



UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

Supporting Scotland's Older Veterans

UNFORGOTTEN FORCES – IMPACT REPORT AUG 2020

BACKGROUND, ORIGINS AND CONCEPTION

Unforgotten Forces has been funded by a grant from the Aged Veterans Fund which came about as a result of money being allocated by HM Treasury from bankers' Libor fines. The Aged Veterans Fund was established for organisations wishing to deliver services to veterans aged 65 and older.

In 2016 Poppyscotland issued an open invitation to organisations to join a consortium with the aim of securing funding to deliver services in support of Scotland's older veterans. Consortium membership was not restricted to ex-Service organisations as Poppyscotland wanted to work with a wider field of organisations that had specialist skills that could improve the quality of life of Scotland's Older Veterans.

In parallel with submitting an expression of interest to the MOD, Poppyscotland received an approach from Standard Life asking if they had any projects in the offing that a group of their future leaders could work on as part of an accelerated management programme. The group decided that they wanted to work with the consortium on the Aged Veterans Fund application. The stage 1 application was successful and Standard Life worked with consortium members to fine tune each partner's delivery plan as well collating the final application.

On 29 March 2017 news was received from the MOD that the consortium bid had been successful to the tune of £4M. The funders described the application as an exemplar for collaborative working evidencing the diversity of the membership of the consortium and the input from the corporate sector in developing the bid.

The funding period commenced on 1 July 2017 and the consortium continued to meet regularly to ensure that services could be operational at the earliest possible time.

CONCEPT & SERVICE PROVISION

Unforgotten Forces is a consortium of 16 organisations of which nine are Armed Forces charities, six are charities whose client groups include older people, and one is an academic partner. The mix of partners gives Unforgotten Forces a unique strength in depth for improving health, well-being, and quality of life for veterans aged 65 and older. The Armed Forces partners enhance their support by drawing on civilian charity specialisms; from arts engagement, to hearing loss support, to later life advice, to empowering older people to have a say in policies and decisions affecting them. Conversely, the civilian charities can identify older military veterans in the community and help them access specialist support.

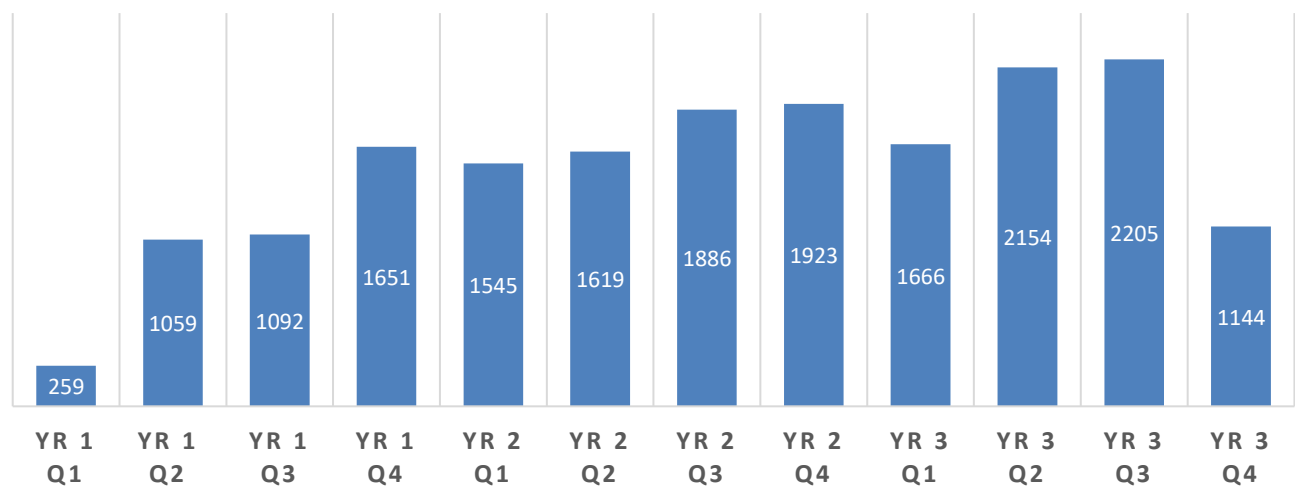
For Unforgotten Forces the priority is meaningful collaboration and ‘joined up’ working by staff on the ground. Referral to one partner is a gateway for the provision of the services of other partners depending upon need. Partners make case referrals to each other; ensuring that older veterans receive tailored packages of support from across the partnership, and without having to retell their story to each service. Intelligence sharing and collaborative problem-solving take place nationally at consortium meetings, and locally, at practitioner forums for the east, west and north of Scotland. Having commenced the provision of services in July 2017, the consortium has delivered 13,224 episodes of support for older veterans across Scotland over the last three years.

THE NUMBER OF EPISODES OF SUPPORT PROVIDED TO OLDER VETERANS BY UNFORGOTTEN FORCES IN THREE YEARS

13,224

At the Unforgotten Forces Public Policy Round Table partners with a policy influencing remit have collaborated to identify and address issues affecting older veterans. The partnership has elicited Scottish Parliamentary discussion - including a bespoke MSP’s debate - of older veterans and submitted to consultations on the UK-wide Veterans’ Strategy and the Scottish Government strategy for tackling loneliness and social isolation. It has advocated for screening of older veterans for early signs of hearing loss, in tandem with the launch of an advice guide for older veterans with sight and hearing loss. Consortium partner the **Scottish Older People’s Assembly** (SOPA) garnered the views of a cross section of veterans at a “Voice of Veterans” engagement event and followed this up by holding a bespoke workshop on older veterans’ issues its Annual Parliamentary Assembly at Holyrood in October of 2019.

UNFORGOTTEN FORCES - NUMBERS OF OLDER VETERANS SUPPORTED DURING EACH QUARTER FROM 1ST JULY 2017 - 30TH JUNE 2020



This collaborative approach has boosted the health and well-being of large numbers of older veterans in five areas of service provision: practical support, information and advice provision countering loneliness and social isolation, health and wellbeing related support, and arts engagement. In practice however there are no barriers between these areas. For instance,

practical support with transport can allow an isolated older veteran to benefit from comradeship, arts participation can boost his or her health, and access to the right information and advice is often vital for a smooth transition from hospital to home.

FIVE AREAS OF SERVICE PROVISION

1. **Practical Support for Older Veterans** Five of the consortium's partners contribute in this area as follows:

Fares4Free provides and coordinates free taxi journeys for older veterans with a need for essential travel, such as to and from hospital appointments. The charity's network of partner taxi firms enables it to cover all major cities and extend far into Scotland's rural areas. During the last three years Fares4Free has provided 4,654 free taxi journeys and driven 60,500 miles for 312 older veterans through Unforgotten Forces which would otherwise have cost them a combined total of approximately £125,000.

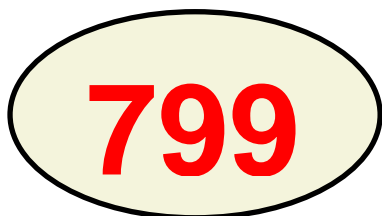


Poppyscotland's Break Away service provided free holidays for 246 older veterans and their spouses or carers who benefited from this either because they were unable to afford a holiday, had not been able to take a holiday for many years or because they were no longer confident or sufficiently mobile to arrange and enjoy a holiday themselves.

“.....this week away has made such a difference to our life. My husband was so relaxed that he did not suffer from any of his mini strokes. It was a fantastic week, fantastic place and we had a lovely week away. Everyone commented on how well I looked when I came home.” Mr & Mrs Kelso following their break at Crathie Cottages on Royal Deeside.

The Royal Air Forces Association, which joined the consortium as a non funded member in 2019, assesses the needs of older RAF veterans in their homes and provides a range of welfare and financial support, including a befriending service and comradeship support, holiday accommodation and retirement accommodation.

ILM Highland's Veterans Handyperson Service provides practical help to older and disabled veterans in the Inveness and Moray areas with safety related work and modifications, small repairs and odd jobs around their homes in many cases enabling them to live independently and safely for longer in their own homes



THE NUMBER OF OLDER VETERANS WHO HAVE BENEFITTED FROM THESE PRACTICAL SUPPORT SERVICES OVER THREE YEARS

2. **Advising Older Veterans** Two of the consortium's partners contribute in this area:

The **Armed Services Advice Project** (ASAP) offers free advice for older veterans and their families, including ongoing support where needed. It offers face-to-face advice in 11 regions

across Scotland, as well as a free helpline covering the whole country, and has so far supported 700 older veterans and their families through Unforgotten Forces. Matters it can advise older veterans on include benefits, debt and money advice, housing, utilities, consumer issues and relationships. Over three years from Jul 2017 to June 2020, 383 older veteran clients have benefited financially, with a total client financial gain of £1,239,869. In total over the period ASAP supported 957 older veteran clients with 4571 pieces of advice. 50% of the advice related to benefits, and 10% to debt.

ASAP is provided by the Scottish Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) Service, a highly trusted network with decades of experience delivering advice.

Hamish's Story. Hamish, an older Army veteran, approached a bureau for help as he was homeless. He was seen the same day by the ASAP Unforgotten Forces adviser, who obtained temporary accommodation for the client from the local authority, and involved Unforgotten Forces partner, SSAFA. The client then received lots of support from both ASAP and SSAFA, who visited him regularly in his new home to help him manage his tenancy, finances and daily activities such as shopping and cooking, as well as organising community support from another local organisation.



£1,239,869

VALUE OF FINANCIAL BENEFIT TO 383 OLDER VETERANS FOLLOWING ASAP HELP & ADVICE OVER LAST 3 YEARS

The **Age Scotland** helpline is a free, confidential phone service for older people, their carers and families in Scotland. It provides information, friendship and advice. Between January 2018 and February 2019 the Age Scotland helpline took enquiries from almost 1,700 older veterans and their dependants. Many had benefits checks undertaken on their behalf, identifying in total almost £85,000 in unclaimed entitlements.

Partnership-working has enabled the charity to publish a suite of advice guides for older veterans. A "Combating Sight and Hearing Loss" guide, which informs older veterans about the signs of sensory loss and available support, was possible thanks to the expertise of **Action on Hearing Loss Scotland** and **Scottish War Blinded**. A "Housing for Older Veterans in Scotland" guide was produced jointly with the Housing Options Scotland 'Military Matters' project, and their "Veterans' Guide to Later Life" was checked by specialists at **Poppyscotland** and the **Armed Services Advice Project**.



"I wish I'd had this guide in 1974 when I got demobbed and ended up in tatty squads for three years!"

Older Veteran

THE NUMBER OF OLDER VETERANS PLUS CHARITIES' STAFF & VOLUNTEERS ADVISED, REACHED AND SUPPORTED OVER THREE YEARS BY AGE SCOTLAND

3,657

3. **Countering Loneliness & Isolation** Most of the consortium's partners contribute in this area but three of most note are:

Erskine's Reid Macewan Activity Centre (ERMAC) gives veterans an opportunity to socialise with their peers, learn new skills, explore interests and access support services. It has 85 veterans amongst its membership aged 65 and above and supports on average 25 veterans per day with an average age of 67. It has delivered over 2,000 activity sessions including woodwork, art, holistic therapy, boxing, bowls, archery, IT and genealogy with over 7,000 attendances.

"I never had much human contact when sitting at home and was starting to get depressed. Then I came here and it's turned my life around".



Older veterans enjoy company at the ERMAC

Older Veteran ERMAC member Billy McPike

Reducing isolation among visually impaired veterans is key for **Scottish War Blinded**: a 2018 survey by the charity of more than 250 of its members found that two thirds felt sight loss had directly contributed to feelings of loneliness. In addition to the charity's two activity centres, its outreach team runs lunch groups all over Scotland that enable members and their families to get together regularly.

Legion Scotland deploys Community Support volunteers to visit socially isolated older veterans. These volunteers provide friendship, and support and encouragement for veterans to connect with wider community and comradeship opportunities. A network of local Community Support Coordinators enables the service to recruit volunteers, and reach older veterans, across Scotland. Unforgotten Forces partners are a vital source of referrals into the service. 610 older veterans have been supported by this service during the first 18 months of the project.

THE NUMBER OF OLDER VETERANS SUPPORTED BY LEGION SCOTLAND'S COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICE OVER 3 YEARS

817

The **Age Scotland** Community Connecting service supports older people to benefit from local clubs and activities matching their interests. The charity is identifying and promoting Community Connecting opportunities that offer an especially warm welcome to older veterans. Some are specifically for veterans, including activities and services offered by Unforgotten Forces partners. However, through a programme of Older Veteran Awareness Training, Age Scotland is also badging up older people's groups and services as offering a 'Veterans' Warm Welcome'. Over the last year it has also mounted a very successful project and competition to encourage physical activity amongst

older veterans and has very recently launched a new “Comradeship Circles” programme to connect groups of older veterans on the phone as a means of countering loneliness and social isolation.

4. Health and Wellbeing Three of the consortium’s partners operate in this area:

The **Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS)** has been funded through Unforgotten Forces for just two years and provided practical and emotional support to older veterans receiving medical treatment in four health board areas: Ayrshire and Arran, Fife, Lanarkshire and Grampian. Following the discontinuation of this funding DMWS have been able to secure alternative funding to maintain these services in Lanarkshire and Fife and these services will again be funded via Unforgotten Forces in the period July to September 2020 and they have also recently launched a new service in the Scottish Borders. DMWS Welfare Officers take referrals from NHS staff, Unforgotten Forces partners and other services. After making an independent and impartial early needs assessment, support is tailored to the individual. It can include a confidential and impartial listening ear, explaining and helping to resolve any medical care issue, and signposting and referrals to other organisations for further support. As well as supporting veterans directly Welfare Officers can liaise and support family members and the bereaved.

990

THE NUMBER OF OLDER VETERANS SUPPORTED BY DMWS DURING THE FIRST 2 YEARS

Scottish War Blinded (SWB) supports visually impaired veterans. Most of its 1,200 members have age related sight loss. Support can include rehabilitation and training to adapt to sight loss, grants for equipment to assist with independent living, funded respite care, home modifications and sports, recreation and social activities. Scottish War Blinded does not receive Unforgotten Forces funding but has derived considerable benefit from belonging to the partnership in terms of referrals for the uptake of its services, and easy cross referral of its older veteran members for various forms of support from the other Unforgotten Forces partner organisations. Partners Action on Hearing Loss, Age Scotland and the Armed Services Advice Project have also provided advice sessions for members of Scottish War Blinded.

Gordon's Story. SWB has supported Scots Guards older veteran Gordon for some years. He had not been registered as visually impaired as his eye condition, Diplopia, is not listed on the form as a specific condition. Registration opens up a host of new options, including enabling someone with sight loss to claim concessions and makes it easier to claim welfare benefits as Personal Independence Payments. SWB Outreach Worker Anne Garry noticed that the certificate of visual impairment form had been updated to list Diplopia as a condition eligible for registration. Anne referred Gordon to Defence Medical Welfare Service. DMWS Welfare Officer Emma Gratton supported Gordon at an eye clinic appointment to re-assess his sight loss and helped him complete the certification form. The Armed Services Advice Project explained to Gordon how he could get the correct benefits entitlement and helped him to apply. Gordon has started to regain his confidence and feels more financially secure.

The **Action on Hearing Loss Scotland (AOHL)** ‘Hearing Forces’ service supports veterans with mild to severe hearing loss or tinnitus. Hearing Forces offers hearing checks and screening, hearing aid maintenance and support on using aid, advice on useful equipment to improve everyday life and support both before and after hearing aids have been fitted. Support is provided in group settings such as Poppyscotland welfare centres, with home visits for veterans who struggle to get out.



1991

THE NUMBER OF OLDER VETERANS SUPPORTED BY THE AOHL SCOTLAND “HEARING FORCES” PROJECT OVER THREE YEARS

In recognition of the importance of mental as well as physical health and well-being for older veterans the consortium was delighted when Combat Stress, the Veterans’ Mental Health Charity joined the consortium as a non-funded member in the latter part of 2019.



5. **Arts Engagement for Older Veterans** Two of the consortium’s partners have contributed in this area:

Scotland’s creative ageing organisation **Luminate** is working in partnership with Erskine on a 3-year artist-in-residence programme in Erskine’s four care homes. Two artists are collaborating with residents on a wide range of creative activities including filmmaking, sound recording, storytelling, creative writing, poetry reading, model making, sculpture, stone carving, painting and drawing. The extended length of the residency is giving the artists the opportunity to build a very strong relationship with residents and staff and is enabling them to design activities personalised for each individual.



“One of the most inspiring arts projects with people living with dementia that I have ever experienced.” Professor Brendan McCormack, Queen Margaret University.

Music in Hospitals & Care Scotland (MiH&C) has brought interactive live music sessions to people receiving care or treatment in healthcare settings across the UK. Through its Unforgotten Forces project, ‘Play it Again SAV’ it has reached beyond hospital and care settings to bring live music to 3,613 older veterans, family members and staff etc. in community settings such as Scottish War Blinded day centres. Through its song-writing project it has also offered older veterans opportunities to create and perform as well as listen to music.

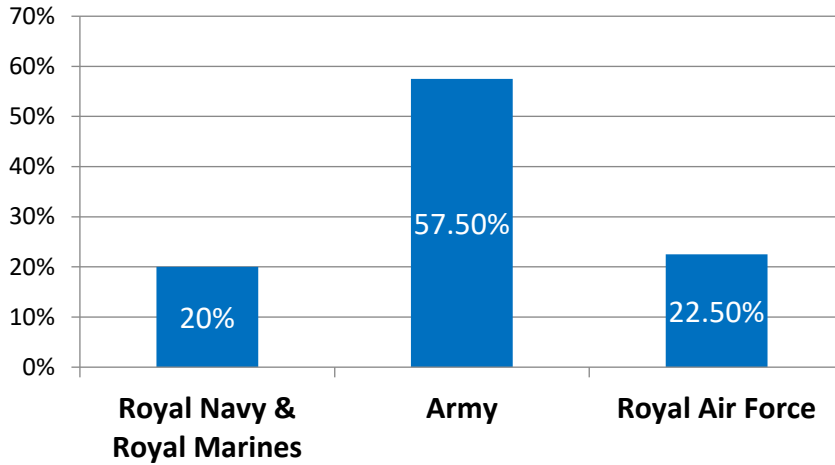
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THE NUMBER OF OLDER VETERANS AND FAMILY MEMBERS ETC. REACHED BY THE “PLAY IT AGAIN SAV!” PROJECT OVER THREE YEARS.

“The concerts make an enormous impact on our members’ lives, making them feel happy, bringing back memories and giving them the opportunity to boogie on the dance floor – something that some of them haven’t done in years”.
Scottish War Blinded Staff Member



Unforgotten Forces - Service Background of Older Veteran Clients as a %age of Total



WW2 Royal Navy Arctic Convoys veteran and Unforgotten Forces client James Docherty (right)

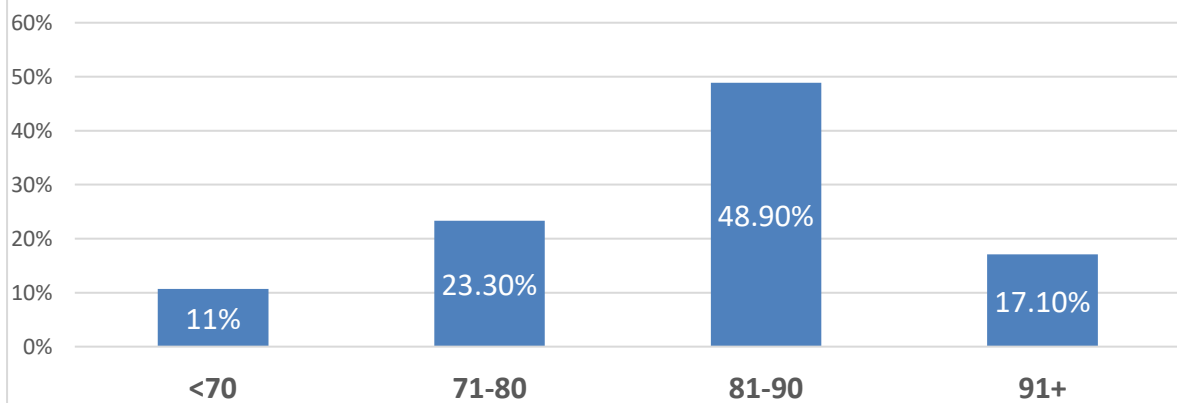
UNFORGOTTEN FORCES WINS AT 2019 SOLDIERING ON AWARDS



The Soldiering On Awards recognise the outstanding achievements of those who have served their country, and the diverse people and groups who work together in support of the Armed Forces Community. On 5 April 2019 the Unforgotten Forces consortium was announced winner of the 'Working Together' category at the 2019 Soldiering On Awards ceremony in London. The award, sponsored by the Forces In Mind Trust, was presented by Lt Gen Richard Nugee, Chief of Defence People



Unforgotten Forces - Age of Older Veteran Clients



UNFORGOTTEN FORCES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In recent months the Unforgotten Forces partnership quickly adapted many of its services to continue supporting older veterans during the coronavirus lock-down. Although the majority of direct “face to face” services were suspended and the numbers of veterans supported over the period has been thereby unavoidably more limited, most partners have innovated to provide remote support via telephone, e mail, helplines and other virtual media plus direct “doorstep” support with deliveries of groceries and prescriptions etc.

That said, the pandemic has unfortunately resulted in the temporary suspension of two of the consortium’s projects namely: Music in Hospitals & Care Scotland’s “Play it Again SAV!” music project and Luminare’s art engagement work at the Erskine homes, both of which can only be delivered by working in close physical proximity to veterans. It is also with much sadness that Poppyscotland was left with no option but to terminate its Break Away holiday service for older veterans as the pandemic means that the service is simply no longer viable either now or in the foreseeable future. Details of the full range of services still provided and revised referral details etc. are available on our website [here](#) and a copy of our recent newsletter with articles about how the consortium has adapted and continued to provided its services despite the pandemic may be viewed [here](#).

UNFORGOTTEN FORCES – THE FUTURE

Looking forward the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust has given approval for a remaining portion of the project’s LIBOR funding to be carried forward into a fourth year and the majority of the projects’ range of services are therefore continuing until the end of September 2020 providing the capacity for a further circa 2000 episodes of support for older veterans. Looking still further ahead the Scottish Government has pledged £750,000 to help maintain its services over the next three years.

Whilst this is very welcome news, the shape, size and capacity of the consortium will inevitably have to change towards the end of this year in line with this more limited future funding stream. Nevertheless, it clear that Unforgotten Forces will continue to provide vital support for Scotland’s older veterans in future and its partners are determined to carry on working collaboratively together to achieve this.

Having stewarded the Unforgotten Forces project from its conception and implementation through to successful service delivery over the last three years, Poppyscotland will relinquish this role on 30th September after which Age Scotland will assume leadership of the consortium.



APPENDIX

UNFORGOTTEN FORCES – THE PARTNERS

