

Scottish Government Support for Veterans and the Armed Forces Community in Scotland

Autumn 2018

Foreword

Scottish Veterans Minister

This document accompanies the Scottish Government's second annual update to Parliament about our support for our veterans and Armed Forces community in Scotland.

Very much like my predecessors in the role of Scottish Veterans Minister, I admire the dedication and professionalism of all those who choose to follow a career in the Armed Forces. I am delighted to have taken on the role from my colleague, Keith Brown MSP who made the championing of the Armed Forces community such a high priority. I am determined that I too, will carry on seeking ways to improve services for our diverse and greatly admired Armed Forces community in Scotland.



I am keen that their experience of life in Scotland is the best it can be and that after serving, they choose to make Scotland their permanent home. To that end, I am pleased to set out our progress since the first annual update to Parliament in November 2017, but also areas where we now need to focus over the year ahead. This document therefore provides an update on our work to take forward the recommendations in the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's 2018 report on Health and Wellbeing, but also provides some headlines to highlight activities in other areas. The final section covers future priorities and I am clear that we need to continue to look across the whole of our business in the Scottish Government to drive progress.

This autumn has seen a change to our Veterans Commissioner. Still the only such role in the UK dedicated to our Armed Forces veterans, our inaugural Commissioner, Eric Fraser CBE, stepped down after four years in this vital role. I should like to thank Eric for all his work in supporting veterans and for raising the profile of our talented Service leavers. And I welcome our incoming Commissioner, Charlie Wallace, who took up the role shortly after leaving his exemplary career in the Armed Forces and his final post as Deputy Commander of 51st Infantry Brigade and HQ Scotland. The role of the Commissioner provides important scrutiny and I am very much looking forward to working with Charlie in the months ahead.

I finally want to reflect on the added significance that this year has, as 2018 marks the 100th anniversary of the conclusion of the First World War. We have seen communities from all parts of Scotland proudly remember the sacrifices of our Armed Forces personnel, past and present, and stand together to pay fitting tributes throughout the commemorations. This year has also seen several other anniversaries, including the 100th anniversary of the formation of the Royal Air Force which has not only allowed us to reflect on the past but has also been an important

reminder of the innovation and vast range of skills that our Armed Forces personnel possess. When leaving the Armed Forces, those transferrable skills are rightly in great demand by employers across Scotland and I am personally committed to doing all I can to help veterans realise their full potential in civilian life.

Overall Achievements

Welcome to Scotland

In June 2018 we published *Welcome to Scotland: a guide for Service personnel and their families moving to Scotland*¹ to provide practical information and advice on housing options, education choices, healthcare and employment support. This has been well received by the Armed Forces community in Scotland and we continue to work with our partners, such as the Families Federations, to publicise this and other sources of information.

Scottish Veterans Fund

This year marks a decade of investment in our Scottish Veterans Fund with over £1.3 million provided to charities and organisations supporting over 150 projects.

Taken together, the Scottish Government's investment of £360,000 and Standard Life Aberdeen's contribution of £240,000, creates a total fund of £600,000. This year, 19 more projects were funded across Scotland.

Scottish Veterans Commissioner

The role of Veterans Commissioner continues to be unique across all UK administrations. We have appointed a

new Scottish Veterans Commissioner, Charlie Wallace, to continue the vital work undertaken by Eric Fraser who stepped down in September. This commitment ensures continued focus on improving the lives of veterans and scrutiny of service provision for veterans and wider policy for Armed Forces families in Scotland.

Social Care

We have continued to commit £5 million this year to ensure veterans in receipt of social care in Scotland continue to get the full value of their war pensions.

Veterans Healthcare

We have accepted the recommendations in the Veterans Commissioner's 2018 report: *Veterans Health and Wellbeing: A Distinctive Scottish Approach*, and are developing a distinctive Scottish approach to veterans healthcare.

NHS Scotland Support for Armed Forces and Veterans

Scottish Government and Veterans Scotland have developed and launched a suite of guidance for primary health practitioners and champions to help them support

¹ <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/welcome-scotland-guide-service-personnel-families-moving-scotland/>

Armed Forces personnel and veterans².

Mental Health Support

The Scottish Government continues to take forward the actions set out in our 10-year mental health strategy to ensure people can get the right help at the right time, expect recovery, and fully enjoy their rights, free from discrimination and stigma. Many of the key themes and commitments will impact positively on veterans and their families.

In 2018 we also agreed a further 3 year funding arrangement with NHS Ayrshire and Arran to continue the provision of specialised mental health services by Combat Stress for veterans resident in Scotland totalling £4.272 million to 2020/21. We also continue to fund the Veterans First Point Network which offers a one-stop-shop for veterans no matter their need.

Veterans Employability Strategic Group

The Veterans Employability Strategic Group (VESG) has continued to be a vital mechanism through which key partners have assessed and delivered activities to support the employment journey of those leaving the Armed Forces.

²<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health/Services/Armed-Forces/AFandV>

The work of the group has resulted in a range of collaborative achievements including: the creation and launch of the My World of Work veterans landing page, the development of a Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and Career Transition Partnership (CTP) A96 Career Guidance Collaboration for Effective Transition Pilot, and the establishment of a joint SDS and Department of Work and Pensions “Champions Group” to ensure their respective services for supporting veterans and spouses/partners are aligned effectively.

Veterans Employability Concordat

Key partner organisations in the Veterans Employability Strategic Group are finalising a Veterans Employability Concordat as an enduring partnership arrangement to support veterans and those transitioning from the Armed Forces into fulfilling civilian careers.

My World of Work

A dedicated landing page for Armed Forces personnel, veterans and families on My World of Work was launched during Modern Apprenticeship week in March 2018. My World of Work is Scotland’s career website which is packed with expert career information, advice and interactive resources, and complements the face to face services from expert Skills Development Scotland advisers.

Career Guidance Collaboration for Effective Transition Pilot

Skills Development Scotland, the Careers Transition Partnership, and other key partners are developing a pilot in the A96 Corridor through Highland & Moray (which will benefit personnel at Fort George, Kinloss Barracks and RAF Lossiemouth). This pilot will see early, impartial career guidance being offered from SDS qualified expert careers advisers to Armed Forces personnel as they commence transition from the Armed Forces and access their CTP resettlement programme.

Translating Military Qualifications

To address some of the barriers experienced by personnel seeking civilian employment, earlier this year, the Scottish Funding Council provided £19,000 of funding to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership to map learning pathways and translate qualifications gained in Service life into those which are recognised by employers in Scotland today.

Scottish Apprenticeships

Scottish Apprenticeship week showcases what is on offer across the employment spectrum in Scotland.

For early Service leavers and veterans and families keen to start an apprenticeship, Skills Development Scotland will continue to provide information and advice through apprenticeships.scot.

Public Sector Jobs

NHS Boards are exploring potential involvement in the '*Step Into Health Programme*' which provides a dedicated pathway for the Armed Forces community to access career opportunities available in the NHS. NHS National Education for Scotland is also developing its careers website to help map Service leavers' skills with NHS Jobs.

Scottish Government has made some early changes, such as amending our internal recruitment guidance to raise awareness of veterans within the workforce.

Colleges and Universities

An Expert Group including veterans' stakeholders and the college and university sector met in November; they agreed and have established a sub-group to take forward specific actions on Information, Advice and Guidance for veterans in colleges and universities and the establishment of a champions network.

Housing Advice

Earlier this year we revised and published: *A Scottish housing guide for people leaving the Armed Forces and ex-Service personnel*³ to refresh and improve its content and visual impact.

Over the past year, we have also continued to provide funding to Housing Options Scotland. Its 'Military Matters' project focuses on housing issues affecting people serving in the Armed Forces in Scotland, Service personnel transitioning into civilian life, and veterans – helping them to find the right home in the right place.

Housing Conveners

We have recently written to Housing Conveners to reinforce to Local Authorities that the housing requirements of the Armed Forces community continue to be fully considered when councils are preparing their Local Housing Strategies.

Affordable Housing Supply Programme

Through our Affordable Housing Supply Programme, we continue to offer funding from our £1.3 million grant award to the Scottish Veterans Garden City Association to deliver additional homes for physically and psychologically disabled ex-Service

³ <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/scottish-housing-guide-people-leaving-armed-forces-ex-service-personnel-9781787811539/>

personnel. Further development opportunities are being explored.

Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group

We have begun work with the Homelessness Prevention and Strategy Group⁴ and partners, including Local Authorities, health and third sector organisations, to consider and implement the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group's⁵ recommendations and those from the 2018 Local Government and Communities Committee's Report on Homelessness. This includes driving forward activities to address veterans' homelessness.

Expansion of Veterans Champions Network

We continue to have a strong network of champions in Scotland across Local Authorities and other public sector bodies. This year, SDS has also established a network of Veterans Champions across its five region areas. All champions are now included in a refreshed list recently compiled by Veterans Scotland to help champions develop links and share best practice.

⁴ <https://beta.gov.scot/groups/homelessness-prevention-and-strategy-group/>

⁵ <https://beta.gov.scot/groups/homelessness-and-rough-sleeping-action-group/>

The Scottish Prison Service

The Scottish Prison Service continues to have Veterans in Custody Support Officers (VICSO) operating in each Scottish prison to help those who receive a custodial sentence. The Scottish Veterans Prison In-Reach Group continues to examine the welfare needs of ex-Service personnel in custody.

Police Scotland

As a result of ongoing collaboration with Police Scotland, Poppy Scotland and Citizens Advice Service Scotland, the referral system to the Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP) enables officers to refer individuals needing assistance to relevant support groups through a single point of contact.

Supporting Service Children in Education

In the last year, the Scottish Service Children Strategy Group (SSCSG)⁶, which brings together key Scottish stakeholders to identify and address challenges that Service children may face, was expanded to include representatives from the Navy and RAF, in addition to long-standing Army representation.

⁶ The SSCSG = Scottish Service Children Strategy Group) is an SG chaired group which includes 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.

Not least to ensure a legacy from the MOD's Education Support Fund (ESF), Scotland's National Transitions Officer, a role supported by the fund, launched a Forces children's education website⁷ earlier in 2018 highlighting a range of resources for various audiences, including teachers and parents.

We published the revised *Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice* which through specific references to Forces children promotes their potential need for, and entitlement to, additional support.

The SSCSG has also been working closely with stakeholders on guidance for teachers, Local Authorities and parents on supporting early stages transitions between different education systems.

Supporting Military Spouses in Teaching

Work has been undertaken to overcome barriers experienced by spouses who qualified as teachers in the rest of the UK, to allow them to teach in Scotland.

To teach in Scotland an individual must have a teaching qualification and be registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), the independent regulatory body for teachers. The GTCS has introduced Provisional Conditional Registration which allows qualified teachers to be registered provisionally and employed while they undertake "top-up" training to enable full registration.

⁷ <https://forceschildrenseducation.org.uk/>

Scottish Veterans Commissioner's Report on Health and Wellbeing

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that all UK Armed Forces veterans living in Scotland are able to access the best possible standard of safe, effective and person-centred healthcare and has welcomed the valuable work of the Veterans Commissioner in his 2018 report "*Veterans Health and Wellbeing: a distinctive Scottish Approach*⁸".

We have accepted the recommendations contained within the report and will be taking forward work over the next year to implement them. Specifically, the Commissioner recommended that we should adopt a Scottish approach to the healthcare needs of veterans, and we have committed to working with stakeholders and veterans champions in NHS Boards to establish this. We will also focus efforts on refreshing the structure and remit of the Armed Forces and Veterans Joint Health Group. A detailed breakdown of progress against each of the Commissioner's recommendations contained within the Health and Wellbeing report is provided as an annex.

Looking to the Future

Veterans are assets to our society and in the year ahead we will focus on promoting the benefits that they bring to both employers and Scottish society. We remain fully committed to ensuring that members of the veterans and Armed Forces community in Scotland do not experience disadvantage when accessing services. We will continue positively to support veterans in the year ahead through the Scottish Veterans Fund.

We have committed to the continuing scrutiny of our service provision through the appointment of the Scottish Veterans Commissioner, Charlie Wallace, to improve the lives of veterans and inform wider policy for Armed Forces families in Scotland. We will continue to drive forward work to address the previous Commissioner's recommendations and look forward to working with Charlie on his priorities.

We have a strong track record of support, but there is more that we can do. The demographics of the veterans community are changing and we need to ensure we adapt to the shifting challenges ahead. As a priority this year we are therefore looking again across all Ministerial portfolios to review current service provision. To underpin this work we are acutely aware that accurate data and better identification at the point of referral are essential if we are to develop a clearer picture of the needs of the Armed Forces community. We will focus efforts, along with our partners, to develop better data to target future service provision. We will also continue to drive progress in the following areas:

⁸ www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/04/2093

Employability

In the year ahead we will continue to work with our partners in the Veterans Employability Strategic Group to focus efforts on the Veterans Commissioner's recommendations to support veterans and personnel transitioning from the Armed Forces into fulfilling civilian careers. Employers have a key role to play in helping to identify the barriers that Service leavers face. Our 2017 publication *Capitalising on Military Talent* was well received, and we will continue to look at ways in which we can do more to highlight the benefits of employing ex-Service personnel.

We will focus efforts to support the entrepreneurial skills of spouses, partners and veterans by accelerating opportunities to create business workspaces to help those who want to run their own businesses. This includes working closely with the Armed Forces in Scotland and other partners to develop hubs near main Armed Forces bases. For those early Service leavers and other veterans and families who are keen to start an apprenticeship, Skills Development Scotland will continue to offer support and engagement through events - including Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2019.

Skills and Education

Through the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) we will work with partners in the Expert Group throughout the next year to develop a "Network of Champions" for the Veterans and Armed Forces Community for both further and higher education. The project to map learning pathways and to accredit prior learning for veterans is also expected to deliver in March 2019.

Healthcare

We have accepted the recommendations in the Veterans Commissioner's 2018 report on Veterans Health and Wellbeing, and will be taking forward work, including refreshing the structure and remit of the Armed Forces and Veterans Joint Health Group. We will work with stakeholders and veterans champions in NHS Boards to establish a distinctive Scottish approach to veterans' health that is in line with our ambition for safe, effective and person-centred healthcare as set out in the healthcare quality strategy for NHS Scotland.

Collaboration

We are fortunate in Scotland to have a strong charity sector and an extensive network of champions in Local Authorities and Public Sector bodies. Key to our efforts moving forward will be the continued support and collaboration of our partners. We have proven that our close working relationships here in Scotland can deliver real benefit to the Armed Forces community, and we are keen to see these relationships developed further with more opportunities for the sharing of best practice to drive up service standards. We are also working collaboratively with the UK Government and other Devolved Administrations on the development of plans for a new Veterans Strategy.

Housing

Following on from our recent letter to council Housing Conveners which highlighted that the housing requirements of the Armed Forces community should continue to be considered fully when councils are preparing their Local Housing Strategies, we have committed to ensuring that the guidance which assists Local Authorities in preparing their Local Housing Strategies is refreshed in 2019 to reaffirm the need to consider the requirements.

On Homelessness, the Veterans Minister and Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning, have agreed to focus efforts to ease the burden of homelessness amongst our Armed Forces veterans, including through discussions with Local Authorities and stakeholders.

The Scottish Government publication *Social Housing Allocations – A Practice Guide* is being reviewed with stakeholders. Due for publication before the end of 2018, it will contain practical advice for social landlords on allocations for veterans and Service leavers. It will include guidance on ensuring that local connection does not put Service personnel at a disadvantage when applying for social housing.

Social Isolation

We are developing an ambitious strategy to tackle social isolation and loneliness, which is focused on community empowerment and everyone playing their part. The strategy, A Connected Scotland, takes a whole population approach however we recognise that particular groups of people, including veterans, may be at increased risk of social isolation and loneliness. The consultation for the draft strategy closed at the end of April 2018 and the final strategy will be published before the end of the year.

Service Families

We look forward to supporting Service families here in Scotland, including those moving to Scotland for the first time. Support for transitions between education systems will remain a key priority. The Scottish Service Children Strategy Group 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, and is keen to explore opportunities to engage *directly* with young people from Armed Forces families. We are also working to ensure that the recently extended MOD Education Support Fund is promoted and used as intended to support children and families impacted by frequent mobility and deployment.

We will continue to look at ways in which we can support further the families of veterans and Armed Forces personnel.

**Scottish Government response to:
Veterans Health and Wellbeing:
A Distinctive Scottish Approach**

Recommendation 1 – A Distinctive Scottish Approach to Veterans’ Health

The Scottish Government and NHS(S) should commit to establishing a distinctive Scottish Approach to Veterans’ Health at a strategic level, accept or adapt the guiding principles of this approach and work with their partners to embed it at an operational level.

We are committed to the general principles of establishing a distinctive approach to veterans’ health and are working with the Joint Group on Armed Forces and Veterans Healthcare and with stakeholders to consider how best to establish this in practice, to ensure their healthcare and support is of the highest standard.

The guiding principles set out in the report are entirely consistent with our ambition for safe, effective and person-centred healthcare as set out in the healthcare quality strategy for NHS Scotland. The integration of health and social care in recent years has changed the delivery landscape for healthcare in Scotland, so we need to ensure that the mechanisms that are in place to support veterans’ healthcare are still fit for purpose.

Recommendation 2 – Improving Collaboration and Partnership

The Scottish Government should reinvigorate senior participation in cross-border networks with a view to improved information sharing and increased involvement in collaborative working and initiatives.

In relation to cross-border networks, Scottish Government officials actively participate in the Ministry of Defence /Department for Health Partnership Board and their various sub-groups.

We will look to strengthen this participation going forward and will share information on our progress towards these recommendations and other work to improve healthcare for veterans in Scotland on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation 3 – Leadership and Governance

The Armed Forces and Veterans Health Joint Group should refresh its membership and remit in order to provide the vital strategic leadership that will deliver the Scottish Approach to Veterans’ Health.

The Director General for Health and Social Care chairs an annual Joint Group on Armed Forces and Veterans Healthcare. This includes representatives from the serving community and veterans’ organisations, Scottish Government officials and other stakeholders.

We are considering how best to refresh the structure, membership and remit of the group to take forward the recommendations of the Scottish Veterans Commissioner’s report and will submit proposals shortly. It is likely that this will consist of a smaller, operational delivery group which will take forward actions agreed at the Joint Group and report back to them.

We aim to have a refreshed structure in place by the end of the year.

Recommendation 4 – National Managed Clinical Network

The Scottish Government and NHS(S) should establish a network on veterans' health. The network will have oversight of delivering the Scottish Approach to Veterans' Health, and will consider the key issues raised in this report and others it deems relevant. It should reflect current structures in the health and social care sector in its membership and approach.

We are discussing the option of establishing a Managed Clinical Network (MCN) for veterans with NHS National Services Division who lead on MCNs. NHS National Services Division are providing advice on the necessary next steps, time-frame and funding required. We would envisage a range of stakeholders and interests being involved in discussions around this option.

Networks are a well-established way of driving improvement in the quality of care through a co-ordinated approach to: service mapping; improving care pathways; tackling inequalities; developing standards; training; awareness raising and data support.

Recommendation 5 – Mental Health Action Plan

The Scottish Government and NHS(S), through the network on veterans health (see recommendation 4), should produce a Mental Health Action Plan for the long-term delivery of services and support. Systemic issues of funding, collaboration, leadership, planning, governance and training of staff will be key.

As outlined above, we are developing a proposal around an MCN for veterans which would enhance care and support for veterans' physical and mental health.

Scotland's 10-year mental health strategy launched in 2017 reinforces our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and includes a range of actions to improve care, services and support for people with a mental health problem, including veterans and their families.

We also continue to invest in mental health services. Last year the Scottish Government provided £825,000 to support the Veterans First Point services network and will provide a further £1.6 million over the next two years to 2020. Funding for the provision of specialist and community outreach mental health services by Combat Stress for veterans resident in Scotland through commissioned service arrangements with NHS Scotland totals £4.272 million over the next three years, to 2020/21.

The Scottish Government's suicide prevention plan has as its overarching aim continuing the long-term downward trend in the suicide rate in the general population, including people who have served in the Armed Forces.

Recommendation 6 – Drugs Misuse

The Scottish Government and NHS(S) should assess the scale and nature of drugs misuse – especially prescription and non-prescription painkillers – amongst the veterans’ community in Scotland and introduce remedial measures. This should be taken forward by the Joint Group and network, and included as part of the Mental Health Action Plan.

The SVC highlights the lack of basic data and medical statistics on veterans which makes it more difficult to measure outcomes, shape policy and address the health inequalities that affect this group. We recognise the importance of being able to identify veterans so we can understand their distinct needs, including health inequalities and specific issues such as drug misuse. The Scottish Government is refreshing our drug strategy - Road to Recovery – which will be published in autumn 2018. The new strategy will recognise that there needs to be a range of services supporting different people with different needs.

In April 2019 a new database will be introduced - the Drug and Alcohol Information System (DAISy). DAISy will gather key demographic and outcome data on people who engage in drug/alcohol treatment services and a field identifier for veterans has been included. Therefore, data will be available on the nature and scale of drug misuse among veterans across Scotland in the future.

DAISy will provide a single data record for individuals as they move through treatment and recovery services, giving detailed pictures of treatment journeys. Alongside this, there is potential to link this data set to other health and social care datasets providing a more detailed picture of service demand.

Recommendation 7 – Barriers to Accessing Services

The Scottish Government and NHS(S) should build on existing work aimed at reducing barriers to veterans accessing mental health services. This will include measures to address issues of stigma, seeking help, and improving awareness and understanding within the medical profession. This should be taken forward by the Joint Group and network, and included as part of the Mental Health Action Plan.

We will work with the Joint Group through the refreshed structure to identify barriers to accessing mental health services. As noted above, we are exploring the establishment of an MCN for veterans.

As a result of discussions at the Joint Group, updated materials to raise awareness of veterans’ health needs have recently been shared with NHS Board Champions and healthcare practitioners, focusing on those in primary care. This includes guidance for GPs on how veterans can share their full service medical record with their GP.

Recommendation 8 – Access to Life-long Services

The Scottish Government, NHS(S), Health Boards and local Councils should make a commitment to veterans with the most severe and enduring physical (and mental) conditions that they can access the highest quality health and social care services for life and as their needs change. Health and Social Care Partnerships and Integrated Joint Boards will be instrumental in planning the delivery of these services and the national network recommended in chapter 2 should assume responsibility for oversight of this work as an early priority.

Veterans Champions are in place in every health board and Local Authority in Scotland. We are considering how we can make best use of this network going forward and how it can better feed into strategic level discussions and influence national policy where required. There are local models of strong networks which support Armed Forces and veterans' healthcare and which are working effectively and we are keen to build on and share this information so that veterans across Scotland can expect the same quality of care and support. We aim to share local models of best practice with Champions by the end of the year.

In Scotland, commissioning for adult health and care services is undertaken by Integration Joint Boards (IJBs). They have a duty to consult their constituent populations and service planning is undertaken based on a population needs assessment. These will include needs of specific population groups such as veterans where they can be identifiable in health statistics or via the stakeholder engagement process.

Recommendation 9 – Funding for Multiple Injuries

The Scottish Government and NHS(S) should give consideration to whether the costs of specialist care for veterans who have suffered polytrauma should be funded through the National Services Division (NSD).

This will be considered through our engagement with the National Trauma Network (see below) and through our discussions with NSD (around establishing an MCN).

Recommendation 10 – The National Trauma Network

NHS(S) should include the specific needs of veterans who have suffered polytrauma as part of its work in setting up a national Trauma Network.

The South East Trauma Network is exploring the introduction of exercise rehabilitation instructors as part of the multi-disciplinary team within the acute trauma pathway.

Still in its early stages, this is based on evidence from rehabilitation in the military. The Scottish Trauma Network's Rehabilitation Group is looking at the draft rehabilitation plan developed by the North of Scotland region to develop a tool that can be used to support the management of patients across Scotland. More information is being sought from the network around timescales.

Regions are active in producing their own rehabilitation plans with the advice of UK wide experts.

We will continue to work with the Scottish Trauma Network to see how we can ensure veterans' needs are met.

Recommendation 11 – Wheelchairs for Amputees

NHS(S) should adapt current arrangements to ensure an appropriate level of funding is available to guarantee that wheelchairs provided by the MOD for veterans with severe amputations can be serviced, maintained and replaced with the best possible equipment commensurate with that individual's needs.

Specialist wheelchairs are provided based on clinical need in line with nationally agreed criteria.

The mobility needs assessment takes account of each individual's wider circumstances and goals in order to ensure that the most appropriate solution is provided for the individual. Long-term specialist wheelchair provision in Scotland is the responsibility of the NHS, and is delivered by clinicians across a hub of five regional centres.

We are working with NHS Boards to clarify whether they are having any difficulties sourcing appropriate specialist wheelchairs for veterans, and how this might be made to work more flexibly.

Recommendation 12 – Chronic Pain Management

The National Advisory Committee for Chronic Pain (NACCP) should consider veterans specifically as part of their work to improve chronic pain management in Scotland.

NACCP is taking forward strands of work to inform policy development and support NHS Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) to improve the provision of pain services across Scotland. This includes a project to develop a core minimum dataset and a set of Quality Performance Indicators (QPIs) that could be used to measure services, outcomes and improvements for people living with chronic pain, including veterans. We are continuing to monitor this.

Recommendation 13 – Funding Hearing Aids

The Scottish Government and NHS(S) should make funding available so that veterans with the most severe hearing loss as a result of their military service can have access to the best possible hearing aids and support.

The Scottish Government is committed to improving the care, support and services available to people who have deafness, sight loss and dual sensory loss through its long term strategy 'See Hear'.

The strategy is jointly endorsed by COSLA and is being implemented through local partnerships between statutory and third sector partners. In Scotland, hearing aids are provided through NHS audiology services, following a specialist assessment of each person's individual needs. Veterans (including those who have served as reservists) receive priority access to NHS primary, secondary and tertiary care, for any conditions relating to their service, including audiology, for hearing loss. NHS audiology services in Scotland are delivered by NHS Boards from their baseline funding.

Each NHS board's audiology service has policies that detail service provision. This will typically cover the types of product used and the methods of assessment and fitting of devices to patients. When replacing broken or obsolete hearing aids, where appropriate, a like for like replacement should be provided.

We are working to establish whether there are any barriers to veterans receiving the hearing aids and support they require.

Recommendation 14 – The Invictus Games

The Scottish Government should work with partners, charities and others to scope a proposal to host a future Invictus Games in Scotland.

Scottish Government officials and Event Scotland are considering what would be required to progress a bid to host the Invictus Games in Scotland. They will evaluate the Sydney games taking place in October this year which will provide a sense of the scale, budget and delivery required.

Recommendation 15 – Tackling Health Inequalities

The Scottish Government, NHS(S) and partners should identify veterans as a distinct group in their work to tackle health inequalities. In doing so they should produce proposals for preventing or mitigating inequalities as they apply to this group, with the ultimate aim of improving health outcomes for all.

We recognise the importance of supporting veterans' healthcare needs. Work around establishing a distinctive Scottish approach to veterans' healthcare will help tackle health inequalities. Discussions about how best to achieve this are ongoing with the Joint Group and with stakeholders. Wider work being done by the Scottish Government, Health and Social Care Partnerships and NHS to tackle health inequalities in the wider population will also have a positive impact on veterans' health.

Recommendation 16 – Identifying Veterans

The Armed Forces and Veterans Joint Health Group should oversee work to increase the number of veterans declaring their previous service to GPs and others in the system. This will likely involve NHS(S), MOD and veterans organisations.

As the Commissioner's report recognises, there are barriers around veterans identifying themselves to health and social care services. We are working with the Joint Group to consider how we can overcome these and increase the number of veterans declaring themselves to health care providers, while recognising that it is a veteran's personal choice whether they do so or not.

Recommendation 17 – Using Information

The Armed Forces and Veterans Joint Health Group should oversee efforts to improve methods of recording, displaying and sharing information about veterans within the health and social care sector. This will be with a view to providing health professionals with the information needed to better understand and support veterans.

We have worked with Veterans Scotland to update information about veterans' health on the NHS Inform website. This was followed with a campaign to raise awareness of the updated information and the signposting services available to coincide with Armed Forces Day 2018. NHS Inform are currently evaluating the impact of this.

As already highlighted, updated materials to raise awareness of veterans' health needs have recently been shared with NHS Board Champions and healthcare practitioners.

We recognise the importance of being able to identify veterans so we can understand their distinct needs, including health inequalities and specific issues such as drug misuse. We note the recommendation that MOD publish statistics at Local Authority and Clinical Commissioning Group level.

Recommendation 18 – Veterans Champions

The Scottish Government and Veterans Scotland should build on recent work to support the network of NHS and Council champions to develop the role so that it can continue to be effective in supporting the delivery of health and social care to veterans within the new health landscape of Scotland.

We are working with stakeholders including Veterans Scotland to consider how we can make better use of the network of champions in health boards and Local Authorities. We aim to share local models of best practice with champions by the end of the year. Champions will also play a key role in the refreshed Joint Group which will strengthen their role.



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