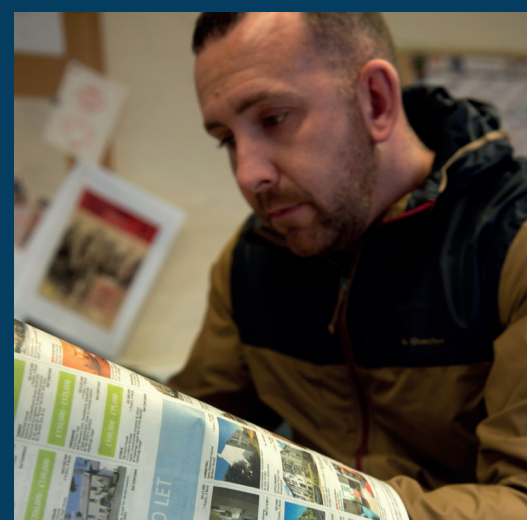


The Strategy For Our Veterans

Taking The Strategy Forward In Scotland – Our Refreshed Action Plan



Credit: PoppyScotland

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Scottish Government
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Foreword



I am pleased to present to you the Scottish Government's refreshed Action Plan detailing how we intend to continue to take forward the Strategy for Our Veterans in Scotland.

Here in Scotland we have a thriving and active veteran community and this plan represents a uniquely Scottish, collaborative approach to addressing the wants and needs of this community. I am pleased that this action plan reflects the important services and support which the Scottish Government and our partners are able to provide.

Much has changed since our original action plan was published in 2020. The two-year period since then has of course been like no other. We have faced huge challenges, from healthcare to employment, and of course the difficult fundraising environment which is so critical to the organisations which work hard to support our veterans.

We recognise the impact that the pandemic has had on the entire veterans sector and we have therefore taken this opportunity to take a look at the extent to which our existing commitments remain valid and where there may be opportunities to add more detail to these commitments or add new ones.

While this plan does not represent a wholesale change to our approach – we see this as a long-term effort to take place over a number of years – we have conducted a light-touch consultation with key partners and stakeholders across Scotland, to ensure that what is produced reflects, to the fullest extent possible, the views of the very people we are all seeking to support.

Our consultation has told us that, as most of our existing commitments are of a long-term nature, they are still extant and that the work currently underway should continue. I believe that there is a real value in committing to long-term goals and continually working to achieve them, and I am pleased to report that for a number of our 2020 commitments, we have been able to evidence real success and therefore we have identified that those commitments have been addressed. For example we have been able to expand the criteria for the Scottish Veterans Fund, to emphasise inclusion and social integration, and to expand the criteria for the Workplace Equality Fund, to incorporate the Armed Forces community, including veterans and spouses.

I am particularly pleased to highlight our achievements to improve our healthcare provision for veterans, and through the Veterans Mental Health & Wellbeing Action Plan which was published on 21 December 2021 we will work to ensure that veterans have parity of care, no matter where they are located in Scotland. We will also continue to provide funding for the provision of a range of specialist and community based services for veterans resident in Scotland.

We have also identified seven important new commitments which will enable us to expand our support to our veterans and their families. Of real importance will be our work with partners to ensure the contributions of veterans are properly recognised and understood by wider society.

While much has been achieved since our original plan was published in 2020, there is always more to be done and I am continually grateful to all our partners across all sectors who continue to work with us to deliver the aims and outcomes of the Strategy. Scotland greatly values its veterans and their families and I look forward to seeing the actions we have identified here being taken forward, and our veterans community going from strength to strength.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'KB', with a wavy line underneath.

Keith Brown MSP

Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans

The Strategy for Our Veterans



Background and Refresh

The cross-UK Strategy for our Veterans, launched in 2018, acknowledged the importance of supporting and empowering those who have served in our Armed Forces. Veterans and their families offer society a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience and it is important that this is recognised, they are supported where necessary, and that they do not suffer any disadvantage as a result of their Service.

By committing to this Strategy, the Scottish Government pledged to achieve a shared vision, principles, and the best possible outcomes for our veterans and their families in the future. In January 2020 the Scottish Government published its original action plan for taking the Strategy forward in Scotland. This was informed by an extensive consultation with stakeholders across the community and tailored to the needs of our veterans and their families and the distinctive mechanisms for delivery in Scotland. It made a number of commitments across all of the Strategy's cross-cutting factors and key themes. A summary of the key themes, cross-cutting factors and 10-year outcomes are shown on pages 7-8.

During our original consultation, we emphasised the message that, first and foremost, veterans are assets to our society, and the small proportion who find the transition to civilian life more challenging are owed the right support to ensure that they too are able to realise their potential and live full and successful lives after Service.

Our original action plan built on the excellent work being done by organisations across the public, private and charitable sectors to support and empower veterans and their families. It recognised that the needs of our veterans and their families were changing, both in terms of the reducing numbers and also with regard to the types of support that help them to integrate successfully into civilian society. The issues faced by veterans and their families can be multiple and complex, emphasising the importance of effective collaboration and co-ordination across organisations and stakeholders that support them. Our 2020 action plan set out how we intended to respond to these changes, across all of the services that impact on the lives of veterans and families of the Armed Forces community in Scotland.

Scotland's original plan was deliberately designed to be long-term in nature. It made a series of commitments to deliver the vision and principles of the Strategy out to 2028, ten years after it was first published. However, recognising the impact that the Covid pandemic, in particular, has had on all aspects of daily life, we believed that there was an opportunity to review our commitments to determine: those we believe have been delivered; the extent to which the original set remained valid; where there may be an opportunity to add more detail, and; if there were any new commitments we could add. A consultation on the scale carried out in support of our original action plan was not conducted. Rather, we undertook a light-touch examination whereby we reviewed each of our commitments with policy areas across the Scottish Government, developed a refreshed set and offered key stakeholders the opportunity to review these draft proposals and contribute their views. The external stakeholders offered the opportunity to comment are shown in **Annex A**. As we expected, many of our original commitments remained broadly extant although some have been updated or reworded and a small number of new commitments have been added. Those which we now consider to be complete are shown in **Annex B**.



Cross-Cutting Factors and Key Themes

Vision

This Strategy has a 10-year scope. Through the 10-year timescale, the Strategy addresses the immediate needs of older veterans as well as setting the right conditions for society to empower – and support – the newer generation. Initiatives and proposals will work towards an enduring Vision articulated by three key principles.

Those who have served in the UK Armed Forces, and their families, transition smoothly back into civilian life and contribute fully to a society that understands and values what they have done and what they have to offer.

Principles

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

Veterans are first and foremost civilians and continue to be of benefit to wider society.

Veterans are encouraged and enabled to maximise their potential as civilians.

Veterans are able to access support that meets their needs when necessary, through public and voluntary sectors.

These Principles encompass Regular and Reservist veterans and where appropriate, their families and the bereaved. The focus is on those veterans of the UK Armed Forces resident in the UK. In due course, we will consider encompassing veterans who return to or choose to live overseas. These Principles are consistent with, and underpinned by, the Armed Forces Covenant.

Cross-Cutting Factors

that affect service provision for veterans across all Key Themes.



Collaboration



Co-ordination



Data



Perception



Recognition

Key Themes

that emerged as affecting veterans' lives.



Community and Relationships



Employment, Education and Skills



Finance and Debt



Health and Wellbeing



Making a Home in Civilian Society



Veterans and the Law

Summary of 10-Year Outcomes

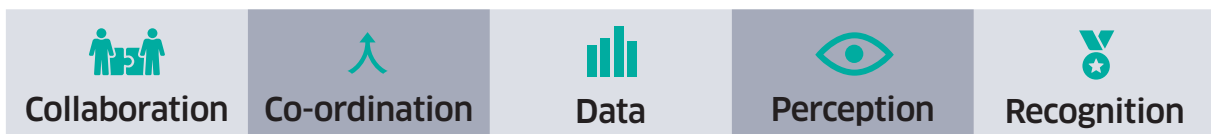
Cross-Cutting Factors		
1	Collaboration between organisations	Improved collaboration between organisations offers veterans coherent support.
2	Coordination of veterans' services	The coordination of veterans provision delivers consistent aims and principles over time and throughout the UK, ensuring veterans, their families and the bereaved are treated fairly compared to the local population.
3	Data on the veteran community	Enhanced collection, use and analysis of data across the public, private and charitable sectors to build an evidence base to effectively identify and address the needs of veterans.
4	Public perception and understanding	The UK population value veterans and understand their diverse experiences and culture.
5	Recognition of veterans	Veterans feel that their service and experience is recognised and valued by society.
Key Themes		
1	Community and relationships	Veterans are able to build healthy relationships and integrate into their communities.
2	Employment, education and skills	Veterans enter appropriate employment and can continue to enhance their careers throughout their working lives.
3	Finance and debt	Veterans leave the Armed Forces with sufficient financial education, awareness and skills to be financially self-supporting and resilient.
4	Health and wellbeing	All veterans enjoy a state of positive physical and mental health and wellbeing, enabling them to contribute to wider aspects of society.
5	Making a home in civilian society	Veterans have a secure place to live either through buying, renting or social housing.
6	Veterans and the law	Veterans leave the Armed Forces with the resilience and awareness to remain law-abiding civilians.

Taking the Strategy Forward in Scotland: Our Refreshed Commitments



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Cross-Cutting Factors



Collaboration & Coordination

Outcome: improved collaboration between organisations offers veterans coherent support and the coordination of veterans provision delivers consistent aims and principles over time and throughout the UK, ensuring veterans, their families and the bereaved are treated fairly compared to the local population.

We will achieve this by:

- Working with OSCR (the Scottish Charity Regulator) and Veterans Scotland to expand the guidance for new charities produced by OSCR to also specifically signpost to Veterans Scotland. While decisions on such charities will remain with OSCR, Veterans Scotland will be able to advise on gaps or potential overlaps with other Scottish charities, ensuring that applicants have a clear understanding of existing charity coverage in the sector.
- Offering all Local Authority Champions the opportunity to meet with the Cabinet Secretary for Veterans at least once per year to continue to develop the partnership approach in delivering the Veterans Strategy and to review Terms of Reference for the group.
- Improving sector-wide information and guidance, including increased promotion of, and greater collaboration and information sharing between, Veterans Gateway and Veterans Assist.
- Supporting and participating in cross-government work to improve understanding and raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant, through, for example, engagement in the cross-government Covenant Reference Group.
- Engaging with the dedicated team of Armed Forces Champions across the Department of Work and Pensions. We will work with the staff based in Scotland, whose focus will be to help veterans and their families to find a job and receive the financial support they are entitled to, to ensure joined-up support across governments where appropriate.
- Continuing to recognise the work of the Unforgotten Forces consortium to improve the lives of older veterans.
- Continuing to support the Scottish Veterans Fund. We have allocated over £2.3 million through the Scottish Veterans Fund since 2008, supporting over 190 projects across Scotland and benefiting the lives of hundreds of veterans and their families. The Scottish Government has committed to maintain the fund at its increased level of £500k per annum for the remainder of this Parliamentary term.

- Building on the excellent relationships developed with the three Services in Scotland and the Families Federations.
- [NEW] Working with partners to encourage collaboration across the Armed Forces Third Sector in Scotland through such mechanisms as the Unforgotten Forces consortium, the Scottish Veterans Fund and Veterans Scotland's capacity building grant.
- [NEW] Continuing to fund and support the role of the independent Scottish Veterans Commissioner and prioritising the delivery of any outstanding and new recommendations.
- [NEW] Continuing to work closely with and support the MOD as it seeks to further embed the Armed Forces Covenant into legislation through the Armed Forces Act 2021, including development of statutory guidance.
- [NEW] Working with the UK Government and other Devolved Administrations to support the delivery of those commitments in the UK Government's 2022-24 Veterans Strategy Action Plan which impact veterans right across the UK.

Data

Outcome: enhanced collection, use and analysis of data across the public, private and charitable sectors to build an evidence base to effectively identify and address the needs of veterans.

We will achieve this by:

- Working to encourage veterans to declare their veteran status when seeking a service or support.
- Working with National Records of Scotland (NRS) and stakeholders to develop outputs from the Census concerning the veterans community in Scotland. Analysis and outputs will be linked to the themes and cross-cutting factors of the Strategy for Our Veterans, and will look to address priority research questions and evidence gaps.
- Beginning a programme of work that will seek to collate and assess research that has been published on the veterans community in Scotland, to identify gaps in our knowledge. We have also identified additional sources of regular data collection beyond the Census, such as including the same veterans question in the Scottish Household, Health and Crime and Justice Surveys.
- Considering viable and robust options for carrying out further research to begin to address evidence gaps in line with our priority research questions. Throughout this process we will engage with the academic and wider expert research community.
- With the UK Government, exploring data-sharing opportunities to exploit current data and identify gaps.

Perception and Recognition

Outcome: the UK population value veterans and understand their diverse experiences and culture; veterans feel that their service and experience is recognised and valued by society.

We will achieve this by:

- Engaging regularly with the Heads of the Armed Forces in Scotland to support the positive narrative that reinforces the vital work that the Armed Forces do in keeping our country safe and secure and the importance of their presence in Scotland.
- Improving training and resources for service providers engaging with the Armed Forces and veterans community, so that the modern veteran is better understood by those delivering services; for example, by promoting the Forces Connect products that have been developed for Local Authorities.
- Supporting the Office for Veterans' Affairs' commitment to undertake a scoping study for provision of digital verification of veteran status, and further work to develop options for Phase 2 of the rollout of veterans ID cards.
- Working with employers in Scotland to highlight positive case studies to help promote veterans as assets to employers, communities and our wider society.
- [NEW] Working with partners to ensure the contributions of veterans are properly recognised and understood by wider society through commemorations and education materials.



Key Themes



Community and Relationships

Leaving the Armed Forces, and their associated camaraderie and sense of purpose, can create challenges establishing new relationships within civilian communities both for Service leavers and their families. This experience will be different for each veteran and family. Some will already have links within communities and others may be starting from scratch. That it is a personal issue, and varies greatly between individuals, presents a challenge in how to sufficiently support ex-Service personnel while respecting their private lives.

Outcome: veterans are able to build healthy relationships and integrate into their communities.

We will achieve this by:

- [NEW] Working with underrepresented groups within the veterans community in Scotland, to ensure their experiences and needs are more widely understood and supported.
- Integrating veterans within our wider work on social isolation, through a Programme for Government commitment to develop a new five-year plan to implement A Connected Scotland strategy, backed with investment of £10m to provide funding which will help to tackle barriers to connection.
- Working with stakeholders to further promote positive ways for veterans and their families to integrate into local communities.
- Promoting our *Welcome to Scotland* booklet, as a guide to families settling in Scotland. We will ensure that this resource is updated on an annual basis and promoted widely to Service families, working with the Families Federations and other stakeholders.





Employment, Education and Skills

Military service fosters leadership, organisational skills, resilience and specialist skills such as medical or technical expertise. Veterans – and their families – are great assets for all employment sectors, and a growing number of employers are actively targeting veterans to fill their skills gaps. Continued development beyond military service can also include a number of education options, both for the Service leavers and their families. It is also important to recognise that, during their school education, children of Service personnel and veterans sometimes need additional support to overcome the challenges arising from military life.

Outcome: veterans enter appropriate employment and can continue to enhance their careers throughout their working lives.

We will achieve this by:

Employability Support

- Continuing to ensure that veterans and their families are able to access and benefit from a range of Scottish Government supported employability initiatives, including the ‘No One Left Behind’ Employability Funding Stream, the Young Persons Guarantee and Fair Start Scotland.
- Working with the Scottish Government’s Veterans Employability Strategic Group to continue to examine how to improve employment opportunities and remove present and future potential barriers for the Armed Forces and veterans community, including their families and work with partners to effect changes which will make a positive impact.
- Supporting further the online skills and qualifications mapping tool developed by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP) along with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and MOD. This is linked to the Skills Discovery tool in *My World of Work* and allows Service leavers from the main job roles that predominantly settle in Scotland to benchmark their qualifications against the SCQF, in order to understand the level of the learning they have achieved in the Scottish context and convey this to potential employers. Further work on the tool will take place in 2022-23, to expand the number of job roles and to formally launch and promote the tool as widely as possible.
- Supporting work underway where SDS is working closely with the MOD and the Careers Transition Partnership to increase the levels of careers guidance and support offered to Service leavers during their Resettlement period. Work has also expanded to include Service leaver families.
- Continuing to promote the SDS website *My World of Work* to the Armed Forces Community, which has a dedicated landing page for Service leavers and veterans, and SDS’s engagement with the veterans community, for example during the annual Scottish Apprenticeship Week events.

Higher and Further Education

- Continuing to support the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) led Armed Forces and Veterans Community Group (AFVCG), which developed and supports the HE:FE Veterans Champions Network. The AFVCG is also linked to the SCQFP Veterans Steering Group and continue to work together on key areas such as ELCAS (Enhanced Learning Credits Administration Services).
- Continuing to promote SFC's dedicated web page outlining sources of information, advice and guidance for veterans, Service leavers and their families.
- Working with stakeholders to explore the barriers to Further and Higher Education for children of Service families. SFC continues to support the Service Children's Progression Alliance Scottish Hub.
- Supporting SFC's work to improve access through the use of data analysis, including veterans data in the college sector, which SFC began collecting in academic year 2017-18. SFC continues to use data collection on students who self-declare as veterans. A field was included in the 2021-2022 HESA Student Return to identify Service leavers in the university sector. Data from 2021-22 is expected to be available by early 2023.

Support for Families

- Contributing to the Forces Families Jobs website, providing links to adverts on the Work For Scotland website.
- Supporting the General Teaching Council for Scotland's (GTCS) work with the Families Federations to develop a joint publication detailing the requirements for teaching in Scotland.
- The Scottish Armed Forces Education Support Group (SAFESG), chaired by the Scottish Government, taking a strategic lead in developing and supporting best practice for Armed Forces Children and Young People (AF CYP).
- Using the SAFESG in conjunction with education stakeholders to support and develop best digital practice and build on the research base for AF CYP in Scotland.

Specific Pathways

- Through our Programme for Government Commitment, working with key partners to create more work placements and job opportunities within the Scottish Government, set aside specifically for veterans and family members including through the Going Forward Into Employment programme.
- Continuing to develop the NHS Careers website, which provides information for people looking into a career in the NHS. A dedicated veterans landing page has already been developed for the NHS Scotland Careers website and this provides tailored information and resources for veterans. For example, the website features “Career Stories” which highlight case studies from NHS employees who have served in the Armed Forces.
- Supporting Police Scotland’s aims to strengthen its partnership working in order to focus recruitment of veterans into Police Scotland as police officers, staff members and Special Constables.
- Engaging with the veterans community, including at jobs fairs aimed at veterans and Service leavers, to understand the best way to encourage and support them to apply for Scottish Government jobs.
- Ensuring that Scotland’s Apprenticeship suite of offerings will continue to be promoted to Early Service Leavers, veterans and their families.





Finance and Debt

Finance is regarded by many as being in the top three areas of need for veterans, though frequently in combination with another issue. While the Armed Forces community can encounter many of the same financial issues as the general population, Service life, often starting in very early adulthood, can mean that some Service leavers are less familiar with managing their personal financial outgoings than their civilian peers who have had years of experience of doing so. It is therefore vital that personnel are given financial awareness while they are in Service and suitable advice, guidance and support as they transition back into civilian life.

Outcome: veterans leave the Armed Forces with sufficient financial education, awareness and skills to be financially self-supporting and resilient.

We will achieve this by:

- Providing clear and transparent advice on entitlement to devolved benefits. Where benefits remain reserved, we will signpost or refer individuals to organisations that can provide specialist advice. These referral pathways and guidance were put in place for Adult Disability Payment when it launched in March 2022.
- Recognising that some veterans will access benefits delivered by our agency, Social Security Scotland, and that there will continue to be significant overlaps between these benefits and veteran-specific benefits, such as between Armed Forces Independence Payment and Disability Assistance for Working Age People. We will provide guidance to make clear where there are overlaps between devolved benefits and those that remain reserved to the UK Government, including veteran benefits.
- Embedding specialist support available where necessary for the smaller number of people who need it. Social Security Scotland and the Scottish Government are working closely with a range of expert stakeholders, including the British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association (BLESMA), to help us with this specialised work.
- Continuing to engage with our Seldom Heard groups, one of which is veterans, in order to maximise take-up, and to ensure that these voices are heard and considered in our policy work going forward. Our Stakeholder Take-Up Reference Group is being expanded to include representatives of organisations that support veterans.

We are committed to ensuring all Armed Forces personnel and veterans who serve and live in Scotland are able to access the best possible care and support, including safe, effective and person-centred healthcare. Our continuing aim is to ensure the long-term clinical needs of Service personnel and veterans are better understood and supported within the NHS.

Outcome: all veterans enjoy a state of positive physical and mental health and wellbeing, enabling them to contribute to wider aspects of society.

We will achieve this by:

Collaborative Working

- Continuing to use the Armed Forces Personnel & Veterans Health Joint Group (the Joint Group) to bring together NHS Champions, Local Authority Champions, representatives of the serving community, veterans organisations, Scottish Government officials and other stakeholders such as the Service Families Federations. The Joint Group sets a number of priorities for the Implementation Group to take forward each year, largely based around recommendations from the Veterans Commissioner's reports. Many of these have already been successfully implemented, for example, access to replacement wheelchairs and hearing aids, equivalent to those issued by the MOD.
- Improving collaboration and awareness through continuing to strengthen support for the NHS Champions network. We will continue to host networking events to provide Champions with information and development on areas of mutual interest, encouraging the sharing of good practice and providing the opportunity to make and build connections and will look to expand this into work on social care with Local Authority Champions.
- Continuing to work with UK Government counterparts by actively participating in cross-border networks through the MOD/Department of Health Partnership Board and a number of sub-groups.

Better Data

- We are engaging with NHS National Services Scotland, Public Health Scotland and the MOD to gather more information on veterans health. By improving how we collect, hold and use such data, this will allow us to identify areas of inequality and set metrics to address these.
- Obtaining data from the new Drug and Alcohol Information System (DAISy), which includes a field identifier for veterans and will gather key demographic and outcome data on people who engage in drug and alcohol treatment services. This will provide useful data on the nature and scale of drug misuse among veterans across Scotland.

Access to Health Services

- The Veterans Mental Health & Wellbeing Action Plan was published on 21 December 2021 and, through this, key principles have been identified. The new Implementation Board will work to implement these principles and ensure that veterans have parity of care, no matter where they are located in Scotland.
- Working with GP Practices, initially, on raising awareness of veterans health issues. We will look to apply the principles that underpin the Veteran Aware Accreditation scheme that operates within GP practices in England, ensuring that these are developed and applied to accurately reflect the Scottish health landscape. By greater identification of the veteran population within health, we will look to embed good practice and further raise awareness of veterans issues throughout NHS Scotland services.
- Improving accessibility to online information for veterans on NHS Inform through working with NHS24. NHS24 are leading a project to allow the development of a standardised website for each GP practice across Scotland, which will encourage dissemination of health information, as well as promote self-management and signpost to available local services. “Early Adopter” pilot areas are NHS Highland, Western Isles, Lanarkshire, Forth Valley and Lothian.
- Working with 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 signpost the veteran to the free services and support provided.



Specialist Support

- In partnership with NHS Scotland and Combat Stress, provide funding of £1.4m for 2022-23 for the provision of a range of specialist and community-based services for veterans resident in Scotland whilst the implementation of the Veterans Mental Health & Wellbeing Action Plan is taken forward.
- With six local health boards the Scottish Government has provided joint funding for the Veterans First Point Network, which offers a one-stop shop for veterans no matter their need. Funding of £666,383 for Veterans First Point in 2022-23 has been agreed whilst the implementation of the Veterans Mental Health & Wellbeing Action Plan is taken forward.
- Developing a bespoke employability programme for members of the Armed Forces which promotes to veterans the wide range of careers available in the NHS, highlights that the forces skill-set is an asset, and supports access to roles and work experience.





Making a Home in Civilian Society

For many veterans, leaving the Armed Forces will be the first time they find a home for themselves. Despite this, veterans as a whole are as likely as the general population to own their own home after accounting for age and sex, and there is no evidence to suggest veterans are overrepresented amongst homeless applicants. Wherever they wish to settle in civilian life, it is important that Service leavers are clear on the local options and how to find further guidance or support that they might need.

Outcome: veterans have a secure place to live either through buying, renting or social housing.

We will achieve this by:

- [NEW] Working with Scotland's Housing Network to encourage Local Authorities to identify the housing needs of the Armed Forces Community and to reflect this in their Local Housing Strategies.
- Improving the advice for social landlords on allocations for those leaving the Armed Forces. We published *Social Housing Allocations in Scotland – A Practice Guide* in February 2019, which provided clarity for social landlords about giving priority to Service leavers and on ensuring that they are not at a disadvantage when applying for social housing, due to time spent outwith an area. The guidance also reinforced the need for social landlords to have clear information and housing options in place for all applicants, including veterans. To reinforce this we will encourage all social landlords to include veterans as a priority group in their allocation policies, under the 'Reasonable Preference Allocations Priority' policy introduced in the Housing Scotland Act 2014.
- We will work with the sector to encourage social landlords to include a specific question on veterans on housing application forms to help improve the data collected, and ensure that veterans applying for social housing are identified and provided with appropriate housing options advice, and will continue to work with social landlords and veterans organisations, where appropriate, to identify and promote good practice in veterans housing.
- Continuing to provide funding through our affordable housing supply programme to deliver homes specifically for veterans, where Local Authorities identify this as a strategic investment priority. Since 2012, more than £6 million has been made available through this programme to deliver over 100 homes specifically for veterans.

- Continuing to make the Open Market Shared Equity scheme available to veterans who have left the Armed Forces within the past two years so that they can buy a home that is for sale on the open market with assistance from the Scottish Government where they cannot afford the total cost. These households have priority access to the scheme, which means that they do not need to be first-time buyers to benefit from it.
- Continuing to support Housing Options Scotland to provide its Military Matters project. Since it began in 2012, the project has supported just under 1,000 people in total. In 2020-21, the service received 266 new referrals.
- Continuing to improve action on preventing homelessness through the Ending Homelessness Together Action Plan and Preventing Veterans Homelessness Pathway which was published on 25 January 2022.





Veterans and the Law

Although most veterans remain law-abiding citizens, a small minority enter into the criminal justice system. Members of this group are often among the most vulnerable veterans, with complex needs, meaning that there are often particular considerations to address when deciding on the most suitable support. The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that ex-Service personnel are properly supported when in custody or involved with the criminal justice system. Strong working relationships are in place with the third sector to make referrals, enabling holistic support for their needs.

Outcome: veterans leave the Armed Forces with the resilience and awareness to remain law-abiding civilians.

We will achieve this by:

- Engaging with the network of Veterans In Custody Support Officers (VICSOs) to review the support for ex-Service personnel within Scotland's prison estate.
- With the VICSOs, considering what specific research might provide a better understanding of the ex-Service prison population in Scotland.
- Supporting efforts being made by the Scottish Prison Service to encourage ex-Service prisoners to socialise in the prison community, possibly through initiatives such as breakfast clubs which were curtailed by the pandemic.
- Supporting SACRO's work to create safer and more cohesive communities across Scotland, by helping ensure that their support for veterans is understood by the relevant agencies.
- Supporting Police Scotland's pledges under the Armed Forces Covenant to support the Armed Forces and veterans community, including its review and refresh of the Veterans Champion role across local policing divisions and the introduction of Veterans Champions within its custody and criminal justice environment.

Annex A

Partners and Stakeholders Consulted

During our action plan refresh, the following external stakeholders were offered the opportunity to comment on our draft proposals and contribute their views. We are grateful to all those who contributed to the process.

- Career Transition Partnership
- Forces in Mind Trust (FIMT)
- Legion Scotland
- Poppyscotland
- Scottish Veterans Residences
- Veterans Housing Scotland
- Local Authority Champions
- Veterans Scotland (including Housing Group and Health Group)
- Army Families Federation (representing three Service Federations)
- Firm Base Steering Group
- Erskine
- Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP)
- Skills Development Scotland
- Scottish Prison Service
- Office for Veterans' Affairs



Annex B

Summary of Completed Commitments

The table below highlights those commitments made in our original 2020 action plan which we consider to be complete.

Cross-Cutting Factor/Key Theme	2020 Commitment
Transition	Contributing to MOD's plans to take forward its new Holistic Transition Policy. The new policy is intended to support Service personnel and their families to better prepare for life after the military on a through-career basis, by recognising that transition is far wider than employment and that a wide range of life-changing issues can affect both the Service person and their immediate family as they leave the Armed Forces. Through the policy, the single Services will identify potential vulnerable Service leavers and facilitate a referral to the new Defence Transition Services.
Transition Community and Relationships	Responding to the Veterans Commissioner's focus on transition as a key future theme of his work, with an emphasis on how communities in Scotland can best work together to support veterans.
Community and Relationships	Expanding the criteria for the Scottish Veterans Fund, to emphasise inclusion and social integration, so that future local projects can be supported.
Community and Relationships	Providing a programme of development for breakfast club volunteers across Scotland to receive formal training on Befriending and Mental Health First Aid.
Employment, Education and Skills	Supporting the development of a Co-working Hub in Helensburgh to support families based in Faslane. This follows the model of the Leuchars Co-working Hub, which was the first hub in the Military Co-working Network, and we will consider if the model could be further extended to other areas.

Employment, Education and Skills	Expanding the criteria for the Workplace Equality Fund, to incorporate the Armed Forces community, including veterans and spouses.
Employment, Education and Skills	Continuing to support the relationships between GTCS and the Armed Forces to overcome barriers that may be experienced by Service personnel interested in pursuing a teaching career in Scotland. The GTCS have introduced Provisional Conditional Registration for teachers who have appropriate previous experience.
Employment, Education and Skills	Sharing practitioner resources and case studies of supporting Armed Forces children, on Education Scotland's National Improvement Hub.
Employment, Education and Skills	Supporting the University of Strathclyde to develop an articulation route that allows Service leavers with HND qualifications to enter initial teacher education programmes.
Employment, Education and Skills	Working with SDS to provide £60,000 to a consortium led by SaluteMyJob to deliver a pilot project to upskill/ reskill veterans and spouses into Cyber Security jobs, between January and April 2020.
Finance and Debt	Promoting, with our partners, the Moneyforce website, a programme led by the Royal British Legion that aims to improve the financial capability of the UK Armed Forces by providing money guidance to all those serving in the military and their families. <i>[This commitment is no longer relevant as the Moneyforce website no longer exists]</i>

Finance and Debt	<p>Working with the Money Advice Trust, who, in designing their new guide 'How to Deal with Debt' which is due for launch in 2020, will engage with the Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP), part of Citizens Advice Scotland, to ensure that the specific needs of the veterans community are addressed as appropriate in the guide.</p>
Finance and Debt	<p>Ensuring that veterans stakeholders, including ASAP, are formally consulted as part of the Money and Pensions Service (MaPS) Scottish Action Plan for Financial Wellbeing to be launched in 2020.</p>
Making a Home in Civilian Society	<p>Continuing to engage with veterans organisations on our Housing to 2040 vision and route map. This follows our 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.</p>
Making a Home in Civilian Society	<p>Amending legislation so that, from 1 July 2019, where the landlord is a charity providing accommodation to veterans, a private residential tenancy agreement will not apply. This will ensure that veterans-specific accommodation in the private rented sector can continue to be used, ensuring 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.</p>
Making a Home in Civilian Society	<p>Promoting the publication recently produced by Poppyscotland and its partners, <i>Housing in Scotland - A Best Practice Guide</i>, which provides guidance for social housing providers on how they can best support the Armed Forces and veterans community.</p>



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