

Scottish Veterans Commissioner

Making life better for Scotland's ex-Service community



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Lt Cdr Susie Hamilton RN Ret'd

APSE Meeting 2 April 2025



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[@scotveterancomm](https://twitter.com/scotveterancomm)

Support for Veterans in Scotland

Minister for Veterans, Graeme Dey, MSP

Scottish Government Veterans Unit –

Policy, Support and
co-ordination of activity

Sponsors of SVC and Scottish Veterans
Fund

John Mooney, Head
Paul Hood, Deputy Head

Office of the Scottish Veterans Commissioner

Susie Hamilton

*Julie McIlroy – Head of Office
Mary Spence – Policy Manger
Anita Burns – Commissioner's E/A*



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Role of the Commissioner

- Improve outcomes for veterans in Scotland
- Be an ambassador for veterans in Scotland
- Help public services focus on veterans' experience



Mission: To make life better for
veterans and their families in
Scotland



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Drivers for Change

- UK and Scotland Strategy for Veterans
- Armed Forces Covenant due regard duties
- SVC Recommendations



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Summary of SVC Activities

- ❖ Annual Assess of Scot Gov progress
- ❖ Thematic reports iaw Strategic Plan
- ❖ Engagement and listening

KEY EVENTS UK WIDE 2025

- Publication of Review Op Valour Review
- Development of new UK Veterans Strategy
- Defence Committee Armed Forces Covenant Enquiry

Summary of Activities

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Online Publication of Assessment

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Making a Home in Civilian Society (2021)

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RECOMMENDATION	2022	2023
11 Service leavers and veterans should be enabled to find somewhere to live that is right for them and equipped to make informed choices. Preparation and planning to make a home in civilian society is a crucial aspect of transition and as such needs to be part of the flexible and accessible transition model recommended.	🟡🟢	🟡🟢

Scottish Government actions

ACTION	UPDATE	STATUS
The Scottish Government will continue to work closely with the UK Government (MOD and Office for Veterans Affairs (OVA)) to understand the actions they plan on taking in order to better prepare Service leavers for entering the civilian housing market and determine opportunities for the Scottish Government to support these efforts.	We continue to work closely with the UK Government and supported and informed the development of its 2022-2024 Veterans Strategy Action Plan, which includes commitments on veterans housing. We engage regularly with the UK Government on its progress through forums such as the Devolved Administrations Working Group. As Transition is reserved, it is the responsibility of the UK Government to prepare Service leavers to leave the Military. We have worked with the OVA on cross-UK veterans homelessness projects including Op Fortitude and the Veterans Capital Housing Fund to ensure Scotland's interests are represented.	🟡🟢
We will support the MOD and Office for Veterans Affairs (OVA) to better inform Service leavers by continuing to promote our Welcome to Scotland publication.	An updated version of Welcome to Scotland was again published in spring 2023 following extensive consultation with the Armed Forces and partners across the veterans sectors to ensure that the guide is both up to date and contains the most important information for personnel and their families ahead of relocation to Scotland.	✅

12 Service Leavers and veterans should have access to accurate, relevant and understandable advice and support

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Slow Progress

- ❖ Health –Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Scotland
- ❖ Housing – Scottish Veterans Homelessness Prevention Pathway

Good Progress

- ❖ Health – GP Recognition Scheme
- ❖ Employability – Skills Discovery Tool and

Summary of Activities

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Strategic Plan

- 2023 Veterans' Community and Relationships
- 2024 Veterans and Criminal Justice
- 2025 Veterans and Finance



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Community and Relationships: Anything but Uniform

Community and Relationships Recommendations

- The identity and contribution of under-represented groups within the veteran community are recognised. Diversity is recognised in language, imagery, policy and practice and barriers to access are eliminated. Gaps in provision for the specific needs of under-represented groups within the veteran community are addressed.
- A better understanding by service providers of the specific needs of women veterans is required, particularly in the areas of mental health and sexual trauma, to support them more effectively.
- Improved and expanded data capture, analysis and transfer supports and enhances policy development, quality of support and service delivery for the veteran community.
- Spouses, partners, children and the bereaved are explicitly included in policy and practice relating to the veteran community.
- Mechanisms are established to raise awareness, promote good practice, identify and resolve challenges, and provide assurance and consistency of delivery of veterans' services by public bodies in Scotland (in line with the principles of removing disadvantage due to Service and applying special consideration if appropriate).
- Inconsistency of financial support for the most vulnerable veterans in Scotland should be eradicated by Scottish public bodies.



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Veterans and the Law

Veterans And The Law Recommendations

- Veterans are identified through the criminal justice journey, and the data about that section of the veteran community is used to support veterans who come into the system as well as to inform future policy and service development.
- Staff in the criminal justice system are 'veteran aware' so that they feel able to understand and support the veteran community in their role.
- The Veterans in Custody Support Officer (VICSO) role is retained and supported across Scotland, including protected time to carry out the role effectively.
- A coordinated and collaborative approach is in place across Scotland, bringing together statutory and third-sector providers to support veterans who come into contact with the criminal justice system. This approach aims to be accessible, straightforward to navigate, and focused on achieving outcomes that prevent offending, support rehabilitation, and reduce reoffending.
- Statutory services in the justice system recognise the benefits of employing veterans, and continue to optimise recruitment and retention, and maximise the value these employees bring to their organisations and the communities they support.

Including All Veterans



Working Together



Changing Perception of Veterans



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Common Themes

- ❖ Many veterans' services reported as high quality and effective.
- ❖ Women, LGBT+ and family members feel less included, with services 'not for them'.
- ❖ Stereotype image of veterans by media and public prevents real understanding by employers of some service providers.
- ❖ Inconsistencies in access to MH services and covenant awareness in health providers (and veterans).
- ❖ Rurality magnifies problems with access to services.

What Next

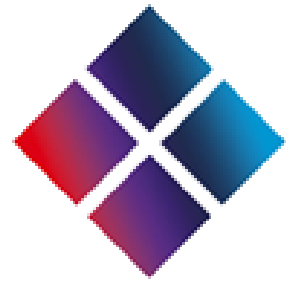
❖ Report on Veterans, Finance and Debt
June 2025

❖ Next assessment of Scottish Government
progress September 2025



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