

Making life better for Scotland's ex-Service community

Vision

A Scotland where the contributions and sacrifices made by veterans and their families are recognised and appreciated and where all veterans feel valued by society.

Strategic priorities

- ◆ Our veterans and their families are empowered to make informed choices to secure positive futures
- ◆ The diversity of our veteran community is clearly recognised and valued, with support and services accessible to all
- ◆ Policymakers and service providers will be responsive to need, collaborative in approach and aligned in their efforts to maximise impact
- ◆ Our communities and employers better understand, value and support veterans as they integrate, contribute and build fulfilling lives



I aim to act as an advocate for veterans, ensuring their voices are always heard and that they remain relevant to, and welcomed in, the wider community - while also providing scrutiny and challenge to the Scottish Government to help improve services, support and opportunities for veterans and their families.

◆ Susie Hamilton
Scottish Veterans
Commissioner



Scrutiny, recommendations and progress

A key aspect of my role is scrutinising the work of the Scottish Government and its progress towards implementing recommendations. I publish a progress report on this annually, and you can read the latest Progress Report here <https://www.scottishveteranscommissioner.org/progress/>

Since 2014, the SVC Office has:

- ◆ Researched and published 14 reports
- ◆ Made 96 recommendations to Scottish Ministers – all of which have been accepted in full

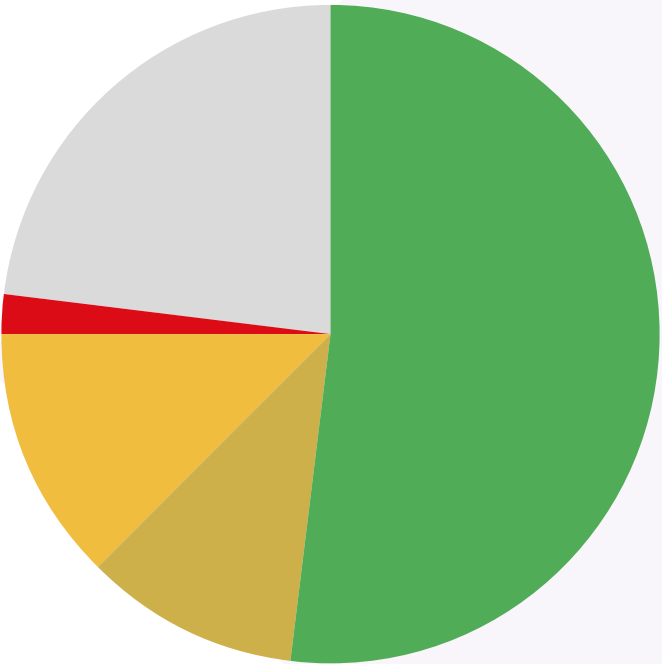
In my Veterans and the Law (2024) and Veterans and Finance (2025) reports I made nine new recommendations, and these were assessed for the first time in the 2026 Progress Report.

The Scottish Government Veterans Minister and officials provided me with a set of planned or current activities against recommendations not yet achieved, with an update on the progress made against these activities. This has supported my independent assessment, alongside the information and feedback received over the year through my engagement work with the veteran community, statutory and third sector organisations, and researchers and analysts.

Of the 96 recommendations made, 50 have been fully implemented with a further 12 partially implemented and 10 implemented but work is required to properly embed them into relevant systems. Of these, 2 recommendations haven't been implemented, and I will continue to work with Scottish Ministers to support progress being made in these areas. A further 15 have been incorporated within the outcome focussed recommendations that have been made since 2020, and 7 have been superseded, merged or are not assessed.

Following on from an encouraging report last year, this year's evaluation highlights a slowdown in the progress being made towards implementing recommendations.

I will continue to monitor progress closely and work with the Scottish Government and its partners to ensure commitments are delivered in a way that drives real, lasting change.



2026 status of the 96 recommendations:

- Fully implemented
- Implemented but work should continue to embed
- Partially implemented
- Not implemented
- Superseded/merged/not assessed/incorporated

Action required

The Scottish Government should prioritise progress in the following areas:

 **Homelessness Prevention Pathway**
There has been minimal progress on implementing the Veterans Homelessness Prevention Pathway. A long-overdue establishment of a working group would bring focus to ensuring no one who has served their country faces homelessness

 **GP Recognition Scheme**
I continue to hear from the veteran community that their Service and specific needs are not well understood when they require primary healthcare. The GP Recognition Scheme was launched in 2023 to address this, but sign-up remains inadequate at around five per cent of practices. More attention and resource has since been directed towards the roll-out, and this needs to lead to a considerable increase in registration over the coming year

 **Veterans and the law**
This is one of the key themes chosen by the Scottish Government in their strategy on veterans, and it is disappointing that the report finds a low level of activity in this area. Our criminal justice system needs to be 'veteran aware' to enable all associated services to support veterans who come into contact with them. The approach needs to support rehabilitation and reducing the likelihood of reoffending

 **Veteran Employment**
While increasing numbers of employers and businesses are recognising the skills, experience and qualifications the ex-Service community (including partners and spouses) bring to their organisations, it is important for the Scottish Government and partners to provide strategic leadership and direction in this area

Recent progress

Recent progress in the delivery of SVC's recommendations:

 **Mental health**
An action plan on mental health for veterans was published in 2021, and the key principles were endorsed by the Scottish Government. Subsequently, the Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Pathway: national framework was published by the Scottish Government in March 2026, with one of the levels of support expected to be implemented by October 2026. However, I remain concerned by the length of time it has taken to reach this stage

 **Local Housing Strategy**
In March 2026, a refreshed and updated Local Housing Strategy was published and issued to all local authorities, making it clear that the housing requirements for the Armed Forces and the Veterans Community, including their spouses, partners, children and bereaved should be fully considered when developing their local housing strategies

 **Employment and skills**
There has been encouraging progress in this area in recent years, with ongoing work to support spouses and partners, as well as early service leavers, who may face particular challenges in the labour market. It's pleasing to see the continued development and embedding of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework tool on My World of Work, which helps service leavers and employers translate military skills, qualifications and experiences for the civilian workplace

 **Gambling harms**
The allocation of some of the recently introduced gambling levy to support Serving personnel and veterans is to be welcomed, with an increased risk of gambling harm having been identified within that community



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