



Poppyscotland Inverness 5-year Impact Report 2018

“I will recommend Poppyscotland to anyone who is looking for help and assistance. They opened my eyes to opportunities and funding that I was unaware of.”



“I wish that this service was available 23 years ago when I demobbed. This service should be available in every town and city in the UK. Well done and thank you.”

We are grateful for the support of Rebecca McFarlane and Anneke Meehl from The Lines Between for their statistical analysis and commentary www.thelinesbetween.co.uk.

Foreword

In June 2013 Poppyscotland embarked on one of the most ambitious projects in the charity's history: to establish in Inverness a dedicated Welfare Centre designed to provide the large Armed Forces community in the North of Scotland with access to the full range of our support services.



Five years on I am delighted to introduce this report, which outlines the impact the service has had in improving the lives of those who have served, those still serving and their families.

More than 3,500 individuals, of all ages and service backgrounds, have been assisted by the team at Poppyscotland Inverness, both directly and through our partner network. This co-ordinated approach ensures our support is both personalised and comprehensive.

Amongst my many personal highlights are those represented throughout this report by people like Gordon, Scott, Richard, Kevin and Jim.

Looking ahead, we will use these five years of knowledge and experience to reach out even further, to enhance cooperation with other specialist organisations, and to ensure the best possible outcomes for those requiring our help.

Finally, I must express my thanks to all the individuals and organisations who have played such a key role over the past five years: the numerous achievements outlined in this report have benefitted immensely from their active collaboration.

I look forward to strengthening these partnerships for the benefit of the Armed Forces community in the North of Scotland for many years to come.

Nina Semple

Welfare Services Manager

North of Scotland

Introduction

Poppyscotland's MacRobert Centre provides information, support and guidance to serving and ex-Service people and their families. Based on Strothers Lane in the heart of Inverness, the Centre first opened its doors on 3rd June 2013. The Welfare Centre was renamed The MacRobert Centre in June 2018 on its fifth anniversary to commemorate the MacRobert Trust's ongoing support for Poppyscotland.

The Centre's core activity includes: providing information, support and guidance; signposting to other local support services; and hosting other local providers of specialist information and advice. The Centre aims to ensure that whatever its beneficiaries' needs are they are given the support required to take control of their life.

Approximately 100,000 members of the Armed Forces, veterans and their families live in the north of Scotland. During its first year in operation the Centre received nearly 500 general enquiries and actively supported more than 79 people who presented with various needs. It has since supported more than 3,500 people. Individuals present with a variety of issues including finance, housing, employment, health (including mental health and physical health), benefits, and debt.

The staff team is made up of a Welfare Services Manager, a Welfare Services Coordinator, and a Welfare Services Administrator. Since its opening, the Centre has continued to offer opportunities for volunteers and has 'Welfare Volunteer' positions for up to three individuals at a time.



Services provided

The Centre offers help with informal advice or one-to-one consultations. Its knowledgeable staff aim to steer the beneficiaries in the right direction to help them get back on track, whether that be for employment advice, financial assistance, housing help or more.

Information provision:

Although there may be plenty of help available to the Armed Forces community, knowing where to start and finding the right advice is sometimes overwhelming. To overcome this, the Centre's welfare staff provide a holistic approach, ensuring information is at their fingertips – improving accessibility to a wide range of support and specialist advice to both serving and ex-Service personnel as well as their families and carers.

Case management:

As well as providing information and signposting, a case management approach delivers one-to-one support and guidance to individuals who present with multiple or complex needs. Trained staff help to identify and prioritise these needs before highlighting what practical assistance is most appropriate.

“A welcoming office from reception to meeting advisors.”

They then guide the beneficiary through the quickest and easiest way of putting their plan into action.

Support available is person-centred comprising of a mixture of one-to-one appointments, groups, weekly drop-in and active engagement of other partner organisations to meet individual needs.

Centre staff run a weekly drop-in session, attended by approximately six to ten individuals. The group organises social events and activities that are extended to those who access the Centre. Attendees are encouraged to socialise to reduce isolation, build and enhance their networks, and reinstate an identity which may have been lost.

Activities have included

 Strathspey
**Railway
visit**

 **3-4** annual
cinema visits

#1918
Poppy Ness Veterans

**Rothiemurchus
Activity Days**
fishing, quad bikes,
archery, clay shooting 



Lifestyle Management
Courses for Veterans

Auricular 
Acupuncture
10-week course

Legion Scotland 
Breakfast Club and
Christmas Lunch

RAF100 
Drop-in 2018

 **Highlanders Museum
and Fort George**

Working with volunteers

The Centre currently has three 'Welfare Volunteers'. Each of them are ex-Service personnel and are heavily involved in the local Armed Forces community, including involvement with other local organisations. In addition, they each have specialised expertise in different relevant areas that they bring to their role. The Welfare Volunteers are integral to the Centre's success, and their contributions and positive impact are of great value. Specifically, they provide:

1. Capacity:

Covering staff absence or annual leave, helping to engage with clients, drop-in facilitation, and supporting peer activities.

2. Specific skill sets and experience:

Ex-Forces, peer support, mental health, welfare, and pastoral support.

3. Links with local networks:

Ex-Forces community, SSAFA, and Legion Scotland.



Working in partnership

The Centre works in partnership to identify and resolve issues, working with both veterans' organisations and civilian support services. This allows the Centre to provide a holistic service to its beneficiaries.

Since opening in June 2013, partnerships have been initiated and established with the local Armed Forces community, ex-Service welfare practitioners and local expert advisers (both Statutory and Third Sector) to ensure that beneficiaries are provided with the most appropriate support.

During its five years of operation the Centre has become well embedded into the local community, with partner services being delivered directly from the Centre and utilising the hot desking, training and advice room facilities for meetings, clinics and beneficiary appointments.

Officially launched on 20 May 2016, and funded by Libor, Veterans First Point Highland was hosted at Poppyscotland Inverness until the project's closure in October 2017.

Veterans First Point Highland was a pilot project set up as part of the National Veterans First Point Scotland model and was a collaboration between Poppyscotland Inverness and NHS Highland.

Providing practical help and support for veterans experiencing mental health problems, it offered a single point of access delivering high quality evidence-based care, treatment and support for veterans and their families across the Highland region and for those veterans who accessed the service from other regions.

Funding came to an end in October 2017; however, Poppyscotland and NHS Highland remain in dialogue to ensure the legacy of this collaboration is carried on.

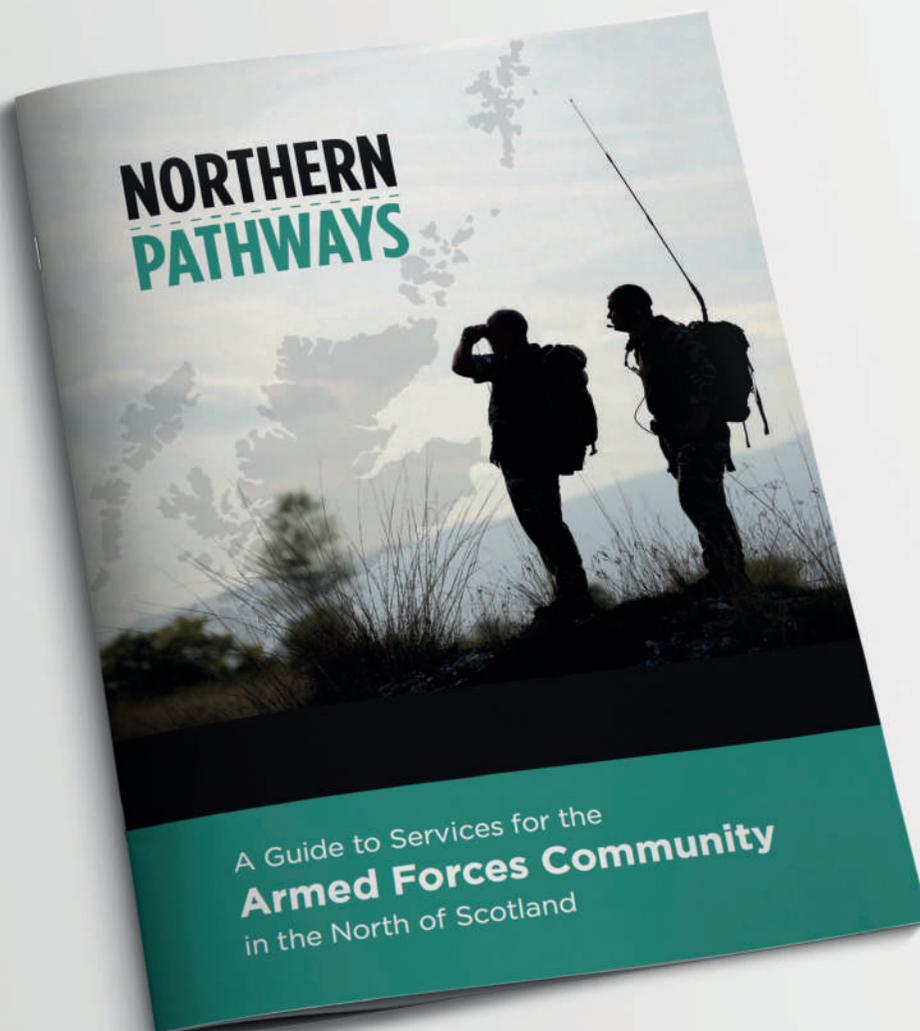
Further examples of partnership working include:



Research

Over the past five years, the Centre and its beneficiaries have been involved in several local and national consultations, bringing a North of Scotland perspective to a range of research themes affecting the Armed Forces community, including employment, housing, supports available, loneliness and social isolation. Northern Pathways – A Guide to Service for the Armed Forces Community in the North of Scotland, offers just one example of this work, where consultation with a group of beneficiaries influenced the development of this publication.

“I was feeling down and unsupported until Poppyscotland got involved in my situation. They have been like a rock to my well-being; they can’t do enough for you and they are only a phone call away for help, advice and overall care.”



Who has used the Centre?

General enquiries

For the five-year period between June 2013 and June 2018, the Centre received 3,037 enquiries in total, including 1,038 enquiries for information and/or support. Over the five years, information and/or support enquiries have constituted between one quarter and one half of all enquiries received at the Centre.

Case management

During the same period, staff at the Centre provided one-to-one support to 390 individuals through their case management service. More than three-quarters (78%) of clients are self-referrals – i.e. individuals who approached the centre themselves – while the remaining 22% were referred by others. The most common referral sources were partner organisations (24%), a previous interaction with Poppyscotland (18%), and friends and family (17%). Individuals were most likely to make contact with the Centre via telephone (43%) or by popping in to the Centre directly (37%). The remainder contacted the Centre via email (19%).

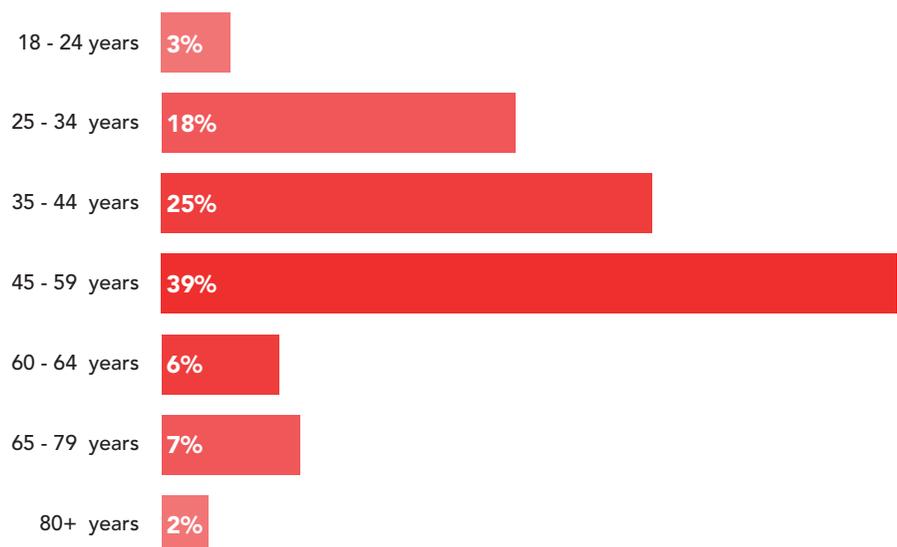
Geographic spread

While the Centre has facilitated support across the whole of the North of Scotland, 62% of beneficiaries come from Inverness-shire, the majority of whom are from Inverness itself. A further 20% are from Moray and 8% from Ross and Cromarty.

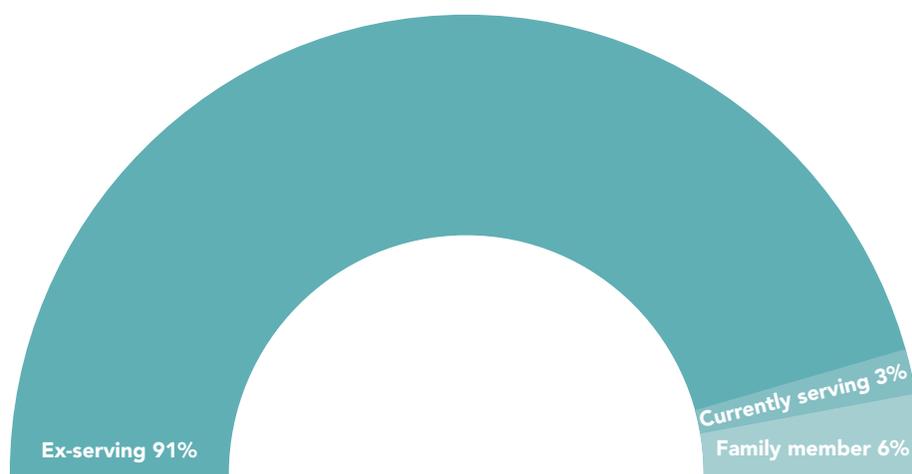


Beneficiary profile by age

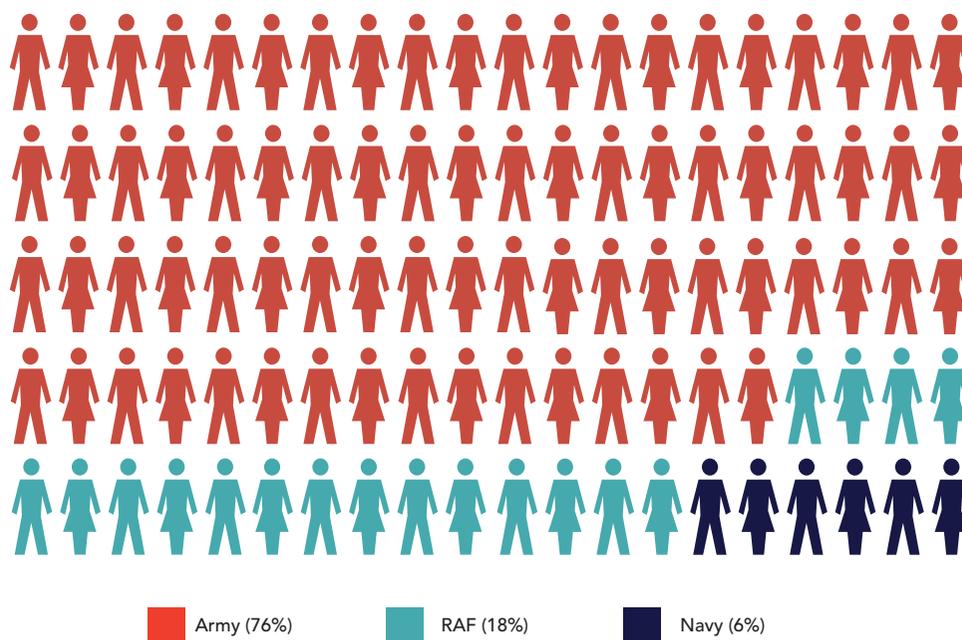
Whilst offering support to a diverse age range it is interesting that the majority of beneficiaries are aged between 35-59 – an important consideration when guiding beneficiaries towards sustained independence.



Profile of beneficiaries



Forces breakdown

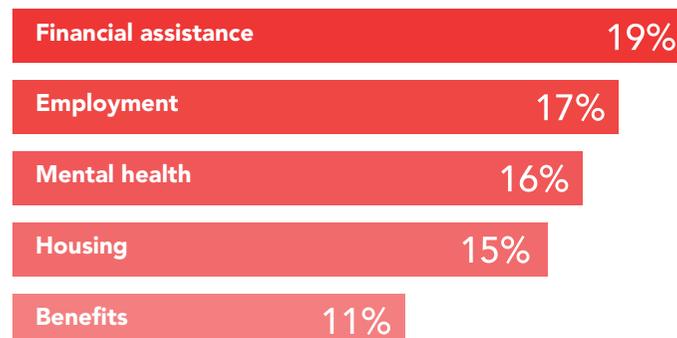


“Without the help I would not be doing what I am doing today. I was on a bad path – maybe even one leading to suicide – having felt shame when I first left the Army. My life was crumbling and the family I had built was gone. I felt I had nowhere to turn, but Poppyscotland helped me get back on track. I love waking up every morning and knowing what I am doing for the rest of the day. It’s amazing. I would have none of that if it wasn’t for Poppyscotland. They gave me the nudge and the help I needed.”

Our beneficiaries' needs

People seek support to address a range of issues which may fundamentally impact on their quality of life. Over the five years to June 2018, the proportion of clients presenting with employment as a need has fallen significantly, while the proportion presenting with mental health as a need has increased overall. These align with Poppyscotland's seven areas of support: tailored support and funding; advice; employment; mobility; respite; housing; and mental health.

Common needs



Help - what it actually means



Tailored support and funding

Everyone has different needs that change over time, so it's important our support changes with them. It's often simple solutions that can make all the difference, which, for a variety of reasons, can be out of reach for many. We offer a helping hand with practical things such as a suit for a job interview or a replacement battery for an electric wheelchair.



Advice

Debt. Jobs. Housing. These are just a few of the areas the Armed Forces community needs support with. We cut through the clutter of services and contacts to put them in touch with the right people, whether that's via our dedicated telephone helpline, a specially trained advisor, or at our Welfare Centre in Inverness.

Employment



This is one of our broadest areas of support. Our aim is to help those leaving the Armed Forces, and those who have already left, find a sustainable, fulfilling civilian career. We offer a number of services, ranging from re-training to helping veterans with mental health issues back into the workplace.



Mobility

Problems might start on the battlefield, or they could emerge years later. Like much of our work, we tailor the support to each veteran's needs – helping them live an independent life by providing occupational therapist assessments, home adaptations and mobility aids.



Respite

Poppy Breaks provide much needed respite for those in the Armed Forces community who wouldn't otherwise have the means. These short

breaks can make the world of difference to veterans and their families. We also provide support for families while their loved ones are away on operational duty.

Housing



Many members of our Armed Forces go straight from school into the military. Therefore, things like finding and keeping their own home can be extremely stressful. As well as directly funding home improvements and adaptations, much of the money we raise goes to support housing for veterans and their families, provided by specialist organisations.

Mental Health



While most leave the Armed Forces in a good frame of mind, a significant minority experience mental health issues. Nightmares, flashbacks, isolation and insomnia are just some of the problems veterans can face. We work with organisations that give advice and support, helping our veterans get well again.

Partner involvement

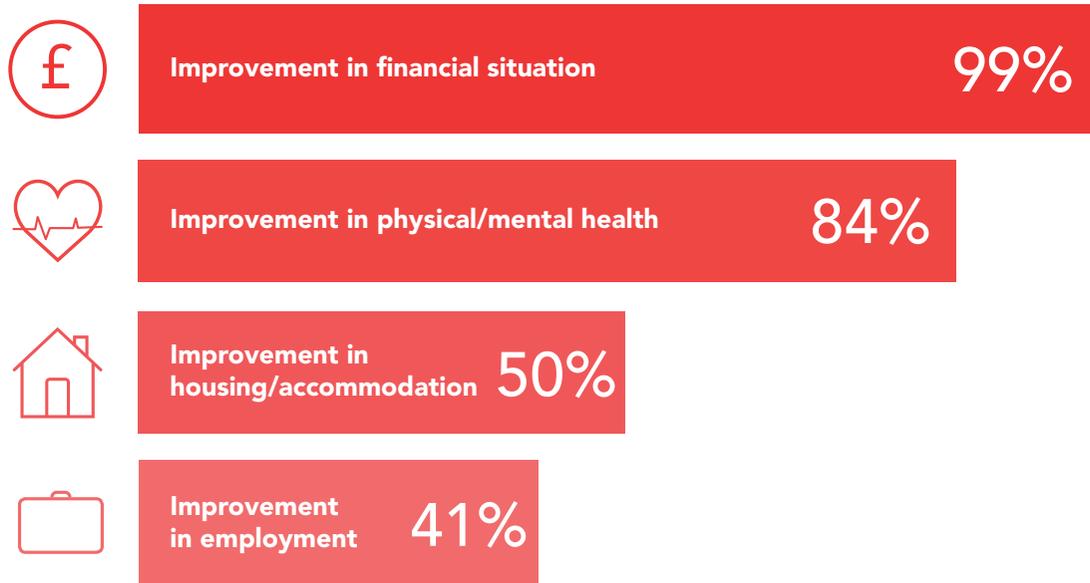
The Centre works with many partner organisations in relation to its clients, as mentioned in the introduction of this report. It has worked with SSAFA in providing support and assistance to one-fifth of its case management clients. ASAP has been involved in 15% of cases, while the Veterans Welfare Service has been involved in 8%, and a Local Housing Authority has been involved in 6%.



What has changed for our beneficiaries?

Between October 2015 and June 2018, Centre staff recorded the services' impact on 123 beneficiaries. Over this period 122 (99%) reported an improvement in their financial situation; 106 (84%) reported an improvement in the physical/mental health; and 61 (50%) reported an improvement in their housing/accommodation (see chart).

Impact



Feedback from beneficiaries

From a return of 72 feedback forms between July 2015 and June 2018, 81% reported that the support they received had led to an improvement in their peace of mind. Similarly, 36% reported improvement in their ability to help themselves and in their mental health. 28% of clients reported improvement in their physical health.

Additionally, close to one in four clients indicated that their ability to manage their money had improved. The same proportion of clients also reported that their financial situation, including debts and their access to appropriate benefits, had improved. Some clients reported improvements in other areas: approximately one fifth indicated that their employment situation, their feelings of isolation, their housing situation, or their access to local services had improved.

“Poppyscotland’s staff were great. From the dark place I was in when I first approached them for help, your staff didn’t judge me and helped me through an extremely stressful time. Now I am stronger and willing to deal with my problems.”

“The service was always helpful and without it I would have been very lost. They are always there whenever needed.”



“An incredible group of people and not really sure how this year would’ve turned out if not for Poppyscotland. Always there, always ready to listen and always a decent brew. They helped me more than I can put into words through what, for me, had been the hardest and darkest times of my life, and I don’t mean that as a cliché.”

Beneficiary stories

Gordon's story

After serving as a member of the 1st Battalion The Royal Scots for 12 years, Gordon approached Poppyscotland for help when he was diagnosed with PTSD. He had been signed off work and was beginning to worry about his financial situation. Poppyscotland provided Gordon with a grant to help him get back on track in the short term and also helped him to successfully apply for a war disablement pension. The team in the Centre referred Gordon to the Armed Services Advice Project where he received support to put together a realistic plan to help him manage his finances in the longer term.



“LifeWorks was a brilliant course – and what helped is that I was surrounded by like-minded people from the Armed Forces community. You don’t realise that people, like those at Poppyscotland, actually care and can change your life. It’s only a call away and it’s definitely worth making that call. It has helped me enormously and I’d like to thank Poppyscotland from the bottom of my heart for all that they’ve done for me.”

“I don’t think I could have got out of the hole I was in by myself. The support took away a lot of my immediate stress and anxiety. I was listened to and I was believed. When I broke down in tears I wasn’t being judged. I felt I could contact Poppyscotland whenever I needed to, and they were regularly in touch with me to see how I was doing. Life is definitely getting better.”



Scott's story

Scott, a former Supplier in the RAF, was refused his full pension and struggled to adjust to civilian life and secure employment. He sought help at Citizens Advice Scotland and was referred to Poppyscotland and SSAFA. Poppyscotland enrolled Scott on to the LifeWorks course and provided him with the funding he needed. Completing the course gave him a massive confidence boost and meant that he had a much better chance of getting a job that suited his skills and mind-set.

Richard's story

Richard, a former Sapper, and his family received a grant from Poppyscotland that allowed them to buy a new fridge/freezer and helped pay for flooring work in the family home. They also received grants that helped them travel to and from hospital while Richard was undergoing a heart transplant. Since his transplant, other sources of support have gradually tailed off, but Poppyscotland has continued to keep in touch, reassuring Richard that they will support him into the future.

“Without the help from Poppyscotland, my family wouldn't have been able to stay together. Financially, because of health issues, things have been extremely tough, but now I am looking forward to the future. I take each day as it comes and I am making steady progress. To get back to work and some form of normality is good and I am really looking forward to the future. I won't forget the help I received from Poppyscotland.”



Kevin's Story

Kevin served for seven years in the Scots Guards, but struggled to rebuild his life after leaving the Armed Forces. He suffered from depression, chronic anxiety and pre-existing PTSD. Poppyscotland sent Kevin and his family to enjoy a 'Poppy Break' in Southport and then to Ayrshire for a caravanning holiday. When the Centre opened in Inverness, the team invited him in to chat and put him in touch with other support services. Poppyscotland also provided Kevin with the funding he needed to begin his career as a boxing coach.

Jim's story

Jim served in the Royal Army Ordnance as a Supply Specialist for close to six years. Following his departure he struggled with debt and unemployment, and was diagnosed with stress, exhaustion and depression. Poppyscotland referred Jim onto RFEA – The Forces Employment Charity through which he undertook various jobs and agency ad-hoc work. He was then referred onto the LifeWorks course and less than six months later he had secured permanent employment locally.

“My CV got me interviews for four jobs. The LifeWorks course helped considerably to get my CV sorted out. It did me a world of good. I got the job based on what I gained from the course. LifeWorks did the job for me, as does the fact that I know the team at The MacRobert Centre is just a call away.”

Thank you for all your support

Visit

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Opening hours

Monday to Friday - 10am to 4pm



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