

Scotland's Veterans Wellbeing Alliance

THRIVE TOGETHER

*Empowering Veterans and Families:
Creating Connections, Building Futures*



New Frontiers

Strategic Plan 2024-2027

Foreword

I am pleased to introduce our new Scotland's Veterans Wellbeing Alliance Strategy (2024 - 2027) which seeks to reflect the ambitions and mitigate the challenges we anticipate in the coming years.

Much has happened since the inception of the Alliance including the unprecedented challenges and profound impact of facing a pandemic, increasing societal divisions and polarisation of views, global conflict and wars, and increasing inequality impacting on people's wellbeing and ability to thrive. But our community of veterans and their families, our armed forces, our specialist veteran's organisations and services and an array of organisations across the country are committed to strengthen, empower and invest in our veterans who may be defined by interest, place, or identity to ensure that they receive the support they need at the right time and in the right place.

During *Fingerprints*, our co-production process across Scotland, we were amazed by veterans and their willingness to share their stories, experiences, and ideas with us. Staff from all sectors continued to inspire us with their ability to create, innovate and help people to see their strengths within themselves.

We will carry on with our dialogue checking in on what's important and of value to individuals and communities. These insights will continue to inform future planning and prioritisation in delivering the ambitions contained within the strategy.

By nurturing and supporting our veterans, the families who love them, the staff and volunteers who work with them and our communities that should embrace their knowledge, skills and experiences, the Alliance, will increase its contribution to ensuring that Scotland is a country where veterans not only feel welcomed but a country that creates the conditions for veterans to thrive.



Dr Linda Irvine Fitzpatrick

Strategic Lead

Scottish Veterans Wellbeing Alliance

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Scotland's Veterans Wellbeing Alliance (the Alliance) was funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund until 31 March 2024. The underpinning ethos was to build collaboration across organisations supporting veterans in Scotland. SVWA funded partners included CAPS, Combat Stress; Community Veterans Support; Cyrenians; Defence Medical Welfare Service, Edinburgh Napier University, ERMAC; Fares4Free; Fighting with Pride; Horseback UK; Lothians Veterans Centre; NHS Lothian; Rock2Recovery; SAMH; Scottish Veterans Residences; SSAFA; Stand Easy; Thistle Foundation; Veterans Scotland Walking with the Wounded.

Well-being is a positive state experienced by individuals and societies. Similar to health, it is a resource for daily life and is determined by social, economic, and environmental conditions. Well-being encompasses quality of life, as well as the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world in accordance with a sense of meaning and purpose.

Focusing on wellbeing supports the tracking of the equitable distribution of resources, overall thriving, and sustainability. A society's well-being can be observed by the extent to which they are resilient, build capacity for action, and are prepared to transcend challenges.

World Health Organisation, 2021

- 1.2 Our mission was to harness the assets of veterans themselves, the skills and experience of the Alliance workforce and the imagination and creativity of all, in how we used spaces and places to connect and connect and reconnect veterans to what was important and meaningful to them. The SVWA provided spaces and places across Scotland where veterans and families could connect, receive, and provide support, learn new skills and benefit from activities delivered by a compassionate workforce striving to nurture relationships with all who have an interest in veterans' health and wellbeing. A tailored training and support programme, including a focus on Suicide Prevention, Mental Health First Aid and Raising Awareness of Dementia was delivered to staff and volunteers enabling them to grow and maintain positive relationships.
- 1.3 The SVWA was accessible by referral from a range of agencies including: Veterans Mental Health Specialist Services, Armed Forces Covenant grant funded programmes, Local Authorities, NHS, and Police Scotland and Community Justice Services and of key importance, veterans could self-refer.

The Alliance focused on:

Places

Connecting trusted and safe spaces which were already part of the veteran landscape; using different spaces which may have benefited other communities of interest and identity; and creating new places in which veterans could connect.

Pathways

Focusing on social prescribing interventions that formed part of a holistic pathway extending into and reaching out from the current and developing community and residential veterans' mental health services across Scotland.

People

Focusing on Alliance staff and volunteers who supported and delivered the interventions and building capacity to ensure that places and interventions were accessible to all veterans.

1.4 The Alliance aimed to achieve the following outcomes:

- Veterans are healthy and active
- Veterans live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, and resilient
- Veterans value, enjoy, protect, and enhance our environment
- Veterans Services respect, protect and fulfil human rights
- Veterans Services provide opportunities for education, skills building, volunteering and employment ensuring that Veterans' contribution to civilian sociality is maximised
- Veterans Services provide safe and respectful spaces so that all can realise their full potential
- Veterans Services tackle poverty by sharing opportunities for wealth and power more equally
- Veterans Services are creative, respecting and celebrating vibrancy and diversity

1.5 These outcomes were adapted from the health and wellbeing outcomes set by the Scottish Government. A set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were set and reported against in order that we could ensure we were capturing distance travelled to make impact on these longer-term outcomes.

1.6 This work culminated in over 4,000 direct beneficiaries with an estimated 2,000 indirect beneficiaries. A focus on social prescribing interventions as part of a holistic pathway extended reach out from the current veterans' mental health services across Scotland. Organisations signposted and referred to other organisations within the SVWA, as well as going above and beyond by providing food hampers and emergency payments for those in need.

"Without their help I wouldn't be where I am today. I would've been a lot worse and most definitely unemployed. I just showed up out of the blue without a warning most days and the team were always ready to hear my story and help me forward. They continue to do so to this day. Thank you everyone for the support you have given me."

An Alliance beneficiary

- 1.7 The work of *Veterans Scotland*, *SAMH*, *SSAFA*, and *Combat Stress* contributed to developing a trauma informed workforce trained in Mental Health First Aid, suicide awareness and prevention, and dementia awareness, committed to learning and sharing good practice, challenging stigma, and discrimination. This element of the project was the most challenging in terms uptake but nevertheless, 300 staff and volunteers received training.
- 1.8 *Fighting with Pride* continued to forge links with all partners across Scotland. The team have vast experience of service in and support of the Armed Forces, and personal 'lived experience' on how the ban impacted on LGBT+ personnel and veterans. They provided virtual and face-to-face support to LGBT+ veterans who have reached out to FWP Scotland and established drop-in centres in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Fife, and Aberdeen.
- 1.9 The final component of the programme concentrated on taking the journey the extra mile. By utilising the current *Defence Medical Welfare Service* and *Fares for Free* infrastructure, F4F and DMWS collaborative operating systems and processes are now well established, with a DMWS referral form online on the F4F booking system. Both organisations' data capture systems demonstrate a steady flow of new and repeat referrals. As part of the SVWA, they continue to gain crucial insights into the needs of veteran service users and thus are improving how to best provide support.
- 1.10 The wide range of social prescribing activities and approached has ensure that veterans and family members have been supported to different types of support reflecting peoples' needs and preferences.

"Going forward I'm taking the knowledge I don't need to feel isolated, I used to feel alone in my thoughts but now I know other people get it. Seeing people nodding at what I was saying on the course was reassuring. So, I know it's ok to feel/think it now".

Thistle Foundation Course Attendee

"Without these activities I would most probably be stuck in the house getting up to no good, I am so pleased that I have engaged with Walking With The Wounded and the opportunities have made such a difference to my life, I have new friends and team mates, get out more and importantly get to do the things I enjoy most again."

Walking with the Wounded Participant

"Before coming to the course, I didn't know what to expect. I live with high anxiety and so arrived at Horseback very nervous. By the end of the first day the children were enjoying being outside and it was amazing for us to just be able to watch them interact with the horses. The whole environment was so calming that my anxiety disappeared for the whole week.

The mixture of structure and relaxing was just right with opportunities for us all to try new things. The children amazed me as they focused on the archery, stone painting and even science experiments but the horses were the best.

The house was great with plenty of space and my husband had the first decent night's sleep in many years. Just to get away from our home environment has been a complete game changer and I would recommend this course to everyone. Please can we come back!!"

Horseback UK Participants

"Hi guys, just a massive thank you to all of you guys (especially Malcolm) for all of your help over the last 10 months or so. It's honestly been the greatest help to me, and I feel as though my life is a better place and my mind is a nicer place to be. Your support is priceless."

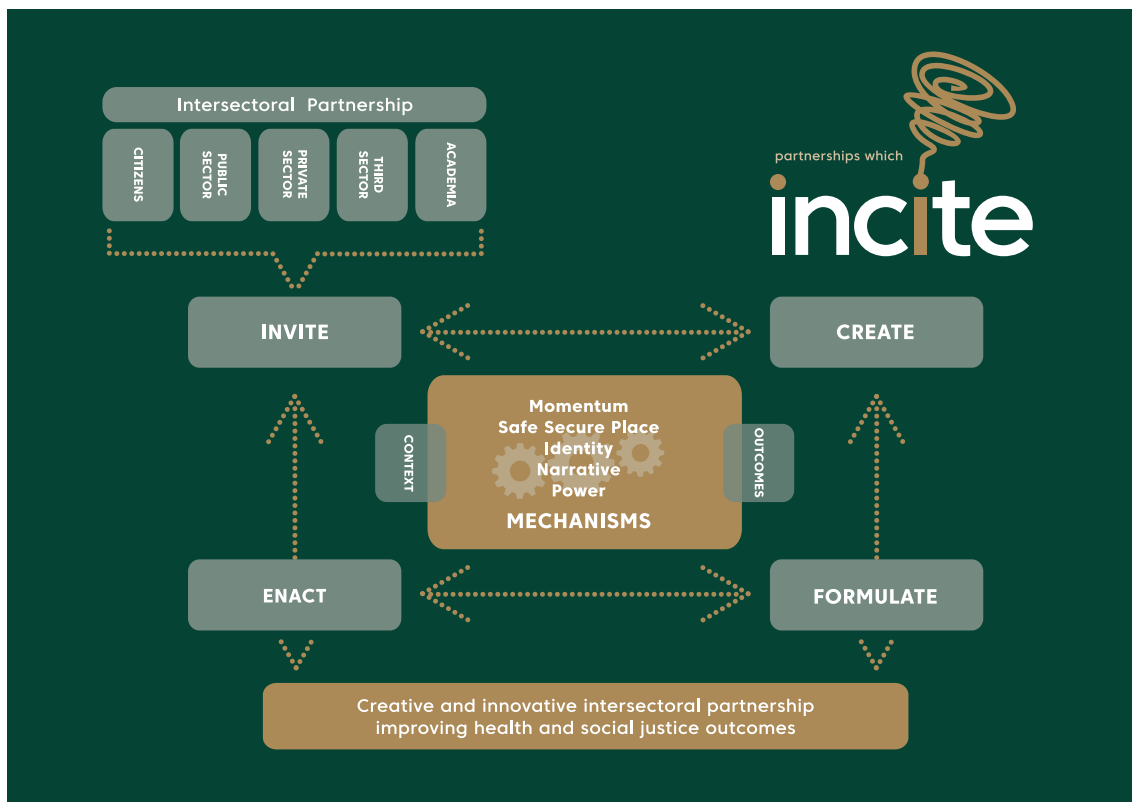
Rock to Recovery Beneficiary

"This was our third time taking part in a family weekend and each time it outweighs the last. Having just returned home from another fab weekend I have taken so much positive energy away with me. The girls have said more than once that they miss it. Both stood at the end of my bed this morning and said "mum I wish we were back!"

We cannot wait for the next time as you never know what the weekend will bring but we always go home feeling proud of our achievements. The unspoken connections between veterans' families always makes me feel part of something bigger."

Thistle Foundation Course Attendee

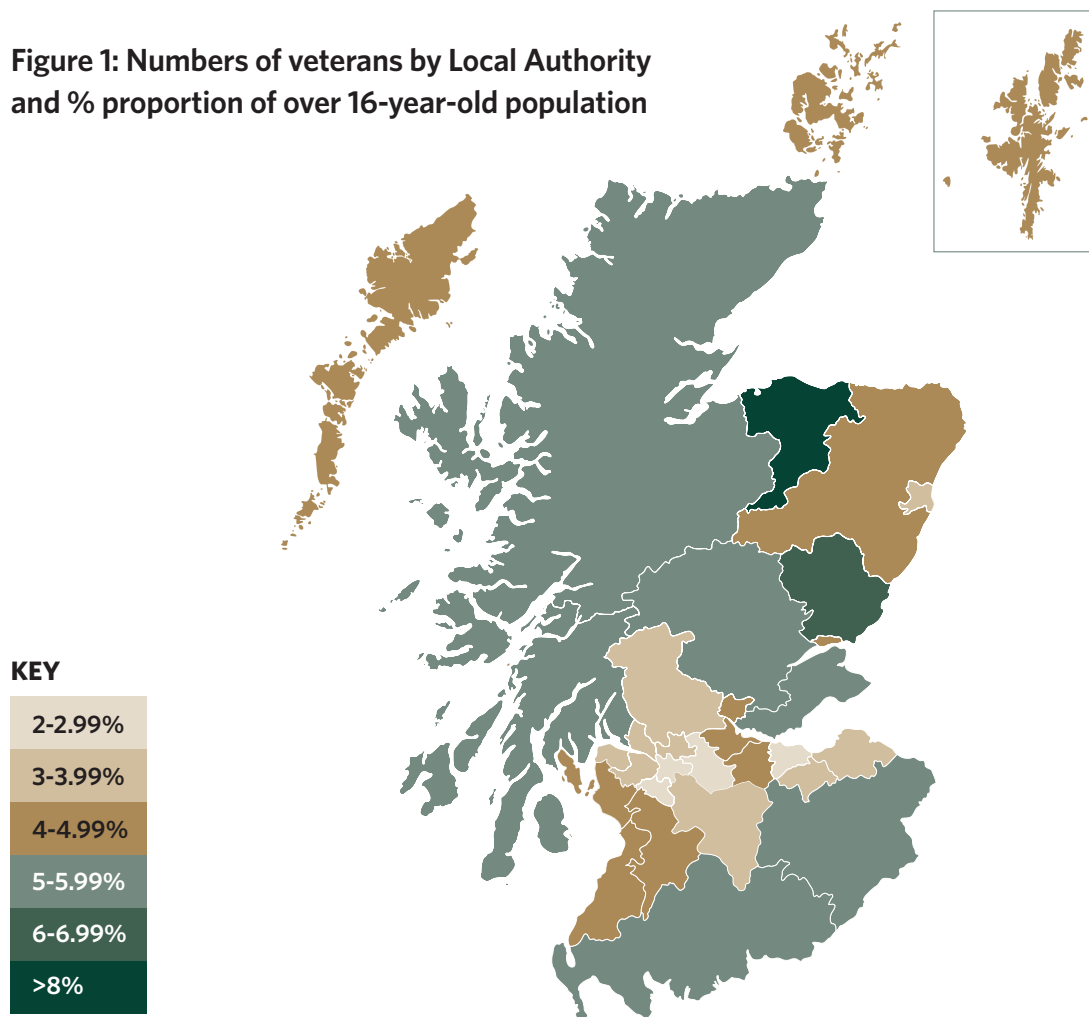
- 1.11 Creating and sustaining the Alliance involved the intentional use of the intersectoral programme theory "Incite" (Irvine Fitzpatrick et al 2021) which involves five mechanisms; Narrative; momentum; identity; safe secure space and power, which drive change through four distinct phases - invite, create, formulate and enact.
- 1.12 The intentional use of this programme theory enabled insights on what was working and what was not working to be made explicit and subsequently focused on. The insights generated particularly in relation to power and safe secure place led to the funding of collective advocacy for veterans provided by CAPS an independent advocacy organisation in order that power imbalance between those delivering services and those receiving services could be discussed and addressed in safe places which veterans created for themselves.



2. Fingerprints Coproduction

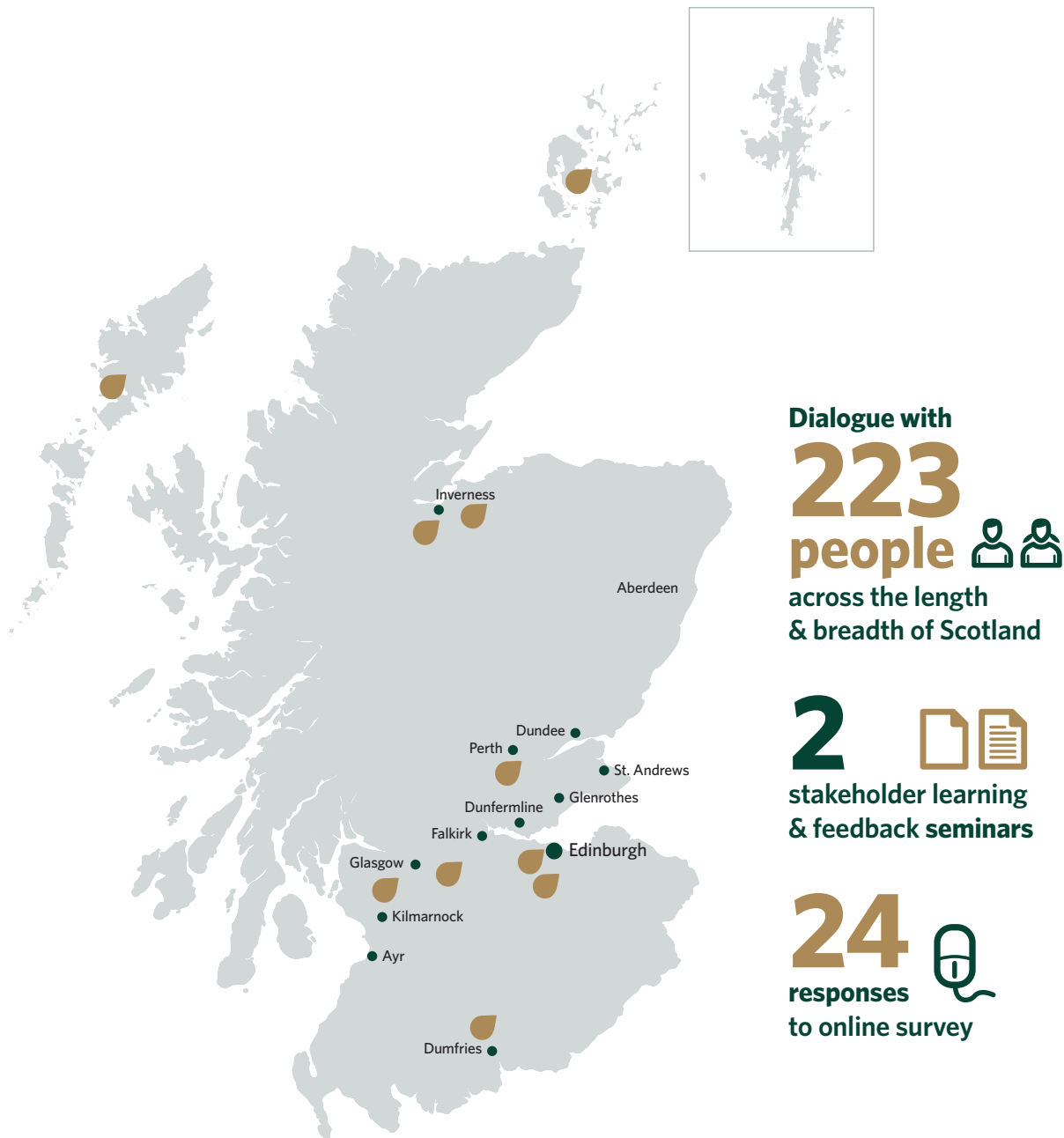
- 2.1 From our coproduction process we wanted to ensure that whatever we produced people would recognise their fingerprints on it. A platform for people's voices to be heard through a comprehensive collaborative cross Scotland co-production process was created by dividing Scotland into north, east, west and the islands. This enabled the hosting of dialogue events in places across Scotland with a particular focus on the Highlands and Islands which have a high number of veterans. The recently published census data was invaluable in shaping the places and people we needed to speak with.
- 2.2 There were 176,100 veterans recorded as residing in Scotland at the time of the census (Scotland's Census, 2024). Figure 1 on the following page, highlights the number of veterans living in each locality area, including proportional population percentages.
- 2.3 From the map it can be seen that the local areas with the highest veteran populations were those with large military bases, indicating that veterans likely remain in the areas that they served. The Moray local authority had the largest population percentage, with 9% of those residing in the area having previously served. Glasgow City and City of Edinburgh hold much smaller population percentages but are among the areas with the highest number of veterans totalling 22,229. Overall, Fife had the highest number of veterans at 17,200.
- 2.4 The engagement and co-production events took place over a ten-week period between 16 April 2024 and 24 June 2024. On 17 May 2024, the Alliance Strategic Delivery Team hosted a learning event for all active Alliance members and stakeholders with an interest. This enabled lessons learnt to be shared and discussed and included a screening of the Heart monologue which was created to provide learning insights from the Live Life partnership. The Fingerprints coproduction process was discussed at the first event with a short film highlighting the work of the Alliance by veterans and staff. Flyers describing the intention of Fingerprints and inviting stakeholders to participate were widely circulated across Scotland using our extensive network distribution.

Figure 1: Numbers of veterans by Local Authority and % proportion of over 16-year-old population



	TOTAL	%		TOTAL	%
Aberdeen City	5673	3.0	Aberdeenshire	9564	4.45
Angus	5826	6.07	Argyll and Bute	4307	5.87
City of Edinburgh	11553	2.63	Clackmannanshire	2138	4.96
Dumfries & Galloway	6236	5.04	Dundee	5340	4.26
East Ayrshire	4076	4.08	East Dunbartonshire	2723	3.04
East Lothian	3609	3.92	East Renfrewshire	1980	2.56
Falkirk	5265	4.01	Fife	17217	5.56
Glasgow City	10676	2.03	Highland	10418	5.26
Inverclyde	2289	3.45	Midlothian	3127	3.99
Moray	7017	9.03	Na h-Eileanan an Iar	965	4.35
North Ayrshire	4752	4.24	North Lanarkshire	8218	2.93
Orkney	818	4.49	Perth & Kinross	6896	5.43
Renfrewshire	5115	3.32	Scottish Borders	5044	5.12
Shetland	681	3.62	South Ayrshire	4292	4.54
South Lanarkshire	8361	3.08	Stirling	2955	3.74
West Dunbartonshire	2823	3.85	West Lothian	6127	4.15

2.5 An analysis of the dialogue, survey responses and stakeholder meetings was completed in late July, and shared with stakeholders. On 13 August 2024 partners were invited to consider and review findings and discuss how these would inform the strategic plan and subsequent delivery of the Alliance.



3. Fingerprints Learning

- 3.1 Our extensive coproduction with veterans, their families and organisations identified key themes, and this has informed our strategy and future delivery plans:

During Fingerprints we explored the experiences of:

- Settling in Scotland
- The community around you
- Accessing or receiving support

In breakfast meetings, one to phone calls, collective advocacy meetings, online survey, and stakeholder meetings

3.2 Settling in Scotland

For a number of people, the reason that they returned to a specific area was to be closer to their family or child. They were able to get strong support from family members and felt connected. There was a sense that social stability was key for people, and connection to the place they settled in was valuable to their wellbeing. Access to a strong veterans' community with an appreciation of what they have experienced, as well as empowering them moving forward was important in their choice of where to settle.

"This is home, it always has been... There was never a question of not returning"

Living in cities and on the mainland brought the opportunity to connect with established communities and reduce isolation. Returning to rural and Island life for many was experienced as homecoming to family and friends. For others, it was around ensuring they have adequate access to support, as it was felt that outside of the central belt, support was much more limited. Some chose to move out of the city to have a place of sanctuary and peace.

- 3.3 **Connection and connectedness** – one protective factor identified by many participants was that of peer support in "Civvy Street". This often served as an extension of community connectivity which many experienced during their time serving in the forces. Knowing that someone had served brought an immediate connection and shared experience.

"...it's sometimes, you know that shared language...civvies don't get it... Our humour is our way of coping..."

- 3.4 **Belonging and identity** – People expressed how they didn't want to lose the link to their family, friends and peers. The importance of remembering their experiences and how this has shaped them was discussed by many and how that sense of identity and self was shaped by experiences, good and bad.

People discussed the change in identity and that period of transition can be short and seamless, for others a long process which can exacerbate health concerns and conditions.

“...It is the point of transition, which is key, what do people have when they are leaving...”

People spoke of how it's not just transition from military to civilian life that need to be focused on but the transitions you experience in everyday life – retiring; death of spouse; children leaving home, and how these transitions can impact on your identity and sense of belonging.

- 3.5 **Finding Help** – Many felt that visibility was completely lacking with veterans and their families struggling to know what is available to them without the help of an organisation.

“...like a maze...”

Some people described facing dismissive attitudes, and pushback around the Armed Forces Covenant, including that veterans should not receive any priority.

“You know what you signed up for...”

Those living in rural and isolated areas often had to travel to access any type of support which at times was challenging when faced with poverty, mental health issues and lack of information.

“Miles can seem like mountains”.

A number of veterans described some services either lacking the understanding or being misinformed about veterans. They then described how therefore accessing support is only easy if you can advocate/communicate and adapt to civilian standards. Services and supports need to be welcoming for all as we move forward.

- 3.6 **Asking for and Receiving Help** – Some people spoke of the support of the local regiments and the reliance that provided with a sense of shared identity and camaraderie, was sometimes preferred to that of statutory or charity support.

People talked of how sometimes the support received from local grassroots organisations was essential for people's wellbeing rather than that delivered by the large mainstream charities. The larger organisations seemed to have little inreach to more rural areas.

Many expressed the view of *"Keep it simple"*; a good example being breakfast clubs. These were great examples of spaces that were informal and social, providing opportunity for connection without the expectation of disclosure.

Some felt that they were treated like children – being done to – rather than encouraged to be self-sufficient or empowered to develop and grow. Some noted that we need to be supporting people much earlier, rather than waiting until they are in crisis.

"you're not less of a person if you need help"

- 3.7 **An unequitable Scotland** – veterans support was inconsistent across all areas of Scotland. The more northern and southern areas of Scotland were able to access less veteran specific organisations and support than those centrally.

There was real sense of a 'postcode lottery' whilst some have a vast range of services and support to choose from, many struggle to find anything suitable.

The role of Veterans' Champions was welcomed by participants but they reflected that scope and interpretation of the role and influences aren't consistent across all areas or sector. *"...some are great, and some are invisible"*.

- 3.8 **Sustainability Uphill battle** – many organisations described keeping going as an uphill battle with difficulties of keeping groups going with funding pressures and inconsistent attendance.

- 3.9 All of this and our experiences over the last two years has formed our future vision and delivery.

4. Our Vision

Scotland's Wellbeing Alliance, by focusing on people, places, and pathways, will support and enable veterans and their families to live well and thrive in and as part of communities which embrace their knowledge, skills and potential.

4.1 This simple statement clearly communicates that our Strategic Plan looks beyond service provision to influence the wider social determinates and factors that improve population health and equity for veterans and their families who have chosen to settle in Scotland.

4.2 **We will achieve our vision by:**

- Talking to people about what they need to live well and thrive, and about how we can support them to achieve this.
- Simplifying referral systems so people receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.
- Improving access to services and supports for veterans and their families who need them and are available when they need them most.
- Responding to all of a person's assessed needs - physical, psychological, and social.
- Focussing on prevention and early intervention to achieve health improvement and reduce health inequalities.
- Enabling veterans to take more control of their health and wellbeing.
- Recruiting, developing, and retaining a competent, confident, and valued workforce including volunteers.
- Working with our partners to create stronger communities that build on people's strengths and support them the way they want to be supported.
- Making full use of Scotland's rich and diverse community assets.
- Broadening and deepening our partnerships with the voluntary and community sector, private and academic sectors.
- Understanding and addressing the impact that financial challenges and poverty (including fuel and food poverty) have on veterans' health and wellbeing.

- Embedding quality and safety in everything we do.
- Ensuring equal access to supports by valuing diversity and inclusion when designing our interventions and services.
- Working in partnership with housing partners to reduce the impact of low quality or inadequate access to housing.
- Striving for innovation and trying new things, even if they are difficult and untested, including making the most of technology.
- Evaluating new and existing systems and services to ensure they are delivering the vision and priorities and meeting the needs of veterans and the communities in which they live
- Using clearly defined and transparent performance monitoring to ensure continuous improvement and accountability.
- Focussing decisions and taking innovative approaches based on evidence of what works, for whom and in what set of circumstances.

4.3 **Our behaviours - how Alliance Partners will work together**

Involve veterans and share power - Consistently take a strengths-based approach with co- design, co-production and lived experience as fundamental ingredients

Share risk and resources - Set out our expectations of each other, share data effectively, support joint working with shared resource and create a culture of collaboration. This must happen at every level and in every place.

Spread, adopt, adapt - Share best practice effectively, test, learn and celebrate success, with supportive governance and resources. Adapt and implement best practice locally, in organisations and across systems.

Be open, invite challenge, take action - Be open, honest, consistent, and respectful in working with each other. Work on the boundaries and differences that we have in a constructive way to support effective change.

Focus on names not just numbers - Ensure we all listen to people, putting them at the centre, and personalising their care. This will involve rapidly increasing the level of integrated neighbourhood and locality working that connects all partners and communities who can contribute to improving health and tackling inequalities. This will move us to a stronger model of collaboration, ensuring we can respond more effectively to systemic challenges.

5. Our Strategic Aims

- 5.1 In Scotland and the UK we are aware that we live in a policy-rich landscape, and we need to be able to respond in an agile way to changing priorities and focus. The Alliance needs to consider a variety of national and UK-wide strategies, plans, policies, and legislation across different domains including but not limited to health and social care, substance use, suicide prevention and self-harm, military and defence, human rights and legislation for protecting vulnerable people, community justice, housing, and homelessness
- 5.2 In Scotland, in partnership with other Wellbeing Economy Governments around the world, including Iceland, Finland, Wales, and New Zealand, policies are focussed on building a wellbeing economy which prioritise human, social, planetary, and economic wellbeing, which constitute the wellbeing “capitals.” These include important assets such as trust, social cohesion, participation, environmental sustainability, and quality employment, which are crucial for developing healthy, fairer, and prosperous societies where people can thrive. Veterans have potential to make a significant contribution to these aspirations and the Alliance will seek to maximise opportunities for active citizenship.
- 5.3 In this strategy we are committed to delivering on four strategic aims:
- Building our Alliance

Enhancing Help Seeking

Providing Holistic Support

Supporting families and carers
- 5.4 Each aim will have actions delivered by Alliance partners. Some will require funding from the Alliance, others will not, but all will benefit from being part of the Alliance. As well as being “*more than the sum of our parts*”, there will be added benefits to organisations due to the learning approach that the Alliance is taking.

5.5 Strategic Aim One: Building Our Alliance

This is where we are paying attention to the mechanisms for building successful intersectoral partnerships – Narrative, Power, Safe Psychological Space, Identity, and Momentum.

- 5.6 **Reframing our narrative** - Often our language is framed around deficits and what people can't do rather than what they are able to do. We often focus on transition from serving to returning to civic life, however we need to not only pay attention to improve this transition but focus on the other life transitions which veterans, in common with all civilians will go through. The resilience and protective factors which the armed services can provide some of the very strengths which we need to draw upon when facing transitions in our civic lives.
- 5.7 **Power and power sharing** - We will continue to address the issue of power imbalances by enhancing our collective advocacy input enabling veterans to create spaces for dialogue focusing on what is important to them. **CAPS Advocacy** will also raise awareness of individual independent advocacy and how people can access this in their area of residence.
- 5.8 **Safe psychological space** - Trust was a key issue identified through our coproduction and that can be built and strengthened when we create safe spaces to share our learning and practice. The Alliance's evolution is to be a learning organisation recognising that we are working in a complex environment characterised by variety and change. Embracing complexity lies at the heart of mobilisation concerning social change, and alliances and networks harbour a multitude of resources which can be tapped. This ongoing awareness to the importance of being agile in responding to an ever-changing context has resulted in a more dynamic and fluid plan and building an increasing social movement across the country with a shared narrative of embracing our veterans and enhancing opportunities for them to live well.

In developing our Learning Alliance and Learning Labs we will:

- Nurture relationships with empathy and respect
- Embrace learning and experimentation
- Renegotiate our identities - What are people holding on to that is holding them back? What is preventing us from being truly innovative and doing what we feel is right.
- Lean into discomfort - being comfortable can be a barrier to change, even when we have permission to do things differently.

All Alliance partners will be supported and expected to participate in this. This will not only improve our collaborative Alliance endeavours but will provide one of solid foundation to assist sustainability for partner organisations.

- 5.9 **Identity** - Throughout our co-production process some people spoke of how they didn't connect with the term of veteran. Others did and many of the Alliance partners use the term veterans in their organisation's name. We will work partners to set out what it means to be a veteran living in Scotland as we approach the midpoint of the 2020's. It is envisioned that this will include an active communication and marketing campaign using different media and Alliance members will have a key role to play including the production of a podcast series.

The second action within this mechanism is to strengthen the identity of the Alliance. In the last two years we have successfully bid for two additional **Armed Forces Covenant** programmes. The ALERT and AFFIRM programmes include Alliance partners and we believe that with the strong focus we have on evaluation and research the Alliance's Programme Team can help to develop and support other funding applications which not only results in increasing capacity to work in a responsive way with veterans but also adds value to individual organisations sustainability and learning aspirations.

Our united academic efforts through the **Centre for Military Research, Education and Public Engagement at Edinburgh Napier University** (CMREPE-ENU) and through the Scottish Armed Forces Evidence and Research SAFE&R around our strategic aims will enable each initiative to have a strong "theory of change," from research through to implementation, which provides assurance that our strategy will have long term impact and that theory is grounded in the reality of front-line delivery.

- 5.10 **Momentum** - Through the Fingerprints coproduction we are now engaged with a large number of veterans and family members in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. A number of potential actions were identified including access to historical monuments which are of tremendous significance to veterans and community members. This includes a memorial on Lewis which is not accessible due to being on private land. The Alliance will facilitate a partnership on Lewis to try to establish open access and this will also include a focus on wider transport issues which the veterans from these communities' experienced. For this initiative to be successful it needs to be rooted within the local context. Our first step will be to meet with the key local partners to progress this.

- 5.11 **Strategic Aim Two - Enhanced Help Seeking** - to significantly improve help seeking behaviour among the veterans' community and reduce the stigma associated with asking for help.

Our focus on **Identity** will provide a firm platform for galvanising the actions to achieve this strategic aim. These actions include:

Transition Planning – in reach into armed services transition programmes to explain the work of the Alliance and provide taster sessions of the social prescribing initiatives that are available.

Transitions in all our lives – this will focus on strengthening our coaching and mentoring for individuals and the provision of Interpersonal Counselling which can be delivered by peers.

Scotland's Veterans Wellbeing Alliance Website - We are aware that accessing information on support available online is one way people access information and it cannot be the only way. However, this website, which will be developed by **Health in Mind**, will have both a public facing site the content of which will be curated and maintained through a routine and rigorous process **and** a password protected staff site which will enable Alliance partners to refer to each other's services and share information and experiences through the online community of practice. This we believe will have numerous positive steps including building trust and transparency and the ability to generate activity data which can be shared and minimise duplication of effort.

It is critical that whilst we build on services offered digitally, we consider those who are digitally excluded due to a lack of access, skills, and capabilities. The Alliance will work on developing a Digital and Data Strategy to promote digital inclusion by addressing the barriers to opportunity, access, knowledge, and skills in using technology.

5.12 Strategic Aim Three - Holistic Support Approaches - to provide better holistic approaches to supporting veterans focusing on mental and physical wellbeing with tailored activities and support services to address the diverse needs of veterans.

Alliance partners have developed and provided a wide range of social prescribing interventions, and we intend to strengthen a number of interventions that we know have demonstrated positive impact including gardening, drama, coaching, equine therapy, outdoor pursuits, creative arts and opportunities for people to socialise. Our new partners **The Lighthouse Project** and **Warhead Project UK** will add great value to the choices we can offer to veterans and their families. We have also identified a further social prescribing initiative focused on dogs provided by **Bravehound** which we will support. **Veterans Tribe Scotland** continue to extend their reach to veterans across many parts of Scotland and we hope to extend upon that through the connections which the Alliance will offer.

It is essential that the Alliance continue to recognise the diversity of communities and we will strengthen our work with **Fighting with Pride** with our LGBTQI+ veterans. We are delighted that our Alliance partner **Lothian Veterans Centre** are leading work with female veterans and will continue to support and amplify that work. **Sight Scotland** have been working with many of the partners and we are delighted to have them as part of our Alliance. In recognition of the changing demographics of Scotland's veterans we will embrace the opportunity to work with **Age Scotland** as an Alliance Partner.

5.13 Strategic Aim Four - Support for Carers and Families which strengthens support networks for veterans' carers and families and provide resources and services that cater to the wellbeing of the entire family unit.

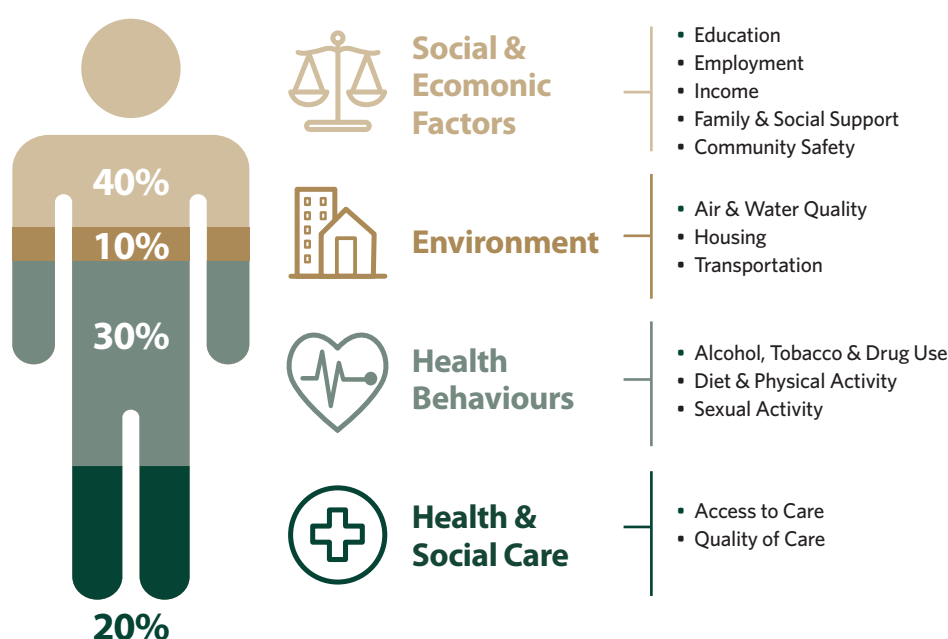
Our priority will be to continue to offer family mediation to veterans and family members. We will also work with Alliance partners **Sacro and Care After Combat** with the work they are doing with veterans who are incarcerated with a focus on supporting their families to remain connected during the incarceration periods.



6. Our Outcomes

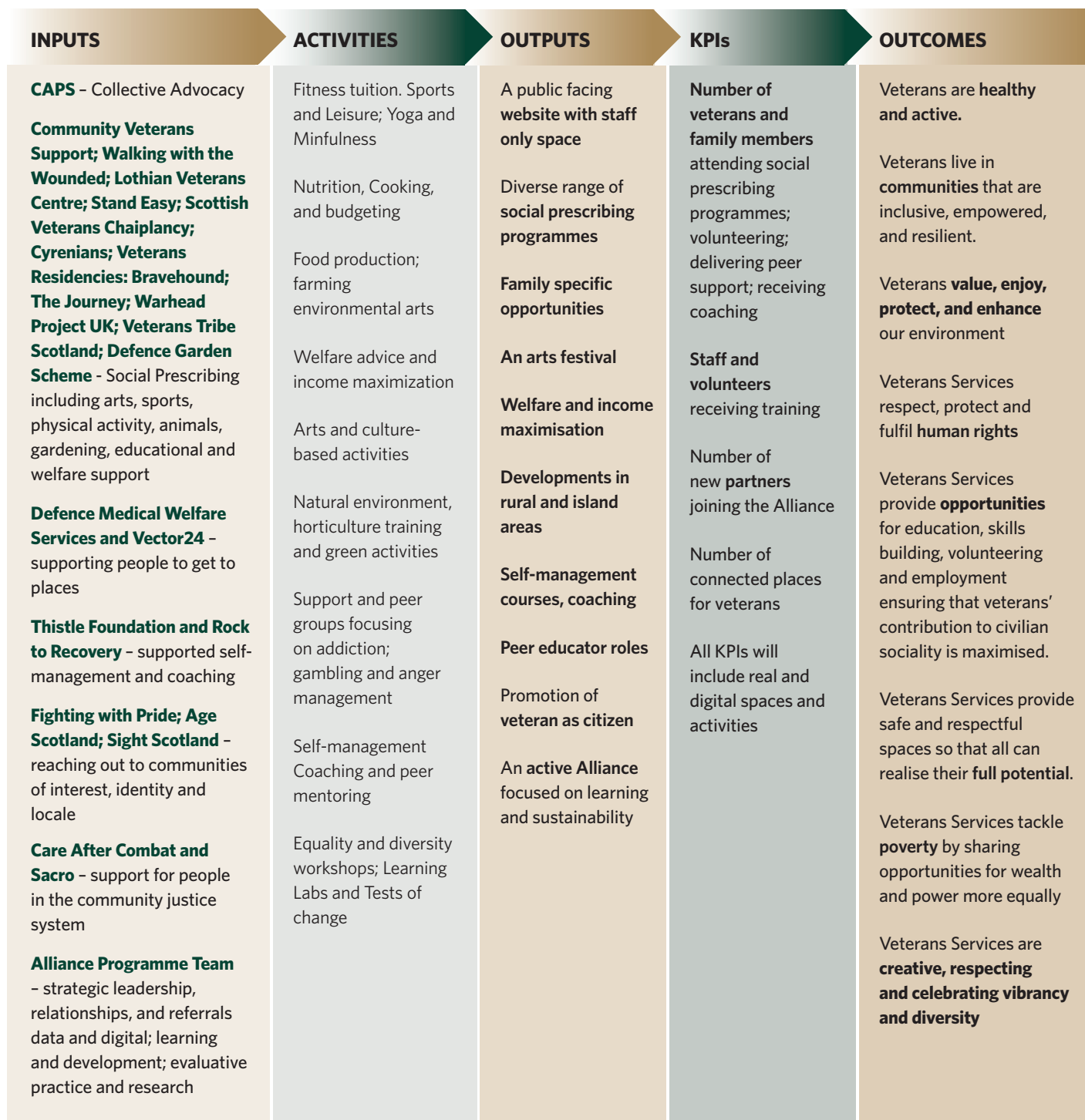
- 6.1 Our health and wellbeing are determined by a complex combination of social and economic factors. Where we live, our work conditions, our housing and education are fundamental building blocks in influencing our health and wellbeing. As Figure 2 below illustrates, healthcare is important, but other factors have a significant impact on health. This means we need to take action to support improvement in wellbeing across the building blocks of health and not focus on health and social care in isolation.

Figure 2: Social Determinants of Health



- 6.2 A logic model (Figure 3) has been constructed to create a simplified picture that displays the connections between resources, activities and outcomes within this programme. This is helpful in demonstrating the intended relationships between investments and results. This enables us to identify Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which will inform quarterly outcome reports that will be requested from partners.
- 6.3 This will aid the Learning Labs and evaluative practice and will provide the Strategic Lead with an overview which will be used to structure our governance meetings and the planned Learning Labs. It will enable us to see quickly if any social prescribing programmes have poorer uptake than anticipated; identify gaps or over provision through duplication and highlight any training requirements. It is key that we are purposefully adding value to Scotland's Veterans landscape, and we will expect all partners to enter into the Alliance with a genuine spirit of active inquiry and learning.

Figure 3: Scottish Veterans Wellbeing Alliance Logic Model



7. Governance

- 7.1 In order to ensure appropriate and efficient strategic leadership , the Alliance will be part of Edinburgh Napier's Centre for Military Research, Education and Public Engagement. Embedding the Alliance within the Centre will strengthen sustainability and impact.
- 7.2 We are confident that we are embarking on a further journey of discovery with partners all of whom have signaled their intent and commitment and curiosity to learn together about what can further support and enhance veterans mental health and wellbeing.
- 7.3 The Alliance will create a safe psychological space for people to share what has worked, and as importantly what has not worked.
- 7.4 Our commitment to learning means that we will be constantly striving to ensure that Alliance partners maximize their contribution to supporting veterans and their families to thrive.

Scotland's Veterans Wellbeing Alliance

THRIVE TOGETHER

*Empowering Veterans and Families:
Creating Connections, Building Futures*

