



UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

Supporting Scotland's
Older Veterans

Unforgotten Forces Newsletter No.6 - Autumn 2019

Welcome to the autumn 2019 edition of the Unforgotten Forces consortium's newsletter. At the end of June this year the project reached its 2nd birthday and by the end of September had notched up an impressive 8,709 episodes of often life changing support for older veterans in Scotland across its five main service areas, namely: practical support, advice, health & wellbeing, countering loneliness & social isolation and arts engagement. Much has been achieved in these first two years and, looking ahead, the nature of consortium's services continues to evolve and efforts are now well underway to achieve a sustainable future for the consortium beyond the end of its current LIBOR funding in mid 2020. Meantime, its business as usual for the partner organisations as they continue working together and you can read all about the project and what we have been up to in this edition via the following articles:

- **Volunteering opportunities to help counter loneliness and social Isolation amongst RAF veterans**
- **Unforgotten Forces video project completed**
- **Veterans Workshop at the SOPA Annual Parliamentary Assembly**
- **Age Scotland ready, set and go for boosting older veterans' fitness!**
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- **News from the Erskine Reid Macewan Centre (ERMAC)**
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Volunteering opportunities to help counter loneliness and social isolation amongst RAF veterans

**ROYAL
AIR FORCES
Association**

The charity that supports the RAF family

Right now, there are RAF veterans in Scotland who are lonely and isolated. As a Befriender Volunteer, you could step in to change that. It wouldn't take much of your time and it's a great way to use your skills, give something back and feel good.



Unforgotten Forces Partner the Royal Air Forces Association (or RAF

Association), is a member-led, registered welfare charity that provides welfare support to Serving and Ex-Serving RAF personnel and their families. The Befriender role is at the heart of the RAF Association's objectives in delivering welfare support to members of the RAF family requiring it. The aim of the Befriender role is to help alleviate isolation and loneliness, by giving time to listen to people either in person or over the phone and to encourage communication on a shared interest or topic, to ensure that the beneficiary remains part of the community and feels socially connected.

The role of a Befriender is varied and could involve helping out with practical tasks such as driving someone to a doctor's appointment, it could simply involve a cup of tea and a chat or it could be to accompany them to their first meeting of an interest group in their community.

Befriender volunteers are asked to commit to:

- One day of initial training which is provided free of charge and for which travel expenses will be reimbursed.
- As much time as you can offer to the role. Each visit to a beneficiary would be around one to two hours, or more if desired by both parties, this can be either a short or long term support package.

Befriender volunteers need to be:

- Caring and empathetic, with the ability to build a rapport with others and put them at ease, through a friendly and sensitive approach
- Good listeners and communicators
- Reliable and dependable
- Able to put people who may be anxious or worried, at their ease
- Aware of some local social groups the beneficiary could get involved in or be able to research this for them.

Befriender volunteers will develop a wide variety of skills, including:

- Experience of welfare work
- Listening and communications skills
- Building relationships with a wide variety of people
- Team working skills
- Research skills (volunteers will be finding ways to integrate beneficiaries into the community and local groups)

An RAF or forces background is not essential, and we welcome applications from all areas of the community.

This is an opportunity to play a key role in helping the RAF Association deliver valuable support to members of the RAF Family.

Befrienders are required in the following locations:

Banchory, Bo'Ness, Coatbridge, Cowdenbeath, Crosshouse, Dalkeith, Dunfermline, Falkirk, Gourock, Greenock, Houston, Irvine, Kelso, Kirkcaldy, Larkhall, Leven, Livingston, Lochgelly, Milngavie, Motherwell, Rosyth, Shetland and Thurso.

For more information please visit:

<https://www.rafa.org.uk/volunteer/roles/befriender>

or contact 0800 018 2361 / volunteers@rafa.org.uk

Unforgotten Forces Video Project Completed



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Over the last year the Unforgotten Forces consortium has been making a series of 16 short videos in conjunction with the Glasgow based film company 29Studios to record the work of the consortium in support of older veterans in Scotland, help publicise our work in order to help generate more referrals and to encourage future funding. 14 of the videos feature the consortium's individual service delivery partners with two others providing a longer (16 min) and a short (5 min) version of an overall general documentary about the Unforgotten Forces project. All these videos may be viewed on the Poppyscotland website via the following link:

<https://www.poppyscotland.org.uk/get-help/unforgotten-forces/about-unforgotten-forces/>

Veterans Workshop at the SOPA Annual Parliamentary Assembly

Following the success of the Scottish Older People's Assembly (SOPA) "Voice of Veterans" event held in Bathgate earlier this year in June, another first was achieved recently when a bespoke workshop was held on the issues relevant to older veterans in Scotland at SOPA's annual Parliamentary Assembly at Holyrood on Sat 5th Oct. The workshop was chaired by the Scottish Veterans Commissioner, Charlie Wallace and attended by a number of older veterans, staff from Armed



Forces charities as well as local politicians and Maurice Corry MSP. A very lively discussion ensued ranging over many issues and a summary of the key points which emerged as food for thought were as follows:



The "Older Veterans" workshop at the Scottish Parliament

- Whilst there are many good statutory and third sector services available in Scotland to support older veterans, many who would benefit from them still do not know about them or how to access them. More needs to be done to disseminate information about these services.
- There was a general desire expressed for the creation of Veterans First Point service in all local authority areas as well as a call to improve the level of awareness amongst primary and secondary care NHS staff of issues relating to veterans.
- The Veterans Commissioner commented that, as we have a much smaller military nowadays, there is less understanding generally across society about the armed forces and military service.
- Many expressed the view that, whilst there are many excellent projects to support veterans, plans and funding should be put in place for the long term as often they are not necessarily sustainable once their funding runs out.



***Scottish Veterans
Commissioner, Charlie
Wallace***

- Generally it was felt by all those who took part that the discussion had been helpful and that the implementation of these points would greatly assist veterans in Scotland.



The SOPA Annual Parliamentary Assembly at Holyrood

A full report from the earlier SOPA “Voice of Veterans” event held in Bathgate in June is available on SOPA’s website <http://s3.spanglefish.com/s/31982/documents/consultation-events/the-voice-of-veterans-summary-report.pdf> along with a film from the event available on the homepage <http://www.scotopa.org.uk>.

Age Scotland ready, set and go for boosting older veterans’ fitness

The aim of Age Scotland’s Veterans’ Project is to enhance everything charity does for the benefit of older veterans. In our first two years we published a suite of free guides for older veterans, boosted our Helpline’s ability give them specialist advice, trained local, groups to identify, include and assist older veterans, and given development support to veterans’ clubs. Yet one key strand of Age Scotland’s activities remained: promotion of physical activity in later life. This is the priority for the Project’s third year.



Body Boosting Bingo at Dowding House Sheltered Housing (RAF Association). “Active, refreshed and ready to go again,” said one resident.

Physical activity is hugely beneficial for older people. It boosts mental wellbeing and cuts the risk of conditions including type 2 diabetes, heart disease and dementia. Many community groups are great at bringing older people together to enjoy companionship and support, yet gatherings can involve a lot of sitting. Primarily through its Body Boosting Bingo game, Age Scotland supports groups to build physical activity into regular get-togethers, in a fun and inclusive way.

Drawing on our knowledge of veterans' groups, and the expertise of Age Scotland colleagues and Unforgotten Forces partners, the Project has set a Challenge for Older Veterans' to Exercise Regularly Together – COVERT for short. Since launching this summer, groups of older veterans from Fort William to Moffat have signed up for the Challenge. What does it involve? Each group sets a goal for getting more physically active: something that works for them. They keep a diary of their Challenge experience, sending it to us by the end of January 2020. Then on 25 March 2020 prizes of sports or activities equipment will be given at Age Scotland's annual conference in Glasgow to groups that can best show they've had fun, feel fitter and got the physical activity bug.

The Project team is supporting groups to take part. We're offering advice and support to organisers and connecting them with specialist providers of fun and inclusive physical activities. We can do M.O.T checks for older veterans who want to compare their 'everyday' fitness with others of a similar age. We're helping groups to keep their diaries, for example using digital technology. And we're running fun and active sessions for groups: Body Boosting Bingo, and a brand new 'Power Quiz' we've developed specifically for the Challenge.

We'd love to hear from other groups of older veterans who would like to get more active together. To find out more email:

nveteransproject@agescotland.org.uk or call us on 0333 323 2400.

www.agescotland.org.uk/veterans

Arming older veterans with their rights



Every veteran has made the transition, most successfully but none with complete ease, from military to civilian life. Later life can also bring big transitions, and for these two Unforgotten Forces partners are working closely together to ensure that veterans are armed with knowledge of their rights, entitlements and options. The Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP) is provided by the Scottish Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) Service. And national

older people's charity Age Scotland provides a helpline for later life matters and publishes an extensive suite of free advice guides.

ASAP and Age Scotland have mapped their respective specialisms so advisers in each know when and how to refer older veterans to the other. For example, in many areas of Scotland local ASAP support officers can give face to face advice, at Bureau or through home visits. Conversely Age Scotland can connect lonely older veterans with local social opportunities and activities.

Benefits advice is a big focus for both. In later life many people will find they have less money to live on, and some may be entitled to state benefits they might not even know exist. Attendance Allowance is an example. This can be claimed by people who are over State Pension age who have a physical or mental disability such that they need help with personal care or supervision. It is a tax-free benefit and is not means-tested, so applications can be made regardless of how much income or savings someone has.

Often people who are eligible for Attendance Allowance miss out, either through lack of knowledge or misunderstandings about how it works. For example, having a claim turned down in the past needn't mean that someone will be turned down now, as their circumstances may have changed in the meantime.

Previous military service sometimes increases entitlements. For instance, where a veteran receives War Pension or Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments, there are special rules about how these affect other means-tested benefits such as Pension Credit and Housing Benefit. This can result in an increase in what they get.

Many of the benefits most useful to older people are being devolved from Westminster to Scotland, and it is likely at least some of them will be administered quite differently north and south of the border. Funeral Support payments are now run by Social Security Scotland, a new agency of the Scottish Government, with Attendance Allowance and Carers Allowance to follow soon.

In 2018/19 ASAP supported older veterans to claim benefits worth £343,727. That year Age Scotland helpline identified £530,788 unclaimed benefits for older people, of which £82,545 was for older veterans. Benefit checks from both services are free and confidential. ASAP face to face advisers can also provide support with completing forms and challenging decisions. Their Helpline Nos. are:

Age Scotland helpline - **0800 12 44 222**

Armed Service Advice Project - **0808 800 1007**



Unforgotten Forces Partners Working Together!



SCOTTISH WAR BLINDED
FOR ALL VETERANS WITH SIGHT LOSS

Action On Hearing Loss Scotland's "Hearing Forces" project which provides support to older veterans experiencing hearing loss and tinnitus welcomed the opportunity to attend Scottish War Blinded's The Gathering recently.

Their attendance at the 2 day event gave delegates the chance to access our services and they were very busy carrying out hearing checks, re-tubing hearing aids and providing delegates with advice about their hearing loss and assisted technology.

Heather MacKie, who normally attends the Scottish War Blinded Linburn Activity Centre in West Lothian was delighted when Hearing Forces Project Officer, Derek Clark, was able to adjust her hearing aid, making it more comfortable to wear and enabling her to fully participate in the event.

An everyday example of how Unforgotten Forces are working together routinely on a daily basis to improve the health and well-being of older veterans in Scotland.



News from the Erskine Reid Macewan Centre (ERMAC)

A New Bench!

Gas distribution company SGN chose an unusual way to say a big thank you to one of the community stakeholders affected by its Erskine Bridge pipeline replacement project across the River Clyde.

Part of the major engineering project involved felling a small number of trees in Boden Boo Community Woodland so SGN commissioned Jonny Chainsaw to carve one of the felled trees into a splendid bench which it happily donated to ERMAC. The bench was designed by members using the Centre's workshop and incorporates thistles from The Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) cap badge, along with poppies for Remembrance Day.





The bench will take pride of place at the entrance to the centre and was unveiled by Jason Fearnley and Sam Gillespie. They were joined by SGN Project Manager David Rae and Frank

Coyle and Barney Roberts who have both recently celebrated their 93rd birthdays.

Debs Dickson, Erskine Reid Macewen Activity Centre Manager: "We are delighted with the bench; it looks fantastic. We are very proud of veterans Sam and Jason who designed it. The talent we have here at the centre is now on display for all to see. Thanks to SGN for the bench and for all their support helping us out with different projects while they were working close to our centre."

Sporting Senior Games - 2019

This year's D-Day landing themed Sporting Senior Games took place on Saturday 21st September and was opened by Para Veteran Scott Meenagh. Erskine teams were joined by competitors from Lanarkshire, Ayrshire, West Lothian and Bishopton. The games, a joint collaboration between Erskine and Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) took place in the GCU Arc building for a day of sporting competition like no other!



ERMAC entered two teams of 5 with an age range of 71 - 94 and we were delighted to come home with 1 gold, 3 silver & 2 bronze medals. Teams competed in the sports of ten pin bowling; boccia bowls; javelin; golf; curling and cycling on static bikes. (Left) Here is our D-Day veteran Albert Lamont 93, who served in the Royal

Navy as a signalman discussing tactics with Scott. Inspiration came from Scott who as Captain of the multiple medal winning British Army team of the inaugural

Invictus Games, is well versed in the determination needed to win, just what the teams needed to spur them on to victory!

(Right) WW2 Far East veteran of the Royal Marines, Frank Coyle, 93, concentrating carefully as he competes in the bowling event on behalf of ERMAC.



ILM Highland's Veterans Handyperson Service Support for RAF Veteran



The Highland Veterans Handyperson Service provides help with small repairs and home maintenance, including home security and safety measures. This service gives older veterans increased peace of mind and additional comfort in their homes, therefore enabling them to live independently for longer.

George was a Sergeant in the RAF for 12 years. He left the Forces in 1981, after suffering a severe spinal injury whilst servicing a Nimrod aircraft at RAF Kinloss which left him quadriplegic. George lives in Moray with his wife, who is also his full time carer.



George with the Highland Veterans Handyperson, Alec Pole

George and his wife were the first clients of the Highland Veterans Handyperson service and over the last 18 months have been supported with a variety of different tasks including several modifications and additions to George's computer desk to allow wheelchair access and better positioning of the speakers and printer.

George spends many hours in the summer house come rain or shine, reading and listening to music whilst looking out over Findhorn bay. Draught-proofing and repairs to the double doors were undertaken; as well as repairing an outdoor tap, clearing gutters, replacing parts to toilets and showers.

In total, 26 jobs have been completed for George and his wife since the service started. Their sincere gratitude is highlighted in the following extracts from their recent letter of thanks:

“I’d like to thank you for all the recent help that my wife and I have received from your excellent service over the last few months since we stumbled over your advert...You have no idea how much this means to myself and my wife. It literally is a lifeline to people like us who try to live an independent lifestyle in the community.

It has been my wife who has carried out most of the tasks (minor & major)

around our house. This has been frustrating for me to watch her struggle especially now as we’re both getting older and it’s been difficult and expensive to get workmen (assuming they’ll tackle smaller tasks) to come out for some of the jobs.

I’d just thought that I’d write to let you know that it truly is appreciated by

both of us to know that this service exists, it’s peace of mind for me and my wife and I hope that word travels and this service is extended around the country for others who live in the community.”

The Highland Veterans Handyperson service may be contacted via:

ILM (Highland), Unit 1G, Teaninich Industrial Estate, Alness, Highland, IV17 0XS

Tel: 01349 884774

Web site: www.ilmhighland.co.uk



Handyperson Alec Pole & Service Manager Monica Thomson

Training Day for Unforgotten Forces Staff and Volunteers

Not only do the staff and volunteers of the Unforgotten Forces partners work closely together to support older veterans, but they also get together from time to time to undertake joint training, network with each other and to brainstorm how we can further improve collaborative working. Over 40 staff and volunteers therefore gathered at the Legion Club in Grangemouth on 11 Sep for a day of induction training for new staff and volunteers as well as some partnership wide general training. Presentations were delivered by a number of the project's partners with updates on their services for older veterans and two were also delivered by external organisations. Firstly, by Re-Engage (formerly known as Contact The Elderly) who work to counter loneliness and social isolation amongst the elderly. (Further information is available on their new website via the following link: [https://www.reengage.org.uk/.](https://www.reengage.org.uk/)) Secondly, SP Energy Networks provided a very useful briefing on their Priority Service for the elderly and vulnerable. (Information is available on this service via this link: https://www.spenergynetworks.co.uk/pages/priority_services_registration_for_m.aspx)



Unforgotten Forces staff & volunteers during their joint training day in Grangemouth

Glen MacDonald, Unforgotten Forces Coordinator, commented about the day: "Today has certainly been a very worthwhile day and feedback from those attending has been very good. With 16 different organisations in the Unforgotten Forces consortium it is very important that our staff and volunteers get together regularly so that they know each other personally and understand what each partner organisation brings to the project. In this way effective "joined up" working is enhanced and older veterans can be seamlessly cross referred between partners for the various types of support they require."

Presentation of Veterans Badges for Midlothian Veterans

Although all those who have served the UK armed forces are nowadays issued with a veterans badge when they leave in recognition of their service and to enable them to identify themselves as veterans if they wish to do so, many older veterans who left prior to the introduction of this initiative are unaware of their entitlement and that they can be awarded the badge retrospectively. Unforgotten Forces Partner Legion Scotland recently arranged a special event to present veterans badges to a number of older veterans in the Midlothian area.



Lord Lieutenant of Midlothian Sir Robert Clerk presented eight veterans with their badges, aided by Midlothian Veterans Champion Provost Peter Smail and Legion Scotland Veterans' Community Support Co-ordinator Tony Hooman.

David Little, the welfare and support officer for the Penicuik branch of the Royal British Legion Scotland said: "A great day was had by all the veterans and their families. My aim of the presentation is to give our veterans a day to remember. And of course their badge, just a small token for what they gave up in the past, and to let them know they will never be forgotten."



**Legion
Scotland**

Veterans badges are free of charge for those eligible and information on how to apply for them and the

eligibility rules etc. are available on the UK Government's Veterans UK website via the following Link: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-medal-or-veterans-badge>



***Lord Lieutenant of Midlothian Sir Robert Clerk
and the veterans after the ceremony***



UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

Supporting Scotland's Older Veterans

For further information about the services available for older veterans via the Unforgotten Forces project and how to make referrals for support and advice to any of the partner organisations please visit the Poppyscotland website via the following link:

<http://www.poppyscotland.org.uk/get-help/unforgotten-forces/>

For any general and policy related enquiries about the project, or if you would like copies of our hard copy leaflet, a face to face presentation for your members, clients or staff team, or wish any further information please contact the Unforgotten Forces Coordinator, Glen MacDonald (that's not me on the right by the way!), via:

E mail: g.macdonald@poppyscotland.org.uk
or Tel: 07458 014362.



We look forward to hearing from you!

