will route students to specific information and guidance for Armed Forces members, their families and veterans on the SAAS website.

CASE STUDY

Supporting Armed Forces Children in Our Scottish Schools' Event:

The Scottish Service Children Strategy Group (SSCSG) includes representatives from the Armed Forces, MOD, Association of Directors of Education Scotland (including Scotland's National Transitions Officer), the Royal Caledonian Education Trust, Education Scotland and the Scottish Government. From the end of 2019, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) will join the group.

In May 2019, the SSCSG held a Scotland-wide event for education professionals and Armed Forces personnel. Its purpose was to acknowledge and share work in support of Armed Forces children, consolidate networks and identify future priorities. Attendees discussed challenges and opportunities around supporting service children, shared examples of effective practice from across Scotland –with presentations from Argyll and Bute, Angus, Moray, Midlothian and Fife - and received an update on the final round of the MOD Education Support Fund (ESF).

Nearly 50 education professionals and Armed Forces personnel attended the event. Feedback was very positive. All of those evaluating the event rated it as 'excellent' or 'good' in terms of 'fulfilment of intended outcomes'. Delegates said it was a valuable networking opportunity for local authorities, schools and Armed Forces representatives, and a welcome chance to discuss ESF application ideas.

Some of the content from the event has been shared on Education Scotland's National Improvement [Hub](#). The SSCSG are using the input from delegates to shape future work. Given the excellent feedback, the SSCSG will hold a similar event in 2020.

CASE STUDY

Angus Council Support for Service Children:

Angus Council employs a small, dedicated team of staff in schools who work with children from Armed Forces families.

The team provide academic, social and emotional targeted support on a needs-led basis. Using money from the MOD Education Support Fund (ESF) Angus has developed Loss, Change and Separation resource packs which are available to all schools. These include information, books, resources and activities to help support pupils during times of transition and loss. The local authority has introduced various approaches to help alleviate the concerns and confusion of moving to a different education system. On enrolment, a bespoke Service Families Welcome Booklet provides information about Angus Council and the Scottish curriculum, and a Children's Booklet encourages children to share previous learning and experiences with their new teacher and school. Pupils are given a Transition Passport to record their learning and experiences in Angus, to share with their next school.

Angus has developed a training resource to support all staff to acquire the knowledge, confidence and skills to respond appropriately and effectively to the challenges Armed Forces children and their families might face. Also, with a strong focus on Health and Wellbeing, a variety of approaches to support children's resilience, motivation, self-reliance and self-esteem have been implemented. For example, an authority-wide resource helps further work around 'getting it right for every child' by supporting pupils to build confidence, emotional resilience, independence, language and communication skills. All developments in the authority are designed to be sustainable as far as possible, for example by building the capacity of staff and embedding practice in core work.

Update Wider Support

ACHIEVEMENTS

Wider Engagement

The Scottish Government continues to engage widely in considering the needs of the Armed Forces and veterans 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 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.

Scottish Veterans Fund

Ten projects were supported through the Scottish Veterans Fund (SVF) in 2018-19 and a further seven in 2019-20 bringing the total funding allocated through the SVF since 2008 to over £1.4 million, supporting over 150 projects across Scotland and benefiting the lives of hundreds of veterans and their families. We have committed to fund the SVF for a further three years from 2020-21 to 2022-23 at its current level of £120,000 per annum. We have also welcomed Standard Life Aberdeen's continued partnership in the fund. They are providing £80,000 for 2020-21 bringing the total funding for that year to £200,000. The SVF is aimed especially at projects that are attempting to deliver a new or innovative approach to veterans' issues, or that seek to develop areas and activities not currently funded by either the Scottish Government or the Ministry of Defence. In June 2019 we published "[Supporting our Veterans: an Impact report on the Scottish Veterans Fund](#)" which told the stories of those organisations that had received support from the fund during 2017-18 and 2018-19, and the excellent work that they have carried out.

Social Isolation

In December 2018 the Scottish Government published "[A Connected Scotland](#)" which seeks to ensure everyone in Scotland can build meaningful social relationships regardless of age, stage or circumstance. The strategy recognises that particular groups of people, like Veterans, may be at increased risk of social isolation and loneliness and commits to continuing to work with veterans and veterans organisations, to better identify how to support the Armed Forces community to strengthen social connections.

Older People

In April 2019 we published [A Fairer Scotland for Older People – A Framework for Action](#), which highlights the contribution of older people, tackles the barriers they might face and challenges negative attitudes to ageing. The Framework reaffirms our commitment to ensure that older veterans are not disadvantaged due to their Service.

Census

National Records of Scotland propose including a question in the 2021 census to provide robust statistics on the size, location and profile of our veterans population in Scotland. The final census questions are planned to be agreed through the Scottish Parliament by summer 2020.

Scottish Veterans Commissioner

With the role of independent Veterans Commissioner now firmly embedded in Scotland, five years on the second Commissioner has begun his tenure by re-affirming the baseline and using that and the recent Veterans Strategy

consultation to inform his priorities for the future. In June 2019 the Commissioner published an independent assessment of progress on how well the Scottish Government is doing against each of his predecessor's 63 recommendations made over his four in-depth reports.

Issues that affect veterans lives range widely and often straddle different Ministerial portfolios. This calls for coordinated effort and joined-up working across government and with partner organisations. By monitoring and regularly reporting progress by government and partners in this way, the Commissioner aims to maintain focus on the recommendations, aid prioritisation and help drive delivery to ensure our veterans receive the best possible levels of support.

The first analysis tells a positive story of improvement but also highlights specific areas where the Commissioner feels increased effort or corrective action is needed. It is intended that this regular independent analysis will be repeated and reported annually.

CASE STUDY

Scottish Veterans Fund

Erskine is one of Scotland's leading veterans' charities. They provide residential care in four homes and applied to the Scottish Veterans Fund to help pay for the employment of a Dementia Nurse Consultant to improve the quality of care they offer.

This included increasing the knowledge, skills and expertise of their staff by training them to Enhanced and Expert Level on the Promoting Excellence Framework.

"Our Dementia Nurse Consultant, Janice McAlister, has had a major impact since coming to work at Erskine in 2017. Janice is supporting staff across the organisation, making them more confident and competent practitioners, which of course supports us in reaching our ultimate goal of delivering excellence in care for our residents. The invaluable support of the Scottish Veterans Fund has been key to helping us achieve this goal, enabling us to develop our learning and also share that learning within and beyond Erskine. We are hugely grateful for the financial support received – it really has made a difference to the delivery of care services at Erskine and improved the way in which we can support our veterans and their families." - Derek Barron, Director of Care at Erskine.

The Strategy For Our Veterans

The [Strategy for our Veterans](#) launched in November 2018 recognising the importance of supporting our Armed Forces veterans and their families and building upon the Scottish Government's support for our Armed Forces and veterans community, as set out in [Renewing our Commitments](#) (2016), and through the previous annual updates to the Scottish Parliament.

The Strategy, jointly developed with the other governments of the United Kingdom, builds upon the work to support veterans by organisations across the public, private and charity sectors. It sets a clear vision to ensure the best possible outcomes for our veterans and their families in the future, with the aims that every veteran would feel even more valued, supported and empowered.

Since its publication last year, we have been consulting thoroughly and extensively across Scotland about how to take the Strategy's aims forward with veterans, their families and the many organisations who support them.

This reinforced the valuable work undertaken by so many through veterans charities and organisations, often unpaid, to support and improve the lives of veterans. The feedback gathered in Scotland, along with that collected by the UK Government during its wider public consultation, about the needs of the veterans community has equipped us to develop our response to the Strategy. Looking ahead we will soon publish a document setting out how we will take the vision and aims of the Strategy forward in Scotland to ensure that veterans and their families receive the support they deserve.



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