

Recommendations from Veterans Health & Wellbeing: A Distinctive Scottish Approach

SVC Recommendation 1: A Distinctive Scottish Approach to Veterans' Health

The Scottish Government and NHS(S) should commit to establishing a distinctive Scottish Approach to Veterans' Health at a strategic level, accept or adapt the guiding principles of this approach and work with their partners to embed it at an operational level.

Scottish Government update:

We are working with stakeholders, NHS Armed Forces and Veterans Champions and through the refreshed Armed Forces Personnel and Veterans Health Joint Group to ensure we create the conditions for and drive forward progress towards the 'Distinctive Scottish Approach to Veterans Health'. Our progress towards the remaining recommendations shows how we are working to achieve this.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented/ongoing

SVC Recommendation 2: Improving Collaboration and Partnership

The Scottish Government should reinvigorate senior participation in cross-border networks with a view to improved information sharing and increased involvement in collaborative working and initiatives.

Scottish Government update:

We actively participate in cross-border networks through the MOD/DH Partnership Board and a number of sub-groups. A meeting of the MOD/DH Partnership Board will be held in Scotland in November 2019.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 3: Leadership and Governance

The Armed Forces and Veterans Health Joint Group should refresh its membership and remit in order to provide the vital strategic leadership that will deliver the Scottish Approach to Veterans' Health.

Scottish Government update:

The Armed Forces Personnel & Veterans Health Joint Group (AFPVH JG) brings together NHS Champions, representatives of the serving community, veterans organisations, Scottish Government officials and other stakeholders. Refreshing the structure, role and remit of the Joint Group has been a priority, as it is central to delivering a number of recommendations. In December 2018, DG Health and Social Care and Chief Executive of the NHS approved a new structure for the Joint Group, which consists of a Strategic Oversight Group and an Implementation Group. The Strategic Oversight Group will meet for the first time on 16 May 2019 and the Implementation Group's inaugural meeting will be on 10 June 2019.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 4: National Managed Clinical Network

The Scottish Government and NHS(S) should establish a network on veterans' health. The network will have oversight of delivering the Scottish Approach to Veterans' Health, and will consider the key issues raised in this report and others it deems relevant. It should reflect current structures in the health and social care sector in its membership and approach.

Scottish Government update:

NHS National Services Division are exploring a Managed Clinical Network as a potential longer-term solution to ensuring equitable and sustainable health services for veterans. The proposal has moved to stage two of their planning process, meaning a full application and a detailed work plan will now be developed before putting the proposal to NHS Chief Executives then Scottish Ministers.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 5: Mental Health Action Plan

The Scottish Government and NHS(S), through the network on veterans health (see recommendation 4), should produce a Mental Health Action Plan for the long-term delivery of services and support. Systemic issues of funding, collaboration, leadership, planning, governance and training of staff will be key.

Scottish Government update:

Scotland's 10-year mental health strategy, launched in 2017, reinforces our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and includes a range of actions to improve care, services and support for people with a mental health problem, including veterans and their families.

In addition, we continue to work with NHS(S) in order to progress with establishing a Managed Clinical Network (MCN) for veterans healthcare. We would expect, should the network be approved through the formal NHS(S) process, that its initial priority would be to lead on the development of a Veterans Mental Health Action Plan which would complement our Mental Health Strategy.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 6: Drugs Misuse

The Scottish Government and NHS(S) should assess the scale and nature of drugs misuse – especially prescription and non-prescription painkillers – amongst the veterans community in Scotland and introduce remedial measures. This should be taken forward by the Joint Group and network, and included as part of the Mental Health Action Plan.

Scottish Government update:

The new Drug and Alcohol Information System (DAISy) will be introduced no later than December 2019. DAISy will gather key demographic and outcome data on people who engage in drug and alcohol treatment services and a field identifier for veterans has been included. This will provide useful data on the nature and scale of drug misuse among veterans across Scotland. Alongside this is potential to link this dataset to other health and social care datasets, providing a more detailed picture of service demand.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 7: Barriers to Accessing Services

The Scottish Government and NHS(S) should build on existing work aimed at reducing barriers to veterans accessing mental health services. This will include measures to address issues of stigma, seeking help, and improving awareness and understanding within the medical profession. This should be taken forward by the Joint Group and network, and included as part of the Mental Health Action Plan.

Scottish Government update:

Last year the Scottish Government provided £825,000 to support the Veterans First Point services network and will provide a further £1.6 million over the next two years to 2020, a total of £2.4 million. Funding for specialist and community outreach mental health services by Combat Stress for veterans resident in Scotland continues at £1.424 million for this year.

SVC evaluation of status:



Not yet implemented

SVC Recommendation 8: Access to Lifelong Services

The Scottish Government, NHS(S), Health Boards and local Councils should make a commitment to veterans with the most severe and enduring physical (and mental) conditions that they can access the highest quality health and social care services for life and as their needs change. Health and Social Care Partnerships and Integrated Joint Boards will be instrumental in planning the delivery of these services and the national network recommended in chapter 2 should assume responsibility for oversight of this work as an early priority.

Scottish Government update:

The Managed Clinical Network referred to under Recommendation 4 will provide the oversight that this recommendation requires. In addition, the Scottish Trauma Network, now in its second year of phased implementation, aims to meet the needs of the

population of Scotland, working across traditional specialities and geographic boundaries to deliver better outcomes for patients, improving outcomes at every stage of the patient journey, from pre-admission to rehabilitation.

SVC evaluation of status:



Not yet implemented

SVC Recommendation 9: Funding for Multiple Injuries

The Scottish Government and NHS(S) should give consideration to whether the costs of specialist care for veterans who have suffered polytrauma should be funded through the National Services Division (NSD).

Scottish Government update:

The National Trauma Network referred to under Recommendation 8 will help Scotland's most severely injured patients, ensuring they have the best chance of a speedy recovery from their injuries. The issue of the cost of specialist care could be considered by the Armed Forces Personnel & Veterans Health Joint Group's Strategic Oversight Group.

SVC evaluation of status:



Not yet implemented

SVC Recommendation 10: The National Trauma Network

NHS(S) should include the specific needs of veterans who have suffered polytrauma as part of its work in setting up a national Trauma Network.

Scottish Government update:

The National Trauma Network referred to within responses to recommendations 8 and 9 is based around four Major Trauma Centres, and has already marked several milestones including the introduction of the Trauma App, the Trauma Desk and triage tools. These will help Scotland's most severely injured patients, and ensure patients have the best chance of a speedy recovery from their injuries. We will consider the content of recommendations 8, 9 and 10 as part of the work going forward to develop the Network.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 11: Wheelchairs for Amputees

NHS(S) should adapt current arrangements to ensure an appropriate level of funding is available to guarantee that wheelchairs provided by the MOD for veterans with severe amputations can be serviced, maintained and replaced with the best possible equipment commensurate with that individual's needs.

Scottish Government update:

Specialist wheelchairs are provided based on clinical need, in line with nationally agreed criteria. A mobility needs assessment takes account of the each individual's wider circumstances and goals to ensure that the most appropriate solution is provided for the individual. We are engaging with stakeholders to enhance our understanding of veterans' experiences and continuing work to address any potential issues around provision of wheelchairs.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 12: Chronic Pain Management

The National Advisory Committee for Chronic Pain (NACCP) should consider veterans specifically as part of their work to improve chronic pain management in Scotland.

Scottish Government update:

The National Advisory Committee on Chronic Pain (NACCP) is taking forward work to inform policy development and support NHS Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs) to improve the provision of pain services across Scotland. This includes a project to develop a core dataset and a set of Quality Performance Indicators (QPIs) to measure service outcomes and improvements for people living with chronic pain, including veterans. The Director of Pain Association Scotland (PAS), sits on NACCP

and has been in discussion with the MOD Clinical Adviser for Veterans about the need to recognise veterans as a vulnerable group that would benefit from tailored support for chronic pain. The Pain Association has identified a gap in the quality of support services received on leaving the forces, in comparison to those received whilst serving. We are actively engaging with stakeholders to better understand experiences of veterans. PAS are piloting a programme in Scotland after securing funding from the Veterans Association. The programme offers veterans one-to-one self-management sessions via phone or skype to discuss personal needs and outcomes. This alleviates the need for the individual to attend clinics in person, recognising attendance may be difficult due to the nature of their pain. PAS will evaluate the project after 18 months and NACCP, chaired by the Deputy Chief Medical Officer, will consider outcomes and findings of the pilot.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 13: Funding Hearing Aids

The Scottish Government and NHS(S) should make funding available so that veterans with the most severe hearing loss as a result of their military service can have access to the best possible hearing aids and support.

Scottish Government update:

Patients' needs are assessed by an audiologist, taking account of product specification, flexibility and cosmetic appearance, leading to a recommendation of a specific hearing aid. Typically, a like for like replacement is provided. For example if a patient – veteran or otherwise – has previously worn “in the ear” (ITE) hearing aids, and provided it is still technically appropriate, they should receive replacement ITEs. Custom ITE hearing aids are defined as “specialist” and offer a mainly cosmetic difference rather than significant technical advantage over “behind the ear” (BTE) hearing aids. ITEs are not routinely provided by NHS Audiology Services, mainly due to cost (often several times the price of BTEs) and being seen as less reliable and requiring more maintenance. ITEs may be prescribed where there is a physical fit issue or where personal protective equipment or other head wear may make the wearing of a BTE difficult. In the past, ITEs have been prescribed due to BTEs not meeting the acoustic performance required to overcome hearing loss. However, most hearing loss can now be resolved to the same standard with a BTE.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 14: The Invictus Games

The Scottish Government should work with partners, charities and others to scope a proposal to host a future Invictus Games in Scotland.

Scottish Government update:

The Invictus Games took place in Sydney in October 2018. The Scottish Government acknowledges the power of sport and the impact it plays in the lives of our injured service men and women. EventScotland is conducting an assessment of the Sydney event with a view to considering the value to Scotland as a potential future host. A feasibility study will be needed and, should this show that bidding would be appropriate, EventScotland will lead the formal bidding process. On 24 January 2019, the MOD Secretary of State announced that the Team UK Invictus Games Trials will take place in Sheffield, 22 – 26 July 2019. The event is the first ever national games for wounded, injured and sick veterans and personnel and is being delivered by the Ministry of Defence, Help the Heroes and the Royal British Legion.

In addition, the Mey Highland Cultural Games will be held in John O’Groats in August 2019. This will be a traditional highland games but plans are to include Invictus-style events for war veterans and para-athletes. The 2018 event’s participants included US and Australian veteran para-athletes.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 15: Tackling Health Inequalities

The Scottish Government, NHS(S) and partners should identify veterans as a distinct group in their work to tackle health inequalities. In doing so they should produce proposals for preventing or mitigating inequalities as they apply to this group, with the ultimate aim of improving health outcomes for all.

Scottish Government update:

Officials have been engaging with colleagues on the Step Into Health programme to hear more about how their programme works. The programme is a NHS Employers initiative to promote and encourage members of the Armed Forces on leaving service to join the NHS. There is an opportunity to maximise this initiative across NHS Scotland. Officials have also had discussions with the Veterans Commissioner and NHS Boards to look at challenges and opportunities to determine if further work is required around veterans’

employability within NHS Scotland. This initiative will tackle health inequalities by increasing the number of NHS staff who are veterans themselves and have a shared vocabulary and experience with veteran patients, enabling improved health outcomes for veterans. The current position is that Step Into Health was discussed at the HR Directors Scotland meeting on 30 January 2019 where the HR lead stepped down from this work. A new HR lead will be identified to drive forward the programme, so work is on ice until then.

We have worked with NHS24 to improve accessibility to online information for veterans on NHS Inform. An evaluation study has taken place and improvements will be implemented at the end of March 2019. Improved accessibility and quality of information will tackle health inequalities and improve health outcomes for veterans.

NHS24 are currently leading a project to allow the development of a standardised website for each GP practice across Scotland, which will encourage dissemination of health information, as well as promote self-management and signpost to available local services. “Early Adopter” pilot areas are NHS Highland, Western Isles, Lanarkshire, Forth Valley and Lothian. The early adopter practices will use the site in a ‘live’ environment throughout April and May 2019 for the back end/administration of the site, before testing with patients and public within a live environment, before a phased approach to rolling out to a larger number of practices throughout 2019. Uptake should increase through each rollout phase and, in turn, this will increase the accessibility of health information and improved outcomes for all.

The ALLIANCE is funded by the Scottish Government to deliver A Local Information System for Scotland (ALISS). This web-based resource continues to map community assets and to connect people – including veterans – with local sources of support that will enable them to manage their own health conditions more effectively. ALISS was co-produced by working with disabled people, people living with long term conditions, unpaid carers, health and social care professionals and technology professionals. In 2017/18, the ALLIANCE developed a new version of the website to make it easier to keep information content up-to-date and to improve the relevance and accuracy of searches. In 2017/18 the number of users who accessed ALISS totalled 164,851 and 3,777 services were added to the system.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 16: Identifying Veterans

The Armed Forces and Veterans Joint Health Group should oversee work to increase the number of veterans declaring their previous service to GPs and others in the system. This will likely involve NHS(S), MOD and veterans organisations.

Scottish Government update:

Commissioning for adult health and care services is undertaken by Integration Joint Boards (IJBs). They have a duty to consult their constituent populations and service planning is undertaken based on a population needs assessment. These will include needs of specific population groups such as veterans where they can be identifiable in health statistics or via the stakeholder engagement process. National Records of Scotland propose including a question in the 2021 census to provide robust statistics on the size, location and profile of our veterans population in Scotland. The final decision will be made by the Scottish Parliament via a draft Order, to be laid in early 2020. We will continue to work with NHS Champions to better understand and overcome the barriers to veterans identifying themselves.

SVC evaluation of status:

Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 17: Using Information

The Armed Forces and Veterans Joint Health Group should oversee efforts to improve methods of recording, displaying and sharing information about veterans within the health and social care sector. This will be with a view to providing health professionals with the information needed to better understand and support veterans.

Scottish Government update:

The refreshed Joint Group on Armed Forces & Veterans Health will be considering ways to encourage more veterans to identify themselves to health professionals. We have worked with Veterans Scotland to update online information about veterans on NHS Inform. This was initiated from an awareness raising campaign for the duration of June 2018 to coincide with Armed Forces Day. A Toolkit to compliment the updated information has been produced for organisations who support veterans, and will be sent out early May 2019. NHS Inform has conducted an evaluation of the content on the pages to ensure that the information is as helpful as possible to veterans and a report on this will be published in May 2019.

SVC evaluation of status:

Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 18: Veterans Champions

The Scottish Government and Veterans Scotland should build on recent work to support the network of NHS and Council champions to develop the role so that it can continue to be effective in supporting the delivery of health and social care to veterans within the new health landscape of Scotland.

Scottish Government update:

NHS Champions are in place in every NHS Board, acting as a veterans' advocate to meet the intent of the Armed Forces Covenant and the Scottish Government's "Renewing Our Commitments" document. We recently sought feedback from Champions on the role and are working with them to consider how best to use this network going forward. Updated materials to raise awareness of veterans healthcare needs have been shared with NHS Board Champions and healthcare practitioners. This includes guidance for GPs on how veterans can share their full service medical record.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

Recommendations from The Veterans Community: Employability, Skills and Learning

SVC Recommendation 1: Veterans Employability, Skills and Learning

The Scottish Government should establish a Veterans Employability Strategic Working Group of key partners to provide strategic leadership and to oversee the activity required to fulfil the ambitions of more, and better, employment opportunities for veterans, as articulated in this report and in *Renewing Our Commitments*.

The working group should include core participation from the Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Local Government representation, Ministry of Defence (MOD)/Career Transition Partnership (CTP), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and Veterans Scotland.

Scottish Government update:

The Veterans Employability Strategic Group (VESG) was announced in 2017. The group has met eight times to date and brings together many of the key stakeholders for example Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Careers Transition Partnership (CTP), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Veterans Scotland and the Scottish Government. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) and employers have also attended some meetings. As a direct result of the Veterans Employability Strategic Group, key partners have committed to enduring partnership working through the establishment of a Scottish Veterans Employability Concordat. The Concordat provides a single, unambiguous statement of the expectations of veterans, early service leavers and their families, encapsulating a broad framework of three principles for which those involved in the employment and training of veterans and their families can set out their commitment to make Scotland the destination of choice for Service leavers. The Concordat was launched by the Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans during the veterans annual update to Parliament in September 2018.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 2: Scottish Veterans Fund

The Scottish Government should support proposals that promote employability and increase job opportunities amongst the veterans community as the priority when allocating resources from the Scottish Veterans Fund

When the Scottish Veterans Fund was relaunched in 2017 along with investment from Standard Life Aberdeen, a dedicated employability strand of funding was created to support projects helping veterans into employment.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should progress

SVC Recommendation 3: Skills Gaps

The Scottish Government to review how the veterans community could be most effectively utilised to fill the known skills gaps in key sectors like education, health, IT, engineering, construction, finance and insurance. In doing so, it should consider whether its recent initiative to attract former oil and gas workers into teaching in the North East of Scotland should be replicated for the veterans community. This recommendation should be considered by the Veterans Employability Strategic Working Group (see Recommendation 1) as one of its early priorities.

Scottish Government update:

Some exploratory work has been undertaken to look at how the example of attracting former oil and gas workers into teaching could be replicated. Information was also shared by CTP on the sectors those transitioning were most commonly moving to and the kind of skills they had to offer and the engagement of SDS in the work of the Group has been very positive. A programme of work led by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership is now underway to look at substantiating military gained skills and qualifications into recognised skills to civilian employers. The SCQF Partnership will report findings/progress of the initial phase of this exploratory work in March 2019.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 4: Regional Employability Pilot

The Scottish Government should initiate and co-ordinate a regional employability pilot project, based in an area where there is a high military and veteran population. The purpose should be to deliver an increased number of meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities for Service Leavers, veterans, and spouses and partners.

Scottish Government update:

The pilot has recently gone live with Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions delivered to Resettlement Officers/CTP and SDS staff, and a handshake card produced and issued to pilot bases for Resettlement Officers to issue at their briefs. They cover the service offer from SDS at transition and seek referral, for which there is a process in place. The pilot is being promoted via base digital platforms and other forums e.g. Hives. There has been 12 referrals since pilot launch to April 2019. Meetings have taken place with Training Education Skills & Resettlement (the MOD in Whitehall) regarding early service leavers and the development of a Scottish Transition page is underway with CTP, Veterans Scotland and Transition SO2 for those transitioning in Scotland.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 5: Research & Evaluation

The Scottish Government should commission research to provide analysis of the current baseline of the employment situation for the veterans community and to evaluate the impact of national and local initiatives to improve job prospects.

Scottish Government update:

Our response to this recommendation committed the Scottish Government to considering what gaps there were in the data and what needed to be done to address these. In 2017, we were given access to data from CTP on future cohorts of veterans that has enabled the VESG to better consider priorities. The activity to date has been aligning existing services and programmes of support. The impact of this work will be monitored which could result in future research work to understand where systems and programmes could be improved. As a result of having access to CTP's data, the Scottish Government will now consider forming focus groups to enable a further understanding of access to services. In the 2017 Autumn Update to Parliament, we also committed to setting out a plan for additional qualitative research to identify barriers through the

VESG, and using the results of this research, help shape thinking on the feasibility of a pilot approach. The research plan was discussed at the VESG, but no additional qualitative research has been conducted as yet, although potential options which could deliver valuable findings have been identified.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 6: Work Placement

The Scottish Government should work with employers – both small and large – to find ways of offering more placements to Service Leavers, veterans, spouses and partners. This should be in addition to those offered by Career Transition Partnership.

Scottish Government update:

Some initial guidance was given on work placements through the Capitalising on Military Talent toolkit that the Scottish Government developed and launched with Business in the Community (BITC) in early 2017. There is potential to take forward work to look at work placements through an employer’s network, although this has not yet been established. This will be considered further by the VESG group. SDS have agreed that “Certificate of Work Readiness” may also be helpful for very early service leavers but less relevant for the older age group. It can be signposted from Apprenticeships.scot.

SVC evaluation of status:



Not yet implemented

SVC Recommendation 7: Improving Literacy and Numeracy

The Career Transition Partnership (CTP), Local Authority community-based support services, colleges, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and charities should promote the benefits of improved literacy and numeracy skills amongst Service Leavers and veterans, directing them to appropriate community-based support, including the ‘Big Plus’ initiative. The aim should be to generate greater awareness amongst veterans with specific needs, their families and employers in order that learning opportunities can be accessed more readily.

Scottish Government update:

Although not specifically for the Scottish Government, SDS has updated the 'Big Plus' website, which is signposted from MyWoW landing page. Promotion and understanding of MyWoW and the Landing page has and is continuing to be done with key CTP/Military and veteran organisations including Champions group and the Cross Party Group.

SVC evaluation of status:

Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 8: Recognition of Qualifications and Skills

The Veterans Employability Strategic Working Group (see Recommendation 1) should produce a plan for building understanding and recognition amongst Scottish employers (especially SMEs) of the skills and qualifications gained in the military. The Group should also consider whether the current system for translating and mapping qualifications could be simplified and how it might be better utilised and understood.

Scottish Government update:

This is being taken forward by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and is being supported by £19,000 of funding through the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). The SCQF steering group, consisting of members from SDS, CTP, SFC, and Scottish Government reported on the first phase of exploratory work in March 2019. Further funding has been provided to the project by SFC to continue with this work.

SVC evaluation of status:

Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 9: CTP and SDS build on their existing relationship to avoid 'falling between the gaps'

The Career Transition Partnership (CTP) and Skills Development Scotland (SDS) should build on their existing relationship with the aim of ensuring Service Leavers and veterans have seamless access to SDS once their period of support from CTP comes to an end. This will be particularly important for Early Service Leavers and others in danger of 'falling between the gaps'.

Scottish Government update:

The Veterans Employability Strategic Group (VESG) has been very successful in building on this relationship, which can be seen for example in the initial work to establish a pilot in the North East, which is now live with Continuing Professional Development (CPD) sessions delivered to Resettlement Officers/CTP and SDS staff. SDS has also launched a dedicated veterans page on My World of Work, which we had committed to in our response to the recommendations.

SVC evaluation of status:

Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 10: Veterans Attending College

Colleges Scotland to work with their members to engage the veterans sector more closely in order to promote the benefits of, and opportunities to participate in, college education. Ultimately the outcome should be an increase in numbers from the veterans community taking up college places.

Scottish Government update:

Colleges Scotland through the College Development Network, and other key stakeholders are meeting to develop a network of champions for further and higher education. Information on recommendation 16 (below) contains a fuller update on this but essentially, the college sector will be seeking to build upon good practice already underway in a number of universities and seek greater opportunities to increase the number of veterans across the college sector.

SVC evaluation of status:

Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 11: Modern Apprenticeships

The Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland and Colleges Scotland should develop a plan to promote the Modern Apprenticeship programme to Early Service Leavers, veterans who would benefit from up-skilling or retraining, and spouses and partners.

Scottish Government update:

This recommendation has been met. Scottish Apprenticeship week (SAW) is held annually and is used to showcase to both employers and to those interested in Apprenticeships what is on offer across the employment spectrum in Scotland. During Scottish Apprenticeship week 2018, the dedicated page for Veterans on My World of Work (MWoW) was launched. Skills Development Scotland will continue to engage with Service leavers and veterans as part of Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2019, which will be held in March 2019. In addition, as part of the work SDS and the CTP is undertaking, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships will be promoted to Early Service Leavers, veterans and their families. This will include awareness of Apprenticeships.scot which is Skills Development Scotland's 'go to' site on all matters relating to Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships. Awareness training for Careers Transition Partnership staff on all aspects of Apprenticeships in Scotland will be facilitated by SDS' National Training Programme Team.

SVC evaluation of status:

Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 12: Sponsorship at College

The Scottish Government should work with employers to identify ways of supporting, and perhaps incentivising, sponsorship schemes that will allow a greater number of Service Leavers and veterans to undertake college studies in conjunction with full time employment

Scottish Government update:

The college sector now has the opportunity to participate in the Scottish Government's £10 million Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF). It supports employers to upskill and reskill members of their workforce through college training provision enabling them to adapt and grow. Employers can undertake training and development which will increase productivity, fill identified skills gaps, upskill and retrain the existing workforce. The fund has enabled employers to flex their training budgets to support a broader range of staff. In many cases, staff supported through this fund would otherwise not have had any other opportunities for workforce development support whilst in employment.

SVC evaluation of status:

Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 13: Access Thresholds

In fulfilling the recommendations from the Commission on Widening Access, all universities should consider how access thresholds can be specifically applied to the veterans community. Subsequently, they should advertise and promote these thresholds widely across the military and veterans sectors.

Scottish Government update:

Universities are progressing with work to implement access thresholds for those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and those with care experience, as we know that the school education of these particular groups of learners is likely to have been impacted by their childhood circumstances.

We have considered the specific barriers veterans face when trying to access higher education, and the most appropriate interventions that can assist them. As many members of the Armed Forces leave with skills and qualifications, we consider recognition and accreditation of this prior learning to be a more effective approach than implementing access thresholds for veterans. We are taking forward work in this area through the Scottish Funding Council-funded Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP) project on mapping learning pathways and accrediting prior learning for Service leavers and veterans. This project also supports recommendations 8, 14 and 15.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 14: Articulation

The Scottish Funding Council, universities and colleges to specifically consider the veterans community as they embark on the expansion of articulation, as recommended by the Commission on Widening Access.

Scottish Government update:

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) is in the final stages of completing a National Articulation Database (NAD2), which will enable a deeper analysis of articulation between colleges and universities. SFC is currently working directly with universities on the final stage of Quality Assurance to validate the NAD2 figures to ensure accuracy. This process is on track for completion in early 2019.

Work is also underway to consider how to improve access through the use of data analysis. For example from academic year 2017-18 onwards SFC began collecting data in the college sector about veterans, which is now available and is receiving further analysis. It is anticipated that figures will be low in the early years of collection, until wider awareness-raising and work on Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) is implemented. This will also be carried out through institutional Outcome Agreements.

The SFC has also arranged with the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) for the inclusion of a field in the 2019-20 HESA Student Return to identify veterans in the university sector. Once that data is gathered and returned, SFC will be able to consider veterans' representation, success rates, and how many are supported by articulation and other routes such as the Scottish Widening Access Programme (SWAP). This will enable interventions to be put in place through the Outcome Agreement process as required.

Articulation work for the SFC is covered by a SFC, Universities Scotland and Colleges Scotland tri-partite post, which supports the work of the National Articulation Forum, as well as being responsible for taking forward the recommendations of the Commission on Widening Access's final report A Blueprint for Fairness.

The consideration of veterans will be included in the work of the Forum and in upcoming regional articulation discussions with institutions. These discussions will include their work on improving articulation pathways to increase numbers and provide more flexible routes for students.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 15: Information about Colleges and Universities

The Scottish Funding Council should work with relevant organisations – including Universities Scotland, Colleges Scotland and Student Awards Agency Scotland – to produce material designed specifically for the veterans community. This should include information about finance and the support available for those enrolling at college or university. Subsequently, this material should be made available widely amongst the serving and veterans communities, and those like CTP and SDS who support them.

Scottish Government update:

The Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) continues to review its existing Armed Forces Guidance as part of its annual 'Change of Session' activities. The content of the guide relates specifically to SAAS eligibility criteria and the exceptions applicable to members of the Armed Forces and their families. An updated version of the guide will be available on the SAAS website from April 2019 in advance of the 2019-2020

academic session. The updated version includes additional information for Veterans of the Armed Forces.

A project has also been established, as recommended by the Student Support Review (SSR), to develop an information portal that will cover Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) on funding across further and higher education. The development of the portal is being taken forward by the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) on behalf of the Scottish Government. The project has completed its discovery stage and is on schedule for delivery within the 2019-2020 academic year.

Through continued engagement with Scottish Funding Council's Veterans Group, we aim to ensure that all Further and Higher Education providers give the Armed Forces community (current and ex-serving) consistent information around education opportunities in Scotland. The group is currently considering IAG for the Veterans community through the development of web pages. The intention is that each linked organisation and institution will host a web page with key IAG and links to relevant information on funding and other resources. This in turn will support the work of the Network of Champions (recommendation 16).

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 16: Veterans Network/Champions in Colleges and Universities

Colleges Scotland and Universities Scotland should work with their members and Veterans Scotland to establish a network of champions across all colleges and universities. The champions can provide the first point of contact for members of the ex-Service community applying for, or undertaking, further and higher education. They should also consider offering mentoring, advice on applications and funding, and be part of the wider champions' network in Scotland.

Scottish Government update:

SFC is supporting Veterans Scotland to work with Universities Scotland, College Development Network, and other key stakeholders to develop a Network of Champions for Further and Higher Education. The Network was launched at an information seminar for colleges and universities, which was held in January 2019 at Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU). As well as beginning the process of setting up an Armed Forces Champion Network for Education in Scotland, the event addressed the challenges and benefits of having champions to support ex-Armed Forces personnel and veterans. It also highlighted existing work by Edinburgh Napier University and GCU, who have already established Armed Forces Champions within their institutions and hope to lead by example.

The work on Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) under recommendation 15 will also support this Network. It is anticipated that the web pages will provide information on how to become a Champion, as well as further IAG that can be used on institutional webpages.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 17: Parliamentary Scrutiny of Veterans Issues

The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work should in due course report the progress made against implementing the recommendations in this report (and my two previous reports) to the Scottish Parliament. The aim should be to raise the profile of veterans' issues amongst Parliamentarians and provide them with the information necessary to scrutinise the Scottish Government's work in this field.

Scottish Government update:

There is no longer a Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work. The Veterans Minister now provides an annual autumn update to the Scottish Parliament on progress made against all four reports. A number of SG Cabinet Secretaries and Ministers now have responsibility for delivering against the recommendations.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 18: Jobs within the Scottish Government

The Scottish Government to assess its current and future recruitment policies with a view to identifying opportunities to better target and support the veterans community in securing Scottish Government jobs. In doing so, it should consider Police Scotland's approach of providing tailored information, personal support in completing applications, and advice in preparing for interviews. Mentoring from ex-Service personnel within the civil service is likely to play a crucial role.

Scottish Government update:

The Scottish Government has been scoping a possible pilot work experience programme this year. Although in the early stages, the Scottish Government hopes to be in a position to offer a work experience placement later this year to Service personnel as part of their transitional period.

SVC evaluation of status:

Not yet completed

SVC Recommendation 19: Jobs within NHS Scotland

NHS Scotland and individual Health Boards should develop and deliver commitments made at the last Armed Forces and Veterans Joint Group meeting to utilise the talents of the veterans community and provide better support and advice to those applying for jobs within the NHS.

Scottish Government update:

NHS Boards are exploring potential involvement in the 'Step Into Health' Programme which provides a dedicated pathway for the Armed Forces community to access career opportunities available in the NHS.

NHS National Education for Scotland is also developing its careers website to help map Service leavers' skills with NHS Jobs.

SVC evaluation of status:

Partially implemented / ongoing

Recommendations from Housing for Service Leavers & Veterans in Scotland, 2016

SVC Recommendation 1: MOD Advice & Briefings Relevant to Scotland

The Scottish Government should continue to work with the UK Government to ensure that advice and MOD briefings reflect housing policy and provision in Scotland, so Service Leavers choosing to settle in Scotland are not disadvantaged (also recommended in Transition in Scotland report).

Scottish Government update:

Work has been undertaken with the Ministry of Defence to provide housing information from a Scottish perspective for inclusion in advice, briefings and guidance to ensure Service Leavers in Scotland are not disadvantaged.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 2: Proving a “local connection”

The requirement to prove a “local connection” needs far better explanation in MOD, Scottish Government and Local Authority publications, including leaflets and websites, targeted at housing providers, veterans and Service personnel.

Scottish Government update:

As part of the wider revision of the Scottish Government website, a veteran support area has been created on mygov.scot, which clearly sets out housing options and on how veterans can gain access to more tailored advice. Links have been created on other veterans’ websites to help sign-post individuals quickly to the information they require. ‘Social Housing Allocations in Scotland – A Practice Guide’ was published in February 2019. It contains practice advice to social landlords on allocations for veterans and Service leavers including guidance on ensuring that local connection does not put service personnel at a disadvantage when applying for social housing.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should be continued

SVC Recommendation 3: Routes into Social Housing

If Scotland is to become the destination of choice for Service Leavers, then the Scottish Government and housing providers should give consideration to smoothing their route into social housing. Particular attention should be given to and removing any potential disadvantage caused by a lack of “local connection” brought about by military Service, both for those serving in Scotland and elsewhere.

Scottish Government update:

As part of the wider revision of the Scottish Government website, a veteran support area has been created on mygov.scot, which clearly sets out housing options and on how veterans can gain access to more tailored advice. Links have been created on other veterans’ websites to help sign-post individuals quickly to the information they require. ‘Social Housing Allocations in Scotland – A Practice Guide’ was published in February 2019. It contains practice advice to social landlords on allocations for veterans and Service leavers including guidance on ensuring that local connection does not put service personnel at a disadvantage when applying for social housing.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 4: Scottish Housing Guide for People Leaving the Armed Forces

The Scottish Government should consider wider distribution of the Scottish Housing Guide for People Leaving the Armed Forces and work with MOD, public sector organisations and charities in Scotland to raise its profile, ensuring it appears on all Scottish Local Authority websites and on relevant UK Government websites.

Scottish Government update:

A Scottish Housing Guide for People Leaving the Armed Forces & Ex-Service Personnel has been redesigned to meet the Commissioner’s recommendations. It was published in 2018 and is available on the Scottish Government website. The Scottish Government has also made other organisations such as charities, Scottish Local Authorities and the UK Government aware of the revised booklet in order to raise its profile.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 5: Review and Improve Guide

The Scottish Government should review its Scottish Housing Guide for People Leaving the Armed Forces with the aim of improving content, visual impact and accessibility.

Scottish Government update:

A Scottish Housing Guide for People Leaving the Armed Forces & Ex-Service Personnel has been redesigned to meet the Commissioner's recommendations. It was published in 2018 and is available on the Scottish Government website. The Scottish Government has also made other organisations such as charities, Scottish Local Authorities and the UK Government aware of the revised booklet in order to raise its profile.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should progress

SVC Recommendation 6: Review Scottish Government Website Information

The Scottish Government should review the information provided on its website relating to housing targeted at Service Leavers, veterans and their families in order to improve accessibility and currency.

Scottish Government update:

A Veteran support area has been created on mygov.scot setting out housing options for Service leavers.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 7: Consolidation of Scottish Government Information

The Scottish Government should consider placing all information for veterans and Service Leavers (not just information on housing) in one area like the mygov.scot website.

Scottish Government update:

A Veteran support area has been created on mygov.scot setting out housing options for Service leavers.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 8: Local Authority Information

All Scottish Local Authorities should consider offering housing information for Service Leavers, veterans and their families on their websites with direct links from Housing home pages to improve accessibility.

Scottish Government update:

The Social housing allocations in Scotland- a practice guide (February 2019) reinforces the need to have clear information and housing options advice services in place for all applicants, including veterans. However, the design of a Local Authority website is a matter for each individual Local Authority.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 9: Guidance for Frontline Local Authority Staff

Local Authorities should consider providing additional guidance to their frontline staff on the principles of the Covenant and the council's policy on housing support for veterans.

Scottish Government update:

Not primarily for Scottish Government. The former Veterans Minister wrote to all Local Authorities in September 2017 to thank them for their support and highlight the 'Guide for Local Authorities' which sets out best practice on delivering the Armed Forces Covenant within Local Authorities.

SVC evaluation of status:



Not yet implemented

SVC Recommendation 10: Links Between Local Authorities and MOD

The Scottish Government should work with Local Authorities and MOD to improve information-sharing in order that those leaving the Services are aware of the opportunities available in Scotland and Local Authorities are given advance notice of those expressing a wish to live in their area (also recommended in Transition in Scotland report).

Scottish Government update:

For information see Veterans Gateway. Further information and advice for service leavers on housing options in Scotland is also available on the mygov.scot and other veterans websites.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 11: Shelter Scotland and ASAP Citizens Advice Scotland

The Scottish Government and other housing information providers should consider taking a lead from Shelter Scotland and ASAP Citizens Advice Scotland when looking to upgrade their websites and generate a more extensive online presence, and should consider promoting these organisations' websites more extensively.

Scottish Government update:

The Scottish Government has created a veterans support area on mygov.scot which clearly sets out housing options and how veterans can get tailored advice. Links have been created on other veterans websites to help signpost individuals to advice quickly.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 12: Wider Audience

The Scottish Government and Veterans Scotland should work together with partners, including the UK Government and other parts of the Third sector, to ensure that housing information is easily visible on the Veterans UK and other pan-UK websites in order to reach a wider audience.

Scottish Government update:

Veterans UK is not the appropriate website for this. Housing information appropriate to Scotland is available on the Veterans Gateway

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

Recommendations from Transition in Scotland, 2015

SVC Recommendation 1: MOD Advice & Briefings Relevant to Scotland

The Scottish Government should continue to work with the UK Government to ensure that online advice and briefings reflect housing policy and provision in Scotland, so that Service Leavers choosing to settle in Scotland are not disadvantaged.

Scottish Government update:

Work continues with the Ministry of Defence to provide housing information from a Scottish perspective for inclusion in advice, briefings and guidance to ensure Service Leavers in Scotland are not disadvantaged.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 2: Information for Local Authorities

The Scottish Government and COSLA should engage with the UK Government to ensure that work on providing more information about resettlement destinations reflects the information needs of Scottish Local Authorities.

Scottish Government update:

As part of the wider revision of the Scottish Government website, a veteran support area has been created on mygov.scot. This recommendation has been completed and a full response is provided in the Housing report.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 3: Effective Devolved Services

The Scottish Government and its agencies should engage closely with the UK Government once the new Career Transition Partnership (CTP) programme is in place to ensure that devolved services can provide the full range of employability, skills and learning support to Service Leavers in Scotland.

Scottish Government update:

Response to this recommendation is continuing and has largely been superseded by current work. CTP have copies of our recent publication “Welcome to Scotland” which provides a range of information on a variety of topics, including housing, education and employability. The Veterans Employability Strategic Group and the Scottish Government engages regularly with CTP to ensure that those completing their service in Scotland have the best available information.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 4: Extending ‘Opportunities for All’ Programme

The Scottish Government should consider introducing flexibility to relax the age restrictions, extending the eligibility for criteria within ‘Opportunities for All’ for Early Service Leavers.

Scottish Government update:

The age eligibility relating to ‘Opportunities for All’ has been extended up to the age of 29.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 5: Early Service Leaver Pilot Scheme

The Scottish Government and the Third Sector should consider piloting a Community Jobs Scotland (CJS) programme aimed at Early Service Leavers.

Scottish Government update:

The Scottish Government is providing funding of at least £6.1 million in 2018/19 for Phase 8 of the Community Jobs Scotland (CJS) employability programme. This programme has a specific focus on the Early Service Leavers and since 2016 there have been 28 veterans starting on the programme.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 6: Incentives for Employers

The Scottish Government, in partnership with Skills Development Scotland, Local Authorities and the Third Sector, should consider options to extend recruitment incentives so that they encourage employers to recruit Early Service Leavers.

Scottish Government update:

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), which delivers the programme on behalf of Scottish Government, works closely with veterans organisations including PoppyScotland's Employment team, RFEA/CTP Future Horizons, Veterans Scotland, ASAP, Employable and many more to promote the Community Jobs Scotland opportunities to early service leavers.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 7: Employability Fund

The Scottish Government, Local Authorities and Skills Development Scotland should consider options for targeting the Employability Fund, and future employability services, at Service Leavers.

Scottish Government update:

The Scottish Government's Employability Fund aims to help people develop the skills they need to secure a job, or progress to more advanced forms of training. Skills Development Scotland is working with key partners, including the Scottish Government Strategic Working Group, to raise awareness of Skills Development Scotland's offer to veterans and their families.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 8: Modern Apprenticeships

The Scottish Government and Skills Development Scotland should consider actively promoting Modern Apprenticeships to Early Service Leavers and to their potential employers.

Scottish Government update:

This is continuing but has largely been superseded by later initiatives. In 2017, we published "Seven things you need to know about Scottish Apprenticeships". Scottish Apprenticeship week (SAW) is held annually and is used to showcase what is on offer across the employment spectrum in Scotland to both employers and those interested in Apprenticeships.

A dedicated webpage for veterans was launched on My World of Work (My WoW) during SAW 2018. Skills Development Scotland and the Careers Transition Partnership are also promoting Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships to Early Service Leavers, veterans and their families.

SVC evaluation of status:



Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 9: Invest in Young People Groups

The Scottish Government should utilise Regional Invest in Young People Groups across Scotland to promote young Service Leavers amongst prospective employers.

Scottish Government update:

There are now 21 Regional Invest in Young People Groups across Scotland. Amongst other things, the Groups encourage employers to engage with young people.

SVC evaluation of status:



Not yet implemented

SVC Recommendation 10: Youth Employment Initiatives

The Scottish Government, working with devolved partners and engaging with the UK Government and Armed Forces, should identify opportunities and consider options for marketing its youth employment initiatives to Early and young Service Leavers, which might include targeted presentations, tailored leaflets, accessible on-line information and wider campaigns to raise awareness of the support available.

Scottish Government update:

The work now completed through My WoW landing page and the Veterans Employability Strategic Group continues to identify opportunities for Service leavers.

SVC evaluation of status:



Partially implemented / ongoing

SVC Recommendation 11: Engage with Employers

The Scottish Government should use its existing mechanisms for engaging with employers to promote the employment of, and work placements for, Service Leavers within its broader employability policy framework and delivery infrastructure.

Scottish Government update:

In 2017 and in partnership with Business in the Community, the Scottish Government published “Capitalising on Military Talent”. That publication showcases best practice and offers practical advice to employers who may not already employ veterans. Work is also continuing through the Veterans Employability Strategic Group.

SVC evaluation of status:

Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 12: Personal Development Plan

The Scottish Government, its agencies and Scottish Local Authorities should work with the UK Government to ensure that the new Personal Development Plan and related course modules are relevant to those settling in Scotland.

Scottish Government update:

When the Transitions report was published, officials spoke to each of the single Services and MOD about Personal Development Plans and the relevance of courses undertaken for those intending to settle in Scotland. This work has now been taken forward by the Veterans Employability Strategic Group.

SVC evaluation of status:

Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 13: Access to Medical Records

The Scottish Government and NHS Scotland should retain the current procedures whereby GPs in Scotland retrieve Service Leavers’ medical records but also keep them under review.

Scottish Government update:

This work is underway through separate initiatives. This includes guidance for GPs in Scotland on how veterans can share their full Service Medical Records. In addition, UK Government is developing Programme Cortisone which is due for delivery during 2020-22. As part of the programme, Service medical records will be digitised to allow for easier and more rapid sharing of documents.

SVC evaluation of status:

Implemented, but work should continue

SVC Recommendation 14: Veterans and Families Research Institute

The Scottish Government should engage with the Veterans and Families Research Institute at Anglia Ruskin University to help identify evidence needs and ensure research into transition in Scotland is also included in future programmes.

Scottish Government update:

Officials have met representatives from Anglia Ruskin. In addition the Scottish Government continues to engage with organisations which conduct research on Transition – for example the Forces in Mind Trust and the Families Federations.

SVC evaluation of status:

Implemented, but work should continue

More information:

Website: www.scottishveteranscommissioner.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/scottishveteranscommissioner

Twitter: [@ScotVeteranComm](https://twitter.com/ScotVeteranComm)