



UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

Supporting Scotland's
Older Veterans



Home regard

The right home for
later life (p7)

p4
Mental
health

p10
Service
associations

p12
Gas
safety

MAGAZINE

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The Unforgotten Forces magazine is for older ex-Armed Forces men and women living in Scotland, their families, and carers.

We welcome reader feedback: you can contact us by phone, email or in writing. You can also use the details below to let us know if you no longer wish to receive the magazine.

Email: veteransproject@agescotland.org.uk

Telephone: **0333 323 2400**

Write to: Unforgotten Forces, Age Scotland
Causewayside House
160 Causewayside
Edinburgh EH9 1PR

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Foreword

Welcome to the Unforgotten Forces magazine.



This issue we focus on mental health. In the feature on page 4 you can read about David, a veteran who struggled with poor mental health for many years, turning the corner only when he reached out for help. You'll also hear from Combat Stress about some of the ways they support veterans to better health and wellbeing.

Housing is our other big feature, on page 7. You can read what experts say about getting the best housing options as you age, and on how to heat your home for less. Also, Highland Veterans Handyperson Adam Davidson shares his day, and there's a housing 'happy ever after' story to illustrate help that's available.

On page 10 we take a tour of service and regimental associations. If you've lost touch with former comrades, and want to rejoin your tribe, you'll find loads of information and contact details. Lastly, in our 'Knowledge' section we cover gas safety, vaccines, LGBT+ veterans' issues and more.

If your magazine arrived by post it will include a complimentary copy of Age Scotland's 2024 calendar, featuring a collection of lovely wildlife illustrations by graphic artist Helen Wyllie, and advice each month for a happier and healthier later life. If your copy doesn't include the calendar call the Age Scotland helpline 0800 12 44 222 to request one.

Best wishes
Doug Anthony, Editor

Fares4Free turbo-charged by volunteers

At veterans' transport charity Fares4Free a volunteer recruitment drive is underway. "We aim to offer more than a journey every trip, and our volunteer Outreach Support Drivers help us to do that," says Operations Manager Leon Fisher. "If a veteran is going through a particularly difficult time, and is perhaps needing a block booking, it's important to have the continuity of a friendly driver who builds a rapport, and if possible, does all the journeys. This helps with anxiety and other similar conditions that can otherwise make journeys difficult."

Volunteers help enhance what Fares4Free offer when trying to meet veterans' individual needs. "For example, if someone is suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, it may be important to them that they meet the driver in advance, that they receive a text to say they are on their way with the vehicle's details and exact arrival time, and sometimes it is important that it is the same vehicle that picks them up." says Leon.

Some of the qualities Fares4Free are looking for in their volunteers are "empathy, a caring nature, good listening skills, reliability and extremely punctual timekeeping," says Leon. Before hitting the road, training includes a two-day Mental Health First Aid for the Armed Forces Community course, and a bespoke Fares4Free one-day training workshop covering everything from advanced driving standards to conflict management. "After that, there are no fixed day commitments. When a request comes in, we give you a call and if you are free, great, but if not that's okay." Leon would like to have volunteers geographically positioned across the whole of Scotland, so that Fares4Free can say yes to every veteran in need of a transport solution.

Fares4Free: Request help or volunteer
Call **0141 266 6000** Web **www.fares4free.org**

David and Pam's story

Fares4Free volunteer outreach support driver David, who covers the Highlands, was a lifeline for Pam, whose veteran husband Ian was living with dementia and had recently broken his hip. To visit Ian in NHS respite care involved a 14-hour round trip and an overnight stay for Pam. David drove Pam once a month for several months to visit Ian, with a café stop and shopping stop at Lidl included in these journeys. Pam was able to have lunch with Ian and David went for a swim in the local pool. Having someone to talk to before and after visits also made a big difference to Pam.



Erskine veterans go for gold

Veterans vied for silverware success as Erskine hosted the 2023 Sporting Senior Games at Glasgow Caledonian University. Erskine teams, including from the Erskine Reid Macewen Activity Centre, were joined by residents from care homes in East Ayrshire, West Lothian, Ayr, Coatbridge and Bishopton. Opportunities for sporting glory included basketball, 10 pin bowling, curling, boccia bowls, and javelin. Medals were awarded by special guests from Bowls Scotland, Commonwealth Para Gold Medallists Garry Brown and Pauline Wilson. The winner of the prestigious John Bowman Trophy, named after an inspirational Erskine veteran, was Erskine Park Home.

Discover the Erskine Reid Macewen Activity Centre

The Centre aims to enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of veterans in the community, providing the opportunity to engage with people who have shared experiences and history, learn new skills, explore a number of interests and access support services.

Call **0141 814 4534** Web www.erskine.org.uk

Award for Ayrshire veterans' group

Saltcoats Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club has been awarded Age Scotland's Patrick Brooks Award for Best Partnership Working. The club offers an informal atmosphere, with no hierarchy, forms or fees. Members can drop-in weekly for easy-going banter and to enjoy a free first cup of tea, generously provided by the Melbourne Café.

In the club veterans can talk openly with people who understand the reality of time spent in the Armed Forces, with regular visits from veterans' charities who share information and available support. The club arranges activities, including a walking group, fishing trips and indoor bowls. It also helps arrange transport for hospital appointments, assists with shopping and makes home visits. Some club members volunteer at the town's food bank and have helped prepare houses for homeless veterans.

Paul Coffey, a club organiser, said, "Come rain, hail, wind, or snow there will be members queuing up outside for a cuppa and a chat every Monday morning. Some lonely and isolated, some with PTSD, some with serious health issues, and others just enjoying the banter. It's very hard to describe how we have laughed, cried, and hugged over the past five years."

Melbourne Café owner Elaine Meney said: "It's an ongoing privilege to support and show our appreciation to the veterans for their service." Age Scotland Chief Executive Katherine Crawford said: "It's wonderful to hear how much the club means to veterans and ex-servicemen and women who meet in the Melbourne Café and to see the close bonds that have been formed."



Erskine Games



Saltcoats Breakfast Club

Mental health

Research suggests that, in general, being in the military doesn't make poor mental health more likely. Yet around one in four people are estimated to be affected by mental health problems in Scotland, a tally that includes veterans. Many veterans are older, and with later life can come changes, and sometimes losses, that affect our mental health.

Of course, for some veterans, military service has contributed to mental health challenges. These can be a result of combat experiences. They may be linked to life limiting injuries, and/or chronic pain. And, for some, they arose because of being bullied, sexually assaulted, or treated harshly under the military 'gay ban' up until 2000.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is more likely if you have been involved in combat or were deployed as a reservist, although PTSD rates among veterans are only a little higher than for the population generally. Today, the military has put in place mental health support for personnel involved in traumatic incidents, but older veterans did not have such support. Some felt okay when they left service, and only years later was their PTSD triggered. And, for some, the legacy of a difficult childhood alongside their experiences in the Forces has further complicated their mental health situation in civilian life.

Do you recognise yourself in any of the above? If yes, have you reached out for support? It's not unusual for veterans to find it difficult to ask for help with mental health problems. The Armed Forces value mental and physical toughness and, while the UK military's stance on mental health is today more enlightened, a legacy is that for some older veterans shame and stigma remain barriers to seeking help for mental health challenges. Veterans with poor mental health can lean on things like alcohol and smoking to help them cope, more so than their civilian peers, but in the long run these worsen mental health as well as physical health.

When veterans do reach out, as David's story opposite shows, they will find that help is there. From charity Combat Stress, and in some areas from an NHS service called Veterans First Point, there is ongoing support for veterans with mental health challenges. Compensation is available to veterans with mental health conditions resulting from military service, and campaigners are now hopeful that the UK Government will announce a financial award scheme for veterans adversely affected by the military 'gay ban'. In addition, general adult mental health support services are also available to veterans.



David's story

Royal Navy veteran David was the youngest Scot to serve in the Falklands War. He experienced PTSD and depression for many years.

"I enlisted age 16 to escape a childhood of violence," says David. "There were real high points in the Navy, and I felt very accepted." He soon found himself on HMS Fearless sailing to the Falkland Islands. "It was a massive shock. Under air attack from the Argentine Air Force there were adrenaline rushes and comedowns. I saw and heard things no 17-year-old should. But no one spoke about how they felt, so I bottled it up." David became irritable on ship and drank too much when in port.

He left the military in his twenties due to an injury and became a press photographer. "I loved the job, my injury was getting better, and I thought I was coping. Then I was sent to cover the Dunblane massacre." The experience drained him emotionally, "but I didn't feel able to speak to anyone and turned to alcohol for solace." At that time there was no media coverage of mental health, so seeking help didn't feel like an option. "There was self-stigma. I didn't want to be seen as weak. Being told you're weak or useless happens a lot in the military, as they try to break you down and remould you. But these words can come back to haunt you."

He turned the corner during a visit to his GP. "I told her I had a problem with my neck, and she said she thought I had depression. I burst into tears of gratitude that someone had at last noticed what I'd been struggling with. I could feel it in my body. A weight fell off."

Now, after getting support, whenever David feels his mental health dip, he has a toolbox of strategies to help him through. "I would say to any veteran with a mental health issue, that you are not alone, that there is non-judgmental support out there, from professionals and from your peers. But you need to reach out."

You can read more about David's experiences in his book *Stayin Alive*. www.razurcuts.com/shop/stayin-alive



A toolkit for wellbeing

What do brain games, square breathing, and paracording have in common? They all feature in Combat Stress wellbeing courses. Recovery Support Workers Liz Grimason and Tracey Harding explain.

Any UK veteran with one day or more's paid service can ask Combat Stress for support. We help with problems including anxiety, low mood, anger issues, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and substance misuse. There's no need for a diagnosis, or for a medical referral.

The first step is to contact our 24-hour helpline, staffed by trained counsellors. Callers are asked to complete an 'about me' questionnaire, by email or phone. Veterans' family members can also call.

Next, a clinician will assess your needs and recommend treatment, drawing on specialist expertise from across Combat Stress. If we're not the best fit for a veteran, we can refer them to an alternative support service.

While veterans wait for treatment a Recovery Support Worker, such as us, will check in. One of the things we offer is a six-week Wellbeing Course to help with everyday problems, such as finding it hard to relax. The course is relaxed and informal. We start with brain games to improve concentration and memory, which all enjoy. We show how crafts like Paracording calm the mind. We explore how food affects mood, such as sugar highs and lows, and anxiousness from too much caffeine.

We offer sleep and relaxation tips. For example, if you feel anxious in a shop, you can calm yourself by using techniques such as 'square breathing' learned during the session. Lastly, veterans write a wellness recovery action-plan to put what they've learned into practice. We wrap up with a fun outing.

During the course veterans find they aren't the only ones feeling the way they do, and they often make lasting friendships. They have a laugh, which is itself medicine. By the end, they all show improved wellbeing, and have a toolkit to use when life gets tough.

We can run the course in any area where there are three to eight Combat Stress registered veterans who want it. We're happy to meet veterans one-to-one before the course starts, to put them at ease.

Further advice and support

Combat Stress: Web. <https://combatstress.org.uk/> Tel. 0800 1381619

Veterans First Point is an NHS mental health and wellbeing service run by and for veterans. Visit www.veteransfirstpoint.org.uk or call local services: Ayrshire and Arran 01294 310400 | Scottish Borders 0300 0132044 | Fife 01383 565128 | Lanarkshire 0300 303 3051 | Lothian 0131 220 9920 | Tayside 01382424029

Legion Scotland can support veterans with compensation claims for mental health problems arising from military service. Call 0131 550 1566 or email pensionenquiries@legionscotland.org.uk.

Age Scotland offers advice guides *Mental Health: Keeping well and who can help* and *Mental Health: A guide for carers*. Its *Veterans Guide to Later Life* includes information about Armed Forces compensation schemes. Call 0800 12 44 222 to request free copies or visit <https://age.scot>.



Liz (left) and Tracey (right)

Where you live and how well it suits you matters. Housing needs can change in later life, but help is available to navigate these changes, including specifically for veterans.

Your housing options in later life

Moira Bayne is Chief Executive of Housing Options Scotland, a charity that helps disabled people, older adults, and members of the Armed Forces community, to find their right home in the right place. “We have older clients whose housing problems are because of things like debt, alcohol misuse, or an inability to cope with life in general,” says Moira. “There are also relationship issues, including for people in their 70s. Breakups are more acceptable these days, especially for older women.”

Financial difficulties are common. “Interest-only mortgages were pushed in the 1980s, but some people haven’t a plan for paying it off and so may have to sell their house,” she says. Moira has seen some lenders becoming less sympathetic to mortgage arrears. And “while there are good protections for private rented tenants at the moment, these may not last.”

Moira says it’s never too early to start thinking about your future housing needs. “From your mid-50s, the ‘what-ifs’ should be in the back of your mind. If your circumstances change, will your home be safe, accessible, and affordable?” Moira advises “looking around your house with a family member or friend for things like trip hazards.” While Councils offer home assessments to people who may need support “waiting lists for Occupational Therapy visits can be long,” says Moira. Home adaptations aren’t always an answer. “Stairlifts can be costly to maintain and prone to breakdown, so moving may be preferable.”

Future repairs and maintenance are a consideration. “It’s important to keep your house in good repair, including the roof, whether you stay or plan to move. If you live in social housing, ask about support available from your landlord.”

The wider neighbourhood matters. “Is it safe and friendly? Are there good transport links?” Also, “think about how dependent you are on people around you for support, and how likely it is they will be nearby in the future.”

Housing Options Scotland’s ‘Military Matters’ service started a decade ago when “we saw many veterans unaware they were entitled to Scottish Government Home Ownership funding.” While most veterans do well “some have never had a stable life after service and are in and out of homes and relationships.” Moira has found the 1980s/90s service generation was often isolated from the wider world as they lived on base before internet access. “We aim to empower them now with information.” Veteran client numbers have more than doubled since Covid-19 and stress and frustration levels have risen. “But an advantage of being a veteran is that there is so much additional support out there.”

Housing Option Scotland: Call **0131 510 1567**. <https://housingoptionsscotland.org.uk>
Supported by the Veterans Foundation and Scottish Government.



A Handyman's Tale

Adam Davidson, handyman at the Highland Veterans Handyperson Service, provides practical help to older and disabled veterans with odd jobs and small repairs around the home.

“On a typical day I might set a handrail for someone, change a tap washer, or put in a ‘sun sail’ for outdoor shade. I plan a few jobs in the same area – around Moray, up to Wick and Thurso, or somewhere in-between. Small jobs can make a big difference. I recently helped a veteran who is bent double, uses a wheeled walker, and couldn’t get downstairs or outside. We put in a portable ramp, so she is no longer housebound. For another man I removed a few trees so he could use a patio again. He was delighted.

Many of my clients are regulars and often we build a great rapport. I try to pop in if I’m passing, as some, particularly up the west coast, can be quite isolated. Meeting people and hearing their stories is the best part of the job. And being a veteran myself, we always click. I always tell them about Unforgotten Forces and look for opportunities, for instance to talk about Sight Scotland Veterans if I spot a magnifying glass lying out in a client’s home. A lot of my clients are referred to me from our Unforgotten Forces partners.

Highland Handyperson Service: Call **01349 884774** Email: handyperson@ilmhighland.co.uk

Peter's story *

After 19 years of private renting, Scots Guards veteran Peter and his wife were told by their landlord he was selling up. His local council would only help when they became homeless, and when that happened moved them into a damp and cramped cottage. Via SSAFA, Peter was introduced to Housing Option Scotland, whose adviser Ryan found a suitable Veteran’s Housing Scotland (VHS) property and helped the couple apply for it. In January they moved into a lovely, affordable three-bedroom home, with a garden. The couple are very grateful for the help and Peter encourages any veteran facing being homeless to ‘go for it’ and contact Housing Option Scotland.

* Names have been changed



A warm home in later life

Age Scotland Energy Trainer **Paul McCafferty** explains things to consider, and help available, to keep your home warm for less.

“Energy bills are going down but aren’t predicted to return to pre-Covid levels until the end of the decade,” says Paul. “Meanwhile many people aren’t getting benefits to which they are entitled.” Certain means-tested benefits, including Pension Credit and Attendance Allowance, entitle someone to further help. “There are cost-of-living payments and various winter heating payments, so we’re talking potentially more than £1000,” says Paul. “Plus, Home Energy Scotland has grants for improvements including insulation and new heating systems, of on average £5000.” Paul encourages any older person struggling with bills to get a free benefit check from Age Scotland. “You can call us on **0800 12 44 222**.”

For people ineligible for grants, zero interest loans of up to £7,500 are available from Home Energy Scotland. “Loans can be a step too far for some, but there are also quick and low-cost measures such as putting reflective panels behind radiators, draft-proofing, and a film cover for windows to keep heat in. These make a difference,” says Paul. Smart Meters can also help. “With a Smart Meter your bills are never estimates. They aren’t perfect – if they break, replacement can be a hassle – but overall, they are worthwhile.”

Paul runs home energy workshops online and in-person for community groups. “Our main workshop covers energy efficiency, related money-matters, and what’s happening because of climate change, such as more use of heat-pumps to heat homes. We’ve also got workshops on ‘future energy heating options’ and electric vehicles.” Age Scotland’s ‘preparing for a power cut’ workshop “answers questions like, what do you do if electricity is cut, and you need it for medical equipment or a stair lift?” Paul finds that lots of older people are unaware that energy companies and Scottish Water have **Priority Service Registers**. “Being on these registers means you’ll get help first if there’s a problem with the supply,” says Paul. “Everyone over State Pension Age is eligible, and others such as disabled people and carers.”

To request a workshop for your group call **0333 323 2400**.

For a free benefits check call Age Scotland **0800 12 44 222**.



Service associations

If you have served, you're a veteran of a specific part of the Armed Forces, which can open doors to bespoke camaraderie opportunities and help, if needed. Here we introduce some of these dedicated support organisations. If you are part of an association that's active in Scotland which we've missed, please contact us (details on inside cover) to share the story.

The **Association of Wrens** welcomes all serving and former women of the Royal Naval Services. There are three geographical and one virtual branch in Scotland. Financial assistance from the WRNS Benevolent Trust is via SSAFA*.

02392 725141 | <https://wrens.org.uk>

The **Black Watch Regimental Association** offers comradeship and support to Black Watch veterans and their dependants. Grants for financial need are provided via SSAFA*. It also has a Holiday Scheme for widows and provides training and education grants to veterans who have retired or are about to. There are six branches in Scotland, and a regimental museum at Balhousie Castle in Perth.

<https://theblackwatch.co.uk>

British Nuclear Test Veterans Association

is working for recognition and restitution of servicemen who participated in the British Nuclear Tests. The Association offers bereavement and funerals support, an online forum for descendants, an annual reunion and assistance with War Pension applications.

0208 144 3080 | www.bntva.com

The **Gordon Highlanders Regimental Association** is for veterans of the Highlanders Regiment, their widows, and children. It has six branches in Scotland and there is a regimental museum in Aberdeen.

01224 311200 | www.gordonhighlanders.com

The **Kings Own Scottish Borderers Association** offers camaraderie and support to Kings Own Scottish Borderers veterans. There is a Regimental Museum in Berwick-upon-Tweed, and grants for financial need are provided via SSAFA*.

01289 331811 | <https://kosb.co.uk>

Nautilus Welfare offers advice and assistance on money, health, and other issues, for retired seafarers and their dependants.

0151 346 8840 | www.nautiluswelfarefund.org

The **Officers Association** offers advice and support to those who have held a commission in the Armed Forces, their families, and dependants.

020 7808 4175

www.officersassociation.org.uk

The **Parachute Regiment Association** offers comradeship and support, including for mental wellbeing. Financial assistance is provided via SSAFA*. There are four branches in Scotland.

01206 817103 (welfare enquiries)

01206 817074 (other enquiries)

theparachuteregimentalassociation.com

The Queen's Own Highlanders (Seaforth and Camerons) Regimental Association

offers comradeship to regimental veterans and their families and financial assistance via SSAFA*. It has 12 branches, mostly in Scotland.

all 0131 310 8172 | www.cabarfeidh.com

The **RAF Association** offers camaraderie and support to RAF personnel and veterans, and their families, including welfare grants, low-cost holidays, retirement accommodation and telephone friendship. It has 300 branches worldwide, including 12 in Scotland.

0800 018 2361 | <https://rafa.org.uk>

REME Association

For serving and former members of the Regiment of Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, the Association offers comradeship and support, including for mental wellbeing. Financial assistance is provided via SSAFA*.

07590 848766 | <https://remeconnect.org>

The **Royal Marines Association** offers support, advice and lifelong camaraderie for serving and retired Marines and their families. It also provides mental health support, respite breaks, and grants to help with financial difficulty and getting about inside and outside the home.

0800 468 1664 | <https://rma-trmc.org>

The **Royal Naval Association** offers access to a life-long community and support through life's highs and lows. Membership is free, and benefits include access to welfare advice and retail, travel, and entertainment discounts. There are 10 branches in Scotland where you can enjoy camaraderie (some may charge a small annual subscription).

023 9272 3747

<https://royal-naval-association.co.uk>

The **Royal Regiment of Artillery Association** offers comradeship and support to serving and former gunners and their dependants. Financial assistance is provided via SSAFA*. There are seven branches in Scotland.

01980 845233 | www.thegunners.org.uk

The **Royal Scots Association** offers camaraderie and financial assistance via SSAFA* to Regimental veterans and their dependants. There's a Regimental Museum at Edinburgh Castle and a Royal Scots Club, also in Edinburgh. There are four branches in Scotland, and a Southern and Northern Ireland Branch.

0131 557 0405

www.theroyalscots.co.uk/association

Royal Signals Association

The Association offers camaraderie and financial assistance via SSAFA*. It has 60 branches UK-wide, including five in Scotland.

01258 482 161 | <https://www.royalsignals.org>

Women's Royal Army Corps Association

The Association offers comradeship and welfare to women's army corps veterans and fosters connection with currently serving female personnel. Financial assistance is provided via SSAFA*. There are six branches in Scotland.

<https://wraca.org.uk>

***SSAFA: 0141 488 8552**



Armed Forces Day Inverness (credit Dave Conner)

THE KNOWLEDGE

HM Government apologises for historic LGBT+ ban

The Prime Minister and Defence Secretary have apologised for the treatment of LGBT+ veterans under the military's pre-2000 ban on LGBT+ personnel. This followed publication of an independent review into the ban and its impact, which found that investigations into individuals' sexuality were intrusive, invasive, and for some caused long-lasting, severe damage to veterans and their families.

Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak said: "The ban on LGBT people serving in our military until the year 2000 was an appalling failure of the British state – decades behind the law of this land. In that period many endured the most horrific sexual abuse and violence, homophobic bullying and harassment while bravely serving this country." The Government has said it will implement "the vast majority" of review recommendations, which include a financial award for affected veterans.

You can find out about the campaign for fair treatment of LGBT+ veterans affected by the ban, and support available for them, online at www.fightingwithpride.org.uk



RAF London Pride Crown Copyright 2014

Flu and Covid-19 vaccines

If you're 65 or over, you are eligible for the flu and Covid-19 vaccines. The NHS advises that "vaccines offer the best possible protections against serious illness from the viruses." NHS Scotland will invite you for vaccination, so look out for an NHS branded envelope, an email or text. This will either include appointment details or will ask you to arrange an appointment online or by phoning **0800 030 8013**.

Support is available if you require an interpreter at your vaccination appointment or need help finding transport to it. If you're unable to leave your home (due to your mobility or physical ability or mental health condition) or if you need additional support at your appointment (for example, someone to support you when you arrive or a private space to be vaccinated), you can phone the national vaccination helpline on **0800 030 8013** and your request will be sent to your local health board.

Further information is available online at <http://nhsinform.scot/wintervaccines>



Be gas safe

The Gas Safe Register has published gas safety tips for householders. It wants everyone to be aware of the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, these being headaches, nausea, breathlessness, dizziness and, in severe cases, collapse and loss of consciousness. Your gas appliances should be serviced annually, by a legally qualified engineer. You can find a 'Gas Safe Register' registered engineer in your area online at www.GasSafeRegister.co.uk or by calling **0800 408 5500**.

They'll also do a visual inspection of your gas pipework and test for gas leaks. If you're a tenant renting a property, make sure your landlord arranges a gas safety check. Registered engineers carry a Gas Safe ID card. Always ask to see this. The back shows which gas appliances they are qualified to work on.

Warning signs that gas appliances may be unsafe include a lazy yellow flame instead of a crisp blue flame, error messages or unexpected noises from your boiler, or dark and sooty stains around your gas appliance. If you smell gas or think there might be a gas leak, call the national gas emergency line **0800 111 999** immediately.

In Scotland every home must, by law, have a carbon monoxide alarm in any room where you have a carbon-fuelled appliance like a boiler, wood-burning fireplace, or flue. If the alarm is battery operated it must have a sealed battery for the duration of its lifespan, which may be up to 10 years. Air vents and chimneys in the home should be unblocked. You should never attempt to work on a gas appliance yourself, instead always seek the help of a Gas Safe registered engineer. Lastly, don't use a gas appliance for something it wasn't meant for - for example, using a cooker to heat a room.

Government progress on support for veterans

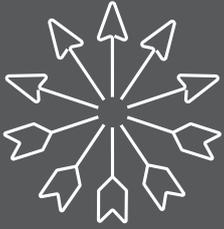
The Scottish Veterans Commissioner has published her annual assessment of the Scottish Government's progress in improving support for Scotland's veterans and their families.

Commissioner Susie Hamilton said: "There's some really encouraging progress, particularly in the area of health and wellbeing." She highlighted a new approach to treatment that "has the potential to transform the lives of the most seriously injured veterans." She also identified activity to raise GPs' awareness of the health and wellbeing implications of serving in and transitioning from the Armed Forces. An Armed Forces and Veterans General Practice Recognition Scheme has been piloted and a national roll out of it is in preparation. Good progress was also noted in employability and skills support.

However, the Commissioner raised a concern about the pace of implementing the 2021 Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plan: She said, "Mental health services and support remains an area in which we commonly hear about unmet need." Homelessness prevention was another area where she found further progress is required.

The Commissioner said: "Providing scrutiny and supportive challenge to policy makers and those providing services to veterans is an important aspect of my role. It gives an independent and impactful picture of statutory support for veterans in Scotland, allowing us to celebrate successes and focus attention on areas where more effort is required."

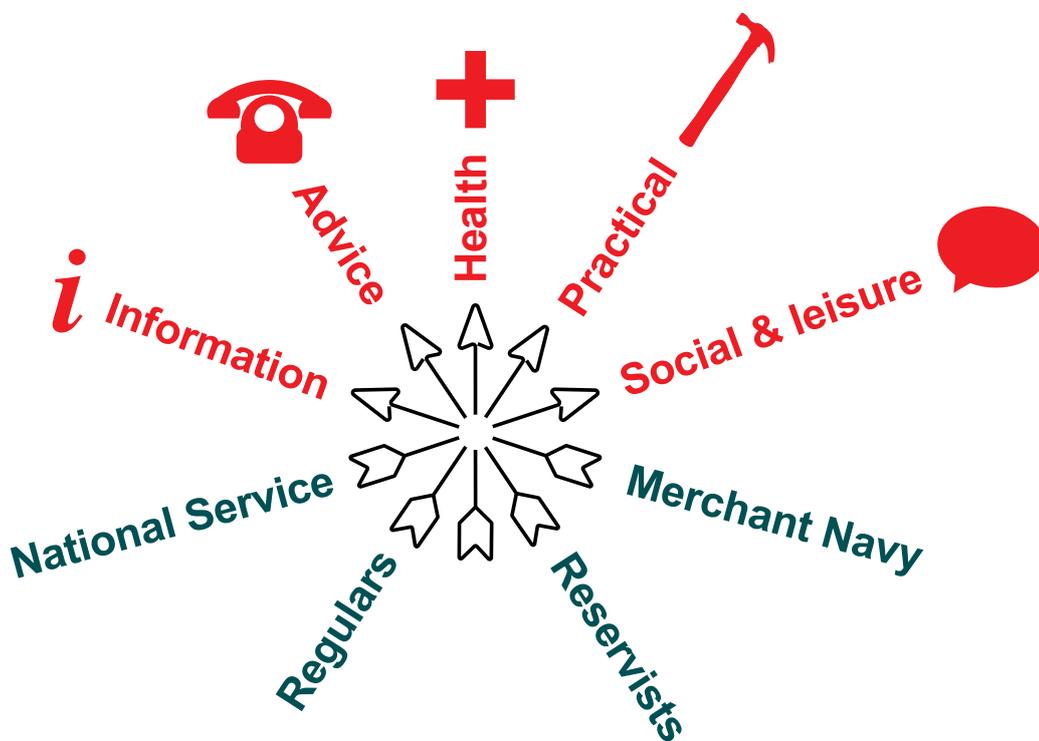
You can read the 2023 progress report online: www.scottishveteranscommissioner.org



UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

Supporting Scotland's Older Veterans

If you are aged 60 or older, live in Scotland, and served in the British Armed Forces, Unforgotten Forces is your doorway to camaraderie and extra support, should you need it.



 @UFForces

 @UnforgottenForces

www.unforgottenforces.scot

0800 12 44 222

(The Age Scotland helpline can connect you with Unforgotten Forces services if you are unsure who to approach)

