

# **Scottish Government support for Veterans and the Armed Forces Community in Scotland**

**November 2017**

# 1. Introduction

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Here in Scotland we have a proud military history and our Armed Forces community continues to be held in high regard. The last few years in particular have provided momentous occasions for people across Scotland to come together; to reflect and remember the sacrifices of our Armed Forces, past and present and to recognise the contribution that our serving personnel, reservists and veterans continue to make to our communities.

For example, First World War commemorations<sup>1</sup> to date have included the Drumhead Service marking the start of the war; the Quintinshill Rail Disaster; Scotland's entry to the Gallipoli campaign; the Battle of Loos; the Battle of Jutland (both in South Queensferry and in Orkney) and the Battle of Arras centenary. Commemoration events will continue to be supported until we mark the end of the First World War through a service to mark the centenary of the sinking of HMV Iolaire on 1 January 2019.

The Scottish Government remains committed to giving Scotland's Armed Forces, veterans and their families our full support and will continue to help maximise the opportunities available to them; and to ensure they are not disadvantaged when accessing services.

There are approximately 237,000 veterans<sup>2</sup> in Scotland today. They range in age, social background and length of service. Many live in our cities, settling close to military bases, but some are spread in some of the most rural and remote locations. Our commitment to support for our Armed Forces community also reaches beyond this immediate number to spouses and families and those currently serving. This diversity provides challenges in terms of service design, but also opportunities and we are committed to pursuing a fully inclusive approach.

Last year we published *Renewing Our Commitments*<sup>3</sup> setting out our achievements and identifying future priorities. Since its publication, we have continued to work collaboratively with our partners in the public, private and third sectors, Local Authorities, as well as the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces in Scotland to deliver support where it is needed most. Our ambition remains to make Scotland the destination of choice for Service Leavers and families through offering high living standards, access to housing, good jobs and opportunities for skills development.

This document sets out our current achievements and future priorities, and highlights the work that the Scottish Government is taking forward to respond to the recommendations made in the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's three reports:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ww100scotland.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-population-survey-uk-armed-forces-veterans-residing-in-great-britain-2016>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00494468.pdf>

*Transition in Scotland*<sup>4</sup> the *Provision of Information on Housing for Service Leavers and Veterans in Scotland*<sup>5</sup> in 2015 and the *Veterans Community - Employability, Skills and Learning*<sup>6</sup> in 2016.

An overview of the progress made against each of these reports is set out below and includes a general update on additional work being undertaken in support of our Armed Forces, veterans and their families.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00474235.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00483702.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00509806.pdf>

## 2. Overall Achievements

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Since *Renewing our Commitments* was published in 2016, considerable progress has been made, including:

- **The Scottish Veterans Fund has, since its creation in 2008, committed over £1 million to more than 140 projects** and organisations supporting veterans across Scotland. In 2017-18 we re-developed the fund and, for the first time, partnered with Standard Life Aberdeen to provide a dedicated funding strand focused on employability; boosting the fund to £600,000 over three years.
- **Since 1 April 2017, £5 million has been committed to ensure that veterans in receipt of social care in Scotland will now get the full value of their war pensions.** This change, which delivers on a commitment set out in the Programme for Government, will benefit up to 1,300 veterans in Scotland.
- **The Scottish Veterans Commissioner’s tenure has been extended to August 2018.** The Commissioner, Eric Fraser, continues to be operationally independent of the Scottish Government, enabling him to scrutinise both policy and service delivery effectively. His research and reports continue to inform policy development and, to date, **we have responded positively to the recommendations for the Scottish Government.**
- A **Veterans Employability Strategic Group** has been established to drive forward work on veterans’ employability. The Group, chaired by Mark Bibbey, Chief Executive Officer of Poppyscotland, was set up in April 2017 in response to the Veterans Commissioner’s recommendations; and has already made excellent progress in bringing together key partners to work collaboratively to best effect.
- In March 2017, the Scottish Government and partners launched a best practice toolkit ***Capitalising on Military Talent***<sup>7</sup> to help employers understand more about the skills veterans have to offer. This followed the initiative ‘*Supporting Veterans into Employment*’. Both projects, which aimed to encourage employers to recognise the positive contribution that veterans can make to workforces, were conducted in partnership with Business in the Community Scotland and Salute My Job.
- A **veterans portal on mygov.scot**<sup>8</sup> was launched in June 2017 to bring together a range of useful information on housing, health, jobs, education and veterans support services. This portal, which links to other key websites, includes a **dedicated housing section** which sets out housing options and information on how veterans can gain access to more tailored advice – responding to a key recommendation in the Veterans Commissioner’s Housing Information report.
- We have continued to **invest in mental health services** – this year the Scottish Government will provide £825,000 to support the Veterans First Point services network.

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/capitalising\\_on\\_military\\_talent\\_final\\_interactive\\_pdf.pdf](https://www.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/capitalising_on_military_talent_final_interactive_pdf.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://stage.mygov.scot/veterans/>.

- We have worked with the Ministry of Defence to produce a ***guide for Local Authorities in Scotland***<sup>9</sup> to share best practice and deliver better services for veterans in their communities.

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<sup>9</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/653314/Booklet - Local Authority Guide - Scotland.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/653314/Booklet_-_Local_Authority_Guide_-_Scotland.pdf)

### 3. Transition

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The Scottish Veterans Commissioner's first report *Transition in Scotland*<sup>10</sup> (2015) focused on the challenges faced by personnel leaving the forces and making the transition into civilian life.

While for many this is a positive experience, for some support is required in making the transition from the dedicated arrangements for health and accommodation experienced whilst serving. Many of the specific recommendations on transition made by the Scottish Veterans Commissioner have since been picked up by the subsequent two reports and are covered in the sections which follow; particularly on housing and employability.

In addition, the Scottish Government continues to have dialogue with the Ministry of Defence about how best to ensure that relevant and up to date information is provided to those leaving the Armed Forces and settling in Scotland. The Scottish Government has also helped develop a Scotland annex for the 2017 *Covenant Guidance for Local Authorities*<sup>11</sup>, which provides useful and specific information for Scottish Local Authorities about Healthcare, Education, Accommodation, Employment, Training and Support for the Armed Forces Community.

Since the publication of the *Transition in Scotland* report, the Scottish Government has also engaged with academics such as those at Anglia Ruskin University; and we continue to give consideration to their work, such as the Employment Hub, which was launched recently.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00474235.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/653314/Booklet - Local Authority Guide - Scotland.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/653314/Booklet_-_Local_Authority_Guide_-_Scotland.pdf)

## 4. Housing

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The Scottish Government continues to work towards the vision that all people in Scotland live in high quality, sustainable and affordable homes which meet their needs.

In 2015 the Veterans Commissioner produced reports on *Transition in Scotland* and *Provision of Information on Housing for Service Leavers and Veterans in Scotland*. The recommendations for the Scottish Government regarding housing issues have been considered, with changes being made to ensure that information about housing options are easy to access and understand. These improvements build on changes already made to legislation through the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010; to make it easier for former Service personnel to establish a local connection when seeking homelessness assistance. In Scotland, numbers of homelessness applications overall have fallen steadily over the past five years, including from those declared as a former member of the Armed Forces.

### 4.1 Access to Housing Advice

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The Scottish Veterans Commissioner highlighted the issues experienced by some veterans who struggled to find out about the housing options available to them and their families. As a result, the Scottish Government:

- has launched a Veterans Portal on *mygov.scot* with a dedicated housing section clearly setting out housing options and how veterans can gain access to more tailored advice<sup>12</sup>. Links have been created on other veterans websites such as the Armed Forces Covenant Website<sup>13</sup> and the Veterans Gateway<sup>14</sup> to help sign-post individuals quickly to the information they require. A link will also be added to the Ministry of Defence Service Leavers Guide at the next update.
- is revising the practice guidance on social housing allocations. The guidance, which will be re-launched in 2018, will provide advice on meeting the needs of Service Leavers and veterans, including advice on local connection.
- is revising the *Scottish Guide for People Leaving the Armed Forces and Ex-Service Personnel* which is aimed at Service Leavers and veterans. The revised guide will reflect the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's recommendation on visual impact and accessibility and will be issued in early 2018.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://stage.mygov.scot/veterans/>.

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/655596/Booklet - Local Authority Guide - Overview.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/655596/Booklet_-_Local_Authority_Guide_-_Overview.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/532](https://support.veteransgateway.org.uk/app/answers/detail/a_id/532)

- is continuing to ensure that the Joint Services Housing Advice Office (JSHAO) and other relevant organisations are kept updated on housing options in Scotland.

The Scottish Government also increased grant funding to *Housing Options Scotland* in 2017/18. *Housing Options Scotland's Military Matters* project focuses on housing issues affecting people serving in the Armed Forces in Scotland, Service personnel transitioning into civilian life and veterans.

## 4.2 Additional Housing Support

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With support from Scottish Government of £2.59 million, the Scottish Veterans Housing Association delivered 51 homes in Cranhill, Glasgow in September 2014. Twenty one of these homes are let at affordable rental levels to former members of the Armed Forces and their families, with the remaining 30 flats being available as temporary accommodation for veterans in need of dedicated support.

In 2013, £1.3 million of Scottish Government support was awarded to the Scottish Veterans Garden City Association (SVGCA) to help build 38 homes for physically and psychologically disabled ex-Service personnel. Twenty five homes are now complete and SVGCA is working to secure other development opportunities across the country for the remaining 13 homes.

Priority access to the Open Market Shared Equity Scheme (OMSE) and the New Supply Shared Equity Scheme (NSSE) is provided to both serving members of the Armed Forces and veterans who left the Armed Forces within the past two years. It is also open to widows, widowers and other partners of Service personnel for up to two years following the death of their partner during service.

Available data shows that in 2016/17, 82% of applications received from known members of the Armed Forces community successfully led to properties being secured through the OMSE scheme. This figure compares favourably to the rest of the population in Scotland; which saw a 48% success rate for the same time period.



## 5. Employability and Skills

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The Scottish Government published its initial response to the third report by the Scottish Veterans Commissioner on Employability, Skills and Learning in March 2017; responding positively to all of the recommendations.

The Scottish Government firmly believes that our Armed Forces community is an asset to Scotland with those leaving the Armed Forces having many transferrable skills, such as team work, leadership and a sound work ethic. The Scottish Government has a strong track record of delivering support for veterans seeking employment, and has also taken a number of additional steps as a result of the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's Recommendations in his 2016 report '*Employability, Skills and Learning*'.

### 5. 1 The Veterans Employability Strategic Group

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In response to a key recommendation of the report, we have established and continue to support a Veterans Employability Strategic Group in Scotland. This provides a mechanism for consideration of strategic issues and brings together senior figures from a number of key organisations supporting veterans into employment.

The core membership of the group has now been established and is chaired by Mark Bibbey, Chief Executive of Poppyscotland and also includes representatives from Skills Development Scotland, Department for Work and Pensions, Careers Transition Partnership, Veterans Scotland and the Scottish Government.

The group was established in April this year, and even at this early stage has already:

- identified a number of areas where organisations who work to support veterans can collaborate more effectively to identify and tackle skills gaps and barriers to employment. For example, Skills Development Scotland and the Career Transition Partnership have already made changes to their ways of working to improve the experience of those using their services, and continue to work closely to ensure that pathways to information are working effectively.
- collaborated with the Ministry of Defence to obtain information from the Career Transition Partnership to improve understanding about where personnel settle and into which sectors and careers they move. This, combined with information on skills shortages, will help inform a more targeted approach from those who deliver support.
- set out a plan for additional qualitative research to identify barriers. The results of this future research will help shape thinking on the feasibility of a pilot approach.

- started discussions with the Ministry of Defence about transition to help ensure that Service leavers are ready for the civilian jobs they seek.

The Careers Transition Partnership is developing awareness raising materials for those still serving and the wider Service family. It is exploring how referral processes could be improved to ensure a seamless transition from the Armed Forces into training opportunities and good quality civilian employment.

The Strategic Group will continue to look at the Scottish Veteran Commissioner's recommendations as their work progresses; including on issues such as work placements, accreditation, and mapping of military skills into the civilian workplace.

## 5.2 The Scottish Veterans Fund

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The Scottish Veterans Fund was developed and re-launched last year with Scottish Government investment of £360,000 over three years to 2019-20. For the first time, private sector partnership was secured to expand the Scottish Veterans Fund; with a three-year £240,000 contribution from Standard Life Aberdeen for projects focusing on employability. Taken together, the fund was boosted to £600,000 until 2019-20. This has resulted in over £1 million being awarded to organisations working in support of the veterans community and ex-services charities since its creation in 2008.

This year, 19 projects were awarded grants, some multi-year, following consideration by the new Scottish Veterans Fund panel, chaired by the Scottish Veterans Commissioner. These included specific projects focused on employability. For example: the Lothian Veterans Centre was awarded a multi-year grant to establish new pop-up cafes for veterans across the Lothians to improve social inclusion, employment and health and well-being, and to enable RFEA - the Forces Employment Charity - to recruit an employment adviser to assist veterans move into civilian life.

## 5.3 Initiatives to support employment

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The Armed Forces community is able to access mainstream support when seeking employment. For example, Skills Development Scotland provides an all-age careers guidance service through the My World of Work (WoW) website. These programmes are signposted through our Veterans Portal on mygov.scot<sup>15</sup>.

There is also support available through the Employability Fund and through the newly devolved employment service for long-term unemployed; which provides a

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<sup>15</sup> <https://stage.mygov.scot/veterans/>.

targeted employment service to meet the need of unemployed people, including former Service personnel.

However, it is recognised that specifically targeted work is also needed. The Scottish Government has therefore supported and developed specific initiatives to maximise fully the opportunities available to both veterans and employers: a number of initiatives are outlined below.

## Working with employers

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In 2015, the Scottish Veterans Minister, Keith Brown MSP, met HRH the Duke of Rothesay and gained his support to promote the valuable skills that veterans can bring to businesses in Scotland. This resulted in the Scottish Government partnering with Business in the Community Scotland, Salute My Job and Veterans Scotland to launch the “*Supporting Veterans into Employment*” Initiative in October 2016. The aim of the initiative was to encourage businesses of all sizes and sectors to recruit and benefit from employing veterans.

An employer’s toolkit *Capitalising on Military Talent*<sup>16</sup> was then launched in March 2017 in collaboration with Business in the Community Scotland, the Scottish Veterans Employment and Training Service, SaluteMyJob and employers. The toolkit is designed to encourage employers who may not have previously considered employing veterans to do so; it includes excellent best practice examples and practical tips and sets out how employers can get involved.

The toolkit, which has received positive feedback and a high number of online visits, has been distributed widely through government, to our agencies and business stakeholders.

## Community Jobs Scotland

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The Scottish Government provided funding of up to £6.1 million in 2017/18 for Phase 7 of Community Jobs Scotland (CJS). This programme aims to support up to 700 job training opportunities lasting up to 12 months with third sector employers, including opportunities for Early Service Leavers and other veterans. From an initial 50 places available to Early Service Leavers in 2015, all 700 places are now open to applications from Early Service Leavers and veterans.

## Scotland’s Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI)

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Early Service Leavers and Armed Forces veterans, as well as the partners of current or former Armed Forces personnel aged 16-29, are eligible for support through Scotland’s Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI). SERI has a focus on a number of vulnerable groups and offers employers up to £4,000 over the course of the first 12 months of employment, supplemented by £500 if the employer pays the

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<sup>16</sup> [https://www.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/capitalising\\_on\\_military\\_talent\\_final\\_interactive\\_pdf.pdf](https://www.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/capitalising_on_military_talent_final_interactive_pdf.pdf)

participant the living wage. Since 2015/16, SERI has supported 10 Early Service Leavers and former Armed Forces personnel; 3 in employment and the others on Modern Apprenticeships.

## Public sector jobs

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Recent work has been undertaken by NHS National Education Scotland to develop the NHSScotland Careers website. This provides information on all careers in NHSScotland. The Scottish Government is exploring developing website content specifically targeted at veterans and is looking to develop case studies of veterans currently employed within the NHS to highlight best practice and as a means of promoting new career opportunities for veterans transitioning to civilian life. Additionally, the Golden Jubilee National Health Board works extensively with both veterans and reservists pro-actively to recruit former Service personnel, many of whom have a range of transferable skills which are highly adaptable to careers in NHS settings.

## Scottish Government Jobs

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The Scottish Government has met representatives from Police Scotland to learn from its experience about how best to engage with recruiting managers. We are considering how we can learn from best practice and have made some early changes; such as amending our internal recruitment guidance to raise awareness of veterans within the workforce.

## Supporting Early / Young Service Leavers

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*Opportunities for All*<sup>17</sup> is the Scottish Government's commitment to an offer of a place in further learning or training for those not participating in learning, training or employment. It ensures that young people aged 16-19 are supported to plan for further learning, training and employment. However the commitment is flexible for young people between the ages of 16-29 who are furthest from the labour market, including Early Service Leavers, by ensuring access to programmes such as *Community Jobs Scotland*<sup>18</sup>.

Skills Development Scotland works with Local Authorities and other organisations to re-engage young people and to support them into accessing the correct Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) and further training and learning; to allow development and to advance their skills set.

A national network of employer led *Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Regional Groups*<sup>19</sup> has been established in 21 regions across Scotland to provide leadership, a single point of contact and support to facilitate engagement between

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0040/00408815.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <http://jobs.scvo.org.uk/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/developingtheyoungworkforce>

employers and education to improve the employment opportunities for young people. In 2017/18 the Scottish Government will work with the network of Regional Groups to ensure they understand the needs of young Service leavers and to explore opportunities to improve their employment outcomes; this work is closely aligned to the Veterans Employability Strategic Group.

## Modern Apprenticeships

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Modern Apprenticeship week is held annually in Scotland and is used to showcase to employers and to those interested in Apprenticeships what is on offer across the employment spectrum in Scotland. Skills Development Scotland will include content for Service leavers and veterans in Modern Apprenticeship week, starting with the next event in March 2018.

In addition, as part of the work Skills Development Scotland and the Careers Transition Partnership is undertaking, Modern Apprenticeships will be promoted to Early Service Leavers, veterans and their families. This will include awareness of Apprenticeships.scot<sup>20</sup> which is Skills Development Scotland's 'go to' site on all matters relating to Foundation, Modern and Graduate Level Apprenticeships. Awareness training for Careers Transition Partnership staff on Apprenticeships will also be offered.

The Scottish Government also recently published a guide: '*Seven things you need to know about Scottish Apprenticeships*<sup>21</sup>' to help employers develop their workforce for the future.

## Work placements

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Skills Development Scotland delivers work experience through the *Certificate of Work Readiness, (CWR)*; an employer endorsed work experience programme which is often used as a pathway into Modern Apprenticeships. It gives young people a recognisable qualification to show employers they have relevant experience for the workplace.

Skills Development Scotland and the Careers Transition Partnership are also working together to determine how CWR can be best utilised by Early Service Leavers, veterans and their families. The Veterans Employability Strategic Group will continue to consider work relating to work placements.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.apprenticeships.scot/>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Education/skills-strategy/apprenticeship-levy>

## 5.4 Colleges and Universities

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Scottish Government officials and College Development Network (CDN) representatives have begun discussing how to engage with the veterans community more closely to promote the benefits of, and opportunities for, college education. In September 2017, CDN met representatives of the Armed Forces in Scotland, colleagues from across the sector and the Scottish Funding Council to consider opportunities to increase veteran participation in further and higher education in Scotland.

Scottish Government officials continue to work with Colleges Scotland and CDN colleagues to support the delivery of actions arising from this meeting; in order to improve the support available to Early Service Leavers and veterans seeking to attend college.

Following the multi-sector meeting in September 2017, an expert group on veterans will now be formed to help address the best way of improving specific information and addressing gaps in guidance. There is also great support to develop a champions network, and the expert group will consider the most useful way to achieve this.

### Flexible Workforce Development Fund Pilot

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The Flexible Workforce Development Fund pilot was launched in the first week of September 2017. It benefits employers by providing college routes to help train members of their organisation. Within this and in line with Scottish Government priorities, employers are encouraged to give due consideration to specific groups such as veterans and Early Service Leavers.

### Access and Articulation

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Work is underway to improve information for prospective students from the Armed Forces community. The Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) has reviewed its existing Armed Forces Guidance<sup>22</sup> 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. An updated version of the guide was made available on the SAAS website in April 2017 in advance of the 2017-2018 academic session.

Work is also underway to look at improving access. For example from academic year 2017-18 onwards, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) will begin to collect data in the college sector about veterans, which will be available at the end of 2018.

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<sup>22</sup> [https://www.saas.gov.uk/forms/armed\\_forces.pdf](https://www.saas.gov.uk/forms/armed_forces.pdf)

The SFC is also applying to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) to enable collection of data about veterans in the university sector. Once this data is in place, 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), to enable interventions to be put in place through the Outcome Agreement process as required.

In addition, SFC is currently analysing the results of a questionnaire about identifying and supporting 'at risk' groups. The term 'at risk' refers to any group which is at risk of being under-represented in either sector and/or who is at risk of achieving lower outcomes than their peers. This includes veterans and children of Armed Forces families. It is hoped that the results will help identify current practice in colleges and universities for veterans to inform future policy. This analysis will be presented to the SFC Access and Inclusion Committee in November and thereafter published on the SFC website.

### Literacy and numeracy

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Responsibility for improving literacy and numeracy lies with many of our partners including Education Scotland, Colleges and Local Authorities. In addition, Education Scotland and Skills Development Scotland are working together to refresh the Big Plus Website<sup>23</sup>, which aims to promote the free help available to assist with reading, writing and using numbers.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/our-products/the-big-plus/>



# 6. Wider support for the Armed Forces Community

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## 6.1 Working with our Partners

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The Scottish Government has a solid track record of working collaboratively with Local Authorities, wider public sector and charities, including Veterans Scotland, Poppyscotland and Legions Scotland, to deliver support to the Armed Forces community.

The Veterans Employability Strategic Group is a great example of how partners from across the sector can work together to best effect to focus efforts on improving services available for personnel transitioning from the Armed Forces and veterans. Recent ventures between the Scottish Government, Business in the Community Scotland and Salute My Job have also proved how collaboration can deliver positive results, with the launch of a useful guide for employers: *Capitalising on Military<sup>24</sup> Talent*, to raise awareness of the pool of talented individuals who leave our Armed Forces each year.

We recognise that Local Authorities are a key partner in delivering many of the issues which are of most importance to veterans. This year we have worked with the Ministry of Defence to produce a guide for Local Authorities in Scotland<sup>25</sup> to share best practice and help them deliver on their commitments to the Armed Forces community. The Scottish Veterans Minister has also written to all Local Authority Champions highlighting the guide and other sources of advice and promoted attendance at the 2017 Annual Armed Forces and Veterans Champions Gathering. This Gathering provided an opportunity to discuss existing best practice and to strengthen valuable links between those who are supporting veterans in local areas.

Scotland has an Armed Forces and Veterans Champions in each of our Local Authorities, Health Boards, within Police Scotland and the Department for Work and Pensions. Skills Development Scotland is also establishing a Veterans Champion in each of its five areas.

The Scottish Veterans Commissioner also recommended that such a network be replicated within colleges and universities in Scotland. Although this is primarily a matter for colleges and universities, this recommendation was discussed with the Scottish Government in September 2017 and support for developing a network of champions was established and will be considered further by the expert group (section 5.4) in due course.

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<sup>24</sup> [https://www.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/capitalising\\_on\\_military\\_talent\\_final\\_interactive\\_pdf.pdf](https://www.bitc.org.uk/sites/default/files/capitalising_on_military_talent_final_interactive_pdf.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/653314/Booklet - Local Authority Guide - Scotland.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/653314/Booklet_-_Local_Authority_Guide_-_Scotland.pdf)



## 6.2 Health

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The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that all UK Armed Forces veterans living in Scotland are able to access the best possible NHS care and support.

Subject to the clinical needs of all patients, veterans continue to be entitled to priority NHS treatment and services for health problems which were sustained as a result of serving their country. Armed Forces and Veterans Champions within NHS Boards continue to play a vital role in ensuring the implementation of the priority treatment guidelines.

The Scottish Government hosts an Armed Forces and Veterans Health Joint Group meeting, chaired by the Director-General Health and Social Care and Chief Executive NHS Scotland. These meetings bring together a range of stakeholders including the Champions from the NHS Boards, representatives from the serving community, veterans organisations and the Scottish Government to discuss a range of issues such as improving healthcare information. At the recent meeting in May 2017, it was accepted that the Joint Group should meet more frequently.

On 30 August, the Scottish Veterans Commissioner published a thought-piece, entitled *'Veterans' Health & Wellbeing in Scotland – Are We Getting it Right?*<sup>26</sup> This concluded that veterans in Scotland are generally in relatively good health and have a positive experience of accessing health and social care provision. The Commissioner has identified a number of key areas he feels are worthy of further exploration and debate. Two further reports will follow which the Scottish Government will consider in due course.

### Medical records

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From work which began in 2010/11, all serving personnel and their families based in Scotland now have a Community Health Index number to facilitate access to the full range of NHS treatment and services whenever they are required.

The Scottish Government is continuing discussions with the Ministry of Defence to explore what more can be done to streamline the transfer of military health records to local GPs when personnel leave the Armed Forces.

### Prosthetics

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Scotland has a well-established state-of-the-art National Specialist Prosthetics Service which is working well. The single multidisciplinary team approach across two specialist centres in Edinburgh and Glasgow also has links to centres in

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00524012.pdf>

Aberdeen, Inverness and Dundee. NHS Scotland has made it a priority to ensure that veterans have equal access to this important service. Should their injuries be as a result of Service, they are entitled to receive priority treatment.

## Mental Health

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Many of the key themes and commitments in the Scottish Government's new ten-year Mental Health Strategy will also impact positively on veterans and their families; the strategy has improving access to services and supporting earlier intervention at its core. It highlights Scottish Government's support for the ethos of the Armed Forces Covenant and, as set out in *Renewing Our Commitments*, that no one should suffer disadvantage as a result of military service. In supporting efforts to meet the needs of veterans and their families, local partnerships are encouraged to consider how best to provide services locally for them.

The Scottish Government continues to provide funding of £3.6 million over three years to 2018, in partnership with NHS Scotland, for the provision of specialist mental health services for veterans resident in Scotland at the Hollybush House Combat Stress facility in Ayr. A full range of specialist mental health assessment, treatment, education, advice and support is offered to help recovery and improve the quality of life for those veterans across Scotland who need help.

The Scottish Government has partnered with a number of local NHS Boards/Integrated Joint Boards offering funding to support the continuing Veterans First Point network which offers one-stop-shop drop-in centres for veterans. The Scottish Government has committed £825,000 in 2017-18 to achieve this, and has made a match funding offer for the next two financial years to 2020 to encourage sustainable services in the local area. Service delivery, however, rests with individual Boards.

The Scottish Government has confirmed that it will give longer term funding to the Veterans First Point Central Team. In 2017-18 around £150,000 will be provided to the Central Team.

## 6.3 The Justice System

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### Scottish Prison Service

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The Scottish Prison Service has established the Veteran in Custody Support Officer (VICSO) Champions who continue to operate in each Scottish prison, to help those who receive a custodial sentence. In 2010 a Scottish Veterans Prison In-Reach Group was established to examine the welfare needs of ex-Service personnel in custody.

### Police Scotland

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Each of the 13 local policing divisions along with Custody Division has a Veterans Champion responsible for promoting the needs of veterans locally. The Police Scotland Champions Network meets regularly to share knowledge and best practice. Guest speakers from relevant partner agencies are invited to these meetings to ensure strong awareness of local and national veteran support services. This work is overseen by a senior officer to ensure that strong engagement between the veterans community, Police Scotland and the Scottish Government continues.

Police Scotland's Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP) referral system has been in place for three years to enable officers to refer individuals in need of assistance to relevant support groups through a single point of contact. This referral service involves collaboration through Police Scotland, Poppyscotland and the Citizens Advice Service Scotland. Over 850 referrals have been made by Police Scotland to the service since its inception.

## 6.4 Service Children

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The Scottish Government-led Scottish Service Children Strategy Group<sup>27</sup> (SSCSG) continues to guide and engage in work around supporting children from Armed Forces families in Scotland.

The Scottish Government has added an explicit reference to children from Service families and barriers to learning in the revised Additional Support for Learning (ASL) Code of Practice, which was the subject of a recent consultation. Additional support needs encompass a wide range of issues, including those which might impact on children from Service families, such as coping with periods when a parent is deployed or dealing with interrupted education. The Code, which is due to publish late 2017, supports Local Authorities and schools in their statutory duties.

The Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)' dedicated National Transitions Officer (NTO), funded through the Ministry of Defence Education Support Fund, has a key role in directly working with Scottish Local Authorities, schools and Service families. Collaborative working has seen us add to a growing suite of guidance for practitioners and parents, including:

- The SSCSG supported the MOD Parent Support Officer to develop an 'Introductory Guide to Education in Scotland'<sup>28</sup> for Armed Forces parents.
- ADES developed 'Guidance for Local Education Authorities on the Admission of Children and Young People of Armed Forces Families to Scottish Schools' which sets out how education authorities can provide a balanced approach to admissions, taking account of the circumstances faced by Forces Families.
- The NTO is developing a website<sup>29</sup> with partners which will include guidance, resources, local authority pages and partner organisation information when the website goes live later in 2017.
- The NTO has also supported the development of two film resources:
  - *Getting it Right for Forces Families* for educators. The film<sup>30</sup> is being circulated across Scotland with accompanying resource materials; and
  - a film for parents is in production, with input from Tri-Service Armed Forces families and school communities, for release later this year.

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<sup>27</sup> The SSCSG = Scottish Service Children Strategy Group (previously Scottish Service Children's Strategic Working Group or SSCSWG). It is a SG chaired group with representation from the MOD's Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP), Ministry of Defence in Scotland, the voluntary sector (RCET- Royal Caledonian Education Trust), Education Scotland, and ADES including its Transitions Officer whose role is specifically to look at the transition of children and young people from Service families. The RAF and Navy have recently been invited to join the group, in addition to the existing Army representatives.

<sup>28</sup>[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/606820/DCYP\\_Education\\_in\\_Scotland\\_2.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/606820/DCYP_Education_in_Scotland_2.pdf)

<sup>29</sup><http://forceschildrenseducation.org.uk/>

<sup>30</sup><https://vimeo.com/185790355>

The SSCSG will continue to engage with key partners to develop advice and guidance on issues of importance to the education of and support for children from Service families.

The NTO has worked with Local Authorities to adapt their management information system to enable them to identify where school pupils are from an Armed Forces family (and if so, whether regular, reserve or veteran). Local Authorities are in the early stages of beginning to accumulate and analyse data.

The NTO delivered six education forums last year across Scotland which welcomed 125 attendees, including teaching, local authority staff and parents (regular, reserve and veterans). Feedback from these forums is being used to develop resources and to prioritise future work.

The Education Scotland national self-evaluation tool '*How Good is Our School 4*<sup>31</sup> now includes specific quality indicators on '*transitions*' and '*ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion*'. Both are significant in supporting children from Armed Forces families and are being used by schools to help improve practice and by HM Inspectors in school inspections.

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<sup>31</sup> <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Pages/frwk2hgios.aspx>

## 7. Looking to the Future

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The Scottish Government will work with its partners to ensure that the standards of service provision for the Armed Forces community in Scotland improve further. Together, we have already delivered significant achievements, but there is more that we can do. We will strive to make Scotland the destination of choice for personnel leaving the Armed Forces, and will remain committed to ensuring that no one should suffer disadvantage as a result of military service.

Working collaboratively with our partners remains key to our future success. We will continue to strengthen our Armed Forces and Veterans Champions networks throughout Scotland – for example by the inclusion of champions in each of the five Skills Development Scotland areas and the potential development of a network within colleges and universities.

We will prioritise the work being undertaken in response to the Scottish Veterans Commissioner published reports and will update the Scottish Parliament annually on our achievements. We also look forward to the Veterans Commissioner's forthcoming reports on Health.

Provision of physical and mental healthcare will remain a high priority for the Scottish Government. This commitment was reinforced in the recently published Mental Health Strategy (2017-27) which highlighted our continuing support for efforts to meet the needs of veterans and their families. We will continue to use the Armed Forces and Veterans Health Joint Group as a forum to look at how specific support for the Armed Forces community will be delivered. We also will take forward further discussions with the Ministry of Defence to explore options for streamlining the transfer of military health records to local GPs when people leave the Armed Forces.

Veterans' Employability will remain a core focus for the Scottish Government and we will continue to emphasise that our veterans have a range of skills and attributes of value to civilian employers. Specifically, the next round of the Scottish Veterans Fund will again have a dedicated strand focusing on employability projects, and we will work with Skills Development Scotland to include content for Service Leavers and veterans in the 2018 Modern Apprenticeship Week.

Through the Veterans Employability Strategic Group, the Scottish Government, along with other partner organisations, will look at what more can be done to improve the employment prospects of veterans. This will include considering the role that work placements play in helping individuals identify future career paths, and how tailored qualitative research could be used to understand better the issues faced by personnel transitioning into civilian employment.

On housing we will continue to review the information available to ensure it is up-to-date and easily understood. Specifically, we will re-launch '*A Scottish Guide for People Leaving the Armed Forces and Ex-Service Personnel*' in early 2018, and we will publish updated practice guidance on social housing allocations which will include advice on local connection.

Support for families also remains a priority, such as spousal employability and the continuing work of the Scottish Service Children Strategy Group<sup>32</sup> to guide and deliver support for children from Armed Forces families in Scotland.

Scotland continues to be a society which recognises the value that our military personnel, veterans and their families bring to our communities. Looking ahead, the Scottish Government will carry on providing support where it is needed most, and will continue to focus on driving up service provision further.

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<sup>32</sup> The SSCSG = Scottish Service Children Strategy Group (previously Scottish Service Children's Strategic Working Group or SSCSWG). It is a SG chaired group with representation from the MOD's Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP), Ministry of Defence in Scotland, the voluntary sector (RCET- Royal Caledonian Education Trust), Education Scotland, and ADES including its Transitions Officer whose role is specifically to look at the transition of children and young people from Service families.

TRANSITION IN SCOTLAND<sup>33</sup> PUBLISHED 27 MARCH 2015

Number	Recommendation text	Response at section number
1	The Scottish Government should continue to work with the UK Government to ensure that online advice and briefings reflect housing policy and provision in Scotland, so that Service Leavers choosing to settle in Scotland are not disadvantaged.	4
2	The Scottish Government and CoSLA should engage with the UK Government to ensure that work on providing more information about resettlement destinations reflects the information needs of Scottish Local Authorities.	2
3	The Scottish Government and its agencies should engage closely with the UK Government once the new Career Transition Partnership programme is in place to ensure that devolved services can provide the full range of employability, skills and learning support to Service Leavers in Scotland.	5
4	The Scottish Government should consider introducing flexibility to relax the age restrictions, extending the eligibility for criteria within 'Opportunities for All' for Early Service Leavers.	5.3
5	The Scottish Government and the Third Sector should consider piloting a Community Jobs Scotland (CJS) programme aimed at Early Service Leavers.	5.3
6	The Scottish Government, in partnership with Skills Development Scotland, Local Authorities and the Third Sector, should consider options to extend recruitment incentives so that they encourage employers to recruit Early Service Leavers	5
7	The Scottish Government, Local Authorities and Skills Development Scotland should consider options for targeting the Employability Fund, and future employability services, at Service Leavers	5.3
8	The Scottish Government and Skills Development Scotland should consider actively promoting Modern Apprenticeships to Early Service Leavers and to their	5.3

<sup>33</sup><http://www.gov.scot/About/public-bodies/veterans-commissioner/Publications/TransitioninScotlandReport>



	potential employers.	
9	The Scottish Government should utilise Regional Invest in Young People Groups across Scotland to promote young Service Leavers amongst prospective employers	<b>5.3</b>
10	The Scottish Government, working with devolved partners and engaging with the UK Government and Armed Forces, should identify opportunities and consider options for marketing its youth employment initiatives to Early and young Service Leavers, which might include targeted presentations, tailored leaflets, accessible on-line information and wider campaigns to raise awareness of the support available.	<b>5</b>
11	The Scottish Government should use its existing mechanisms for engaging with employers to promote the employment of, and work placements for, Service Leavers within its broader employability policy framework and delivery infrastructure	<b>5.3</b>
12	The Scottish Government, its agencies and Scottish Local Authorities should work with the UK Government to ensure that the new Personal Development Plan and related course modules are relevant to those settling in Scotland.	<b>3</b>
13	The Scottish Government and NHS Scotland should retain the current procedures whereby GPs in Scotland retrieve Service Leavers' medical records but also keep them under review.	<b>6</b>
14	The Scottish Government should engage with the Veterans and Families Research Institute at Anglia Ruskin University to help identify evidence needs and ensure research into transition in Scotland is also included in future programmes.	<b>3</b>

**REPORT ON THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION ON HOUSING FOR  
SERVICE LEAVERS IN SCOTLAND<sup>34</sup>  
PUBLISHED AUGUST 2015**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Recommendation text</b>	<b>Response at section number</b>
1	The Scottish Government should continue to work with the UK Government to ensure that online advice and briefings reflect housing policy and provision in Scotland, so that Service Leavers choosing to settle in Scotland are not disadvantaged.	4
2	the Scottish Government should continue to work with the UK Government to ensure that advice and MoD briefings reflect housing policy and provision in Scotland, so Service Leavers choosing to settle in Scotland are not disadvantaged (also recommended in the <i>Transition in Scotland</i> report)	2
3	The requirement to prove a “local connection” needs far better explanation in MoD, Scottish Government and Local Authority publications, including leaflets and websites, targeted at housing providers, veterans and Service personnel.	4 and 7
4	The Scottish Government should consider wider distribution of the <i>Scottish Housing Guide for People Leaving the Armed Forces</i> and work with MoD, public sector organisations and charities in Scotland to raise its profile, ensuring it appears on all Scottish Local Authority websites and on relevant UK Government websites.	2, 4 and 7
5	The Scottish Government should review its <i>Scottish Housing Guide for People Leaving the Armed Forces</i> with the aim of improving content, visual impact and accessibility.	2, 4 and 7
6	the Scottish Government should review the information provided on its website relating to housing targeted at Service Leavers, veterans and their families in order to improve accessibility and currency	1, 4 and 7
7	The Scottish Government should consider placing all information for veterans and Service Leavers (not just information on housing) in one area like the mygov.scot website.	1 and 4
8	All Scottish Local Authorities should consider offering housing information for Service Leavers, veterans and their families on their websites with direct links from Housing home pages to improve accessibility.	<b>Not primarily for the Scottish Government, but covered in section 1</b>

<sup>34</sup><http://www.gov.scot/About/public-bodies/veterans-commissioner/Publications/HousingInformationReport>

9	Local Authorities should consider providing additional guidance to their frontline staff on the principles of the Covenant and the council's policy on housing support for veterans.	<b>Not primarily for the Scottish Government, but covered in section 1</b>
10	The Scottish Government should work with Local Authorities and MoD to improve information-sharing to ensure those leaving the Services are aware of the opportunities available in Scotland and Local Authorities are given advance notice of those expressing a wish to live in their area (also highlighted in recommendation 2 of the <i>Transition in Scotland</i> report).	<b>2 and 4</b>
11	The Scottish Government and other housing information providers should consider taking a lead from Shelter Scotland and Citizens Advice Scotland when looking to upgrade their websites and generate a more extensive online presence, and should consider promoting these organisations' websites more extensively.	<b>1 and 4</b>
12	The Scottish Government and Veterans Scotland should work together with partners, including the UK Government and other parts of the Third sector, to ensure that housing information is easily visible on the Veterans UK and other pan-UK websites in order to reach a wider audience.	<b>1 and 4</b>

## THE VETERANS COMMUNITY - EMPLOYABILITY, SKILLS AND LEARNING<sup>35</sup>

PUBLISHED 3 NOVEMBER 2016

Number	Recommendation text	Response at section number
1	<p>The Scottish Government should establish a Veterans Employability Strategic Working Group of key partners to provide strategic leadership and to oversee the activity required to fulfil the ambitions of more, and better, employment opportunities for veterans, as articulated in this report and in <i>Renewing Our Commitments</i>.</p> <p>The working group should include core participation from the Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Local Government representation, Ministry of Defence (MOD) / Career Transition Partnership(CTP), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and Veterans Scotland.</p>	1, 3, 5, 5.1
2	<p>The Scottish Government should support proposals that promote employability and increase job opportunities amongst the veterans community as the priority when allocating resources from the Scottish Veterans Fund.</p>	5.2
3	<p>The Scottish Government to review how the veterans community could be most effectively utilised to fill the known skills gaps in key sectors like education, health, IT, engineering, construction, finance and insurance. In doing so, it should consider whether its recent initiative to attract former oil and gas workers into teaching in the North East of Scotland should be replicated for the veterans community. This recommendation should be considered by the Veterans Employability Strategic Working Group (see Recommendation 1) as one of its early priorities.</p>	5.1
4	<p>The Scottish Government should initiate and co-ordinate a regional employability pilot project, based in an area where there is a high military and veteran population. The purpose should be to deliver an increased number of meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities for Service Leavers, veterans, and spouses and partners.</p> <p>The pilot should involve the full range of organisations with an interest in the development of the local economy,</p>	5.1

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00509806.pdf>

	the sustainability of its communities and the particular contribution that veterans and families can make to these ambitions. It should, therefore, see core participation from the Scottish Government, Local Government, Ministry of Defence, Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Chambers of Commerce, Skills Development Scotland, Department for Work and Pensions/Job Centre Plus, Community Planning Partnership(s), employers, local college(s), and representatives of local veterans' families.	
5	The Scottish Government should commission research to provide analysis of the current baseline of the employment situation for the veterans community and to evaluate the impact of national and local initiatives to improve job prospects.	5.1
6	The Scottish Government should work with employers – both small and large - to find ways of offering more placements to Service Leavers, veterans, spouses and partners. This should be in addition to those offered by Career Transition Partnership.	5.3
7	The Career Transition Partnership (CTP), Local Authority community-based support services, colleges, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and charities should promote the benefits of improved literacy and numeracy skills amongst Service Leavers and veterans, directing them to appropriate community-based support, including the 'Big Plus' initiative. The aim should be to generate greater awareness amongst veterans with specific needs, their families and employers in order that learning opportunities can be accessed more readily.	5.3
8	The Veterans Employability Strategic Working Group (see Recommendation 1) should produce a plan for building understanding and recognition amongst Scottish employers (especially SMEs) of the skills and qualifications gained in the military. The Group should also consider whether the current system for translating and mapping qualifications could be simplified and how it might be better utilised and understood.	5.1
9	The Career Transition Partnership (CTP) and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) should build on their existing relationship with the aim of ensuring Service Leavers and veterans have seamless access to SDS once their period of support from CTP comes to an end. This will be particularly important for Early Service Leavers and others in danger of 'falling between the gaps'.	5.1
10	Colleges Scotland to work with their members to engage the veterans sector more closely in order to promote the benefits of, and opportunities to participate in, college education. Ultimately the outcome should be an increase	<b>Not primarily for the Scottish Government, but covered in section 5.4</b>

	in numbers from the veterans community taking up college places.	
11	The Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland and Colleges Scotland should develop a plan to promote the Modern Apprenticeship programme to Early Service Leavers, veterans who would benefit from up-skilling or retraining, and spouses and partners.	5.3
12	The Scottish Government should work with employers to identify ways of supporting, and perhaps incentivising, sponsorship schemes that will allow a greater number of Service Leavers and veterans to undertake college studies in conjunction with full time employment.	5.4 and 6
13	In fulfilling the recommendations from the Commission on Widening Access, all Universities should consider how access thresholds can be specifically applied to the veterans community. Subsequently, they should advertise and promote these thresholds widely across the military and veterans sectors.	<b>Not primarily for the Scottish Government, but covered in section 5.4</b>
14	The Scottish Funding Council, universities and colleges to specifically consider the veterans community as they embark on the expansion of articulation, as recommended by the Commission on Widening Access.	<b>Not primarily for the Scottish Government, but covered in section 5.4</b>
15	The Scottish Funding Council should work with relevant organisations - including Universities Scotland, Colleges Scotland and Student Awards Agency Scotland - to produce material designed specifically for the veterans community. This should include information about finance and the support available for those enrolling at college or university. Subsequently, this material should be made available widely amongst the serving and veterans communities, and those like CTP and SDS who support them.	<b>Not primarily for the Scottish Government, but covered in section 5.4</b>
16	Colleges Scotland and Universities Scotland should work with their members and Veterans Scotland to establish a network of champions across all colleges and universities. The champions can provide the first point of contact for members of the ex-Service community applying for, or undertaking, further and higher education. They should also consider offering mentoring, advice on applications and funding, and be part of the wider champions network in Scotland.	<b>Not primarily for the Scottish Government, but covered in sections 6 and 7</b>
17	The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work should in due course report the progress made against implementing the recommendations in this report (and my two previous reports) to the Scottish Parliament. The aim should be to raise the profile of veterans issues amongst Parliamentarians and provide them with the information necessary to scrutinise the Scottish Government's work in this field.	<b>This document and the Parliamentary debate covers this recommendation</b>

18	The Scottish Government to assess its current and future recruitment policies with a view to identifying opportunities to better target and support the veterans community in securing Scottish Government jobs. In doing so, it should consider Police Scotland's approach of providing tailored information, personal support in completing applications, and advice in preparing for interviews. Mentoring from ex-Service personnel within the civil service is likely to play a crucial role.	<b>5.3</b>
19	NHS Scotland and individual Health Boards should develop and deliver commitments made at the last Armed Forces and Veterans Joint Group meeting to utilise the talents of the veterans community and provide better support and advice to those applying for jobs within the NHS.	<b>5.3</b>



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