



Supporting NI Veterans in 2024

Presentation Slides and
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Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioners Office

Supporting NI Veterans in 2024

NORTHERN IRELAND VETERANS COMMISSIONER
DANNY KINAHAN



Thank you for attending today, together we hope to make the current system easier to navigate for veterans and their families - whether that is accessing assistance in times of need or simply providing linkage with other veterans.



The Aims and Purpose of Today

- ▶ To **bring welfare and caseworkers together** to be updated on the changes and developments to publicly funded veteran welfare services in NI, and what that means
- ▶ To **work collaboratively** to ensure the best possible outcomes for veterans, regarding mutual support, understanding and capabilities of everyone here present.
- ▶ To **have the opportunity to network** and learn about other organisations present today.

No One Organisation Can Do Everything.

- ▶ Provide suggestions of **how we can do things better.**



Key findings since coming into post

- ▶ **Communication** - Getting the information out to veterans about what services exist in NI. **Many veterans had no idea where to go or how to get help. Roadshows and other initiatives have helped change that**
- ▶ **Health** – Difficulty in accessing Mental Health pathways that are understanding of a veterans background and experience, or easily being able to declare veteran status for service related injuries. *(Made more difficult/disadvantaged by overt and supported Veteran pathways in England such as Op Courage and Op Restore)*
- ▶ **Having a Single Point of Contact/Entry** – Prior to April 2023 UDR and Home Service went to UDR & RI Aftercare, and everyone else was picked up by individual organisations or the Veterans' Support Office.
- ▶ **Scattergun of Services** – Previous lack of collaboration



What we have done so far

- ▶ Ongoing **support to veterans and families through pro active engagements** to ensure their needs are championed and vocalised.
- ▶ Gathering **evidence of 'need'** where possible E.g. NI Veterans Health Questionnaire.
- ▶ **Ongoing lobbying and engagement** at Ministerial level and across national, regional and local government.
- ▶ **Providing regular updates** and progress reports to veterans'.
- ▶ Ongoing **best practice sharing** with fellow home nation Veterans Commissioners.
- ▶ Championing veterans in a bid to **change the narrative** and support this amazing community that we have.



This is a journey...we all have a part to play...

Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner's Office (NIVCO)

Website: www.nivco.co.uk
Email: commissioner@nivco.co.uk

Office Tel: 028 2548 3169

Follow us on

Facebook @NorthernIrelandVeteransCommissioner
X (formerly Twitter) @niveteranscomm



Veterans Welfare Service (NI)



Defence Business Services

Veterans Services

Veterans Welfare Service NI

Veterans Welfare Service NI

VWS NI provides support to veterans & their families, service leavers, and bereaved families of service personnel, one a one-to-one basis either via the provision of sound information, guidance and support or more commonly via a holistic casework model to support clients:

Welfare

- Bereavement / loss
- Family / Relationships / Housing / Employment
- *Non-public funded respite for UDR widows, bereaved families, and disabled ex-soldiers*

Health

- MOD funded medical provision for psychological therapy and physiotherapy for service-related ailments.

Finances

- Assistance with War Pension Scheme (WPS) claims, Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) claims, and Armed Forces Pension Scheme – 75, 05 & 15 (+ medical discharge)
- Debt & benefits advice, and Benevolence.



Veterans Welfare Service NI

VWS NI is part of DBS Veterans Services, who are the delivery arm for welfare and transitional support on behalf of Defence. Service expansion in NI sees the continued delivery of trusted services formerly provided by the Aftercare Service, combined with wider Veterans Welfare Support, now available to all UK Armed Forces Veterans within NI.

Service delivery remains via a local community-based welfare service, 4 x Field Teams in the North, South, East and West of the province. Each Field Team consists of 2 x Welfare Caseworkers and 1 x Welfare Advisor. VWS NI HQ is in Palace Bks in Holywood.

Contact us for further info and eligibility on 028 90 420 145 or Email: dbsafvs-vws-ni@mod.gov.uk

North – Coleraine – Tel: 028 92 260 615

South – Portadown – Tel: 028 92 260 044

East – Holywood – Tel: 028 90 420 266

West – Enniskillen – Tel: 028 92 260 114



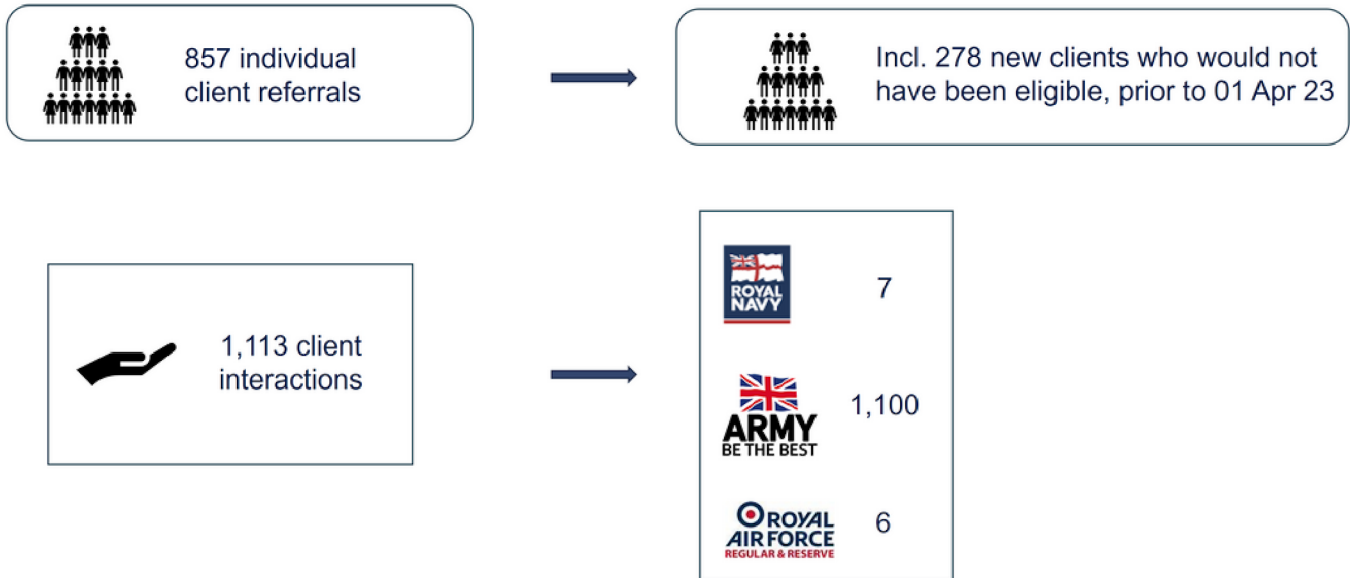
Official

Medical Service Provision

- Qualifying clients may be referred for medical services, physiotherapy and psychological therapies are available.
- The exact nature of the therapy will be determined by the service provider at Initial Assessment, based on the clients' needs. The cost of treatment is borne by the MOD, but the cost of and arrangements for transport to and from service providers, is the responsibility of the client.
- The provision of medical services is contracted out to security-cleared providers. Inspire Wellbeing for psychological therapy and Active Health Solutions for physiotherapy.
- Eligibility – the veteran's medical condition must be attributable to or aggravated by their service.
- Throughput – services are demand driven and therefore fluctuate but referrals can be upwards of 300 per annum.

Official

Client Referrals 01 Apr - 31 Dec 23




Official

Case Study – WIS Service Leaver

	Needs' Analysis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Army Service leaver, PRU Referral • Completed 15 years' service • Marriage problems due to loss of earnings • Benefits Advice • Overpayment in SFA Rent/CILOCT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debt • Limited Family support • Attitude/expectations/perceptions • Mental/physical health issues • History of Alcohol Addiction • Limited knowledge of Veterans Support Organisations
	Actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged with DIO regarding overpayment of Rent/CILOCT • Assistance with securing debt advice and guidance • Referrals completed for Counselling for Addictions/psychotherapy/physiotherapy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychotherapy Counselling sp for spouse/ongoing emotional sp provided • Engaged with RBL to seek immediate financial assistance for client • Referral to Veteran sp groups for ongoing peer sp • Client encouraged to open up/talk to close family/friends
	Impact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement reached with DIO on immediate re-imbursement of Rent/CILOCT • Engagement with Financial Advisor • Addictions now under control/fully engaged with counselling • Physiotherapy enabled client to remain in full time employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate Financial assistance secured from RBL with further 6 months of ongoing financial sp • Marriage back on track • Debt Management Plan in place • Improved friend/family support network

'to be honest, without the timely intervention of the caseworker, my addiction would have been my saviour, and my marriage, business and dreams for the future would be a distant memory'

Case Study – Veteran Support

	Needs' Analysis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Army veteran • Mental and physical health conditions • Self-harm and suicide attempts • Finance/Debt • Family/Friend Sp Network – non existent • Addictions – Alcohol dependency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marriage breakdown/divorce • No access to children • Serving PSNI Officer/C of C not fully aware of issues • Veteran reluctant to divulge personal issues due to historical abuse • Sofa surfing • NIHE housing needs/private rental
	Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple liaison with veterans C of C/NHS CMHT/GP • Fast track referral for Addiction/Counselling • Secured appt for Debt Advice • Solicitor sourced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered with NIHE/helped source private rental • Referral to Veteran Sp Groups • Form A initiated for financial assistance with household items/security deposit
	Impact: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trusted working relationship built and maintained with veteran that encouraged continued engagement with support agencies • Appropriate mental health treatment sourced and sustained • Debt Management Plan in Place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C of C fully aware of Veterans issues/ongoing sp provided • Formal access to children secured via courts • Child Maintenance in place • Stronger relationship with parents/close friends • Private rental secured • Better sp network established with Family and friends who provided immediate financial assistance

Case Study highlights complex and challenging case requiring experience, knowledge and judgement of staff involved. Demonstrates challenging circumstances within which to build a successful client relationship and awareness of available support. This case required complex coordination of multi-agency support that secured eventual safety and appropriate housing of the client.

Future Work

Independent Review of UK Govt Welfare Services for Veterans

HM Armed Forces Veteran Cards – NI approach

Questions



NI Veterans Support Office (VSO)



**Northern
Ireland
Veterans'
Support Office**



NIVSO Core and Programme Posts

NIVSO Core Posts

Head NIVSO – Liz Brown

Deputy Head – Fiona Sinclair

Comms and Support – Janette Loughlin

NIVSO Programme Posts

DGS Regional Co-ordinator for Northern Ireland – Charlie Marno

Veterans' Champions Support Officer – Bobby Gillespie

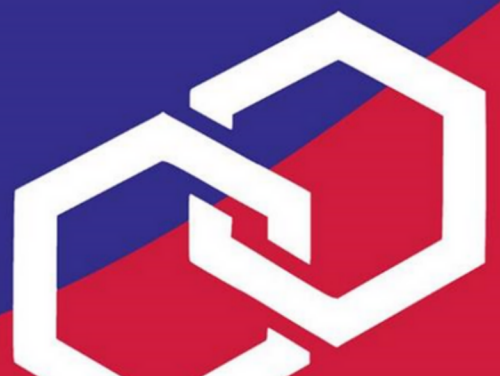
Associated Programme Posts

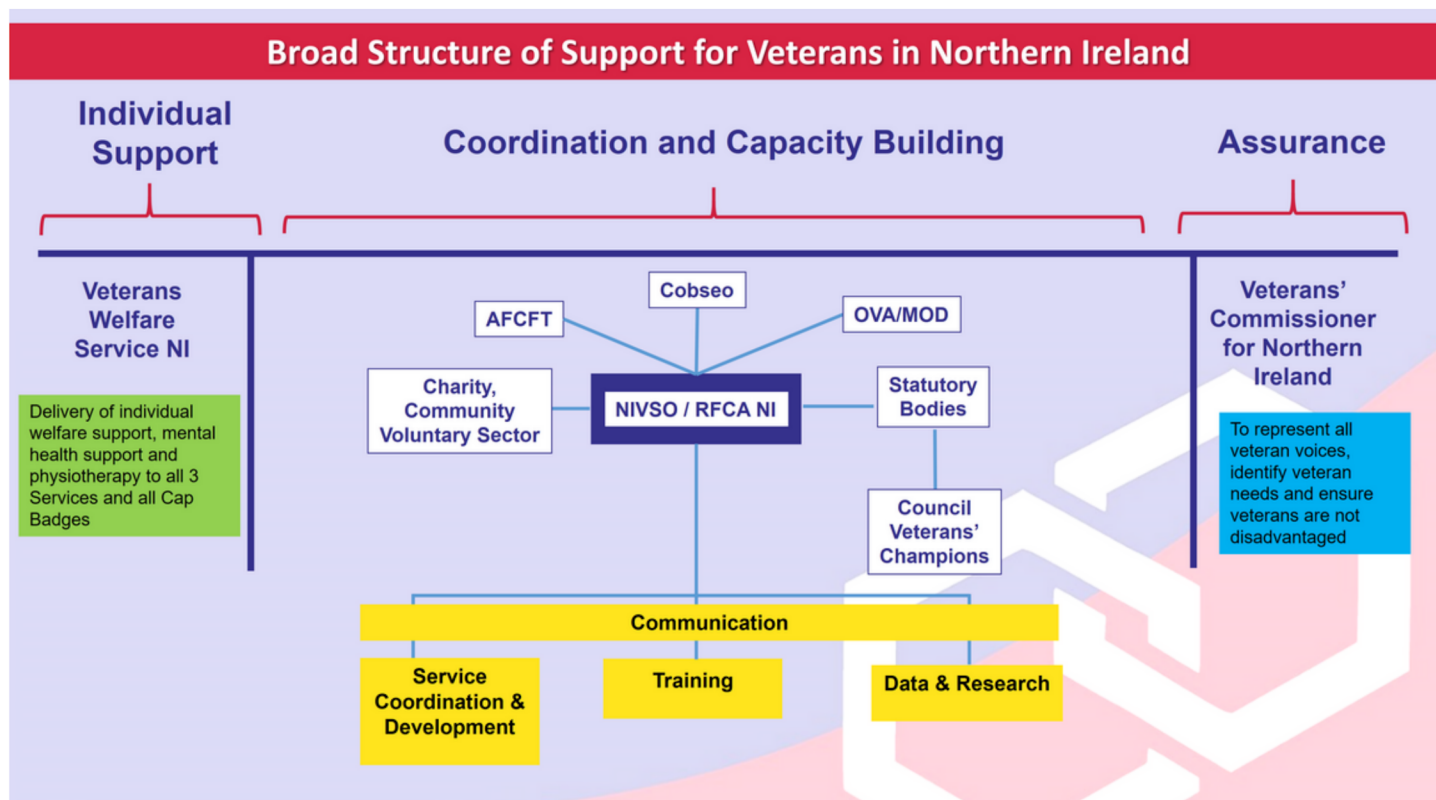
Louise McCreddie (WWTW) – Care Coordinator

Mark Ewing (SNH) – VASP Project Manager

Dennis Currie (AAVS) – Sport and Outdoor Navigator

Brian Williams (DMWS) – Tackling Loneliness Navigator ++





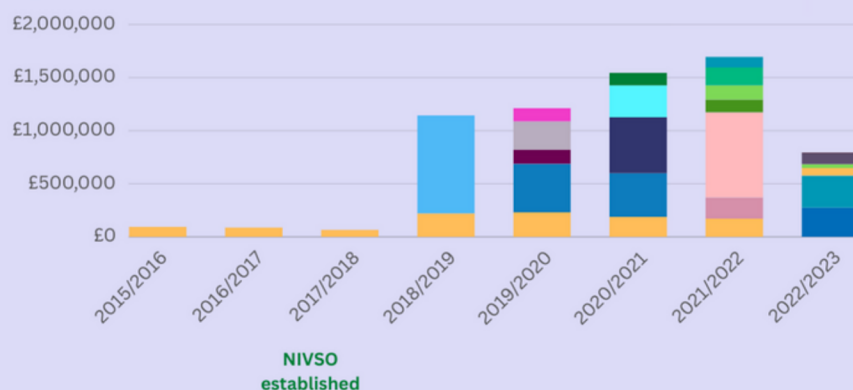
The Northern Ireland Veterans' Support Office was established to develop the capacity to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant in Northern Ireland

The team has 5 main tasks:

- To be a trusted point of contact for veterans whose needs are not being met.
- To be a single point of contact for all organisations providing services for veterans.
- To develop a coherent and coordinated approach to support veterans.
- To increase the quantity and scope of services available by promoting and guiding access to Armed Forces Covenant Trust Funding.
- To achieve and monitor outcomes in all the above and communicate these outcomes appropriately.

Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust programme funding in Northern Ireland 2015 - 2023

Total of £8,069,141 drawn down into Northern Ireland from 2015-2023



Outcomes

- Creation of Navigator posts across NI – embedded in NIVSO (also DGS Coordinator), AAVS, DMWS, WWTW
- Enabling national charities to deliver direct services to veterans in NI – eg WWTW, DMWS, FwP
- Design of the Veterans Adviceline for Statutory Professionals programme – delivered by SNH
- Sustainment of the Start 360 RDV Caseworker in HMP Maghaberry, Magilligan and Hydebank
- Design of the Veterans Champions Outreach programme and creation of support officer
- Creation of networks eg Serving and Ex Serving Women's Network
- Facilitation of Mental Health and Housing Strategy Committees
- Delivery of employment workshop with QUB, 38X, CTP and OU
- Governance Training for veteran support organisations
- Design and delivery of Veterans Places, Pathways and People Programme (VPPP)
- Development of VPPP2 (2024-2027)

Northern Ireland Veterans' Places, Pathways and People Programme



We are the portfolio lead for the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's VPPP programme Apr 22- Mar 24.

In consultation with the veteran community we have designed a package of support from 8 trusted partner organisations.

NI VPPP focuses on care coordination, peer support activities, high level mental health services and volunteer training.



"I never really thought about how things had affected me before this conversation today."

Veteran service user at Brooke House Health & Wellbeing Centre

VPPP Outcomes (up to Dec 23)

- 94 veterans on pathways of support in Brooke House
- 95 veterans on pathways of support in Combat Stress
- 101 veterans on pathways of support in Inspire
- 93 veteran and family members received direct support from WWTW Care Coordinator
- 914 veteran and family members supported on a range of activities at AAVS
- 48 veterans completed 10-week DGS programmes at Brooke House and Ashes to Gold (7 in HMP Maghaberry). Two spring programmes to come.
- 75 veterans and families received direct support from OOTS, 1000+ on activities
- FwP outreach and launch of PiVs
- Mental Health Training of volunteers delivered across NI by Inspire



Independent Review of UK Government Welfare Services for Veterans

Recommendation 26

The NIVSO should be moved into the OVA in order to continue to operate in Northern Ireland as the OVA's regional presence. This will require an additional revenue stream for OVA from HMT. The team recognises that this will have financial, governance, and HR implications for both the NIVSO and for the OVA that will need to be fully worked through. This should be aimed for completion before end of March 2024, with a view to NIVSO being integrated for FY24/25.

Recommendation 27

Consideration to retaining the NIVSO brand, alongside that of the OVA, should be given. Over the last 5 years it has become a well-known, understood, and trusted brand for Northern Ireland veterans, and the review team consider that to change this would be detrimental. It is widely accepted that the NIVSO should no longer be undertaking casework, but that this should fall to the VWS NI team.

Government Response to Welfare Services Review Recommendations

"The Government recognises the views expressed in the Review on the knowledge and trust held by the Northern Ireland Veterans Support Office (NIVSO). OVA will fund the NIVSO for FY 2024-25 from its budget, while evaluating its impact to determine future funding and governance arrangements".

The Future?

- Closer alignment with the Office for Veterans Affairs (OVA)
- Translation of national initiatives and commitments into an NI context
- Further development of veteran specific pathways and networks, but increased collaboration with statutory bodies – health, housing, education and employment
- Retain oversight and coordination of veteran support activities across NI



Veterans ID Card Update

Apply for an HM Armed Forces Veteran Card

Project Update



Strategic vision

Why we are doing this.....



The government has committed to making the United Kingdom **the best country in the world to be a veteran** by 2028.



The Veterans' Strategy Action Plan (2022-2024) the government committed to exploring the **secure, digital verification of veterans' status**.



There have been repeated promises from ministers publicly to roll out veteran cards since 2018. **Ministers continue to show personal interest and commitment.**



Veteran Cards is the key enabler to support **easier and quicker access to services** and inspiring future services from new providers.

Problem statement and solution

“There is no quick & easy way for **users** and **service providers** to **confirm** that someone **has served in the UK Armed Forces** in a one-off, simple process, so **veterans can access the services** they are entitled to”



Future card benefits

Available in the future

- **Speed of accessing services:** Veterans will be able to access services more quickly – by breaking down current verification barriers
- **Easier access:** Removes need for paper documentation
- **Feel more valued:** By allowing veterans easy access to services, it would make veterans feel more valued
- **Early intervention:** By signing up leavers to the Single Digital System before they become vulnerable, over the longer term this should result in fewer veterans slipping through support nets

"Perfect!" "It's the future, it's the right way forward". (v1)

*"If someone's struggling...it's going to be done **quickly**...if it needs to be sorted right now, that's your benefit." (v4)*

"I think it would increase peoples' self worth in being veterans, and feeling valued" (v6)

Source: Engine

Estimated users

Who are the users?

- **2.2 M** – Veterans in the UK
- **1.1M** – Potential users of this service if half veterans want one (assumption)

Testing with real people

In 12 months we have completed:

- **70+** moderated (MS Teams/in person) testing sessions
- **14,000** unmoderated (user applies) testing cases
- **815** end of service survey responses
- **13000** proof of concept survey response
- **15** end-to-end journey interviews
- **14** veterans club visits

What we've been doing

In 12 months we have:

- Built a **front-end digital application service** on gov.uk. URL: gov.uk/veteran-card
- Offered a **paper application** service if needed
- Built **ID verification** via GOV One Login
- Built a **service matcher tool** using extracts from all of MOD's HR database
- Built a **bespoke Case Management** system for the back office



What we've been doing

- We'll offer a **special collection** for Northern Ireland applicants
- We'll offer a **full-service wrap with 4 new staff** for our veterans helpline
- We've enhanced **card printing facilities** through purchasing £0.5m of high-capacity **card printing and enveloping machinery** for **delivery of 50k cards per month**

Our vision is for a digital automated service from "application to post" for 90% of cases

Automation:

- Digital applications taken via Gov.uk
- Creation of Gov.uk One Login account confirms identity
- Service checking function (first in Govt) automatically checks details against extracted MOD service records
- Photo cropper tool automatically re-sizes and formats the photo to printing standard
- If cases pass the auto-checks, cases pass to printing automatically
- Case admin team deal with auto-check failures
- Single, on-screen 'human eyes' check of all photos/card details before card is printed

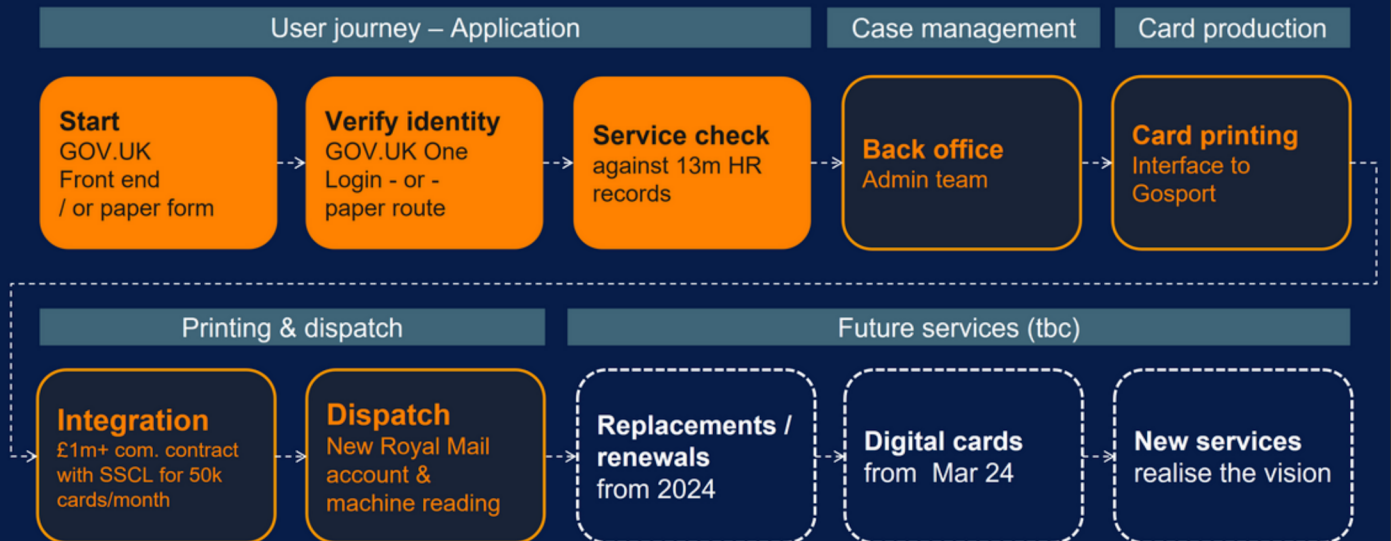


Investment in an automated high capacity card printer and enveloping machine

- Prints card
- Prints card carrier (letter)
- Sticks card to carrier
- Folds in three
- Inserts into envelope
- Seals envelope
- Target: 2,500 cards per day



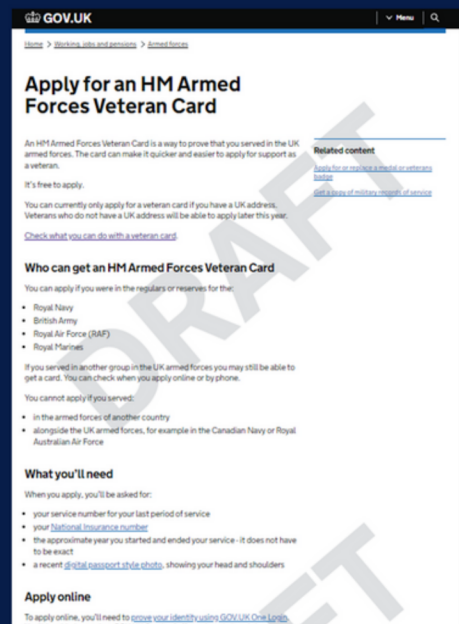
The end to end process



gov.uk/veteran-card

Service Launch

- 14 Jan – tech changes to card production software released
- 15 Jan – high capacity card production commences (for c10k veterans who applied in testing)
- W/c 22 Jan – launch of application service on Gov.uk
- All veterans able to apply from day one
- We'll manage the backlog v production



Approach for Northern Ireland

- 2nd class post but special handling (plain envelopes etc)
- We are building a collection option – offering collection from one of four MOD addresses
- Card sent to VWS NI
- VWS NI contacts admin team for user contact details via MOD systems
- VWS NI contact user and arrange collection
- The collection option is not yet available but will be soon



Questions – you probably have a few?

I'm sorry I can't be with you today and I'm sure you have lots of questions. I'd be delighted to arrange a MS Teams call for you to join, where I can answer your questions and let you know more about our service launch.

David Johnson
Product Owner
HM Armed Forces Veteran Card Project



Veterans Places, Pathways & People (VPPP) Programme

Presented by Combat Stress, Inspire Wellbeing & Brooke House.

Veterans' Places, Pathways and People Programme (VPPP) NI
Connecting Health & Wellbeing Partnership - delivered by Brooke House, Inspire and Combat Stress
At-A-Glance Pathway Document

Mild to Moderate Mental Health Issues or Needs

Moderate to Complex Needs

Mental health concerns or needs should initially be talked through with the GP

Support available

- Workshops - Nutrition / Woodwork / Art
- Psychosocial Education - Living with ... Pain / Trauma / Addiction / Dementia
- Nature Based Therapy - Gardening / Equine Assisted learning / Fly Fishing
- Complementary Therapy
- Pain Management - Prevention / Physiotherapy / Pharmacy
- Psychological Therapy
- Structured Residential Programme
- Carers Support Programme

Brooke House
Co. Fermanagh

Contact: 028 8953 1223
info@brookehouse.co.uk

Support available

- Workshops - Mental Health Awareness / Adult and Children Safeguarding / Alcohol and Drug Awareness / Promoting Self-Care and Wellness / Suicide Awareness and Self-Harm / Understanding and Managing Challenging Behaviours
- Psychological Therapy
- Helpline 0330 808 9294
- Road Map To Recovery Support Groups
- Community Wellbeing Hub
www.communitywellbeing.info
- Advocacy Service

Inspire
Belfast

Contact: 0330 808 9294
workandstudy@inspirewellbeing.org

Support available

- Psychiatric Assessment & Medication Review
- Psychological Therapy - Trauma-focused CBT, Narrative Exposure Therapy, Cognitive Processing Therapy, EMDR
- Online psycho-ed & skills groups
- 1:1 and group Occupational Therapy
- 1:1 and group Mental Health Nursing
- 1:1 and group Peer & Family Support
- Learning Platform for those working with / supporting veterans
- Helpline 0800 138 1619

Combat Stress
Belfast

Contact: 0800 138 1619
northernireland@combatstress.org

Mental Health crisis or severe mental health issues requires statutory HSC support i.e. ED attendance (crisis) or referral to MH Community Teams by GP (severe)

Grey highlight denotes broader additional support or services (outside of VPPP) that may also be available to the client

NB On receipt of a referral or someone getting in touch directly, each partner will undertake an assessment of need to inform appropriate treatment options. The person can then either be supported by the receiving organisation or be signposted/referred on (as appropriate) to one of the other partner organisations. They can also be signposted/referred on after having completed treatment for additional step-up or step-down support.

This slide has been duplicated on the next page but larger and in Landscape for easier printing.

Veterans' Places, Pathways and People Programme (VPPP) NI
Connecting Health & Wellbeing Partnership - delivered by Brooke House, Inspire and Combat Stress
At-A-Glance Pathway Document

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Defence Medical Welfare Service

Supporting the frontline



dmws.org.uk



What we do

DMWS provide medical welfare support to the Armed Forces (serving, reservists, veterans), NHS staff, Blue Light Services, The Merchant Navy, and their families/carers

Our history



- WW2 Joint Committee of St John and Red Cross form Service Hospitals Welfare Department – 1943
- DMWS 2001

- Operational Service
 - Libya and Palestine
 - Aden
 - Bosnia and Kosovo
 - Iraq
 - Afghanistan
 - Ebola
 - Manchester Arena Bomb
 - COVID – 19



- Partnership working with NHS, MoD (long term contractor), Veterans UK, Police, Local Authority and 3rd Sector/Charities

Supporting the NHS

DMWS deliver services through honorary contracts with NHS hospitals across the UK. We provide crucial support for patients, their families/carers and NHS staff with proven positive outcomes and significant cost savings.

We also directly support NHS Trusts and Boards to fulfil their statutory duty under the Armed Forces Covenant.



45 NHS hospital locations in GB



9 hospitals in Cyprus



Support into the community



National Response Service helpline

Supporting the NHS

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45 NHS
hospital
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9 hospitals
in Cyprus



Support
into the
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National
Response
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How we help



In England - VCHA



In Scotland



**UNFORGOTTEN
FORCES**

Supporting Scotland's
Older Veterans



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

**SVTP
VMHAP
HB - VCHA**

April 2022 - March 2023

Total beneficiaries: 9601



4125

Direct
service
users



3180

Family
members
/carers



2296

NHS
staff



Our people

Our people make us what we are: A high-quality, professional medical welfare service provider.

- Two thirds of DMWS staff are veterans
- One quarter of staff are reservists
- One third are partners of serving personnel

This lived experience, together with training, brings a profound empathy and understanding of the practical challenges of Service life and the nature of the communities we serve.





Concept –

OVA funded NI project - develop a medical welfare service for veterans on a medical pathway in NI based on DMWS service delivery experience in the other nations of the UK (UF in Scotland as an example)

Called -

Veterans Medical Welfare Service (NI)

Legacy –

Veterans Transition Service (NI)



Timeline: 18-month project starting 1 Oct 23 finishing Mar 25, Quarterly reporting.

Beneficiary numbers: 175 Direct Beneficiaries, 240 Indirect Beneficiaries which include family members, carers and staff supporting care.

Staff: Total of 7 personnel
2 x clinicians RGN Physical Health Trauma & a CPN.

Recruitment underway

4 x Welfare officers (teamed with current MoD WOs).

Recruitment completed.

Collaborations and Networks:

Veterans Commissioner

NIVSO

VWSNI

38 Brigade

Support Helpline connected to NIVSO Veteran Advice line

Tasks & Constraints



Developing medical Pathways

- Private provision through King Edward in London
- Grassroot engagements by WOs in the community linked to NIVSO

Second order priority

- develop working relationships with hospitals in:

- Belfast HSCT
- Northern HSCT
- South Eastern HSCT
- Southern HSCT
- Western HSCT

Educating the Statutory Sector

- About what support is currently available
- Helpline connected to NIVSO Veteran Advice line
- Develop an appropriate media plan

GP Practices

- Contact through Veteran Champions and NIVSO Veterans' coordinator

Scoping the extent of need

- Build on Vets Commissioner's work

Constraints: Op courage and Op Restore like systems will not be delivered in NI within the next 18 months.

Difficult political & security situation in NI, no commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant
In hospital delivery service problematic - The security considerations currently prevent this from being a viable option.

- Veterans in NI remain in their theatre of operation unlike others who return home. This heightens the need to maintain personal security and anonymity. This prevents disclosure of any military data.
- The current risk remains substantial for serving personnel. Certain hospitals remain locations of concern according to CRAC

A case study

A 64-year-old Army Veteran has had constant, chronic pain after knee surgery 5 years ago. Due to this condition he gave up work subsequently his mental health has deteriorated, he has had suicidal thoughts. He was at the lowest point, when a friend requested assistance from the NI Veteran's Commissioner, who forwarded the case via NIVSO to a DMWS Welfare Officer. After listening at length, the SU was convinced to join H4H social group. Two DMWS WOs accompanied the SU to an evening archery event in Lisburn and he said that this had been the most fun he had had in years and thoroughly enjoyed both the activity and company and planned to continue attending future events with and eventually without DMWS WOs in attendance. The SU still has dark days but now has an outlet through DMWS to talk, meet socially and discuss possible medical options moving forward. DMWS are currently investigating current medical pathways in NI for further surgery.

The result (ongoing)

DMWS WOs remain in regular contact with the veteran and will continue to do so for as long as it is required. His medical circumstances remain his largest concern. DMWS are supporting him through the maze that is the NHS and private hospitals in NI (without the support of the Armed Forces Covenant). However, having an outlet for his frustrations and access to an empathetic and supportive ear with DMWS has meant that already his outlook on life has improved, his social life is expanding, he is leaving his house more often and has a number to call when he is feeling particularly depressed or suicidal. DMWS WO remains in regular contact with H4H Clinical Support and the NIVWS to attempt to arrange a surgical solution, but being in NI is a contributing factor to stopping progress. It is hoped that with the emergence of a DMWS Clinical Team will further assist the SU with appointments and mental health support.





Thank you
Any questions?

**Defence Medical
Welfare Service**

#supportingthefrontline

dmws.org.uk

info@dmws.org.uk

A Guide to Self- Care

Presented by Inspire

Introduction to self-care

Michael Donaldson



What is self-care?

noun

- the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's own health.
- the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, in particular during periods of stress.



Why is self-care important?

Self-care means taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical health and mental health. When it comes to your mental health, self-care can **help you manage stress, lower your risk of illness, and increase your energy.**



Effects of stress

Physiological effect

- The body reacts when confronted with stress, fear and anxiety
- A series of chemicals is released into the bloodstream
- This stimulates the release of corticoids and adrenalin

Effects of stress

Physical effects

- Inability to concentrate and difficulty making decisions
- Loss of self confidence
- Irritability or frequent anger
- Insatiable cravings
- Unnecessary worry, uneasiness and anxiety
- Irrational fear and panic attacks
- Compelling emotions and mood swings



Effects of stress

Emotional effects

- Loss of sense of humour
- Increased irritability and moodiness
- Negative thinking
- Being constantly worried
- Lack of interest in normal and pleasurable activities
- Adverse effect on relationships, work and social activities
- Panicky in social situations or in crowds – may avoid people



Effects of stress

Behavioural effects

- Excessive smoking
- Nervous tics
- Increased use of drugs or alcohol
- Mannerisms like nail biting, hair pulling
- Increased or decreased eating
- Absentminded and accident prone
- Aggressive with little provocation



Long term effects of stress

Exhaustion stage or burn out

When long term effects of stress set in the resulting wear and tear compromises systems in our body and organs and can lead to illness

Frequent stress can impair

- Cardiovascular system
- Digestive system
- Immune system



The importance of sleep

Why do you think sleep is important?



The importance of sleep

- Getting enough sleep is essential for maintaining optimal health and wellbeing.
- Sleep is as vital as regular exercise and eating a balanced diet.



The importance of sleep

- Better memory and performance
- Lower weight gain risk
- Better calorie regulation
- Lower risk of heart disease
- More emotional and social intelligence
- Lower inflammation
- Stronger immune system
- Decrease in depression levels



Barriers to sleep

- Taking sleep for granted – it's a waste of my time. I've got too much to do.
- Caffeine – leads to a vicious cycle
- Alcohol – might make us drowsy but then we get drinkers dawn or our sleep is restless
- Eating and drinking late – heartburn– it's just not comfortable
- Blue light – TV and other screens – social media might be soporific but your brain is overstimulated
- Stress – it's hard to fall asleep when our mind is racing and cortisol is coursing through our body
- Shift work – it's hard to get into a regular pattern for sleeping when the rest of your life isn't regular
- Environment – noise, light, kids, dogs...whatever disturbs you disturbs your sleep



Sleep environment

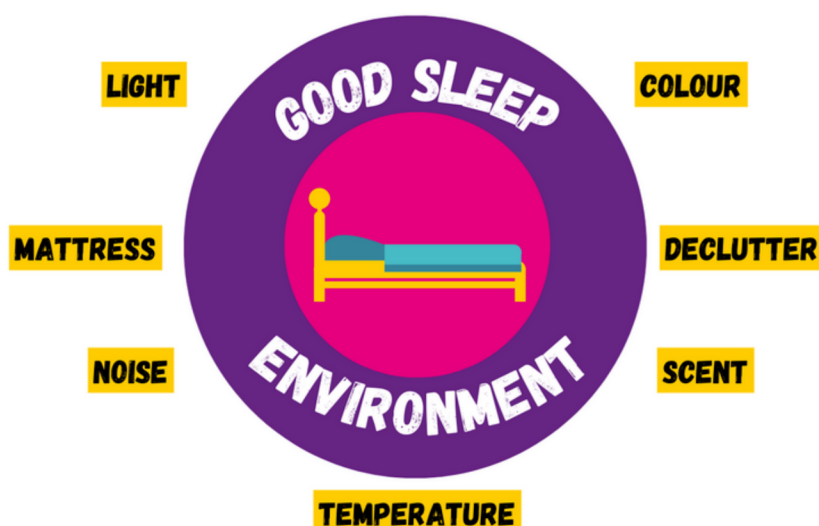
Your sleep environment is the space in which you sleep-your bedroom.

It's important that the environment is right for you , so you get a good night's rest.

What do you think makes a good sleeping environment?



Sleeping environment



Sleep hygiene

Do

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time everyday
- Reserve your bedroom for sleep if you are able to.
- Exercise regularly
- Create a relaxing sleeping environment
- Determine your optimal amount of sleep

Don't

- Don't take naps during the evening
- Don't exercise vigorously in the evening
- Don't drink caffeine
- Don't eat heavy or spicy food in the evening
- Don't watch TV, eat, or read in bed.



Sleep hygiene

Do

- Journal before bedtime
- Breathing exercises
- Keep naps short and sweet
- Turn off bright lights of computers and phones within 2-3 hours of going to bed
- Do some relaxation

Don't

- Don't pull all nighters. Sleep is essential to retaining information
- Don't lie awake in bed for long periods of time and/or watch the clock. If you can't fall asleep within 15 minutes, get out of bed. Do something relaxing before trying to fall back asleep.



Tips, action plans and self-help

Practical, emotional, professional



Positive steps for mental health

- Accept who you are
- Talk
- Keep active
- Learn new skills
- Keep in touch with friends
- Be creative
- Get involved
- Relax
- Ask for help
- Survive



Building emotional resilience

- Regular exercise
- Relaxation
- Staying connected
- Eating well
- Sleeping well
- Having a positive outlook
- Watching alcohol intake
- Acknowledge feelings and focus on actions
- Avoid loud noise
- Fresh air, nature
- Exercise
- Avoid computers and stressful TV
- Reward yourself
- Learn to relax and unwind
- Learn to say 'no'
- Ignite a sense of hope
- Be there for others



Take care of yourself like you would a plant

Stay hydrated
Catch some daily sunshine
Get nourishment
You need space to grow
Life may cut you down, but you'll grow back stronger
Use support when you need it
Let go of things that no longer help
Not everything blooms all the time



Help and support

Talk to your GP

Open up to a trusted love one

Counselling and cognitive therapies

Take time out to do what you enjoy

Get professional advice – counsellors, financial advisers, advice agency

One to one support from mental health organisations.



Contact details

Michael Donaldson m.donaldson@inspirewellbeing.org
07422074363



Introducing SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity

- 16 Jan 2024
- Mike Clements
- Tommie Linton



Our Vision, Mission, Values and Aims

Our Aims:

1. Understanding need
2. Delivering consistent & effective support
3. Sustainable resource
4. Raising our profile & strengthening our brand
5. Growing collaboration



Our SSAFA network worldwide



19/01/2024

52
EMPLOYEE
LOCATIONS

59
SERVING
COMMUNITY
TEAMS

89
BRANCHES

NORTHERN IRELAND

1 - Branch
1 - Serving Community
Teams/Service Committees
2 - Employee locations

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

1 - Branch
1 - Employee location

WALES

8 - Branches
2 - Serving Community Teams/Service Committees
2 - Employee locations

OUR PRESENCE OVERSEAS

4 - Branches
14 - Serving Community Teams/Service Committees
5 - Countries with employees delivering community healthcare

Shetland Islands

SCOTLAND

20 - Branches
5 - Serving Community Teams/
Service Committees
4 - Employee locations

ENGLAND

52 - Branches
37 - Serving Community
Teams/Service Committees
43 - Employee locations

CROWN DEPENDENCIES

(Guernsey, Isle of Man and Jersey)
3 - Branches

SSAFA general services 2023

4

Our 2022 numbers



We supported

59,439

individuals with our charitable
services in 2022.



15,531

visits and cases were
completed by our volunteers.



2,506

volunteers helped us
deliver vital support all
over the world.

£9,528,000

was raised in welfare grants for our
beneficiaries by our SSAFA volunteers.



19/01/2024

SSAFA general services 2023

5

The support we offer

- **Additional Needs and Disability support** – through our Forces Additional Needs and Disability Forum (FANDF) and Short Breaks holidays for families.
- **Adoption**
- **Forcesline** – Free, confidential helpline, email and webchat service. **0800 260 6767**
- **Glasgow's Helping Heroes**
- **Gurkha services**
- **Healthcare overseas**
- **Housing** – including Norton House and our Stepping Stone Home
- **Mentoring** – Personalised mentoring support for service leavers and their families
- **Military Wives Choirs**
- **Personal Support and Social Work Service RAF**
- **Veterans in the Criminal Justice System**
- **Support Groups**
- **Veteran community projects**
- **Welfare and wellbeing support** – Our volunteer network offer practical, emotional and financial support.

19/01/2024

SSAFA general services 2023

6

Adoption

The UK's only adoption agency supporting Forces families, we are experts in the challenges encountered by military adopters.

- SSAFA's independent adoption agency placed 303 children during its first 21 years.
- Rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.

We understand the complex demands of military life and have worked successfully with individuals and couples from all service backgrounds to create loving families.



19/01/2024

SSAFA general services 2023

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Forcesline 0800 260 6767

Forcesline is our free and confidential tri-service helpline and webchat service that provides support for regulars, reserves and veterans from the Armed Forces and their families.

Whether it is addiction, debt, relationship breakdown, our team is here to listen and not to judge. Contacting Forcesline is the start of the journey, and SSAFA is there to help the Armed Forces family every step of the way by providing useful information and signposting.

Our helpline can be accessed from anywhere in the world. **0800 260 6767**



19/01/2024

SSAFA general services 2023

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Forces Additional Needs and Disability Forum (FANDF)



FANDF is a tri-service group for currently serving families or individuals who have a child or adult dependent with an additional need and/or disability

The FANDF is a unique group as it is run by a committee of members whose vision is to ensure that all:

'Forces families with additional needs and disabilities receive the support they need'.

19/01/2024

SSAFA general services 2023

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Glasgow's Helping Heroes

Glasgow's Helping Heroes (GHH) is our partnership with Glasgow City Council to aid the local veteran community.

Since 2010, more than 2,300 members of the Armed Forces community in Glasgow have been helped. The team provides wide-ranging support that includes signposting for financial advice, food poverty support, housing support, tackling homelessness and facilitating benefits access.



19/01/2024

SSAFA general services 2023

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Gurkha services

We work collaboratively with other Gurkha specific organisations such as the Gurkha Welfare Trust, the Gurkha Brigade Association, the Army Welfare Service, Gurkha communities and others.

Our Gurkha services are available to all serving and veteran members of the Brigade of Gurkhas, and their families.



📱 The distribution of tablets across the Gurkha community via our Digital Inclusion Project will allow even more Gurkha families to combat loneliness and isolation."

- Laxmi Bantawa, SSAFA Gurkha Outreach Worker

19/01/2024

SSAFA general services 2023

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Healthcare for the military community overseas

Across the world – including Cyprus, Gibraltar, Brunei, Canada and SHAPE - SSAFA provides local health services for military families.

We are committed to developing innovative child and family services for the Forces community, including dietary health, speech and language therapy, community nursing and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).



19/01/2024

SSAFA general services 2023

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Housing

Short term housing for victims of domestic abuse and their families: women of the Armed Forces community may find themselves without somewhere to live or require a place of safety. That's why we've got our **Stepping Stone Home**.

'Home-from-home' **Norton House** provides **temporary accommodation** for serving personnel, veterans and the families of injured or sick service personnel receiving treatment at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre-(DMRC) at Stanford Hall in Nottinghamshire

The **Royal Homes** in Wimbledon provide **Independent living** for members and former members of all ranks of the Armed Forces, including other eligible beneficiaries and dependants.

Fisher House provides **support and temporary accommodation** for families of injured and sick Armed Forces personnel undergoing (in and/or outpatient) treatment at QEHB.



19/01/2024

SSAFA general services 2023

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Mentoring



Our mentoring helps motivate, support, build resilience and empower service leavers - to fulfil their potential in their new lives outside the military.

Our mentors provide long-term, one-to-one, face-to-face support during transition and for up to two years post discharge.

19/01/2024

SSAFA general services 2023

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Personal Support and Social Welfare Service RAF

The Personal Support and Social Work Service (PS&SWS) RAF is an MOD contracted welfare service run by a team of skilled and qualified staff from a range of disciplines, providing support to the RAF community on base.

Our team provides comprehensive and confidential support, with a special focus on services for adults, but including children, young people and their families. The service covers reservists as well as regulars.



19/01/2024

SSAFA general services 2023

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Short Breaks

Fully funded activity breaks for members of the Armed Forces and their families who have a child with a disability and/or an additional need.

Due to a high intake of applications breaks are currently oversubscribed.



19/01/2024

SSAFA general services 2023

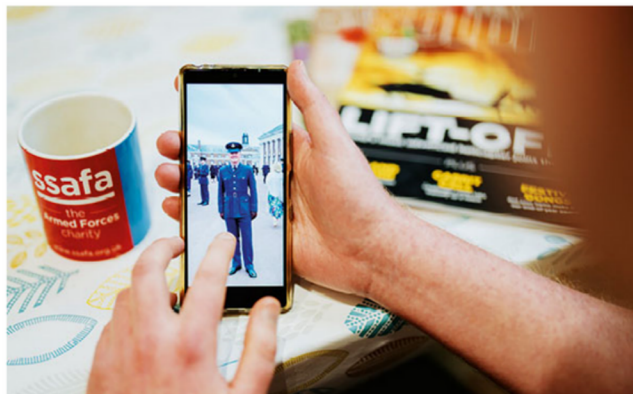
16

Support groups

SSAFA offers three support groups, providing online or face-to-face events;

- Bereaved support groups
- Military Families Affected by Suicide
- Families of Wounded Injured and Sick Personnel.

Each support group runs one or two-day event throughout the year, where beneficiaries can meet up together and receive peer-to-peer support, facilitated in a safe environment.



19/01/2024

SSAFA general services 2023

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Veterans in the Criminal Justice System

The SSAFA VCJS service is committed to giving veterans and their families a service that delivers.

Our aim is to ensure that we offer a recognised and consistent service nationwide whilst meeting our five strategic objectives: effective support, awareness and understanding, sustainable resource, and collaborative working.



19/01/2024

SSAFA general services 2023

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Welfare Operations

Our network of branches in local communities and service committees (serving community teams) on military bases offers practical, financial and emotional support.

We help serving personnel, both regulars and reserves, veterans and their families, with everything from financial hardship to family breakdown.



19/01/2024

SSAFA general services 2023

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SSAFA Central & Regional Governance

- Queen Elizabeth's House, London
- National Chair, Controller and Trustees
- Deputy Chair – Regional Chairs & Representatives
- Directorates
 - People
 - Volunteer Operations (ROSM & VDM)
 - Finance
 - Fundraising, Marketing and Communications (FRM)
 - Community Healthcare Services
 - Social Care Operations
 - Information Technology (Help Desk)

19/01/2024

SSAFA NI Branch - Structure

- President, Chair, Treasurer and Regional Representative
- Branch Office – 2 Part Time Salaried Staff; Sec and AO
- 50 Volunteer Caseworkers, Fundraisers and VCJS.
- Antrim
- Armagh
- Belfast
- North Down
- South Down
- Derry/Londonderry & Tyrone
- Fermanagh

19/01/2024

NI Welfare Operations Statistics 2023

- Applications for Assistance 386
- Home Visits 500 +
- Veterans in Criminal Justice System 72
- Cases Declined 23
- Grants & Emergency Payments **£206K**
- **Major Providers:** SSAFA Financial, RAF BF, RN & RM Charity, ABF, Regimental & Corps Benevolent Funds, TRBL CGT (WS & IEST), Leopardstown Park Memorial Trust.....

19/01/2024

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Requests for Assistance 2023

- Cost of living relief
- Winter fuel payments
- Flood relief
- Marital breakdown
- Isolation & Loneliness
- Funerals & Bereavement
- Special Needs Education
- Occupational Therapy related
- Resettlement training
- Employment search
- Relocation assistance.
- Compassionate travel fees
- Homelessness
- Immigration / Right to Remain
- Debt relief
- PTSD related issues

How can you help?

Every year, SSAFA is there for the Armed Forces community when they need us most. But we can only do it with your help through:

Volunteering

Fundraising

Collaboration



19/01/2024

SSAFA general

THANK YOU

Branch 028 9032 7740

Forces Line **0800 260 6767**

nireland.branch@ssafa.org.uk

<https://www.ssafa.org.uk/northern-ireland>

Royal British Legion

The Royal British Legion

Laura Wilson
Case Officer



About TRBL

Founded in 1921, the Legion is not just about those who fought in the two World Wars of the last century, but also about those involved in the many conflicts since 1945 and those still fighting for the freedom we enjoy today.

We provide financial, social and emotional care and support to all members of the British Armed Forces - past and present and their families. The Legion is also the national Custodian of Remembrance and safeguards the Military Covenant between the nation and its Armed Forces and is best known for the annual Poppy Appeal and its emblem the red poppy.



What we do

Can provide urgent support via our new Urgent Support Team

Grant Giving

Independent Living Advice

Benefit checks

AFCS/WDP Advice and Appeal Representation

Advocating Service

Signpost to external organisations

Specialist support for carers via admiral nurse service

Meet the Team

- Richard Barclay- Case Services Manager
- Sara Marshall- Casework Services Support (Full Time)
- Maureen Beattie- Case Officer (Part Time)
- Gary Trimble - Case Officer (Part Time)
- Rachel Breslin – Case Officer (Full Time)
- Laura Wilson- Case Officer (Part Time)



Case Studies

- Roy Tarbotton (82) who lives in County Fermanagh found he was unable to get to hospital for vital surgery.
- The Royal British Legion stepped in and provided private transportation .
- We also provided him with a deposit for his mobility car and scooter, a laptop, paid for his household goods to be moved to a new property and assisted him with energy costs.

Elloyse Blair, 32 and from Newtownabbey served from 2014-2018

- In 2018, when Elloyse left the army and was set to move to her then-partner's hometown of Swansea with her baby Troy, financially, she was overcome with worry. The RBL supported Elloyse with the move and with necessities for her new accommodation.
- After a short time in Swansea, Elloyse's relationship with her partner resulted in a tense living environment. She swiftly had to move her and her son back home to Northern Ireland. The RBL organised and paid for her belongings and important paperwork to be sent back to her mum's home in Northern Ireland.
- Having settled back home, Elloyse faced further challenges in the subsequent years. When she was eight months pregnant with her daughter Hope, her landlord decided to sell her house, forcing her to have to find a new home all within the space of a few weeks.
- Again, the RBL stepped in and helped set her up in her new home.

Ireland's Grant Giving spend for 2022/2023

£829,713



How to get in contact

- Referring through our Contact Centre is easier and much quicker to access support. The contact centre is open 7 days a week- 8am to 8pm – the number is

0808 802 8080 or ROI Phone Number **44(0) 2033768080**

- We appreciate that some beneficiaries don't want to call a contact centre and that's ok, we are happy to accept referrals locally too, you can do this by emailing:

Irelandcasework@britishlegion.org.uk

When talking with potential beneficiaries, please don't assume or assure beneficiaries that we can solve everything, there are somethings above our reach, whatever they are needing support with, please do refer them however leave the casework to us to manage expectation



Finally

Thank you for listening

Together we can make a difference



Walking With The Wounded

Walking With The Wounded (WWTW)



Contents

- **Why we're here**
- **Our values**
- **What we do**
- **How we do it**
 - Employment Programme
 - Mental Health (Head Start)
 - Care Coordination
- **Case Studies**
- **2022 figures**
- **Questions?**



Why we're here and who we are



Why we're here

An estimated 1.85 million veterans live in the UK.
15,000+ personnel leave the Forces each year.
Most have a successful transition to civilian life.

A small but significant minority do not...

- 10% do not find employment within six months
- The unemployment rate amongst 18-49 ex-service personnel is twice the national average
- Active service is linked to mental health problems
- Loneliness and social isolation are significant issues in the Armed Forces community



Our values

Client first - We listen to our ex-service personnel and are driven by what is best for them; this is at the heart of every decision that we make.

Collaboration - In order to provide the best service for our clients, we recognise the importance of collaboration; collaboration across teams, across the sector, within regions and with key partners, such as the NIVSO and VPPP Partners.

Respect - We commit to treating our colleagues, clients, supporters and partners with respect. We value everyone and treat people with dignity and professionalism.

Empowerment - We strive to empower our workforce to deliver their role with pride, confidence and quality. We work to empower our clients to take steps for their future.

Integrity - We build trust through responsible actions and honest relationships.



What we do

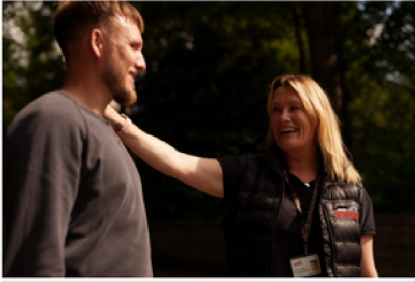
We empower veterans by reigniting their sense of purpose, enabling them to make a positive contribution to their communities and lead independent lives.

Our Mission

To continually pioneer and challenge established ways of thinking to ensure Walking With The Wounded leads the way in developing and delivering best in class services in veterans' support.

IF IT WEREN'T FOR WALKING WITH THE WOUNDED, I WOULDN'T BE HERE. I WOULDN'T, I JUST WOULDN'T. THEY WERE WITH ME EVERY STEP OF THE WAY. IT'S STILL NOT FINISHED, BUT GETTING THERE. GETTING THERE.

MARTIN, A BENEFICIARY



Employment

Our highly trained and experienced employment advisors enable veterans to build confidence, find employment and rebuild their lives.



Mental Health

Our Head Start programme improves wellbeing and empowers veterans with mild to moderately severe mental health difficulties.



Care Coordination

Our Support Care Coordination is bespoke for each person, and designed to develop self-worth, and empower clients to act independently.



How we do it



Employment

Our practical Employment Programme finds meaningful jobs for veterans.

At Walking With The Wounded, we understand transition into civilian life can make it hard for some ex-service personnel to find a job.

Our Employment Programme is designed to find suitable, sustainable jobs for veterans who are struggling since leaving the military. We're here to support veterans thrive in the workplace and rebuild their lives.

LEAVING THE ARMY, I WAS STUCK IN A RUT. THE TURNING POINT WAS MEETING LYNSEY AT WWTW. SHE GAVE ME SO MUCH HELP AND SUPPORT AND NOW I HAVE LANDED MYSELF A JOB DOING WHAT I LOVE. THE SUPPORT HAS BEEN AMAZING. I WOULD NOT BE IN THIS POSITION WITHOUT IT.
Kane, a WWTW beneficiary



Mental Health

High quality therapy for veterans, when, where and how it's needed

We help veterans get support with emotional wellbeing and mental health problems. For example, depression, anxiety, PTSD, or adjustment disorder.

Working with the Headstart, military charities and mental health charity partners, we provide rapid access to talking therapies through accredited private therapists close to wherever the individual lives or online if that is more beneficial for the client.



Support Care Coordination

Personalised, tailored support for veterans, for every part of life.

Support Care Coordination from Walking With The Wounded, and in partnership with NIVSO, VPPP and the Service Charities in NI, helps ex-service personnel manage complex challenges, improve wellbeing and transform their lives.

When a veteran is struggling and needs help, we're here for them.

IMAGINE YOU ARE TAKING A VETERAN UP A MOUNTAIN. FOR ONE, THE AIM WOULD BE TO GET TO THE TOP, FOR ANOTHER IT WOULD BE TO GET EXERCISE, FOR ANOTHER FRESH AIR, AND ANOTHER JUST WANTS TO BE WITH NATURE. THE AIM IS DIFFERENT FOR EVERYONE
WWTW Veteran Support Liaison Officer

Case Study 1

- One of my first referrals when the project started in January 2021
- Significant alcohol addiction and mental health issues
- She was self-harming and had attempted to take her life on numerous occasions.
- Couldn't get the support in NI
- Raised funds through CMS
- Birchwood one week detox program,
- Tom Harrison House 12 week rehab
- Sheltered, supported housing for 15 weeks in Liverpool.
- Life Changing – Alcohol Free; much better health both mentally and physically.
- Relationships with her children, ex-husband and immediate family have improved significantly
- She has accepted responsibility for her role in her addiction.

“It’s like someone has taken my brain and replaced it with a completely different person”



Case Study 2

- Client was referred to WWTW by Charlie Marno (NIVSO) after losing her long-term partner to suicide.
- Charlie and I visited the client together to put together a plan of action as to how we could best support her and the 3 young children going forward.
- The client was visibly upset and very shaken by the trauma of what she had witnessed.
- We discussed her mental health and if she felt that having counselling would be appropriate for her straight away or if she would prefer to wait. She decided straight away as she had no family support.
- A referral was made to AAVSNI who set up counselling straight away.

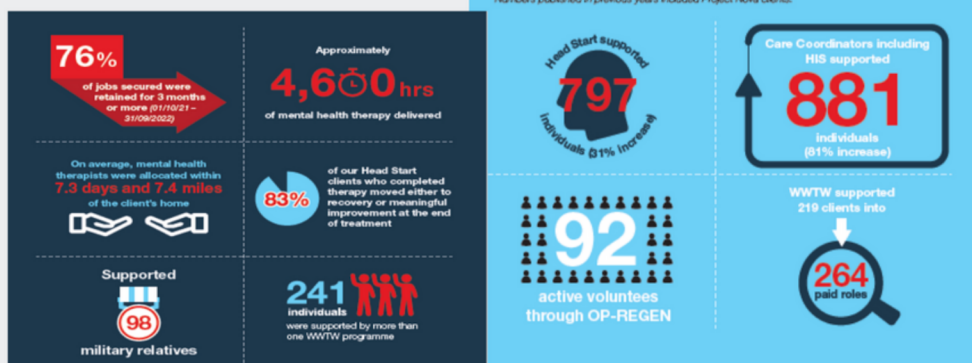
Case Study 2

- QRF fund was used to provide food and electricity in the short term as the Veteran had been the sole earner.
- CMS application was completed for the funeral costs
- White goods and vouchers for clothes for the children was awarded as well as money towards food and electricity for a few weeks until the client could get her finances sorted out.
- The client was also due to start an Access Course for University and through our partner organisation DXC we were able to provide her with a laptop.
- Referral to Brooke House for longer term support
- Referral for a week’s stay at AAVSNI Caravan with the children was also provided

“the help and support has been incredible at an extremely difficult and stressful in time my life, I cannot thank you enough for everything you have done.”



2022 figures at a glance



Questions?



Housing in NI

Identifying and Developing Pathways to Veteran Housing Solutions

Housing is absolutely essential to human flourishing. Without stable shelter, it all falls apart...
- Matthew Desmond, Sociologist.

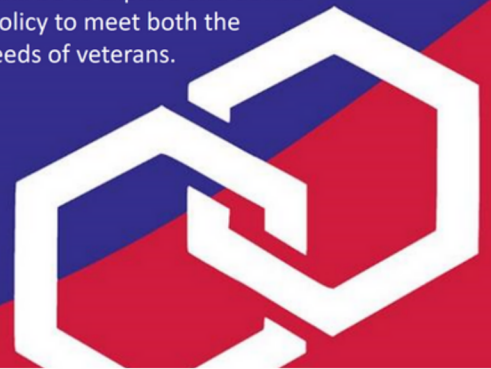
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Role of the NI Veteran Housing Strategy Group

Supporting Veterans in finding a secure home in a safe location for them and their families, taking into account their unique and individual needs e.g. schools, employment, health, access to services etc.

The role of the Group will be to explore and devise housing strategy and policy to meet both the Short and long term needs of veterans.



The NI Veteran Housing Strategy Group – Aims and Objectives

- *A collaboration of statutory, charitable and social housing organisations that either provide veteran specific accommodation, or as part of their delivery, support veterans with housing needs.*
- *Provision of accommodation for the veteran community and development of clear navigated pathways for veterans accessing accommodation in Northern Ireland.*
- *More than simply housing - All agencies will collaborate in a flexible way to devise pathways, identify voids and provide holistic wrap around care to support veterans in their tenancies. Mental health welfare remains at the core of our work.*
- *Support will range from hostel accommodation, supported housing projects, short term respite, long term solutions for veteran families, residential accommodation and independent living solutions.*
- *Group members will commit to working together, pulling on their respective expertise and resources to develop a shared strategy to create effective pathways and housing solutions for veterans.*
- *Membership is open to any professional, working within the housing sector, who wants to support the Northern Ireland veteran community in accessing safe, secure and suitable accommodation for life, with support where required.*



What's Already Available in GB?

1. Cobseo and the Housing Cluster
2. Op Fortitude and the Capital Housing Fund

The Cobseo Housing Cluster does 2 things:

1. Brings together people and organisations who have an interest in housing veterans by joining together both veteran facing charities and other organisations which are not veteran exclusive. Members include statutory authorities, local government, councils, MOD, Defence Transition Service, Cabinet Office (OVA). They work across England, Scotland, Wales and Jersey.
2. Provides solutions to issues of strategic importance

The NI Veterans Housing Strategy Group has been invited to join the Cobseo Housing Cluster <https://www.cobseo.org.uk/clusters/housing/>. Input from NI is important as delivery in NI requires a different approach as the circumstances are unique and more complex.

Op Fortitude

- Run by Riverside.
- Long overdue programme. Unmet housing demand is extreme. Money from Government is very welcome but the scale and challenges ahead are huge and there is not enough money to go around.
- Negotiations are ongoing for NI

Capital Housing Fund

- £20M spread over 3 years.
- The Development Grants programme and Refurbishment Grants programme under the umbrella of the Capital Housing Fund, but both for relatively small individual amounts <https://covenantfund.org.uk/programmes>

NIVSO – Short Term Aims for Northern Ireland

SHORT TERM:

- Established the Veterans Housing Strategy Group, with the NIVSO acting as catalyst, to bring appropriate stakeholders together to review the strategic direction and decide upon the most effective means of delivery.
- Identify, secure provision and promote pathways into short-term accommodation.
- Identify pathways into, and secure the provision of sustainable, secure, and affordable long-term permanent housing by entering into a formal relationship with a suitable housing provider or providers, both social housing and private lets.
- Provide wrap around and holistic care to veterans struggling to maintain their tenancies.
- Support veterans exiting the Criminal Justice System source both temporary and long term accommodation.
- Support and advocate for existing Hubs and veteran housing providers eg BtB.

NIVSO – Medium to Long Term Aims for Northern Ireland

MEDIUM TO LONG TERM:

- Identify and secure the provision of sustainable, secure, and affordable long-term permanent housing through the creation of a new Veterans' Housing Organisation, which would acquire and hold housing assets and where day to day property management would be contracted to a specialist third party
- Bring forward initiatives to support specialist homelessness provision, assisted living support including mental ill health, addiction, dementia care, nursing and residential care and respite care
- Development of common housing register and application process might be appropriate here which includes identification of voids and less congested areas which may be suitable for veterans.
- Identifying and evaluating a partnership with the private rented sector. This might be done, for instance, in conjunction with Veterans Homes, in which a lettings agency would be created for those leaving military service, veterans and their families. This organisation might maintain a list of vetted private property owners and their properties and would place a veteran into suitable accommodation and would be operated in conjunction with the NIVSO.



Housing Group Strategy

Housing Strategy Group Members will be assigned to different cluster groups, dependent on their skills and remit and tasked to focus on the following areas and feedback ideas and progress to the main group:

1. Emergency Housing Solutions (immediate)
2. Short term housing solutions (within 6 months)
3. Long term housing solutions (6 months +)
4. Wrap around and holistic care
5. Data Capture



More than just housing...

Providing housing solutions is not simply about providing shelter.

A veteran's life is impacted negatively in many ways through being homeless.

Eg. Without an enduring address, veterans find it impossible to secure a bank account, GP, hospital care (often driven by a geographic / postcode dependant area), employment.

Their mental and physical health and relationships suffer.

Wrap around care and delivery on the ground is important as this spans more than providing homes.

Wrap around is an approach to care in which multiple service providers, social workers, nurses, primary care physicians, OTs, counsellors and others collaborate to provide more comprehensive physical, mental and behavioural health to the tenant,

The NIVSO:

- ✓ **Builds the capacity for groups to collaborate and network**
- ✓ **Connects – does not signpost**
- ✓ **Provides Peer Support Navigators who work with other case working agencies to support and advocate for the Veteran.**

Identifying and Developing Pathways to connect veterans with services and provide wraparound care



Calling all Veteran Groups & Hubs!



NIVSO Risk Assessment for Charitable Organisations and Community Enterprises in Conjunction with NICVA and Inspire - Thursday 23rd March 2023



The Northern Ireland Veterans' Support Office is committed to supporting Veteran Hubs to grow within their community and provide them with training opportunities.

Following on from our governance and financial management training we are pleased to offer this bespoke training on risk assessment.

Risk assessment is an important task that all organisations should be carrying out, regardless of size or nature. Having a process in place to record this work will help organisations to better manage both current and future risks.

This is a practical training session showing you how to carry out a risk assessment, action plan and record the results in a risk register. The templates used in the exercises can then be used in your own organisation so that you have both the skills and the tools to implement risk assessment.

Who should attend?

This training is specifically designed for voluntary and community sector organisations, it will benefit people across all departments that are involved with assessing and/or managing risk. This training is particularly relevant for those organisations that don't already have risk assessments in place.

Risk Assessment 10am - 1pm

- Identify risks and carry out a risk assessment
- Carry out an analysis of risks and draw up an action plan to deal with them
- Monitor and review action plans

Programme



An overview of VPPP Volunteer training Supporting and Enabling Veteran Volunteers 1.30pm - 3pm

- Build competencies, skills and awareness to support our local veteran population
- Develop a volunteer network
- Promote self care skills to empower and support your volunteer community

Supporting and Enabling Veteran Volunteers

In the afternoon session our NI Veterans' Places, Pathways and People programme partner, Inspire, will provide information on our tailored veteran volunteer training.



To register for this free training please email Janette: ni-vsocomms@rfca.org.uk

Venue: RFCA NI Conference Complex
25 Windsor Park, Belfast, BT9 6FR



NICVA Training 2024 – Calling All Veteran Groups & Hubs!

AM: Training for Committee Members of Veteran Hubs who want some guidance around properly constituting themselves and ensuring that their Trustees are informed and protected.

PM: Making successful funding applications

FORMAT:

Governance Training 10am – 1pm

- The role of the committee/board
- Legal duties of charity trustees and best practice considerations
- The principles of good governance
- Charity regulation

LUNCH

Fundraising session – A practical guide to completing funding applications 1.30 – 4pm

- What are funders looking for?
- Identifying your ideal funders
- Getting your offer correct
- Stages of the application process
- Tips for communicating your needs in writing

To register please
email Fiona Sinclair:

ni-vsodep@rfca.mod.uk

Communicating with the Veteran Community in NI

Communicating to the Northern Ireland Veteran Community

NI Veterans Commissioners Office – Rachael Harger
NI Veterans Support Office – Janette Loughlin

Communication

“To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.”

– Anthony Robbins

Communication is the battle that will never fully be won, but must always be fought.



Communication

Two Comms Officers

Different roles but mutually supportive

Rachael



- To highlight engagement of the NI Veterans Commissioner and to encourage other veterans to engage, so that the NI veterans voices can be represented.
- To highlight progress and provide updates to NI Veterans when appropriate.
- Link veterans with veterans support agencies that they may not be aware of.
- Champion veterans and veteran services more publically.
- Aim to, where possible, influence and change the narrative surrounding veterans in NI.
- To provide a visual and written transparency to NI veterans about the work of the NI Veterans Commissioner.
- To gather evidence to support 'identified veteran need' in NI, E.g. Veterans Health Questionnaire and wider academic veteran surveys.
- Continually adapt and develop communication methods to letting NI veterans know that veteran services exist in NI.



Janette

- Support the needs of the Veterans' Support Office and wider team
- Disseminate information to the veteran network in Northern Ireland
- Promote the work of veteran support organisations across Northern Ireland
- Help translate national initiatives and policy into local action
- Advertise, support and advocate for the programme delivery of NI VPPP, Veterans' Champions engagement programme and all AFCFT initiatives in NI
- Offer comms support to other organisations: development of logos, posters etc
- Share information on news and events relevant to the veteran support network

Working together we avoid duplication and will share and comment each others posts etc. where appropriate.

Billboard campaign poster promoting Veteran NI Services





Print - Newspapers

Local and Regional when and where appropriate



X - Formerly known as Twitter

1.3k Followers



Facebook

1.4k Followers



Billboards

Armed Forces Day and holiday periods



How do NIVCO communicate?



Website

For updated blogs on progress and latest developments within the veterans sphere



Advertisements

E.g. RBL Festival of Remembrance & Special Newspaper Editions



Radio

Occasional Radio Interviews



Leaflets

Specific information with Contact info.



Merchandise

The take away reminder with contact info

Face to Face Engagements





Northern Ireland Veterans' Support Office

**Building Effective Communication for
Veteran Support across Northern Ireland**

Target Audience: The Veteran Community

Transitioning Veterans

Those who have recently left service and are adjusting to civilian life

Veterans with Additional Needs

Individuals facing physical or mental health challenges

Families

Spouses, children, & other family members of veterans who may require support

Veterans Seeking Employment

Those actively looking for employment opportunities after their service

Elderly Veterans

Older veterans who may have unique needs related to health, socialisation and community support

Veterans in Crisis

Individuals facing immediate challenges, such as mental health issues or homelessness

Isolated Veterans

Those living in rural areas who may face unique challenges accessing support services

Female Veterans

Specific support for female veterans who may have distinct needs and experiences

Individual Cap Badges

Recognising the unique experiences and needs of veterans from various cap badges, including the Army, Navy & RAF

Home Service Veterans

Information and support for veterans who served in Northern Ireland during Op Banner.

LGBT+ Veterans

Tailored information and support for veterans from the LGBT+ community

Early Service Leavers

Recent service leavers who may require assistance, e.g. housing, employment

Community Stakeholders

Local community groups, organisations, and businesses invested in supporting veterans.

Government Agencies

Collaboration with governmental bodies involved in veterans' affairs and support, local councils, Veterans' Champions



Messaging and Content Strategy:

Clear and concise

- Clarity is Key: Delivering messages in a straightforward manner
- Avoid Jargon: Ensure easy understanding for all audiences

Empathy in Messaging

- Communicate with Compassion: Showcasing understanding in our tone
- "Build Trust: Empathetic communication fosters a stronger connection

Informative Content

- Knowledge is power: providing the veteran community with valuable information
- Empower veterans through actionable content: take part, join in, come along and engage!

Online Communication Channels



www.nivso.org.uk

Over 500 monthly users



@ni_veterans_
support_office

410 followers



@NorthernIreland
VeteransSupportOffice

2,698 followers



@VeteransNI

585 followers



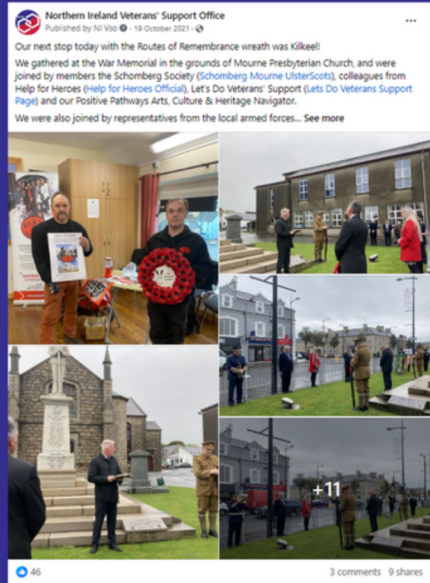
@NIVS06

11 followers

(videos have 1,767 views!)



Engagement and Interaction



Interactive Campaigns:

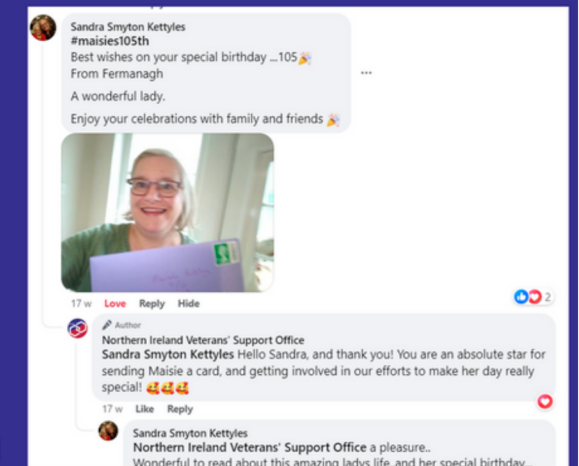
We encourage active participation with our online content

Open Channels:

Establishing feedback mechanisms for transparent communication

Shared Support:

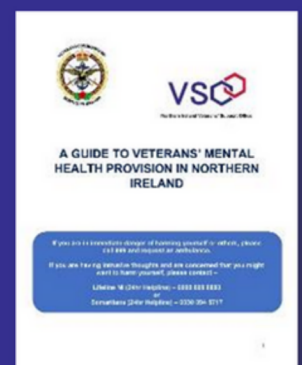
We strive to create an environment where veterans feel connected and understood



Printed Resources



- Newsletter sent via email to over 700 subscribers
- Printed copies available at all in-person events and can be sent by post on request
- Contributions welcome!



Measuring Success and Feedback Loop

Website Engagement:

- Number of unique visitors to the NIVSO website.
- Time spent on the website per visit.
- Interaction with specific content, such as resources, news and event pages.

NIVSO website
504 monthly users
483 new users

Average engagement time:
4m 38 seconds

Social Media Metrics:

- Increase in the number of followers across social media platforms.
- Engagement metrics: likes, shares, comments, clicks.
- Reach and impressions to measure the visibility of content.

Facebook

28 day post reach: 15,709
28 day post engagement:
5,784

Newsletter Effectiveness:

- Subscriber growth and retention rates.
- Feedback or responses received from newsletter content.

"Janette, a great big thank you for sharing this news around Harbour House. Great write up and photography! It was a pleasure to have you there for comms and so important to spread the word that it exists in support of veterans experiencing homelessness. Some great things going on in your newsletter which I hope we can share."
Annemarie Hastings, Chief Executive, Beyond the Battlefield July 2023

Partnerships and Collaborations





Future Plans and Adaptability



- Commitment to Evolution

Continuously assessing and adapting to better serve our veteran community

- Embrace New Ideas

Proactively incorporating new approaches to enhance services

- Strategic Planning

Aligning strategies with the evolving landscape of veteran support

- Flexibility as a Core Value

Adapting our approach to meet the dynamic demands of veterans

- Responsive to Community Needs

Maintaining responsiveness to the evolving needs of our community.



**Serving and Ex Serving
Women's Network
Northern Ireland**



I just wanted to pass on my thanks to you and the team for last night. It was so great to see so many women all vets / serving in one room. I know there are far more out there...

I look forward to the future it sounds incredibly promising.



Leslee

Andy Allen Veteran Support NI

Peer Support



VETERAN SUPPORT NI-AAVS CLUBS (Peer Sp)



- Camera Club
- Veterans Football Club & Golf Society
- Cycling Club (Ride & Reflect)
- Walking Club (Tab & Talk)
- Breakfast Clubs
- Modelling Club
- Film Club (Sandbag & Supper)
- Horticultural Club



AAVS Veteran Activities Centre



- Five Phase Operation over five years!
- Phase One opened 6 May 22 – Tackling Isolation Through Camping (AFCFT)
- 36 beds, kitchen, dining room & ablutions all under canvas
- Activities Based:

Fishing
Archery
Kayaking

Cycling
Water Sports
Walking

Bush Craft
Forestry School
Outdoor Cooking



HONEYCOMB VETERAN COMMUNITY GARDENS



- Veterans Community Hub
- Reflection & Mindfulness
- Intergenerational & Cross Community
- Veterans Helping Veterans



PROJECT HOMELESS WARRIOR



- Aim: To locate homeless/rough sleeping veterans
- Weekly visits to City/Provincial Town centres
- Provide:
 - Food
 - Medical Care
 - Clothing
 - Advice



TOWER 2 TOWER (T2T)



- Cross Community/Intergenerational
- 2 Phases:
 - Home Phase
 - Away Phase
- Following 36th Ulster Div, 10th & 16th Irish Div
- OCN accredited
- Charity Cycle Ride to raise awareness of homelessness & suicide among veterans



TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Supporting our Council Veterans Champions in NI

Supporting our Veterans' Champions Across Northern Ireland

With funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust we are working alongside each of our 11 Veterans' Champions to enhance and sustain their work in your communities.

- Creation of Veterans' Champions Support Officer job role
- Local events for all in the wider community
- Raising the profile and outreach of the VCs
- Training and education: sharing and implementing best practice



Lt Col (Rtd) Bobby Gillespie MBE

Veteran' Champions Community Engagement Programme

Key Points

- Programme funded for two calendar years, 2023-24 and 2024-25.
- £62,000 split across the 11 councils for Veterans' Champion outreach activity each year.
- £11,000 to support advertising, promotional and information literature, and individual development between all VCs each year.
- £2,000 to cover all VC travel expenses to a national event each year.

Scope of Programme

- Up to a maximum of three local veteran community networking events in your council area each year ;
- Up to three veteran community social events in your council area each year; and
- Up to three veteran community outdoor pursuit / family half day activities in your council area each year.

Veterans' Champion Outreach Event – CARRICKFERGUS - Mid and East Antrim Council

OUTPUT

- Community Event within Community Centre
- Big Sunday Breakfast followed by Guest Speakers
- Therapy and Counselling Rooms, and Barber



OUTCOME

- 131 Veterans and Families attended
- Local Community Statutory Professionals attended
- Council Engagement and the announcement of council sponsored events for Veterans and their families
 - Community Integration
 - Peer Support and Friendship
 - A number of referrals to WAVE (Local MH support)
 - VC profile raised and Services to Veteran Community promoted.
 - AR recruitment



One Veteran's Feedback: I left service in 2007 and this is the first event I have ever attended. Thank you for supporting us

Veterans' Champion Outreach Event – Newtownards - Ard and Castlereagh Council

OUTPUT

- Community Event within Church Hall
- Big Saturday Breakfast Guest Speakers and Entertainment
- Veterans' Services available



OUTCOME

- 120 Veterans and Families attended
- Local Politicians in attendance

IMPACT

- Community Integration
- A number of 'Hard to Reach' Veterans attended
- Association link ups
- VC profile raised and Services to the Veteran Community promoted.



One Veteran's Feedback: As a female veteran who has only returned to NI after 24 years this is great – I will attend female Veteran launch on 18 May at HMS Caroline.

National War Memorial Gardens, Islandbridge, Dublin Somme Commemoration Saturday 8 July 2023



Aim. At a request from the veteran community the aim was to send veterans from across Northern Ireland to Dublin

Outcome. Over 500 veterans left Northern Ireland for Dublin onboard buses sponsored by the AFCFT to spend the day with friends and family at the Somme Commemoration.

Comment. The RBL (Dublin Branch) extended its gratitude to the Veterans Champions for supporting this event adding it was the biggest turnout for many years



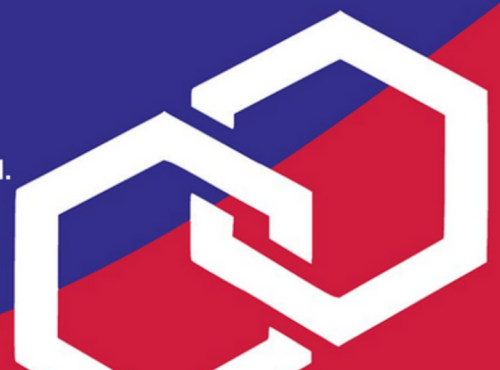
Programme Update and Outlook

Achievements to Date

- 55 events delivered across Northern Ireland with supplementary support provided to another 8 events.
- Over 5000 veterans and family members engaged.
- Over 250 referrals generated.
- Veterans' Surgeries established.
- A programme of Mental Health Training being rolled out across Northern Ireland.
- Briefings to Regimental and Veteran Associations.

Forecasted

- Veterans' Surgeries to be established further.
- Community Projects for veterans to be established and funded.
- VC sponsored forums for Statutory Professionals.
- Veterans' family Open Days.
- Annual Briefing and information fairs.





VASP

1

VETERANS' ADVICELINE FOR STATUTORY PROFESSIONALS

MARK EWING

2

VASP Service Framework

Three Year Project funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund

Centred & Facilitated by the Somme Nursing Home

Sits alongside the Veterans' Support Office (VSO) NI

Endorsed by the NI Commissioner for Veterans

Evaluated by Chester University Academia



3

What is the VASP Service?



Signposting Professionals,
Community & Voluntary Sectors &
individuals to Veteran Organisations
& State Welfare Services

Communicates an array of assistance
available for Veterans in NI

Conduit between Veteran
Organisations

Can provide 2 nights emergency
accommodation

Collaborative Working

- ▶ Dept for Communities – Make the Call
- ▶ Heath & Social Care Trusts – Mental Health Teams
- ▶ GP's
- ▶ Police Service of Northern Ireland
- ▶ Northern Ireland Prison Service
- ▶ Veterans Welfare Service
- ▶ Veteran Organisations & Charities
- ▶ Community Advicelines - Advice NI
- ▶ Law Firms

Overview



953 Signposting Enquiries to VASP Service.



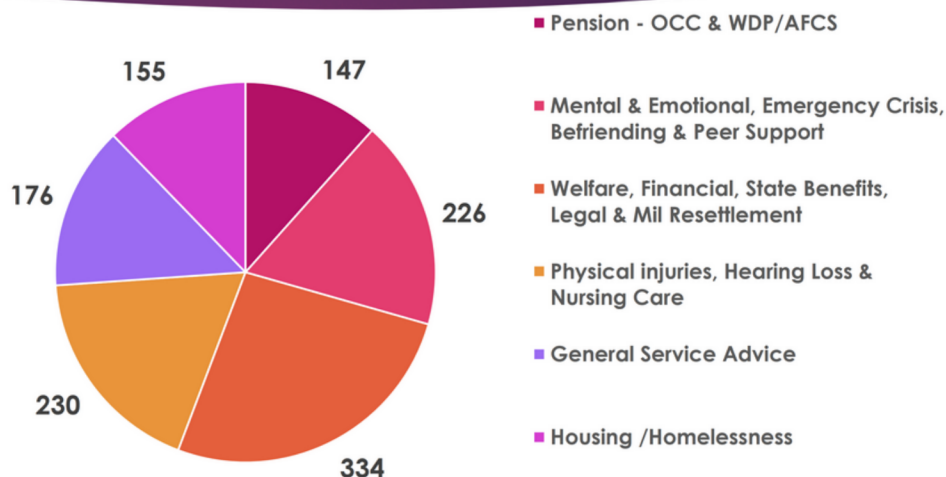
1268 Queries raised by the enquirers.



1703 Signposting pathways provided.

As of 31.12.23

1268 queries for Signposting Assistance

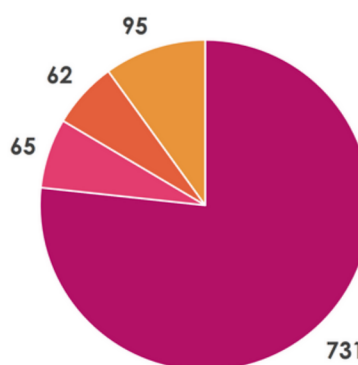


Emergency accommodation has been used on 9 separate occasions for Veterans in need.



Signposting by Military Service

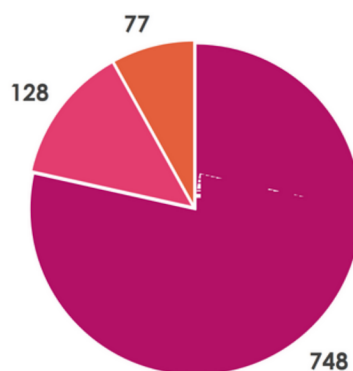
Total = 953 on 31.12.23



■ Army ■ Royal Navy ■ Royal Airforce ■ Tri-Service

Gender of Enquiries

Total - 953 on 31.12.23

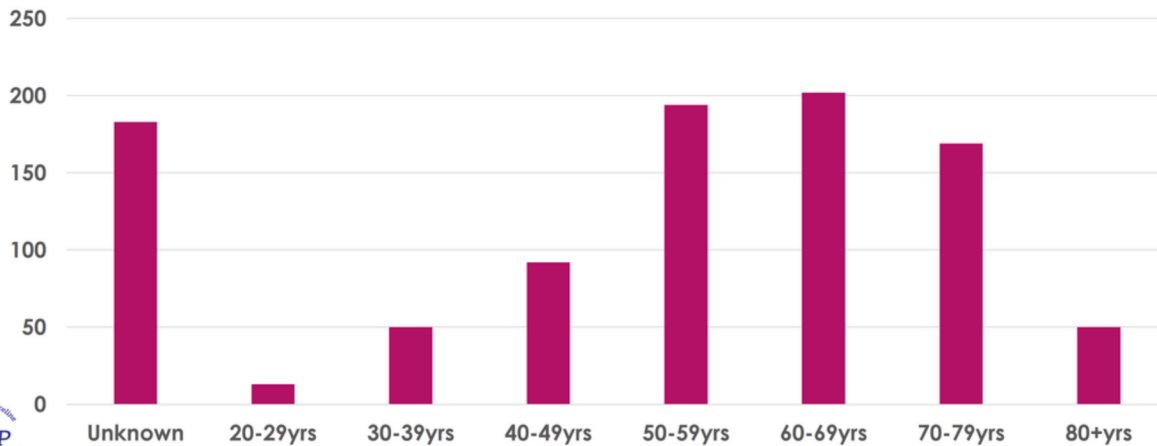


■ Male ■ Female ■ Undeclared

Age Range of Signposting Enquiries

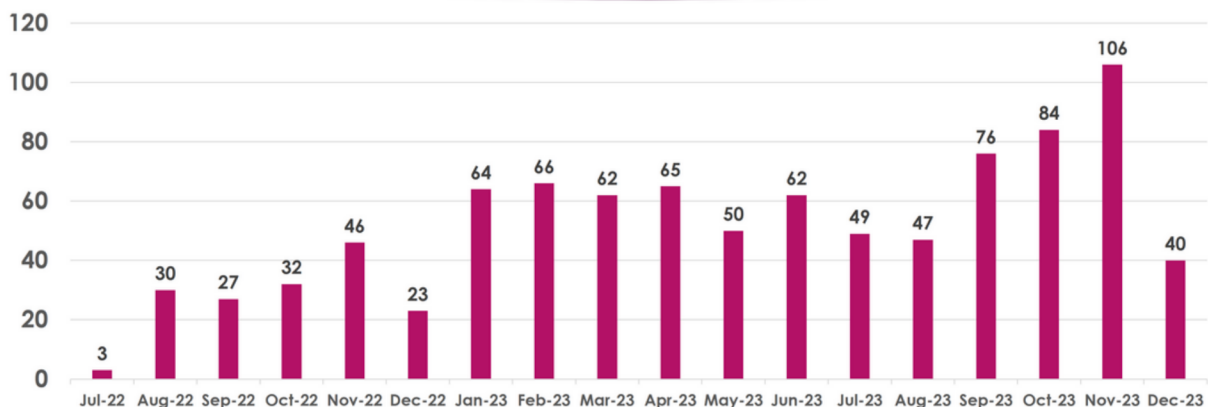
10

Total = 953 as at 31.12.23



Number of Signposting enquiries by Month

11



Good News

12

- ▶ **41** of the long-term grant applications I have signposted/completed for clients have been approved.
- ▶ **1** of my clients is now a resident in the Somme NH
- ▶ **91** clients have had State Benefits applied for/authorised.
- ▶ **2** gentleman got his Preserved Pension.
- ▶ **1** Client signposted to receive Surgery in King Edward VII
- ▶ **2** Placed in alternative accommodation/housing
- ▶ War Pension Applications submitted through the VWS

VASP Service gratefully acknowledges and promotes the many Veteran and other organisations in NI providing remarkable support



VASP

**VETERANS' ADVICELINE
FOR
STATUTORY PROFESSIONALS**

MARK EWING
PROJECT MANAGER

TEL : 07551 397384

EMAIL : VASP@SOMMENURSING.ORG



The Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioners Office would like to thank all those who attended and presented at the 'Supporting NI Veterans in 2024' Training Day.

We hope that by working collaboratively, together we will enable the best outcomes for veterans living in Northern Ireland.