

Poppyscotland's Response to the UK Veterans Strategy
Devolved Matters
February 2019

Overview

Poppyscotland welcomes the publication of the UK Government's Veterans Strategy and the work that the Scottish Government is undertaking to inform its development. Whilst recognising that veterans' needs are often coincident with other groups and individuals, Poppyscotland believes that, by dint of their Service, they should be accorded recognition, respect, care and support across the six cross cutting themes contained within the strategy.

Methodology

This response is the result of conclusions drawn upon from four Focus Groups and an online survey facilitated by Poppyscotland (**See Annex A**). Overall, 41 veterans plus a range of individuals from partner organisations and Poppyscotland staff participated by sharing their views and experiences. Recognising the setup of the Scottish Government, our response has been shaped by looking across government portfolios.

The Bigger Picture

The majority of serving personnel make a successful transition back into civilian life, and go on to make a positive and lasting contribution to society. A minority require extra support due to a range of needs, which are in some cases, multiple and complex. These needs are best addressed by a holistic and person centred approach.

This strategy aims to outline the vision for the next decade but it is worth highlighting that whilst much can be done to support those going through transition from the Armed Forces today and over the next 10 years, the support requirements of those who are already veterans today should also be considered.

A Joined Up Approach

To deliver successfully this strategy, Governments at local, devolved, and national levels need to work together. The strategy should, where appropriate, include clear lines of funding and accountability in order to give it credibility and make a positive and meaningful difference for veterans and our Armed Forces community. Poppyscotland will continue to play its part in both supporting the implementation of the finalised strategy, and supporting our Armed Forces community in Scotland.

A Concurrent Issue

Our engagement with veterans and frontline staff tells us that adequate training and support is required for professionals across portfolios such that staff are better equipped with the knowledge and understanding of what life is like for those in our veterans' community.

Effective Support, Not Preferential Treatment

Veterans engaged with Poppyscotland are clear. Whilst they do not want to be treated differently from civilian society they do want effective support put in place to address any disadvantage suffered as a result of their service. This should be the starting point for the development of the veterans' strategy and any framework underpinning it.

Progress To Date

We welcome the action taken by Scottish Government to oversee and fund activity which is making a positive difference for veterans and their families. The *'Renewing Our Commitments'* strategy and subsequent Annual Updates to the Scottish Parliament provided by the Scottish Government underpin this ongoing work. Poppyscotland looks forward to having sight of and being involved in the outcomes which will arise from this specific consultation work.

Conclusions from Poppyscotland's Focus Groups

Poppyscotland's Focus Groups concluded that:

Veterans

- there has to be greater collaboration, coordination and understanding amongst and between governments, sectors and society to meet the needs of veterans and their families
- there has to be clear funding, resources and accountability to deliver support for veterans
- the role and responsibilities of Veterans Champions needs to be clarified through the development of terms of reference and outcomes for champions to report progress on

Communities

- the Scottish Government's National Implementation Group on Social Isolation should prioritise action regarding tailored support for veterans affected by loneliness by working with military sector charities
- there should be training and support for professionals on what life is like for our Armed Forces community in order to assist with awareness raising and building greater understanding
- there should be programmes to raise awareness amongst the general public and across Scotland's communities about the life, work and contributions of veterans

Culture

- the Scottish Government should finalise the legal and parliamentary arrangements for the inclusion of an Armed Forces Question to be included in the 2021 Census

Education, Employment, and Skills

- the current work being undertaken by the Scottish Qualifications Authority to translate military qualifications with those recognised in civilian society should be supported
- the Scottish Government should work with the UK Government to review Transition so that needs can be identified and addressed in a holistic manner
- local authorities and schools should be encouraged to use the SEEMIS system to record data relating to the number and geographic location of veterans' families and children
- there should be a greater range of support from and for employers to tackle misconceptions, supporting veterans into positive employment

Finance

- resources should be directed towards filling the gaps veterans may have in terms of financial literacy, utilising support tools such as MoneyForce, especially during transition and Service.

Health

- the Scottish Government reviews its existing policy and practice developments across health and social care to ensure greater parity between veterans' physical and mental health
- health and social care pathways need to be more simple, more accessible, and more person focused
- training could be offered to frontline staff and practitioners so they can better understand and meet the needs of veterans and our Armed Forces community.

Housing

- efforts should be continued to improve housing support pathways for veterans which includes improving the range and quality of housing stock available
- Information has to be more readily accessible and given to serving personnel and their families from an early stage so they can begin thinking about housing options post service.

Justice

- veterans involved in the criminal justice system need to be identified at an early stage
- Having adequate support in place is vital to help veterans in the criminal justice system break the cycle of reoffending and reintegrate into society through counselling and mentoring provision
- Improving support given to families is also required.

Annex A: Information on Poppyscotland’s Veterans Strategy Focus Groups

Poppyscotland held four focus groups involving veterans, support staff, staff from partner organisations and the Scottish Government to discuss aspects of the UK Veterans Strategy.

Focus Group Theme	Community, Relationships and The Law
Date	Friday 14 December 2018
Place	Poppyscotland Ayrshire Welfare Centre
Participants	15 veterans, 4 family members, and 3 support staff

Focus Group Theme	Employment, Education, Finance and Debt
Date	Wednesday 9 January 2019
Place	Poppyscotland Employ-Able Service, SAMH Edinburgh Office
Participants	8 veterans, 4 support staff, 1 Scottish Government Official

Focus Group Theme	Health, Wellbeing, and Making A Home In Civilian Society
Date	Tuesday 22 January 2019
Place	Poppyscotland Inverness Welfare Centre
Participants	7 veterans and 1 support staff

Focus Group Theme	General Discussion on the UK Veterans Strategy
Date	Thursday 24 January 2019
Place	Poppyscotland, New Haig House, Edinburgh
Participants	10 representatives from military sector and 1 Scottish Government Official

**Poppyscotland and The Royal British Legion developed an online survey
for serving and former members of the Armed Forces
to contribute their thoughts and ideas.**

Eleven veterans across Scotland responded through this survey.