



# UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

Supporting Scotland's  
Older Veterans



## Beyond the banjo

Your guide to happy,  
healthy eating (p9)

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# MAGAZINE

ISSUE EIGHT: SUMMER 2023

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Cover image: RDNE Stock project

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](mailto:veteransproject@agescotland.org.uk)

Telephone: **0333 323 2400**

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

Unforgotten Forces is a partnership of military and civilian charities, led and co-ordinated by Age Scotland, that have joined forces to boost the health and wellbeing of veterans in Scotland age 60 and older. This magazine is funded by a grant from the Scottish Government. Age Scotland aims to ensure information is accurate at time of production and cannot be held liable for any errors or omissions.

ISSN 2635-1242 (print)

ISSN 2635-1250 (online)

Age Scotland, part of the Age Network, is an independent charity dedicated to improving the later lives of everyone on the ageing journey, within a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland. Registration Number: 153343 Charity Number SC010100. Registered Office: Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1PR.

# Foreword

## Welcome to the Unforgotten Forces magazine.



If you're thinking about taking a summer holiday, our 'Get Away' feature on page 4 introduces holiday opportunities for veterans, and for those with disabilities and health conditions. Or you could commandeer a bus like Cliff Richard.

Summer is also a time to be active outdoors, and you can read about veterans doing just that in our Moving Stories feature on page 6. You'll meet the Veterans Chaplaincy Scotland group walking Fife's historic pilgrim route, read about Sight Scotland Veterans' new sports initiative for veterans with sight loss, find out how the On Course Foundation is supporting veterans through golf, and more.

On page 9 our 'Beyond the banjo' feature looks at eating for health and wellbeing. In it you can read how veterans at Dundee Therapy Garden and with the Defence Gardens Scheme are enjoying home-grown produce, plus read how Sight Scotland Veterans is enabling veterans with sight-loss to cook up a storm.

We're thrilled to share the news that thanks to funding from the Scottish Government the work of the Unforgotten Forces partnership looks set to continue until at least 2026. That means we'll continue to publish Unforgotten Forces magazine, bringing you information, ideas, and inspiration for a happy and healthy later life. You can read the full story on page 2.

Best wishes

Doug Anthony, Editor



## Funding boost for Unforgotten Forces

The Scottish Government has awarded £950,000 to Unforgotten Forces, Scotland's partnership of armed forces and civilian charities focused on improving the health and wellbeing of veterans in Scotland aged 60 and older. The investment will enable us to continue until at least March 2026.

Led and coordinated by the national charity for older people, Age Scotland, Unforgotten Forces was set up in 2017 and has been previously funded by the Scottish Government since 2020.

Graeme Dey MSP, the Scottish Government Minister for Veterans, said: "The Scottish Government is wholehearted in our commitment to ensuring that our Armed Forces community receive the best support we can offer. They are an integral part of our society with a considerable contribution to make.

"I am always impressed by the vital support provided by the veterans' charitable sector here in Scotland, their hard work, and their dedication. I am delighted that we are able to continue to fund the excellent work of the Unforgotten Forces. The success of the consortium illustrates the real value that can be generated from collaboration and the sharing of best practise across the third sector."



Graeme Dey MSP

Frank Gribben, Unforgotten Forces co-ordinator for Age Scotland, said: "We are delighted that the Scottish Government has recognised the value of Unforgotten Forces and the needs of the older veteran's community, and has invested such a large amount in the partnership that supports them.

"This will allow us, over the next three years, to continue providing older members of Scotland's ex-Armed Forces community with a wide range of social opportunities and activities to improve their health and wellbeing, with tailored and high-quality support where it is needed. We are proud that the partnership has asked Age Scotland to continue leading and coordinating Unforgotten Forces and we really welcome the opportunity to do so."

For more information about what **Unforgotten Forces** can offer visit [www.unforgottenforces.scot](http://www.unforgottenforces.scot) or call the **Age Scotland helpline 0800 12 44 222**.

## Paul's story

Unforgotten Forces partners Legion Scotland, Poppyscotland and SSAFA collaborated to support Paul, a disabled and widowed Army veteran who lives alone, is in poor health and has a low income. Poppyscotland put Paul in touch with Legion Scotland as he needed extra support.

"When our Veterans Community Support Officer met him, he was quite distressed," said Legion Scotland's Tommy Douglas. "He'd been told SSAFA was arranging a new cooker for him, but he was getting anxious that it might have been a scam, so we got in touch with SSAFA and confirmed everything was in order and the cooker would soon arrive."

Because of his dyslexia Paul had misunderstood official letters and as a result had his benefits stopped. "We got the situation sorted out and his benefits were reinstated," said Tommy. Paul has been introduced to a Legion Scotland Unforgotten Forces volunteer, and fellow Queens Own Highlander. "Our volunteer makes regular social visits and can help Paul with reading his mail whenever required," said Tommy.

## Patrick's story

Unforgotten Forces partners Fares4Free and Defence Medical Welfare Services recently joined forces to help 91-year-old Royal Air Force veteran Patrick through a period of medical treatment, with DMWS arranging for Fares4Free to escort Patrick to his appointments. Fares4Free operations manager Leon Fisher said: "Our drivers being there to offer support, reassurance and then take him home safely afterwards made the world of difference to Patrick. They built up a great rapport with him."

Fares4Free also took Patrick to visit his wife who had moved to a care home out-with easy reach. "Patrick takes great solace in visiting his wife which really helped him in his battle to overcome the isolation and loneliness issues that previously affected him," said Leon.

## Boosting support for veterans with sight loss

### Michael Donaldson of Sight Scotland Veterans introduces the charity's Veterans Community Service.

Sight Scotland Veterans provides support to all veterans in Scotland who are experiencing changes to their sight, regardless of the cause, how it affects them or their stage of sight loss. We aim to ensure that veterans and their families and carers can get the support they need when they need it.

The Veterans Community Service is an addition to the support we currently offer our members in their homes and communities, and at our Linburn and Hawkhead Activity Hubs in West Lothian and Paisley. Through it, we're developing new opportunities for individuals to link with others through a variety of telephone and online groups, where they can enjoy activities, and get information and support. We're also offering information and advice on financial matters including concessions, budgeting, and welfare benefits. We can support veterans through our grants application process, which can help veterans struggling with sight loss to live as independently as possible.

We're also developing our comradeship opportunities, alongside our partners. And we're connecting our members across Scotland with local sporting opportunities – something you can read more about in the feature starting page 6.

The Veterans Community Services offers support and information not only to veterans struggling with sight loss, but also to their friends, carers, employers, and other healthcare professionals.

Contact the **Sight Scotland Veterans Sight Loss Information Line**

Call: **0800 035 6409**

Web: <https://sightscotland.org.uk/veterans>

## A refreshed advice guide for older veterans

Age Scotland has published a 2023 edition of its popular Veterans Guide to Later Life in Scotland. The guide covers key later life topics including housing, money, health and care, with specialist advice for ex-Armed Forces men and women and information about organisations that can help.

### Get your free copy

Call: **0800 12 44 222** (Age Scotland Helpline)

Web: <https://age.scot/veteransguide>



# Get away

Summer is holiday season, a time to relax and enjoy a change of scene. But 'getting away from it all' is not always straightforward for those on low incomes, with a health condition or disability, or with both. Below, we introduce organisations and services that offer help to overcome these barriers.

## Travel and holidays for the ex-Armed Forces community

**Forces Travel** offers discounted travel world-wide for serving and retired Armed Forces personnel.

**0345 209 4461 / <https://forcestravel.com>**

**Holidays for Heroes Jersey** offers free holidays on Jersey to people injured, in body or mind, because of service with HM Armed Forces.

**01534 856658 / [www.holsforheroesjersey.com](http://www.holsforheroesjersey.com)**

**The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund** offers welfare breaks to individuals and couples from the ex-RAF community.

**0300 102 1919 / [www.rafbf.org](http://www.rafbf.org)**

**The RAF Disabled Holiday Trust** offers accessible UK holidays to serving and ex-RAF personnel who are disabled, or whose dependant is disabled.

**020 7307 3338 / email [rafdht@rafbf.org.uk](mailto:rafdht@rafbf.org.uk)**

In London the **Victory Services** and **Union Jack Club** offer exclusive city centre accommodation to ex-Armed Forces personnel.

**Victory Services Club**

**0207 616 8312 / [www.vsc.co.uk](http://www.vsc.co.uk)**

**Union Jack Club:**

**020 7902 6000 / <https://ujc.org.uk>**

The **Defence Discount Service** is a free, official, Ministry of Defence discount service for Armed Forces veterans. Travel and holiday discounts are included. Apply via the website.

**[www.defencediscountservice.co.uk](http://www.defencediscountservice.co.uk)**

The **Blue Light Card** costs £.4.99 for two years and offers veterans a range of discounts for UK and overseas holidays, and for days out.

**[www.bluelightcard.co.uk](http://www.bluelightcard.co.uk)** / write to: Blue Light Card, PO Box 10960, Charnwood Edge Business Park, Syston Road, Leicester, LE7 4UZ

The **Veterans Railcard** costs £30 per year (£70 for three years) and offers discounts on many UK journeys. Eligibility is a minimum of one day with HM Armed Forces.

Call **0345 301 1656** (for more information) **[www.veterans-railcard.co.uk](http://www.veterans-railcard.co.uk)** (apply online)

The **War Widow(er)s HM Forces railcard** offers discounts to surviving spouse partners and adult dependants in receipt of certain service-related payments. The Royal British Legion can provide details.

## Support for holidaymakers with a disability or health condition

**Disability Information Scotland** provides information on a range of topics, including accessible holidays, and holiday / respite grants.

Call **0300 323 9961 / [www.disabilityscot.org.uk](http://www.disabilityscot.org.uk)**

**VisitScotland** lists accessibility features at accommodation including level access, accessible parking and drop-off points, and hearing loop.

**[www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com)** /

write to: VisitScotland, Ocean Point One, 94 Ocean Drive, Edinburgh EH6 6JH

**Tourism for All** is a charity dedicated to making travel accessible to everyone. It has a travel planner website to help you enjoy holidays in the UK with detailed information on individual attractions and accommodation.

Email **[info@tourismforall.org.uk](mailto:info@tourismforall.org.uk)**

**[www.tourismforall.co.uk](http://www.tourismforall.co.uk)** / write to Tourism for All UK, PO Box 318, Wirral, CH32 9GG

Website **[www.euansguide.com](http://www.euansguide.com)** features reviews of destinations in the UK and beyond for disability access.

**ABTA**, the trade association for UK travel industry, offers online information and checklists for disabled passengers.

[www.abta.com](http://www.abta.com)

**National Express** coaches allow lightweight wheelchairs and small mobility scooters to be stored in the luggage compartment. The company's Disabled Persons Helpline is open from 10am to 8pm (7 days a week).

Call **08717 818 179** / [www.nationalexpress.com](http://www.nationalexpress.com)

Charity **Revitalise** organises UK and overseas holidays for people with sight loss, often in groups with a sighted buddy, and some suitable for those with assistance dogs.

Call **0303 303 0145** / [www.revitalise.org.uk](http://www.revitalise.org.uk)

There are various providers of disability-friendly holiday accommodation. These include:

**Crathie Opportunity Holidays** (Cairngorms)

**01339 742100** / [www.crathieholidays.org.uk](http://www.crathieholidays.org.uk)

**The Rings** (Fife)

**01334 828243** / <https://therings.co.uk>

**Haven Holidays**, in partnership with SSAFA, offers a 10% discount to SSAFA supporters, volunteers, staff and beneficiaries.

Call **0333 202 5423** and quote the discount code "CH\_SSAFA" / [www.haven.com](http://www.haven.com)



## Making plans and asking questions

If you have special requirements, consider each step of your journey in advance, and your daily routine when away. Write down questions that arise from this exercise and put these to any tour operators or travel agents you contact. Your list might include:

## Travel and transfers

If you have a disability or limited mobility, and are flying from a UK airport, or on a UK registered airline or carrier, you are legally entitled to 'Special Assistance' when departing, disembarking and transferring between flights. This assistance is free, and could include the use of an airport wheelchair, help with getting through security searches, and help with boarding and getting seated. Contact your airline at least 48 hours before you are due to fly, if you would like to book Special Assistance.

If you have a medical condition that could affect your suitability to fly, ask your doctor for a certificate to show you are well enough to travel.

Passengers with sight or hearing loss, particularly those travelling alone, should let their travel companies and airlines know so staff can provide immediate assistance should there be an emergency.

## At your destination

Consider what you need in your accommodation, for instance outside and inside ramps for wheelchairs or a suitably adapted room. You could ask about adapted leisure facilities such as swimming pool lifts, and arrangements for excursions. If you require a special diet, do check that this can be provided before booking.

Once you're comfortable that all your questions are answered satisfactorily, and you are making a reservation, it's advisable to get all your requests written onto the booking form and confirmed back to you, so everyone is clear about what you want.



Please note: The organisations and services described in this article are suggestions for readers to investigate further if they wish. None are recommended, or quality assured, by Unforgotten Forces magazine.





# Moving stories

We all know that physical activity is good for us, yet many of us move far less than is recommended for health. There can be barriers, such as caring responsibilities, health conditions or low confidence, particularly after the Covid-19 pandemic. You might have no interest in gyms, swims, or sports and be unpersuaded by pundits who imply exercising is a patriotic duty to take strain off the NHS.

Yet the benefits of an active lifestyle are more than a lower risk of future health problems. They include feeling good now and enjoying more friendship and independence. We hear from veterans about these benefits.

There are many organisations that support older veterans to get moving. We spoke to two, Sight Scotland Veterans and the On Course Foundation, about what they offer.

## Pilgrims go Forth

By the mighty steel skeleton of the Forth Rail Bridge a group of veterans meet at the invite of Veterans Chaplaincy Scotland. They're walking from North Queensferry to Dunfermline along the Fife Pilgrim Way. It's the first of several one-day walks towards St Andrews, a famed pilgrimage in medieval times.

Veterans Chaplaincy Scotland offers veterans, of all faiths and none, pastoral care such as they had access to while serving. Coordinator Phil Paterson explains why it arranges group walks: "We started out holding breakfast and lunch events. We had the idea of a wander afterwards in woodland, and it's grown since."

Phil sees many wellbeing benefits from group walks. "You're in nature, connecting with life and growth. Walking allows for reflection, and helps you find a sense of purpose. It's also a connection with the past, as most veterans will have an experience of the outdoors."

Colin, a Reservist who did many operational tours, also enjoys connection with, and discovery of, the past. "We're passing a training area from World War One, with a plaque commemorating an officer who gave his life for his men. I'm local, and I didn't know this place existed."

Phil finds camaraderie different while walking. "You can wander around and have different conversations with different people." Navy veteran Glen agrees. "It's conducive to good conversations. If you are new to a group, it breaks the ice and helps you get to know each other."

Leading is Duncan Wheeler, a former Army Chaplain and now Pilgrim Pastor to the Fife Pilgrim Way, the first appointment of its kind in the UK. He sees huge emotional and spiritual benefit from walking in nature. "Walking slows you down and helps you reflect on life, on what's important, and what you can be grateful for," he says. "Thousands have walked this Pilgrimage route over the years, and that history puts everything more in perspective. There's also the fresh air, exercise, good company, and sharing stories."

### Veterans Chaplaincy Scotland

Call **07521 638848**

Email [vcs@wpcscotland.co.uk](mailto:vcs@wpcscotland.co.uk)





## A walk in the park

It's a fine spring morning in Coatbridge's Drumpellier Park and Elliot Thomson from Legion Scotland is walking with fellow veteran Clive.

Clive maintained helicopters with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. He recalls Berlin during the cold war, when a drive into the city via the 'Berlin Corridor' had to be timed exactly. "Arrive in under two hours, you were done for speeding, and in over two hours, you were done for spying!" Working in Oman after service he once met the Sultan. "He stopped by in a big truck. I didn't recognise him, and after he left my colleague said, 'do you know who what was?'"



Now living with sight loss, these regular park walks have made a real difference to him. "It's nice and quiet here, and you just enjoy it, with all the wildlife."

Clive and Elliot agree talking while walking is better than when sitting. "It gets you going, you feel better and want to do it again," says Clive. "You feel more alive when you are out walking," says Elliot.

"For some veterans we support, walks aren't an option," says Elliot, "But often it's about supporting someone over a confidence barrier - we men can stick our feet in concrete."

Recently, Clive has started attending Sight Scotland Veterans' Hawkhead Centre where he's tried activities including archery and acoustic shooting. But best of all, "playing pool again with a mate - the other day for 2 ½ hours."

### Legion Scotland Veterans Community Support Service

Call Tommy Douglas **0131 550 1560**

Email [support@legionscotland.org.uk](mailto:support@legionscotland.org.uk)

## Sport with sight loss

Jason Duncan, Veteran Community Lead with **Sight Scotland Veterans**, explains how the charity is supporting its members to be physically active.

"At our activity centres in central Scotland our members enjoy sports like acoustic shooting and fitness classes," says Jason. "Now, we want veterans with sight loss elsewhere to have such opportunities."

A priority is northern Scotland, where around 600 members don't attend a centre. "Often, they don't know about opportunities on their doorstep, so we gather and share local knowledge, such as the member in Inverness who told us they went to an archery club, £7 a time. We ask about barriers, and can often help them over these, for example with grants for equipment or introductions to sporting activities."

Jason works with partners such as Blind Golf, Disability Sport and Kincardine Gun Club to develop opportunities. "We recently entered a team in the visual impairment bowling league."

### Sight Scotland Veterans

Call **0800 035 6409**

<https://sightscotland.org.uk/veterans>



## Getting the golfing bug

Will Barker is Scottish Programme Lead for the **On Course Foundation**, a charity that boosts veterans' wellbeing through golf.

For Will, golf offers “fresh air, around nature. It builds camaraderie, and playing makes it easier to share problems and find out about support.” It is also inclusive. “You can get around with physical injuries in a golf buggy. We've had amputees who can play very well. That helps build confidence.”

On Course supports veterans who have been medically discharged, or who've had a life-changing injury since service. “It could be a crash that's affected mobility or mental health, or they are recovering from long-Covid or cancer.”

On Course is active in Lothians, Fife and Perth and now has funding to grow in the Northeast. “We aim to reach more areas and more people over time. Membership is free, and for life. We run introductory events open to beginners and experienced golfers. We have around 14 residential events a year, with more in-depth tuition and socialising. We encourage our golfers to keep in touch and play as much with each other between events.”

Golf can be costly but “we try to get discounted green fees for our members and can lend starter club sets,” he says. “At our events we cover all costs except travel. People often think you need to wear certain gear when you play, but we make sure golf course staff know we're relaxed and informal.”

### On Course Foundation

Call **020 8334 2010**

Email [info@oncoursefoundation.com](mailto:info@oncoursefoundation.com)

## Getting started

Physical activity is any way of moving the body that burns energy. It includes fitness classes, walking, household chores, playing with grandchildren, gardening, and many hobbies.

For health, half an hour or more of moderate physical activity at least five days a week is recommended. For example, brisk walks during which you can talk, but not sing. Fifteen minutes of vigorous activity, such as jogging, on five days will also do, or a combination. If you are out of the exercise habit that may seem a lot, but any activity is better than none and the most inactive people make the biggest early gains from moving more.

Activities that build strength and balance are recommended, at least twice weekly. We can develop strength and balance through life, helping us to stay independent and to keep up activities we enjoy. Bowls, Tai Chi, and dance are great for balance. The gym, yoga and carrying heavy shopping bags help build strength.

Breaking up long periods of sitting is also recommended. Standing up and moving around for a couple of minutes or more at least once every hour slows the ageing process. To find out more call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** for a free **Keeping Active in Later Life** advice guide, or visit [www.agescotland.org.uk](http://www.agescotland.org.uk). The helpline can also tell you about local sports and activities opportunities.



Golfing with the On Course Foundation

# Beyond the banjo

The Egg Banjo, a runny fried egg sandwich, is an Armed Forces classic. The name comes from the banjo playing action as you brush hot yoke from your clothes after squeezing too hard. Arrive at any veterans' breakfast or brunch club, and the chances are you'll be able to enjoy an Egg Banjo, bacon buttie or similar satisfying fare.

Keeping up enjoyment of food in later life can be a challenge. Our senses of smell and taste get worse, and appetite and motivation to prepare good food can lessen. That makes opportunities that combine camaraderie and food well worth taking, to nourish body and soul. But if comfort and convenience foods are pretty much all you eat, you could benefit from more variety. Research tells us that as you get older, eating well can help improve mood and mental sharpness, boost energy, and increase resistance to illness. What you eat has a big impact on the health of your bones, eyes, heart, brain, and more.

## Eating well – the basics

A healthy meal includes a combination of lean protein, fruits and vegetables (the more colours, the better), whole grains (brown rice, whole wheat pasta) and dairy (milk or its alternatives). Does that sound boring? Try bringing as many colours as you can onto your plate, and experiment with spices, herbs, textures, and novel wholesome foods. If you are on your own, make mealtimes more of an occasion by, for example, setting and sitting at the table.

Though some fats are bad, generally those in highly processed foods, other fats are healthy as part of a balanced diet. Good sources include oily fish, walnuts, flaxseeds, and tofu.

Unplanned weight-loss, feeling weaker or being unwell more often can be signs of malnutrition. Speak to your GP or a nutritionist if worried. You may be familiar with advice to cut calories, but undernourished older people can benefit from the reverse – adding calories, for example with full fat options such as butter, cream, and nuts. If you don't feel like big meals, have smaller meals, but more often.

Our muscles tend to decline with age, but a higher protein intake in addition to daily physical activity (see page 6), appears to help older adults maintain and even build muscle. The amount of protein needed can differ for individuals, but as a rule of thumb aim to include protein with every meal. Good sources include eggs, fish, lean meat, beans, and tofu.

How foods are prepared matters. For instance, eating lots of cured and smoked meats such as bacon can be harmful over time, so choose leaner and try grilling instead of frying. The NHS recommends a maximum of 70g of red and processed meats a day.

Grocers and supermarkets are awash with ultra-processed foods, which research indicates are bad for health. For instance, eaten regularly these foods can kill good microbes in our digestive system that help us stay well and happy. To tell whether a food is ultra-processed, look at the label. If the ingredients mostly wouldn't be found in a household kitchen, it's likely to be ultra-processed.

Studies show that the ability to digest, absorb, and use vitamins decreases with age. For most people having a healthy balanced diet will ensure they meet their vitamin needs. One daily supplement that is advisable is vitamin D. While some foods, including oily fish and eggs, are high in vitamin D, our main source is sunlight, something in short supply over the Scottish winter. The NHS recommends a 10mg daily supplement for all adults from October to March, and year-round for adults who are indoors a lot and people from ethnic minority groups with dark skin.

For a free **Eat Well** guide call the **Age Scotland helpline 0800 12 44 222** or visit **[www.agescotland.org.uk](http://www.agescotland.org.uk)**.



## Eating well with sight loss

**Fiona McCormick and Mick Hilton from the Sight Scotland Veterans rehabilitation team explain how the charity supports people with sight loss to eat well.**

With sight loss you can lose confidence to cook. Where it's gradual there's time to adapt. But where sight loss is sudden, or someone loses a partner who did all the cooking, they can struggle. We see a lot of people who rely on microwave meals and take-aways. We support them to cook healthy meals.

We do home visits to see what's needed. We can provide magnification to help read cooking instructions, sell by dates and ingredients lists. We can improve their lighting, add tactile marks to kitchen devices so they can set them to the correct temperatures. We provide 'talking' kitchen scales, and bathroom scales so they can check they are a healthy weight. We can help get funding for white goods such as 'talking' microwaves and we provide containers for heating up things like porridge safely.

If needed, we'll provide one-to-one tuition on cooking from scratch with sight loss. Some people have no ambition to cook, but where there's a desire, we can help and can spend as much time with them as needed. We encourage our members to set cooking goals, then look back with them later to see if they've achieved their goals.

Where a member becomes able to cook independently, it's a huge confidence boost. Often, they're fed up with endless take-way meals and like having a reason to get back in the kitchen. They rediscover flavours they haven't enjoyed for quite a while. Making soups and stews isn't just good for nutrition, it also helps fill days that would otherwise be more boring, sad, and lonely. We can provide recipes, give tips to make it more manageable such as buying ready-chopped veg or pre-peeled potatoes from the supermarket. We may connect them with community food group for extra support.

**Sight Scotland Veterans**

**0800 035 6409**

**<https://sightscotland.org.uk/veterans>**



Fiona and Mick from Sight Scotland Veterans

## Growing your own

At the **Dundee Therapy Garden** veterans who need mental health and wellbeing support benefit from regular time in a green outdoor space. For Ian, who served in the Falklands campaign with the Merchant Navy, "there's a peaceful, uplifting, feeling about the place. If I didn't come here, I would stay in my room."

Much of what's grown is edible and is enjoyed together. "I planted peas a few weeks ago and seeing them grow I get a feeling of achievement – it's quite amazing," says Ian.

Today's lunch includes salad with spinach, rocket, and Lollo Rosso lettuce. Vegetable soup is a staple, usually with extra for veterans to take home. Kale makes a good basis for quiche. The garden's polytunnels even allow for growing grapes and figs. If veterans wish they can help prepare food.



Dundee Therapy Garden



The Dundee Therapy Garden team (L-R) Josie, Lisa and Fiona

In West Lothian veterans are transforming a neglected walled garden, with growing to eat at the heart of the project. Veterans Housing Scotland tenant Jimmy, who served with the Royal Scots, gardens there once a week. “It’s interesting and keeps me agile. I’m always doing something – that’s why I think I’m so fit.”

The project is a partnership of **Defence Gardens Scheme**, Cyrenians, Sight Scotland Veterans and Veterans Housing Scotland, funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. Richard Henderson from Cyrenians says: “Veterans will learn how to grow and cook on their own plots. We’re introducing bushcraft, a fire pit, and an outdoor pizza oven to make eating social and memorable. If you grow leeks and potatoes, then enjoy them in soup, that’s so much more satisfying than the supermarket kind.” Bacon and sausage rolls are on the menu at garden barbecues but, says Richard, “we want veterans to also take food to the next level, by showing them it can be simple and fun.”



Jimmy

Garden tutor Max says “Growing peas is simple, and for quick results, radishes. Try filling a tray with soil, scatter sunflower seeds (from a garden centre, not Supermarket) and sprinkle soil on top. When the flowers come through, the first leaves have a lovely buttery, nutty flavour, for salads.”

**Dundee Therapy Garden:** 01382 202660 / email [dundeetherapygarden@hotmail.com](mailto:dundeetherapygarden@hotmail.com)

**Defence Gardens Scheme:** <https://defencegardens.org>



The walled garden



# THE KNOWLEDGE

## Payments announced for bereaved spouses and partners who remarried

Widows and widowers of serving personnel who forfeited their pensions prior to 2015 could be eligible for a one-off payment of £87,500. The new joint initiative from the UK Ministry of Defence and the Treasury will address old rules in which a cohort of bereaved spouses, civil partners and eligible partners forfeited their pensions if they remarried or cohabited before 2015. The issue has been the focus of campaigning in recent years.

The scheme and one-off payment are designed to support those whose spouses' death was attributable to service. The application window, open later this year, will remain open for two years with support for applicants provided by the Veterans UK Call Centre, and welfare support available through the Veterans Welfare Service for those who require emotional support during the process.

Johnny Mercer, UK Minister of State for Veterans' Affairs, said: "I pay huge tribute to all the campaigners. This is an issue that has made a lot of us feel deeply uncomfortable over the years and this government is going to correct that wrong."

**0800 085 3600 / [www.veteransgateway.org.uk](http://www.veteransgateway.org.uk)**

## Unclaimed service pensions

Veterans UK is appealing to men and women who served in HM Armed Forces from 1 April 1975 and left without entitlement to immediate benefits to find out if they have unclaimed pensions. Between 1st June 2020 – 31st May 2022 over 4,000 Armed Forces pensions went unclaimed.

Chief Executive, Major General Neil Marshall OBE, said: "We can all play our part in encouraging Veterans we know, to come forward if they have not claimed their preserved pensions or preserved lump sums. These can be significant amounts of money. For example, a preserved pension of £1,500 for someone who left in April 1985, would now have a value of £4,500 pa.

"Anyone serving after April 1975, now aged 60 or over, could have an unclaimed pension. AFPS pensions earned before April 2005 are payable at age 60 but will not be paid automatically – they have to be applied for. We urge you to encourage anyone who might be eligible, to visit the Veterans' Gateway website without delay."

**0800 085 3600 / [www.veteransgateway.org.uk](http://www.veteransgateway.org.uk)**

## Driving in Scotland's new Low Emission Zones

The enforcement of Scotland's Low Emission Zones (LEZs) started in Glasgow on 1 June 2023. People are being urged to make sure they are prepared and that their vehicles are compliant.

LEZs, which are also planned for Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh, help improve air quality and protect public health by restricting access on certain city centre roads to the most polluting vehicles. When a non-compliant vehicle is driven in the zone, the owner will receive a Penalty Charge Notice.

You can check if your vehicle meets LEZ standards online at:

**<https://www.lowemissionzones.scot/vehicle-registration-checker>**



A round up of information and new opportunities.



If the vehicle you're using has a disabled vehicle/disabled passenger vehicle tax class, this will automatically be detected by the local authority enforcement systems.

However, if you are a Blue Badge holder and the vehicle you are traveling in does not have a disabled vehicle/disabled passenger vehicle tax class and is non-compliant, then you must register for an exemption in advance of travel into an LEZ. Blue Badge holders can register vehicles for long-term or one-day exemptions which will apply to all LEZs in Scotland.

For details about Blue Badge exemption for LEZs and to register for an exemption:  
**0800 328 5691 / [www.lowemissionzones.scot/blue-badge-exemption](http://www.lowemissionzones.scot/blue-badge-exemption)**

## Your COVID-19 experiences – be heard

The independent Scottish COVID-19 Inquiry has launched its listening project, Let's Be Heard: Sharing Scotland's COVID Experience.

Let's Be Heard is the main channel for people to share their experiences of the pandemic and any lessons they believe should be learned from the response to the pandemic in Scotland.

Experiences shared with Let's Be Heard will help guide the Inquiry's investigations and inform its reports. This will include identifying any disproportionate or unequal impacts on particular groups or communities.

**Let's Be Heard: 0808 175 5555 / <https://lbh.covid19inquiry.scot/>**

## LGBT+ badging scheme for veteran support organisations

LGBT+ veterans' charity and Unforgotten Forces partner **Fighting with Pride** has launched a Pride in Veterans Standard. This programme is open to any organisation that provides veteran core services or support, that wishes to visibly demonstrate its commitment to providing inclusive and welcoming support to LGBT+ Veterans, serving personnel, and their families.

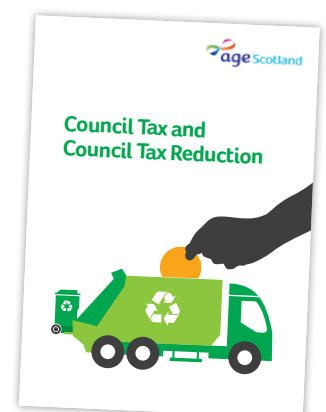
Unforgotten Forces partners Combat Stress, DMWS, Fares4Free, RAF Association and Veterans Tribe Scotland have been badged, alongside in Scotland Glasgow's Helping Heroes, Scottish Veterans Commissioner, Scottish Veterans Residences, Veterans First Point Lothian and Veterans Housing Scotland.

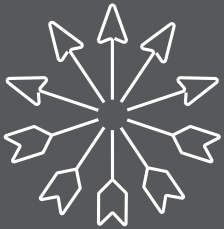
Find out more: [www.fightingwithpride.org.uk](http://www.fightingwithpride.org.uk)

## Council Tax Reduction

Age Scotland has published a 2023 edition of its Council Tax Reduction guide which explains who is eligible for help paying their Council Tax and how to claim. An additional benefit of receiving Council Tax Reduction is that it can open the door to additional support with rising energy bills.

For a free copy contact Age Scotland:  
**0800 12 44 222 / [www.agescotland.org.uk](http://www.agescotland.org.uk)**

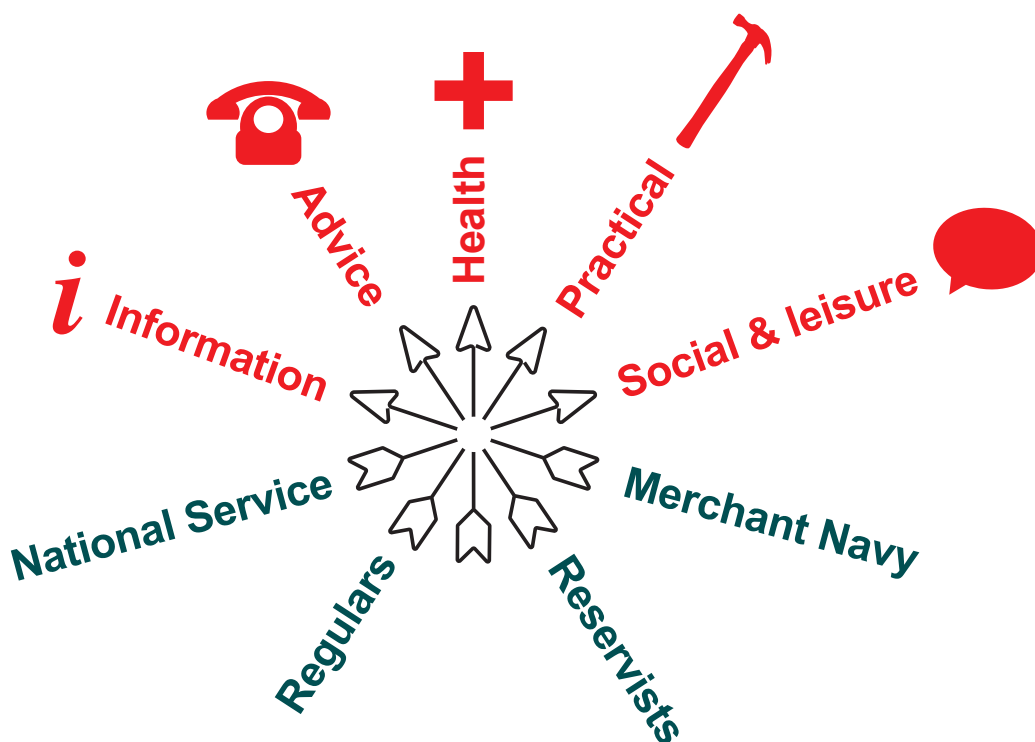




# UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

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](http://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)

