



UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

Supporting Scotland's
Older Veterans

End of Life

Why it's good to talk about it

p6
Veteran-
friendly GP
practices

p9
Ethnic
minority
veterans

p11
Help
to quit
smoking

MAGAZINE

ISSUE TEN: SPRING 2024

Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Foreword | 1 |
| Unforgotten Stories | 2 |
| Veteran-friendly GP practices | 6 |
| Preparing for end of life | 7 |
| Ethnic minority veterans | 9 |
| Help to quit smoking | 11 |
| Female veterans | 12 |
| The knowledge | 13 |

Cover image: Aaron Burden on Unsplash

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

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.



We hope you enjoy this issue and find it informative. We would welcome your views on what you like about the magazine, and what you think could be improved, in our 2024 readership survey. If you received this magazine by post, you'll find the survey inside along with a freepost reply envelope. You can also respond to the survey online at www.surveymonkey.com/r/UFRReaderSurvey2024. Readers who complete the survey can enter a prize draw for a £100 gift voucher.

In this issue you'll find inspiring stories about veterans supported by our Unforgotten Forces charity partners (page 2). You can also read about a new initiative to ensure Scotland's GP services are more responsive to the needs of veterans (page 6). Continuing the health theme is an article on why and how to quit smoking (page 11), and we have a feature on talking about and planning for end-of-life, including Wills and Power of Attorney (page 7).

We celebrate diversity in the veterans' community, with a round-up of Fighting with Pride's work in support of LGBT+ veterans (page 2). We also share the experiences of ethnic minority veterans (page 9) and look at how research is challenging veterans' support services to become responsive to the needs of female veterans (page 12).

Best wishes
Doug Anthony, Editor

Out and about supporting LGBT+ veterans

Charity **Fighting With Pride** supports veterans and serving personnel who identify as LGBT+ and their families. It has informal drop-in sessions every three months in Edinburgh (Veterans First Point, Gilmerton) and Glasgow (Community Veterans Support, the Pearce Institute, Govan). Operations Manager Dougie Morgan says: “These are safe and confidential spaces to speak freely about your experiences and the support you need, and to meet with veterans who have had a similar journey.” To find out more contact Dougie (details at end).

The last six months have been busy. “We attended the Garden of Remembrance and Remembrance Sunday in Edinburgh, for the first time, and laid wreaths on behalf of Fighting With Pride on both occasions” said Dougie. At a networking event in Edinburgh, joint Chief Executives Craig and Caroline presented on the charity’s progress in Scotland to an audience including MSPs and Veterans Minister Graeme Dey MSP.

Dougie’s outreach work has included Job Centre drop-in sessions, speaking to serving personnel, and visits to Castle Huntley, Edinburgh, Perth and Barlinnie prisons with SACRO, a charity that supports veterans in the criminal justice system.

Contact dougie.morgan@fightingwithpride.org.uk
Call **07704 271 392** / visit www.fightingwithpride.org.uk

A proud and emotional day

In November 2023 a group of veterans with sight loss joined the Cenotaph Parade in London as part of a **Sight Scotland Veterans** trip. For Army veteran Willie McKinlay, who passed on a wreath to be laid at the Cenotaph, it was a very proud and emotional day. “We need to get the message across to the youngsters, so they remember what happened in the past and what people had to give up, and don’t repeat our mistakes,” said Willie.

John Reilly, of the Sight Scotland Veterans Hawkhead Centre staff team, said “as a veteran myself I was so honoured and proud to march alongside our veterans. They are a true inspiration.”

The trip also included a visit to the RAF Hendon Museum where “many belied their age by scrambling through small gaps to enter all the planes and helicopters on show,” said the charity’s Michael Donaldson. “After the Parade, Princess Anne took our veterans’ salute in front of the Guards Memorial as they marched back. The day finished with raising a glass to those who we have lost.”



Dougie (R) marks remembrance



Sight Scotland Veterans members in London

Veterans' art showcased in Glasgow

Glasgow's Kelvingrove Museum is hosting an exhibition of original artwork by 16 veterans attending the **Erskine Reid Macewen Activities Centre (ERMAC)** in Bishopton. It captures the transformation of the river Clyde, and how it mirrors the lives of veterans as they adapt to new environments post-service.

Army Cadet Force veteran Jim McGoran discovered ERMAC "after losing my wife and beating cancer, when I was at a bit of loss with what to do with myself." Now attending five days a week, Jim enjoys the banter and sharing his creative side. "I never thought I would have the chance to have my artwork on display in a location like this. It has given me a new lease of life and a passion to explore further," said Jim.

ERMAC 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 range of interests, and access support services. Art Tutor Mac McDade said: "our veterans rose to the challenge and produced a wonderfully diverse range of artwork including drawings, paintings, clay work, sculptures, mosaic and collage." Erskine Veterans Charity Chief Executive Ian Cumming said: "I am filled with immense pride in the incredible individuals who make up our Erskine community. Through this captivating display they showcase the depth and breadth of their talents."

The display will run to May 1st, 2024. For more information about ERMAC call **0141 814 4534** (Debra Dickson) or www.erskine.org.uk. Erskine has recently announced plans to establish a similar veterans' activities centre in Forres, Moray.

Going the extra mile for Eric

In December Army veteran Eric Smith, aged 90, enjoyed a Christmas bacon roll morning at Lothian Veterans Centre with support from **Legion Scotland's** Tony Hooman. "I met Eric five years ago," said Tony. "We matched him a support volunteer, Geoff, who would take him shopping or just for a run in the car." During Covid Geoff could only speak to Eric through his window, "then sadly Geoff died. which was devastating for Eric." Tony kept visiting, then Eric was diagnosed with dementia. Tony worked hard with David, who has Power of Attorney for Eric, to get him into an Erskine Care Home.

Veterans Community Support Manager Tommy Douglas said: "this story highlights how our staff and volunteers go above and beyond the call of duty, every day. We'll continue to look after Eric as he sees us as his only family."

Call **0131 550 1560** / email support@legionscotland.org.uk



ERMAC artists at the Kelvingrove



Eric (L) and Tony (R)

More than a journey with Fares4Free

Veterans' transportation charity **Fares4Free** has achieved accreditation by The Contact Group, a collaboration of charity, academic and professional organisations working to improve mental health support to the UK armed forces community.

This accreditation highlights how Fares4Free's approach has evolved in its six years of operation. Initially, it linked veterans to taxi firms willing to give them 'fares for free'. Now, transport remains free to veterans, serving personnel, and their family members, but is instead provided by a team of dedicated and professionally-trained outreach support drivers and volunteers. That helps ensure Fares4free journeys provide safe spaces for those who find themselves in fraught circumstances.

Fares4Free can help members of the armed forces community who have difficulty attending hospital, mental health, or therapeutic appointments. It can also help those who have lost touch with their community to start attending local activities, events, and volunteering opportunities. It has more than 50 partners to which it can connect people who need further support, such as money advice, or home adaptations. Operations Manager Leon Fisher said: "we help our service users to make it to their appointments, and to stick with health treatment plans. Our friendly and supportive approach also contributes to good mental health and wellbeing."

To find out more visit www.fares4free.org or call **0141 266 6000**. To find out more about Fares4Free volunteering opportunities call or email leon@fares4free.org.

Veterans bolster Men's Sheds

In Springhill, Shotts, local men have transformed a run-down hut into a **Men's Shed**. One is 72-year-old former Royal Engineer Commando Ray 'Magpie' Elliot. "We worked together, utilising each other's strengths, skills and experience and over a short period of time, we have become friends and a great team," said Ray.

For Ray, "joining the Shed has been life changing." He sees it as ideal for veterans. "You will enjoy the warm welcome, fun and camaraderie. Veterans with an illness or injury would be more than welcome."

There's an Aladdin's cave of kit in the Shed. "We now have a mitre saw, table saw, band saw, jigsaws, electric scroll saw, router, plunge drill, planer, grinder, rotary sander, and more." In Men's Sheds, experienced Sheddors can support new members in safe use of such equipment. "We still like our old tools though," said Ray, "including wooden vice, wooden mallets, and hand planers."

Sheds also benefit the wider community, with recent Springhill projects including furniture for low-income families, wildlife boxes and benches. Ray and fellow Sheddors are now regulars on Listen Lanarkshire community radio station (107.7FM).

Find your local Men's Shed: visit www.scottishmsa.org.uk/find-a-shed / call **07465 202 834**



Activities for limbless veterans

BLESMA, the charity for veterans who have lost a limb, or use of a limb, has a new Outreach Officer for Scotland. Rachael Kennedy comes from education, where she worked with teenagers with complex additional support needs. She is busy preparing an exciting range of activities for BLESMA members this year, including clay pigeon shooting, gliding, rock climbing and a tour of a Japanese Garden. “I’m looking forward to meeting with members in the coming months and will always have time for a chat and a cuppa if passing by,” said Rachel. She would love BLESMA members to get in touch, whether with a question, a suggestion or just for a chat.

Email outreachscotland@blesma.org / call **07884 695703**



Rachel Kennedy

Essential advice, ASAP

Army veteran Donald* was at a low ebb when he reached out to the **Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP)**. He was in his sixties, his marriage had recently ended, and mental health issues related to his time in the military had made it impossible for him to continue in his job. “Donald was living in temporary accommodation, with no money apart from disability benefit,” says Tony Kenmuir, who leads the ASAP service. “He was confused by the hoops he had to jump through to get secure accommodation with a housing association. The situation was becoming confrontational, and his mental health was suffering.”

First, ASAP helped Donald tackle his money problems. “Our advisers can check what benefits a veteran is entitled to, and for Donald we found he was due Universal Credit, Housing Benefit and a Council Tax reduction,” says Tony. “It amounted to over £12,000.”

An ASAP adviser helped Donald with paperwork to claim these benefits. “Meanwhile we sourced supermarket vouchers and an emergency grant,” says Tony. “We found him permanent place to stay, which he was able to furnish thanks to a further Poppyscotland grant.” In follow up meetings, ASAP has supported Donald to address his debts, deal with family difficulties, and investigate the possibility of further military benefits. “I finally found someone who understood and accepted me at a difficult time in my life and I can speak to them about any issue,” says Donald.

“ASAP is managed by Citizens Advice Scotland, and made possible by our funding partnership with PoppyScotland,” says Tony. “We’re for any veteran or currently serving member of HM Armed Forces, and their families. Our specialisms are money advice, help identifying and claiming benefits, and support to deal with debt. But we’re not limited to that and can help with whatever problems a client is experiencing.” ASAP has local staff operating from Citizens Advice Bureaux in many areas, and these support clients through a mix of phone and face-to-face appointments. In its 14 years of operation ASAP has unlocked over £25 million unclaimed benefits for its clients in Scotland. So if you have money worries, or problems of any kind, what are you waiting for; drop them a line – ASAP.

Email ASAP@cas.org.uk

Visit your local CAB www.cas.org.uk/bureaux

Call **0800 028 1456**

* Not his real name



Making GP practices veteran-friendly

A new NHS initiative aims to make the nation's GPs, and other primary health-care professionals, 'veteran-friendly'. But what difference will the 'General Practice Armed Forces and Veterans Recognition Scheme' make?

Dr Scott Jamieson is a Kirriemuir GP and Royal Navy veteran. Having heard about the success of a similar initiative in England and Wales he was keen to help pilot the scheme in Scotland. "Several of our team had Armed Forces links, so we were already quite veteran aware," he says.

Practice staff underwent training and accreditation. "There was a basic level everyone did, plus a managerial and clinical perspective," he says. Now patients are routinely asked if they have served in the Armed Forces. "So far, we've identified almost 100 veterans and we're finding more every week."

Where a health concern is caused or made worse by military service, knowing that can improve care. "Under the Armed Force Covenant, we're obliged to ensure veterans are referred to the best people to help them," says Scott. "It's about bespoke, not preferential treatment, and ensuring veterans aren't disadvantaged. So, say, if someone has service-related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder they might benefit more from a veterans' mental health service."

Scott fears veterans sometimes overlook how service has affected their health. "If you are in your 40s or 50s, your knees are gubbed, and were in the Royal Marines, tell us! There may be a link. Or if someone did National Service and was involved in ballistics, they may have significant premature hearing loss as a result."

A recent role in GP practice is the Community Link Worker. "Ours are phenomenal," says Scott. "They link patients to non-medical activities, including veteran-specific ones. We recently got a patient involved in a veterans' horse-riding project for mental wellbeing."

Scott encourages veterans to ask that their veteran status be noted in their medical records as this can make a big difference to referrals and treatment. He also sees a role for them in hastening sign-up to the scheme. "The Veterans Minister has written to all GPs in Scotland about it, but practices are super-busy so let them know that it's important to you," he says,

At the Scottish Government, Gary Cocker leads the team setting up the scheme "We're working closely with NHS Armed Forces and Veterans Champions to encourage practices to join, and keeping an eye on uptake," he says. He's encouraged by the experience of England and Wales, where their scheme had a slow start but "is now snowballing. And we've learned a lot from them, such as making it as easy as possible for busy practices to take part." With the Scottish scheme being a response to recommendations by the Scottish Veterans Commissioner he's encouraged that she "recently reported very positive changes around healthcare."

Photo: Andrea Piacquadio on pexels



Why death should be a talking point

The possibility that you will be asked to give your life for your country is inherent in military service, and many veterans have personal experiences of mortal danger and witnessing death. As we get older, dwelling on mortality might feel unhelpful and unhealthy. But are there aspects of death, dying and bereavement we might benefit from considering more?

“I don’t think death is a taboo,” says Rebecca Patterson, Director of ‘Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief’. “We see death represented in the arts, media, computer games and in the news. But I do think people tend not to talk about the more mundane and practical aspects around our own mortality.”

Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief is an initiative of the Scottish Partnership for Palliative Care which aims to improve people’s experiences of declining health, death, dying and bereavement. “We started this work because we recognised that, however good end-of-life medical care is, some things can only be dealt with by families and friends,” says Rebecca. “We want to foster a more positive and supportive culture about death and dying, so people can talk about it and plan. Usually, people want to do the right thing when someone is affected by ill health, death or grief, but may not know what to do or say, or perhaps worry they are intruding. When it comes to bereavement, relatively few people need specialist counselling services, but everyone needs support from their social networks, and we can all help with that.”

“We also want people to feel able to talk to their nearest and dearest about their own preferences and priorities” says Rebecca. “eg, would you like to attend your grandson’s wedding even if it might be detrimental to your long-term health? Would you like doctors to prolong your life for as long as possible even if this causes you some discomfort, or might there come a time when you want to be made comfortable and let nature take its course? It’s important to tell people while you have the chance, as well as taking care of practical and legal matters such as Power of Attorney.”

‘Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief’ offer a free course called End of Life Aid Skills for Everyone - EASE for short. “It’s for anyone who wants to know more about illness, dying, bereavement, and how to offer practical support,” says Rebecca. EASE involves four two-hour sessions, once a week for four weeks, attended either online or in person. “The course is run for communities, by communities, and we’re always looking for people interested in being a course leader,” says Rebecca.

The course was designed around the things carers of dying people told ‘Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief’ they wished that had known before their caring role began. “How do you navigate the health and social care system? What are common issues others have faced towards end-of-life? These are the things people want to know,” says Rebecca. Bringing people together in a safe environment often unlocks a huge amount of knowledge. “Health and care professionals bring a lot of expertise and we share that on the course through films and other resources. But that is only one part of the story. Course participants bring a range of life experiences with them and learn a lot from each other.”

In addition to EASE, ‘Good Life, Good Death, Good Grief’ runs various initiatives all aimed at creating a Scotland where people can support each other around death, dying and bereavement. This includes an annual Demystifying Death Week, that runs 6-12 May 2024. “The week is about shining a light on death and dying, and we encourage everyone to get involved by putting on events and sharing resources” says Rebecca. “A wide range of organisations and individuals host events, such as death cafes, discussion groups, lectures, film screenings, craft workshops, theatre performances and seminars.” There’s also an autumn ‘To Absent Friends’ festival to remember loved ones who have died, through stories, celebrations, and acts of reminiscence.

Visit www.goodlifedeathgrief.org.uk / call 0131 272 2735

Lifting the veil on end-of-life decisions

While it can be uncomfortable to think about our own mortality, forward planning about end-of-life decisions can make things easier on people we care about when the time comes. Age Scotland Info Writer **Laura Gardner** shares some considerations.

Writing a Will

While there are rules in Scotland for dividing up property if someone dies without a Will, there can be uncertainty and disputes without one. It is best to get a Will checked by a solicitor. Some offer free Will-writing in return for a donation to a charity, including www.Willreliefscotland.org, www.Willaid.org.uk, and **Solicitors for Older People Scotland** in partnership with **Age Scotland** www.age.scot/freewillservice.

Planning your own funeral

Writing a plan for your funeral avoids family members having to guess at your wishes. This can bring some comfort during their grief. You can include funeral plans in a Will if you have one, or the **Planning Your Own Funeral** guide produced by the Scottish Government provides information and space to record your wishes. Visit www.gov.scot or contact the **Age Scotland helpline** for a copy.

Power of Attorney

A Power of Attorney is a legal document that allows someone of your choosing to make decisions on your behalf in certain circumstances. This might be useful in a medical emergency, or if you were to become unable to make decisions, for instance due to dementia. Without Power of Attorney, decisions may not be made by who you would have wanted. It can also be difficult and costly for family members to get legal authority to take decisions on your behalf.

Power of Attorney can cover finance decisions and health and welfare decisions. Crucially, it must be set up while a person has the capability to make their own decisions. More information is available in Age Scotland's **A guide to Power of Attorney in Scotland**.

If you would like more information on any of these topics, call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222**.



Photo: Kampus Production on Pexels

Celebrating ethnic diversity in veterans

Around one in ten HM Armed Forces personnel are from an ethnic minority background, and over time there will be an increasing number of these veterans in or approaching later life.

Do ethnic minority veterans face more challenges during and after military service, compared with other service personnel? While there's evidence that in other countries, such as the USA, they do, there is yet little UK research into their experiences. However, an army report in 2021 found they were more likely to report instances of sexual harassment and were overrepresented in complaints concerning bullying and harassment in general.

While today many ethnic minority service and ex-service personnel are UK citizens, HM Armed Forces also continues to recruit from Commonwealth Countries, and the historic contribution of Commonwealth service personnel is immense. Poppyscotland and the Royal British Legion have long campaigned for Commonwealth service personnel to be able to live in the UK after service. This has had success, with visa fees waived and the qualifying period for lowered to six years in service (no period for those retired due to injury or illness.) Yet barriers remain, with high fees still levied on each family member who stays in the UK with Commonwealth veterans.

Khagendra's story

Khagendra Limbu retired from the Gurkha regiment in 1995, after more than 21 years of service, latterly in the rank of Major. Now age 76, he lives between Aberdeen, where his wife and daughters are, and his home country of Nepal. "Many Gurkhas enjoy living in the UK but for me, at my age, the Nepalese lifestyle keeps drawing me back." While in Scotland he feels included in the veterans' community. "We Gurkhas are invited to social occasions and to Remembrance Day events."

He was involved in combat in Borneo in the 1960s, and his final posting was in British Hong Kong where Gurkhas were protecting the colony against incursion from mainland China. He is particularly proud of his year-long service at Buckingham Palace in 1987. "By tradition there would always be two Gurkhas on Royal Guard duty."

It was the Regiment's reputation that led him, and many of his peers, to enlist. "In Nepal, the Gurkhas have a big name and there is a lot of respect," he says. He is proud of the regiment's history, which goes back to the early 1800s. "The British fought us for two years, and afterwards their leadership was so impressed by our bravery and skills that they invited us into the British Army."

Many Gurkhas have received the Victoria Cross, and this century a Gurkha was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross medal for valour in Afghanistan. "I feel very proud to be a Gurkha, of the part we've played in the British Armed Forces in the past, and the part we continue to play," he says.



Mo's story

Mo Torau, originally from Fiji, joined the Royal Highland Fusiliers in 2002. "It was an opportunity to go abroad, see the world, and have a good career with good pay," he says. The experience was a rollercoaster. "I felt accepted, but I was in a new environment where the language, the food and the weather were different. It wasn't easy; I really had to commit myself."

He was medically discharged after 10 years and began a new career in civil engineering. Now, he has set up a charity, **Commonwealth Veterans and Family Support Organisations**, to help veterans like him across the UK. "I became a case worker in an Armed Forces charity and saw that there wasn't much attention paid to the needs of Commonwealth veterans. We can face disadvantage with things like getting visas, accessing health services, and finding housing. We keep having to prove that we are here legitimately, despite having served and sometimes lost people we care about."

Mo and his family now live in housing provided by Veterans Housing Scotland. "When I was discharged, I felt lost, and there didn't seem to be any help for veterans in my situation. Discovering Veterans Housing Scotland and the support that is available has helped make my future better and brighter," he said. Mo sees progress in how Armed Forces charities support Commonwealth veterans, but "we're not there yet, as some important needs have still to be met."

Commonwealth Veterans and Family Support Organisations offers veterans from Commonwealth countries a "place to come, open up and feel at home." Setting up the charity was challenging and took time, but the support of his wife and son kept Mo going. Now lots of Commonwealth veterans, and their families, have been in touch. "We offer welfare support, and help them to access legal, financial and housing advice, with help from our partners." While the charity was set up primarily for Commonwealth veterans, non-Commonwealth veterans who have faced similar disadvantage are also welcome.

Mo's message to Commonwealth veterans is "don't hesitate to ask for help. The road isn't easy when you leave service, but we're here to help. Stay positive and look after your family as without them you can end up on your back."

More information and support

Poppyscotland

Visit www.poppyscotland.org.uk / call 0131 550 1557

Royal Commonwealth Ex-Service League

Visit www.commonwealthveterans.org.uk

Commonwealth Veterans and Families Support Group

Call 07851 112 312 / email cvfsg23@gmail.com / find them on Facebook

AJEX (The Jewish Military Association)

AJEX aims to continue Remembrance of the Jewish contribution to the military; to combat antisemitism through education; and to provide welfare for Jewish veterans and their families.

Visit www.ajex.org.uk / call 020 8202 2323

Smoking – why and how to quit

The British Army is now ‘smoke free’ yet many veterans live with the legacy of Forces culture that encouraged smoking for bonding and stress relief.

A recent University of Glasgow health study comparing 78,000 veterans with 253,000 non-veterans found that supporting veterans who smoked to quit would be “the most effective measure which can be adopted to improve veterans’ health.”

“If you’re a life-long smoker, quitting now may seem pointless, but there are always benefits no matter what your age,” says NHS Smoking Cessation Practitioner Agnes Rowland. “Stopping smoking is one of the biggest proactive steps people who smoke can take to quickly improve health and mental wellbeing and reduce the risk of longer-term illness.”

Having a reason to stop smoking is vital. “Some people want to be around and healthy for their families,” says Agnes. The benefits start almost immediately “After twenty minutes your pulse has normalised. Within a day you can feel more energetic, with clearer lungs, and better blood circulation. In days you can taste and smell better. Within weeks walking gets easier, thanks to improved blood circulation. In months your lungs work better. After five years your risk of heart attack will halve, and in ten to 15 years so will your lung cancer risk.”

So why do so many people struggle to quit? “Nicotine addiction can be very powerful, and some people use smoking as a coping strategy in stressful situation,” says Agnes. “However, research has shown that quitting improves positive mood, and reduces anxiety, depression, and stress.”

Practitioners like Agnes offer advice and information to increase your chances of stopping for good. “We can discuss withdrawals from nicotine, for instance some people get headaches, constipation, and irritation, and suggest ways to overcome them. We can help you develop coping strategies to deal with risky situations. Things like temporarily avoiding certain social situations, especially friends who smoke who can sometimes feel they are losing a common bond with you if you quit,” says Agnes. “We don’t tell anyone what to do, just share what others have found useful.” Getting support from the Quit Your Way service, along with proper use of nicotine replacement, increases your chances of stopping and staying stopped.

Agnes says people often notice more in their pocket. “Some are just happy to clear their bills, while others put the money they save away - maybe £12 a day - for outings and holidays.”

Support to stop smoking is readily available. “Face-to-face or telephone support, whichever suits you best,” says Agnes. “Your local Pharmacy can also support you, and we have Practitioners in hospitals who can help you quit if you are a patient.”

Find support to quit

Call **0800 84 84 84** / visit **www.QuitYourWay.scot**



Photo: Ivan Samkov on Pexels

How to support older female veterans?

Dr Moira Bailey is passionate about supporting veterans. “I was married to a veteran, recently deceased, who had service-related trauma that only became apparent after he retired.”

She and colleagues at Robert Gordon University, led by Professor Zoe Morrison, also a veteran, were asked by the UK Office of Veterans Affairs to find out what helps, and hinders, female veterans in getting support when needed. “There was anecdotal evidence that female veterans face additional barriers. We wanted to know more.”

11% of Armed Forces personnel are women, making them a minority within a minority. Research has found that women are at a considerable risk of various forms of military adversity during service, aside from combat, including sexual trauma, emotional bullying, and physical assault. Such experiences can have long-term consequences for their health and wellbeing.

“We experienced changes in our attitudes as a result of speaking to these women,” says Moira, “It was humbling and mind-blowing to learn about their experiences. We wanted to give them a voice.”

A key recommendation is that veterans’ support services need to do more to make women feel safe. “A lot of the trauma for female veterans has arisen within the Armed Forces community, so why would they seek support from it?” says Moira. “Armed Forces charities should record and review how many women are using their services. They should ask female veterans what would help them feel safe and supported.”

“What works for men doesn’t necessarily work for women,” says Moira. “The ‘hero’ designation, and images of veterans in combat uniforms in publicity, can be a put off. I spoke to women who served who don’t wear their medals, while their husbands do.”

For Moira, a female veteran-friendly service “should be social and informal, it shouldn’t be an Armed Forces venue or look too military, and women should be visible in any leaflets and pictures there.” The researchers found that female veterans are often happy to mix with male veterans, if not outnumbered. “But sometimes they will just want to talk to other women, if it’s a women’s health issue, or if they’ve experienced military sexual trauma.” Moira has found services that do offer female veterans this environment. “Go looking for them. Your age, and whether you left years ago, won’t matter.”

The ‘hero’ designation, and images of veterans in combat uniforms in publicity, can be a put off



Photo: Anna Shvets on Pexels

THE KNOWLEDGE

A round up of hot topic information and new opportunities

Calling all bookworms

Fiona Maxwell explains what the charity Reading Force can offer older veterans.

The Armed Forces charity Reading Force is all about having fun reading and chatting about books, giving common ground for good conversations. This can be grandparents reading with their grandchildren, or adults getting together to form a book club, either meeting in person or online. A book club is a good way of connecting with friends, or making new ones, and reducing social isolation.

Reading Force supports Armed Forces veterans of all ages to share stories with their grandchildren by sending out free story books. They can then share their collective thoughts about the book in a special scrapbook (also free) - write or draw, it's up to them.

If a group of veterans or their spouses/partners would like to set up a book club, Reading Force can help them, and provide each member of the group with the same free book each month for 3 months.

For more information about how Reading Force helps to support veterans, please contact Fiona Maxwell, Ambassador Scotland: Call **07548 778 930** / email fiona@readingforce.org.uk / visit www.readingforce.org.uk

Always wanted to be part of a book club. Love reading but found excuses recently not to, so am hoping this will give me the push I need to read more and make new friends.

Book Club Member



Benefits rates changes from April 2024

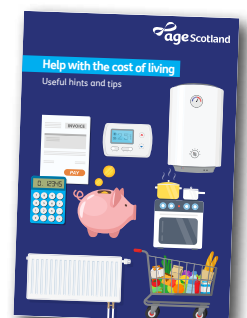
From the tax year beginning April 2024, new rates come into effect for some benefits.

The government has proposed an increase of 6.7% for many benefits, in line with the Consumer Price Index measure of inflation. This includes the Armed Forces Independence Payment, Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance, and inflation-linked tax credits. State Pension, which is protected by the government's triple lock, is due to increase by 8.5%, in line with earnings growth.

You can view the proposed rates online at www.gov.uk. There will also be increases to payments under the War Pension Scheme and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme at rates yet to be announced. If you are in receipt of any benefits affected, you should receive a letter confirming the increase closer to the time. For more information or a free benefit check, call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** or call the **Armed Services Advice Project** on **0800 028 1456**.

Surviving the cost-of-living crisis

Age Scotland has published a free advice guide to help older people navigate the cost-of-living crisis, with advice on energy bills, tips on how to shop smart and eat well when food prices bite, recipes from top Scottish chefs, and a directory on where to go for help. For a paper copy call the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** or visit www.agescotland.org.uk to read the guide online.

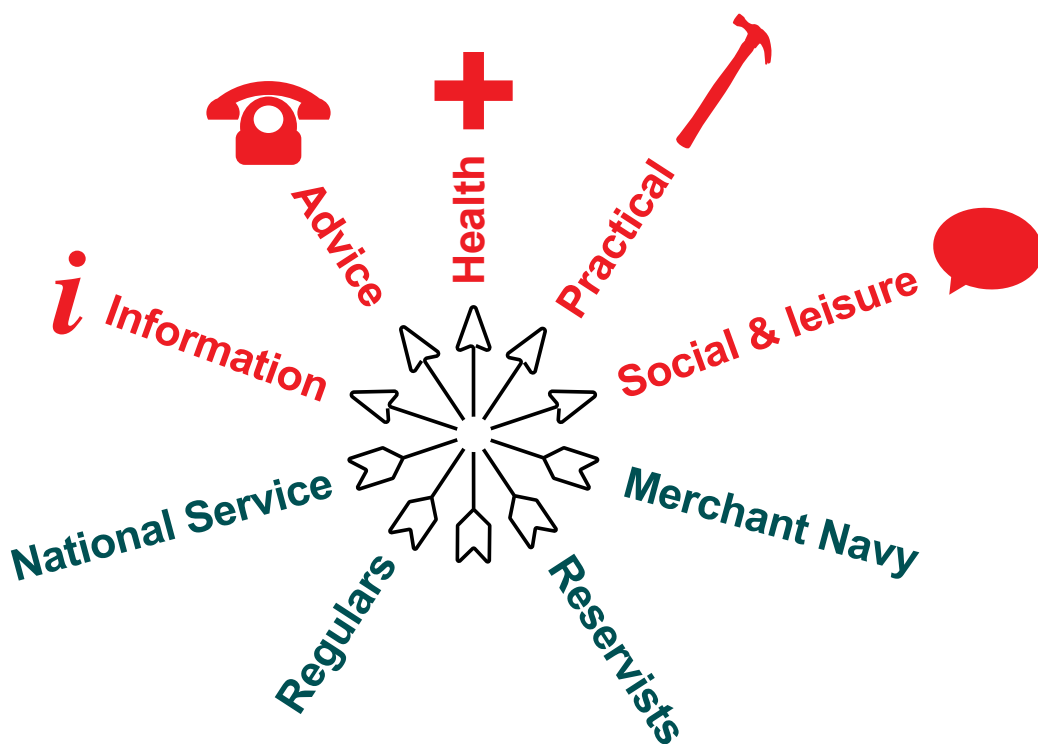




UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

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)

