



Update September 2023

Veterans Chaplaincy Scotland

“A proactive service providing pastoral care to our veterans and their families promoting hope, healing and acceptance.”

Keeping Up to Date with the VCS Programme Coordinator Rev Philip Patterson

The Aims of VCS

Veterans Chaplaincy Scotland (VCS) exists to bring pastoral care to the veterans' community of Scotland. Since 1796 everywhere our forces have gone there has been an organised chaplaincy that has travelled with them. In peace and at war Navy, Army and Air Force chaplains have supported our service men and women at home and abroad.

Veterans Chaplaincy Scotland (VCS) seeks to extend that service of pastoral care to the veterans' community. VCS is a unique service, nothing similar yet exists outside the Armed Services. While we only operate in Scotland at the moment, we seek to promote the vision UK wide and we are keen to work with partners in other regions to establish a wider service.

VCS is the vision of a group of retired Army Chaplains who identified the need among those with whom they had served, for a continuation of pastoral support post service. Basically, **Padres for Veterans** is what we are about. We believe that pastoral service support should be continued after our soldiers, sailors and air force personnel leave the services. While other forms of support are continued for veterans, as part of our nation's military covenant, chaplaincy is not.... until now!

Thanks to Scottish Veterans Fund we have been able to offer pastoral care to those in need among the 240,000 veterans of Scotland and to the wider veterans' community of families, dependants, widows, and widowers of veterans.

Within Veterans Chaplaincy Scotland we talk of the process of 'bringing warriors home' – that sense of transition from service life to community life. This process needs to have physical, mental, and spiritual elements providing practical, emotional, and psychological care for veterans in need. VCS aims to provide the often missing spiritual and emotional support for veterans, and we seek to work holistically with our partner agencies and churches to care for veterans of all faiths and none, just as forces chaplains have done for over 200 years.

Governance

In February 2023 VCS was granted SCIO status by OSCR as it becomes an independent charity, leaving the structures of Work Place Chaplaincy Scotland (WPCS). VCS had become established under the umbrella of WPCS, and as we 'step out' on our own we do so looking forward to a period of growth as we widen our service provision across Scotland.

We are happy to welcome for new Trustees to the VCS board. Maj Gen (ret) Mike Riddell Webster, Rev Dr David Coulter, Pastor Jim Crooks, and Rev Mike Goodison.

Throughout this period of transition, it has remained 'business as usual' for VCS Chaplains. In the last 6 months VCS has welcomed three new volunteer chaplains.

Our Chaplains

Our chaplains are trained in Pastoral Care. Following the principles of the World Health Organisations (WHO) Spiritual Pastoral Care Interventions (SPCIs) and using the specialist Pastoral Narrative Disclosure (PND) format as an intervention tool, Chaplains provide that safe and sacred space for personal life review in the changing circumstances of life.

Moral Injury Support. Using the Moral Injury Outcome Scale (MIOS) as an assessment tool and drawing on their training in Trauma and Moral Injury (TAMI) chaplains are able to recognise assess and begin treatment for Moral Injury among veterans, signposting them to further psychological and practical support when necessary.

Mental Health First Aid. All VCS Chaplains are qualified Mental Health First Aiders and are able to provide that initial response to veterans in psychological distress. Chaplains can identify the signs of growing distress and refer veterans to the specific care agency to address the issues at hand. VCS works closely with Combat Stress, PTSD Resolution, Erskine Reid MacEwan and many local psychological resources in community HUBs and cafes.

Suicide Interventions. Ten VCS Chaplains have already completed the Suicide Interventions Course (SFA). The course enables chaplain to identify the presence of suicidal ideation and take steps to intervene by providing immediate support and onward signposting where necessary.

Bereavement Counselling. Most VCS chaplains have some form of professional bereavement training through their careers, and VCS provides the addition of a continuous development module provided by a professional bereavement counsellor. Bereavement, past and recent, is a factor in many of our pastoral engagements, and VCS chaplains are able to provide the ongoing pastoral support before, during, and after bereavement.

VCS has 22 chaplains, 20 of whom are currently active and two who are completing our training modules. All but three of our chaplains have some form of previous military experience.

Our Service

VCS clients range in age from a 28-year-old early service leaver to a 98-year-old former WW2 RAF Pilot.

In the last 12 months VCS chaplains engaged with 1260 members of the veteran community leading to 388 one to one engagements for ongoing pastoral care. In addition, a further 3358 contacts were made through social media. Aside from social media time, a total of 674 hours of chaplaincy were delivered by VCS chaplains.

We have established relationships with 27 agencies in the veterans space. This includes Poppy Scotland, Legion Scotland, Veterans Scotland, Combat Stress, Street Pastors, The Department of Work and Pensions, Age Scotland, Erskine Homes, The Erskine Reid MacEwan Centre, SAMH, SSAFA, Veterans First Point, Scotland's Bravest Manufacturing Co, PTSD Resolution, Dundee Therapy Garden, the ACVC Hub, and VC at KC cafe. With these agencies we cross refer and work in collaboration to encourage spiritual growth among our veterans.