



UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

Supporting Scotland's
Older Veterans

Respected & Valued:

The Work of the Unforgotten Forces Consortium Policy Roundtable



February 2020

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Introduction

This report outlines the journey the Unforgotten Forces Consortium's Policy Roundtable has been on since its creation in 2018.

Unforgotten Forces is a consortium of 17 organisations of which nine are Armed Forces charities, six are charities whose client groups include older people, and one is an academic partner. The mix of partners gives Unforgotten Forces a unique strength in depth for improving health, wellbeing and quality of life for veterans aged 65 and older.

The Armed Forces partners enhance their support by drawing on civilian charity specialisms; from arts engagement, to hearing loss support, to later life advice, to empowering older people to have a say in policies and decisions affecting them. Conversely, the civilian charities can identify older military veterans in the community and help them access specialist support. Our academic partner serves as a 'critical friend' and provides an independent evidence base.

This collaborative approach has also been applied in the areas of policy influence and political engagement. **Annex 1** lists all the members who have contributed to delivering the workplan. The practice of clear communication, collaboration and coordination has helped the consortium's policy roundtable to successfully deliver upon its set objectives. A copy of which can be found in **Annex 2**.

Also within this report, are the illustrated examples of how the policy roundtables have succeeded. In numbers, quotes, pictures and words. **Annex 3** provides a list of our published documents.

This success has allowed the consortium's policy roundtable to become a model that works and can now act as a blueprint to inform future policy influencing and political engagement work in Scotland and across the wider United Kingdom.

Our Impact In Numbers

The list below provides an overview of policy influencing and parliamentary engagement activity:

10 Unforgotten Forces Policy Roundtables held

5 Party Conferences at which the work of the Consortium was highlighted

3 general Conferences at which the work of the Consortium was highlighted

1 Scottish Parliament Exhibition held highlighting the Consortium which **91** MSPs and **6** Scottish Government Ministers visited

2 Scottish Parliament Receptions held with the Consortium highlighted

1 Scottish Parliament Consortium Focused Debate held

3 Parliamentary Questions initiated

3 Government consultations responded to

1 bespoke consortium written briefing to MSPs

12 written briefings to MSPs which mentioned the Consortium

76 MSPs engaged with the Consortium by visiting a conference stand, attending an event or during a meeting at which the Consortium was highlighted

33 MPs engaged with the Consortium by visiting a conference stand, attended an event or during a meeting at which the Consortium was highlighted

11 Local Councillors engaged with the Consortium by visiting a conference stand, attended an event or during a meeting at which the Consortium was highlighted

34 Veterans' Champions engaged

2 visits hosted from Scottish Government Ministers

3 visits hosted from the Scottish Veterans Commissioner

4 policy development areas influenced: social isolation, transport, sensory impairment, and health and wellbeing

3 Policy led achievements by way of raising awareness, influencing government, and supporting service delivery

3 Impacted service delivery as a result of policy work by way of developing the sensory guide, Certificate of Visual Impairment, and the online resource for Older Veterans' health

5,578 views for the Unforgotten Forces Consortium webpage

302 views for the Poppyscotland Public Policy and Public Affairs webpage which hosts consortium policy content

110 news articles covering the work of the Consortium published with over **1** Million Media Circulation

471, 342 media reach for the Sensory Impairment Guide being covered in **5** National Papers, **27** online sources and **20** local papers

14,669 media reach for the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's participation in the Social Isolation roundtable

4,262 media reach for highlighting visits to Consortium projects by MSPs

1 Local Councillor circulated a press release in support of the work of the Consortium achieving a media reach of **18,204**

3 MPs circulated a press release in support of the work of the Consortium achieving a media reach of **16,519**

9 MSPs circulated a press release in support of the work of the Consortium achieving a media reach of **78,986**

1000 copies of the "Veterans Guide to Later Life" requested following a half page advert in Press and Journal and Courier editions

750 copies of the "Veterans Guide to Later Life" requested following a half page advert in a range of Johnston weekly titles in the West of Scotland

4,700 people saw the Facebook advert for the "Veterans Guide to Later Life" with **45** downloads through this route

Our Impact In Quotes

“We all know that the Unforgotten Forces consortium is carrying out fantastic work in supporting our older veterans—it is a good model; there is no doubt about that. I recently met members of the consortium to be updated on how the work is progressing and their plans.... our dialogue with the consortium will continue, because I value its work.”

Scottish Veterans Minister Graeme Dey MSP speaking during the third Annual Update on Veterans in the Scottish Parliament on 3 December 2019

“I know from experience that in serving with the Armed Forces you become part of a large family; leaving that cocoon can be daunting in both the short and long term. It is welcoming that projects are being funded to help bridge that gap by providing both practical and emotional help to those that need it. I wish the project every success for the next two years.”

Former Scottish Veterans Commissioner Eric Fraser CBE speaking on 2 July 2018

“Scotland is leading the way in many aspects of support for veterans and there is a wealth of organisations throughout the country doing exceptional work in this area. Unforgotten Forces’ pioneering approach enables these organisations to maximise the reach and effectiveness of their work, complementing their respective contribution to making things better for our older veterans and their dependents. I am keen to see Unforgotten Forces build on its success and I will be watching its development with interest. I commend those organisations involved, including Poppyscotland who have led the work and I hope the collaborative’s approach will inspire others in the sector to consider working in this way.”

Scottish Veterans Commissioner Charlie Wallace speaking at the Unforgotten Forces Conference in April 2019

“The way in which the 16 organisations in the consortium function as a collaborative group highlights their effectiveness and shared purpose. The benefits of the unforgotten forces project are immense and far reaching. The co-operation between its partners means that veterans and their families face far less confusion and bewilderment when they approach an organisation for help. By taking the burden off their shoulders and sharing it across appropriate partners, the project goes a long way towards relieving the stress of being unsure of who to turn to. In approaching one organisation, one is in effect reaching out to all the partner organisations.”

Maurice Corry MSP speaking in the debate on the work of the Unforgotten Forces Consortium in the Scottish Parliament on June 2019.

“The work of the unforgotten forces consortium since its establishment in October 2017 provides a shining example of the benefits that just such a co-operative approach across a number of bodies provides. Over halfway through the project, the consortium has, I think, so far recorded 7,300 instances of helping older veterans. It was good to see the consortium being recognised for the success of its collaborative approach when it won the Forces in Mind Trust working together award. The consortium was also shortlisted for the best pioneering project category at the recent Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations charity awards.”

Jackie Baillie MSP speaking in the debate on the work of the Unforgotten Forces Consortium in the Scottish Parliament on June 2019.

“I cannot continue my speech without highlighting the work of Age Scotland, which aims to boost the health and wellbeing of those veterans over 65, and Citizens Advice Scotland’s armed services advice project. In my region of North East Scotland, Age Scotland stepped in for the over-65s when the veterans first point programme lost its funding from NHS Grampian. Of course, that meant that those under 65 lost the service. However, I have been told today that some of Age Scotland’s funding for the programme may be under threat as of next June. It would be a pity if its service could not continue. The armed services advice project is, as we have heard, another really valuable service. Last year, it gave advice to veterans and their families 12,000 times across Scotland, with much of that advice being provided to those in the north-east.”

Mike Rumbles MSP speaking in the debate on the work of the Unforgotten Forces Consortium in the Scottish Parliament on June 2019.

Our Impact in Pictures



Scottish Veterans Commissioner in discussion with older veterans at a roundtable on social isolation and loneliness hosted by Scottish War Blinded.



Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP, First Minister of Scotland visiting the Unforgotten Forces Day held during Poppyscotland's Annual Parliamentary Exhibition



Scottish Veterans Minister and Scottish Veterans Commissioner attending the Unforgotten Forces Conference held in Stirling.

Organised by DMWS, Scottish Veterans Minister taking part in the Unforgotten Forces meeting held at Poppyscotland's Ayrshire Welfare Centre, following a visit to a Legion Scotland Breakfast Club in Saltcoats.



Older Veterans workshop held at the Scottish Assembly for Older People's Annual Gathering in the Scottish Parliament.



Group of Cross Party Group of MP's attending the annual Poppyscotland Dover House Reception in London where they were updated on the achievements of the Unforgotten Forces Consortium.



Making A Real Difference For Older Veterans

The boxes below illustrate examples of where the Unforgotten Forces Policy Roundtables added value to the wider work of the consortium. They also demonstrate enhanced capability in supporting and making a real difference for older veterans across Scotland.

Success in this area can be identified under three headings:

- Raising awareness of the needs of older veterans
- Influencing government policy for older veterans
- Supporting service delivery for older veterans

Raising Awareness of the needs of Older Veterans

The Unforgotten Forces Consortium boosts the health and wellbeing of large numbers of older veterans in five areas of service provision: practical support, information and advice provision countering loneliness and social isolation, health and wellbeing related support, and arts engagement.

To be successful in achieving its set outcomes, the consortium has to raise awareness of its existence and service provision amongst older veterans and all those who support them including health professionals, local authorities, third sector partners, and government.

The Consortium has made a positive impact on public awareness on key issues where there has been little understanding of the challenges faced by older veterans. The specific need to address isolation for older veterans was not widely recognised until it was successfully highlighted as an issue by the Consortium.

This required a level of engagement amongst key stakeholders including politicians, civil servants, local government officers, professionals from statutory organisations and staff from third sector partners.

Activities agreed at Unforgotten Forces Policy Roundtables have led to us engaging key stakeholders at conferences, events, and meeting as well as through our various published briefings and reports. We have collaborated with other groups in the sector such as Veterans Scotland.

The consortium also has to have a sustainable future if older veterans are able to receive the vital support they require. This is why we have also used parliamentary mechanisms to engage and raise awareness of the consortium's existence, to illustrate its success, and build support for its sustained continuation.

Influencing Government Policy For Older Veterans

To date, Unforgotten Forces Consortium Policy Roundtables have contributed to policy development in four policy areas. These are: social isolation and loneliness, sensory impairment, physical health, and transport.

Consultation responses have been submitted for:

- The Scottish Government's consultation on developing a social isolation and loneliness
- The Scottish Government's consultation on developing a national transport strategy
- The Scottish Parliament's Equalities and Human Rights Committee's consultation on the Draft Budget Scrutiny 2020-21

We have also informed the development of the UK Veterans Strategy and the next steps for how it is to be taken forward in Scotland.

Other ways we have helped inform Government policy is by contributing to the work of the Scottish Veterans Commissioner and supporting consortium partners Scottish Older People's Assembly with their work.

For the newly appointed commissioner Charlie Wallace, we engaged with him to discuss and inform his personal work priorities. We also hosted him at consortium member events such as the social isolation roundtable, the Unforgotten Forces Consortium Conference, and the Scottish Assembly for Older People's 2019 parliamentary gathering.

We supported the Scottish Assembly for Older People to organise a veterans' event in Bathgate and contributed to the subsequent workshop at its annual parliamentary gathering.

Attendance at Scottish Political Party Conferences has helped secure interest and support for the consortium's service provision and key policy messages at a local, devolved, and UK national level.

Profiling the consortium at Poppyscotland's Annual Parliamentary Exhibition and the update provided at the Cross Party Group on Veterans and the Armed Forces community engaged both Government and Opposition politicians.

Supporting Service Delivery For Older Veterans

The Unforgotten Forces Consortium Policy Roundtables have undertaken activity which has led to improvements supporting service delivery. Some examples of this include:

Publication of a Sensory Impairment Guide

Age Scotland, Action on Hearing Loss and Scottish War Blinded collaborated to produce the guide “Combatting Sight and Hearing Loss” giving advice to veterans on sensory impairment. The charities also issued a news joint release under the Unforgotten Forces banner calling for action to raise awareness among veterans of the risks of losing their sight or hearing.

Identifying veterans in the Certificate of Visual Impairment process

During the involvement of Scottish War Blinded in the Unforgotten Forces consortium, the charity pursued a campaign to ensure veterans are identified during the process of applying for a Certificate of Visual Impairment (CVI). The consortium provided the charity with a forum to raise this issue at a number of points, including at the Unforgotten Forces conference and in the news release on the sensory impairment guide. This campaign was successful and changes to the CVI process announced in August 2019 by the Minister for Veterans.

Improving Health Pathways – Inverness Pilot

Age Scotland made a submission to the Inverness Community Planning Partnership to undertake a pilot scheme which would include:

1. Automatic provision of Age Scotland info to adults 50+ on discharge from hospital;
2. Automatic provision of older veteran specific info to veterans age 65+ on discharge from hospital;
3. Development of veteran friendly GP practices in Inverness.

The proposal was welcomed and considered on 23 January 2020. Current recruitment of Community Link Workers Highland-wide was identified as a potentially better means of delivering points 1 and 2 and the feasibility of building it into their job roles is being explored. Recruitment of an NHS Highland Armed Forces and Veterans Project Officer was identified as potentially a means of progressing point 3.

Conclusions

In assessing the outputs and outcomes of the work done by the Unforgotten Forces Policy Roundtable Group, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Through effective communication, collaboration, and coordination, the Unforgotten Forces Policy Roundtable has achieved considerable success by delivering in a variety of areas such as policy influencing and political engagement activity. This work has been strongly supported by a number of consortium partners, and it has been recognised to have been valued and respected. We have also brought Armed Forces and civilian charities together on a policy and public affairs basis. This has never been done before.
2. The consortium has influenced and developed a number of public policy areas affecting older veterans including social isolation and loneliness, sensory impairment, physical health, and transport. We have also contributed to the development of the UK Veterans Strategy, and the Scottish Action Plan to implement the strategy to ensure older veterans receive the proper support that they deserve.
3. We have raised the profile of the Unforgotten Forces Consortium, its Policy led activity, and most importantly the needs of older veterans at all levels of Government and Parliament. From Government Ministers to local Councillors. From MPs at Westminster to MSPs at Holyrood. Not to forget the network of Veterans' Champions spread across the public sector. We have made an impact which has been felt politically and real differences for older veterans which have been illustrated above.
4. Our policy influencing and political engagement activity has opened up networking opportunities for all consortium partners involved plus provided additional platforms for consortium partners to link up and speak out about their own interests on behalf of our Armed Forces community. For example, the work of the Policy Roundtable developed Age Scotland's initial thinking on physical activity. This involved working with local veterans' groups, and done in collaboration with partners such as Erskine and Scottish War Blinded. The power of effective communication, collaboration, and coordination on show here.

5. Some members of the Policy Roundtable also had direct responsibility for media within their respective organisations. This helped garner media attraction for our work. Others used these hooks to loop in the communication and marketing colleagues from within their organisations to achieve similar media attraction.
6. The policy and research activity has highlighted key areas where further activity is required and could be undertaken in a new phase of work through the consortium. Our research into social isolation also identified mental health challenges faced by older veterans which need to be recognised by decision makers. Veterans' access to transport is a related policy area where while we have developed some thinking, future activity could highlight further gaps in provision and propose new approaches to improving access.
7. We have provided support to senior leaders within the consortium including information and advice regarding how best to engage and influence political stakeholders regarding building the consortium as a sustainable model for future partnership working, and achieving future funding for the provision of enhanced and coordinated support for older veterans.
8. The Unforgotten Forces Policy Roundtable has proven to have been a successful initiative, an added benefit to the work of the wider consortium, and brought a number of benefits for the older veterans' beneficiary group that we collectively support. The roundtable can be used as a blueprint to model future collaborative policy and political engagement activity in Scotland and across the wider United Kingdom.
9. Overall, our work has provided an additional reason for why the Unforgotten Forces Consortium must continue and grow. We must ensure that future policy work around veterans in general does not solely focus on transition and or the experience of recent service leavers. We must also recognise and ensure that those who have given our nation the most, are always supported, and never forgotten.

Annex 1:

Members - Unforgotten Forces Policy Roundtable

Thank you to the following for their attendance, contributions, and support for the work of the Unforgotten Forces Policy Roundtable. Their collective efforts and passion has achieved the success outlined in this impact report to date:

Usman Ali, Poppyscotland (Chair)

Glen MacDonald, Poppyscotland (Unforgotten Forces Coordinator)

Richard Baker, Scottish War Blinded

Hannah Mitchell, Scottish War Blinded

Adam Stachura, Age Scotland

Doug Anthony, Age Scotland

Alan Dalzeil, Action on Hearing Loss Scotland

Eileen Clarkson, Action on Hearing Loss Scotland

Ian Cumming, Erksine

Jane Scobie, Erskine

Debs Dickson, Erskine

Claire Williams, Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP), Citizens Advice Scotland

Laura Darling, Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP), Citizens Advice Scotland

Terry Donoghue, Sailors, Soldiers, Airforce Family Association (SSAFA, the Armed Forces Charity)

Robert Reid, Defence Medical Welfare Services (DMWS)

Emma Gration, Defence Medical Welfare Services (DMWS)

Liz Frondigoun, University of the West of Scotland (UWS)

Murray Leith, University of the West of Scotland (UWS)

Members of the Unforgotten Forces Policy Roundtable would like to add their thanks to all the members of the Unforgotten Forces Partners Group led by Gary Gray, Head of Welfare Services, Poppyscotland for their ongoing guidance and support for our work.

Annex 2:

Unforgotten Forces Policy Roundtable Work Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Progress
General			
Organise UF Policy Roundtables	Poppyscotland lead / All	June 2020	Complete
Parliamentary Debate on the work of the consortium	Poppyscotland	June 2019	Complete
UF Day at Scottish Parliament Exhibition	Poppyscotland lead / Legion Scotland / RAFA	April 2019	Complete
UF promotion at political party conferences	Poppyscotland / Action on Hearing Loss / Scottish War Blind	Ongoing	Complete
Presentation at Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Veterans and the Armed Forces community	Poppyscotland lead	April 2019	Complete
Submit UF response to UK Veterans Strategy development	Poppyscotland lead / All	January 2019	Complete
Social Isolation and Loneliness			
Submit Parliamentary Questions	Poppyscotland lead / All	August 2018	Complete
Submit UF response to Scottish Government consultation: social isolation and loneliness	Poppyscotland lead / All	April 2018	Complete
Host a roundtable on social isolation and loneliness involving older veterans and the Scottish Veterans Commissioner	Scottish War Blinded lead	September 2018	Complete
Sensory Impairment			
Publish a guide for older veterans	Scottish War Blind / Action on Hearing Loss / Age Scotland	January 2019	Complete
Develop a communications plan to promote the guide.	Scottish War Blind / Action on Hearing Loss / Age Scotland	January 2019	Complete
Health and Wellbeing			
Develop an online resource to promote good practice of support available to support older veterans with their health and wellbeing	Age Scotland / Scottish War Blinded / Erskine	October 2019	Complete
Transport			
Submit a UF response to the Scottish Government: National Transport Strategy	Poppyscotland / Fares4Free	September 2019	Complete
Evaluation			
Feed into the UWS Evaluation	Poppyscotland lead / UWS / All	December 2019	Complete
Produce a UF Policy Impact Report	Poppyscotland lead / All	February 2020	Complete

Annex 3: Key Sources

Below are links to publications and sources referencing work arising from the Unforgotten Forces Policy Roundtables:

Source	Link
Unforgotten Forces Consortium Response to the Scottish Government's Consultation on Social Isolation and Loneliness, April 2018	https://www.poppyscotland.org.uk/about-us/publicaffairsandpublicpolicy/
Unforgotten Forces Consortium Response to the UK and Scottish Government's Consultation on a UK Veterans Strategy, January 2019	https://www.poppyscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Unforgotten-Forces-Consortium-Response-to-UK-Veterans-Strategy_February-2019-1.pdf
Unforgotten Forces Consortium Response to the Scottish Government's Consultation on a National Transport Strategy, September 2019	https://www.poppyscotland.org.uk/about-us/publicaffairsandpublicpolicy/
Scottish Parliament Debate on the work of the Unforgotten Forces Consortium, 26 June 2019	http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12194&i=110147
Scottish Parliament Debate on the Second Annual Update to Parliament on Veterans and our Armed Forces Community, 4 December 2018	http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11824&mode=pdf
Scottish Parliament Debate on the Third Annual Update to Parliament on Veterans and our Armed Forces Community, 3 December 2019	http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=12408&mode=pdf
Scottish Assembly for Older People Voices of Older Veterans Event	https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3.spanglefish.com/s/31982/documents/consultation-events/the-voice-of-veterans-summary-report.pdf
Scottish Assembly for Older People Parliament Gathering, October 2019	http://www.scotopa.org.uk/assemblies.asp
Older Veterans Sensory Impairment Guide, January 2019	https://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/what-we-do/supporting-older-veterans/age-scotlands-veterans-project/information-guides-and-articles-for-older-veterans/
Older Veterans' Health and Wellbeing Online Resource, October 2019	https://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/what-we-do/supporting-older-veterans/age-scotlands-veterans-project/support-to-increase-physical-activity/
A number of Age Scotland Information Guides for Older Veterans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veterans' Project leaflet • Veterans' Guide to later life • Housing for Older Veterans • Combatting Sight and Hearing Loss Health and wellbeing for older veterans	https://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/what-we-do/supporting-older-veterans/age-scotlands-veterans-project/information-guides-and-articles-for-older-veterans/
Unforgotten Forces Consortium Website	https://www.poppyscotland.org.uk/get-help/unforgotten-forces/