



STRATEGY 2022-25

STEP CHANGE | OUR NEW VISION



**FORCES
CHILDREN
SCOTLAND**

Supporting armed forces
children & young people

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RESPONDING TO CHANGE

A NEED FOR A NEW STRATEGY



LAURA FALCONER
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

We have all experienced big changes recently, and it is clear these past few years of living through a pandemic have had a profound effect on the children, young people, and families supported by Forces Children Scotland, particularly when it comes to the impact on mental health and wellbeing, education and learning, and financial hardship.

There have been big changes within Forces Children Scotland, too – I have joined the charity as its new Chief Executive Officer, we have welcomed six new trustees, and a range of new services are being delivered.

Our charity has a new name, visual identity and narrative, which has all been co-produced with children and young people, our staff, trustees, supporters and strategic partners. We are proud of what has been achieved and it was the first step on our journey to become a sector-leading charity.

Our new Strategy 2022-25 is the next step on this journey, and it sets out how we will adapt and respond to challenges. As always, our direction and priorities are based on the voices of children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families.

We feel now is the time to step up with regards to our ambition, how we engage and support beneficiaries, and lead the sector in making big changes to respond to the important issues faced by children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families across Scotland.

Our new strategic plan builds on our previous plan in many ways, including:

We will have a stronger influencing role at a local, regional and national level.

We will build more partnerships across military and civilian sectors.

We will strive to reach more children and young people across Scotland.

We will amplify the voices of children and young people.

Children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families often tell us how they feel like a seldom-heard group within society and that the challenges they face are not widely understood by their civilian friends, classmates, teachers and those who are making important decisions about their future.

Our new strategic plan outlines how we will ensure that their unique experiences are on everyone's radar, how we will make big changes which help children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families to flourish in the future, and how we serve to inspire the wider sector in following our lead in stepping up to respond to challenges both now and in the future.



MALCOLM NOBLE
CHAIRMAN

Our 2018-2023 strategy set out a range of aims which had intended to drive our charity forward a further year. However, much has changed since its publication.

Life has changed considerably for everyone over the past two years, and our team has adapted and responded so admirably to meeting the needs of children, young people and families across Scotland throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

That is why we decided to come together early to co-create Strategy 2022-25 – a plan which reflects how things have changed permanently for our beneficiaries, what support is now needed to complement existing services and how we will measure success over the next three years.

Several aims from our original strategy remain firmly in our new plans, which include the delivery of high-quality services and resources and to be a strong, effective voice for children and young people to influence public policy and legislation.

The process of developing this strategic plan attempted to explore many important considerations to guide our decision-making over the next three years, which involved having children and young people at the heart of the discussion.

The voices of children and young people will inform everything that we do in future and we hope to strengthen our links with those within the military and professional sectors, as well as those making important decisions within governments, at every level.



WHO WE ARE | HOW WE WORK



OUR MISSION

To become the sector-leading charity in Scotland which supports children and young people, from serving, reservist and veteran Armed Forces families, by providing exciting opportunities to get involved and by amplifying their voices to inspire change.



OUR VISION

To make Scotland a place where all Armed Forces children and young people can thrive.

OUR VALUES

We are passionate...

because too often, the children and young people from families of serving, reservist and veteran personnel are overlooked.

We are trusted...

not because we have more than two centuries of experience, but because we continue to evolve our approach based on the unique experiences of children and young people and evidence-based research.

We are collaborative...

whether that be with partners, staff or our children and young people, because only by working together will we deliver meaningful change.

We are honest...

promising to children and young people that we will always act with integrity when supporting them.

WE ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

We are Scotland's oldest charity supporting children and young people of Scottish serving personnel, reservists and veterans across the UK and beyond. We also support children and young people whose families are regular and reservist personnel currently posted/resident in Scotland.



WE ARE TRUSTED IN OUR COMMITMENT TO CO-PRODUCTION

We strive to be a strengths-based organisation with a co-production approach underpinning all of our work. This means we recognise the unique experiences of children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families as our most valuable asset and we ensure their voice is at the heart of all our decision-making. By doing so, we share the balance of decision-making with children and young people in the development of our projects and services.

WE ARE HONEST IN BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

We are a trauma-informed organisation committed to championing the five core principles of **safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness and empowerment** in our work with children and young people, and their families.



Safety

Ensuring physical and emotional safety



Choice

Providing choice and control



Collaboration

Participative decision-making



Trustworthiness

Clarity, consistency, and professional boundaries



Empowerment

Recognising abilities and supporting skill development



WORKING COLLABORATIVELY, WE WILL ACHIEVE BIG CHANGES

To maximise our impact, we work across all levels of an ecological model. This is based on the unique experiences of children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families, and research evidence. Our work has shown that no single factor can explain why the unique experiences of Armed Forces children and young people are not on the radar of civilian peers and those who support them, or who make important decisions about their future at a local, regional or national level.

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RECOGNISING THE POSITIVES AND CHALLENGES

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Consultations with children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families across Scotland have shown that they feel they are a seldom-heard, invisible group within society. It's not that they are ignored, more that their unique experiences, challenges and needs when it comes to education and learning, mental health and wellbeing, and having a say in what matters most are simply not on the radar of their civilian classmates, teachers or those making important decisions about their future.

Children and young people will encounter a range of positive and challenging experiences through life in a serving, reservist and/or veteran family.

Children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families are woven into the fabric of a global community, which is built upon a strong sense of belonging, lived experience and solidarity. What is more, compared to civilian peers, they can embrace frequent opportunities to travel, absorb a range of cultures and meet a more diverse range of people. These experiences can go a long way towards developing a unique sense of identity, purpose and confidence to realise potential and thrive.

However, deployment and uncertainty concerning loved ones, bereavement, living with a family member with life-changing physical or psychological wounds, regular relocations and disrupted friendships can present many unique challenges to children and young people. These factors can significantly impact upon education and learning, mental health and wellbeing, and the participation in decision-making that is involved in realising potential and thriving.



MOBILITY

Mobility can have a range of impacts and, from a practical standpoint, result in challenges such as gaps in learning, complications with course choices and exams, poor transfer of information between schools, difficulties in identifying additional support needs, and a lack of continuity in additional support needs provision. Beyond this, high levels of mobility can be extremely challenging for mental health and wellbeing, with children and young people facing the loss of friendships, relationships with teachers and community support, and repeatedly having to start all over again.



DEPLOYMENT

Deployment can be extremely challenging for children and young people, who have told us how much they miss their serving parent when they are away, particularly at special times such as birthdays, other celebrations or significant milestones. They can experience worry, stress and anxiety about the serving parent's safety during a deployment, which can make concentrating on schoolwork difficult. Others may also experience an increase in caring responsibilities, such as helping to look after a sibling or non-serving parent during deployments.

Given these significant challenges, it is highly concerning that

- 1 Many children and young people continue to tell us that they do not feel heard.
- 2 Many do not feel their experiences are recognised.
- 3 Some children and young people do not feel their lives are understood by their teachers and civilian peers.
- 4 Many children and young people do not feel their experiences are considered by decision-makers in government and parliament.

DATA

There are no nationally collected and published statistics on children and young people living in serving, reservist or veteran families. This means we do not know how many Armed Forces children and young people there are living in Scotland, their geographical locations, or how they fare in terms of their educational outcomes and their wider physical and mental health and wellbeing. The current lack of national data makes it extremely difficult to analyse the needs of Armed Forces children and young people and robustly consider whether current policies and services are effectively meeting those needs.

IMPACT

The lack of nationally collected and published statistics presents an important set of challenges. However, children and young people from serving and veteran families have also told us that they feel the sector could do so much more to respond to their lived experience and achieve big changes.

There is a lot of good work taking place across the sector, but more could be done to accelerate the changes needed to improve outcomes for children and young people, such as more sharing of good practice, joined-up thinking and connecting services and organisations across the sector. This would all make a tangible difference to children and young people.

DEVELOPING STRATEGY 2022-25



CONSULTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

We spoke directly to children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families across Scotland and listened to what they described as the key issues preventing them from thriving. To help guide us towards the development of our new strategy, we asked them what Forces Children Scotland should do over the next three years to help them realise their potential. Young people told us that there is much work still to be done to support their ability to thrive in the future. Their key requirements are...

Activities which distract us and give us a break from responsibilities will help

We need mental health and grief support


We need help and support to transition to civilian life, just like our parents do

Peer support is vital


We need support in education - it should be compulsory for school staff to learn about military life

Politicians need to hear what we have to say

BRINGING IN THE WIDER TEAM

We held development days for our staff and Trustees, who explored the external environment, up-to-date research and what children and young people had shared with us through our consultations. Some key themes kept emerging, for example, sector change, whole family approach, early intervention and amplifying lived experience to influence policy and practice. Our development sessions also highlighted a clear need for greater, wider understanding of the needs of children and young people across all sectors, not simply in education but answering the question, 'Where is the evidence base?'. 

DECIDING UPON OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES TOGETHER

Young people, staff and Trustees then came together to make sense of all we had learned and collated to agree our 2022-2025 strategic plan priorities. Our work with children and young people tells us big changes are needed across the sector. While much good work is being done, there remain challenges being experienced by our children and young people, with little being done to address this issue. Our focus is going to be on helping bring about the big changes that will make a tangible difference to children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families across Scotland. 



OUR 2022-25 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Together, we have come up with six strategic priorities to address some of the big, sector-wide challenges faced by children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families.



IMPROVING OUTCOMES

“There comes a point where we need to stop pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in.” – Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace Prize laureate

Forces Children Scotland has been helping children and young people for more than 200 years, providing education, skills development and wellbeing support. Now, as we enter a new era, under our new brand name, we want to do even more.

As the late Archbishop Tutu’s famous quote above states, it is time for us to stop simply pulling people out of the river to help them. We want to go upstream, find out why they are falling in, and try to prevent this from happening in the first place, as much as possible. Our step change and new vision includes not only offering essential support and outreach services, but working directly with children and young people to amplify their unique experiences.

We want to help ensure that those who support them and make important decisions about their future better understand what they are going through. By addressing challenges early, we hope to improve outcomes – to stop them falling in the river.

LEAD THE SECTOR

- We will establish a lead role in the sector, connecting policy and practice, encouraging third sector partnerships and facilitating sector improvements.
- We will work in collaboration with policy makers and partners to ensure Armed Forces children and young people are considered, included and identified as a distinct group in policies that support improved outcomes.
- We will work with policy makers to lead partnership activity to deliver cross-sector improved outcomes for Armed Forces children, young people and families.
- We will work with partners across organisational boundaries to facilitate change across the system, including between adult and children’s sectors.
- We will review and analyse available data, influencing policy and practice as a result and driving recommendations forward across the sector.
- We will develop and deliver collaborative programmes of work with partners to achieve improvements in health, education and wellbeing outcomes for Armed Forces children and young people, and their families.

INFLUENCE

- We will help shape the future policy landscape in relation to children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families, improving the visibility and influence of our children, young people and families.
- We will develop our new website, ensuring it is a vibrant learning platform for a wide range of stakeholders within the sector and a ‘one-stop shop’ to allow children and young people, and their families, to access support.
- We will create and deliver learning and development opportunities to support understanding across the sector of the needs of children and young people from Armed Forces families. We will work to ensure this activity results in tangible improvements in the lived experiences of Armed Forces children, young people and families.
- We will work with partners at strategic and operational levels across health, education, social care and the voluntary sector to develop ways of working and resources to improve transitions for families moving into and out of Scotland.
- We will develop a media campaign to raise awareness of the needs of children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families.
- We will develop our policy work to ensure it takes a holistic approach to whole families.

PARTNERSHIPS

- We will build partnerships to achieve improved collective impact across the sector.
- We will build partnerships to deliver in key areas, such as upstream prevention activities.

EVIDENCE-BASED

- We will build our capacity to measure outcomes and impact across all our work, contributing to the evidence base to influence change, with due regard to the Armed Forces Covenant and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- We will maintain oversight of good practice across the sector to ensure best practice and will ensure the voice of lived experience underpins the development of learning opportunities, resources and service delivery models.
- We will support and undertake research exploring the direct experiences of Armed Forces children and young people.

ENHANCING OUR REACH

- We will increase our visibility in Armed Forces communities so that families know who we are and what support we provide.
- We will extend our work to include earlier intervention for families, including developing family support models, training and support in wider communities.
- We will extend our reach to support organisations working with serving, reservist and veteran adults to better understand the needs of children and young people, including raising awareness of mental health, trauma and adversity.
- We will develop our advisory service to offer advice, support and signposting across the sector.

YOUNG PEOPLE’S VOICES

- We will grow our participation work to represent the voices of more children and young people from Armed Forces families, including those who are seldom heard.
- We will develop our youth participation activities across Scotland to ensure we reach younger children who are between the ages of five and 11.
- We will provide a platform for Armed Forces children and young people to engage directly with decision-makers at all levels to positively shape policy, practice and service delivery.



ACHIEVING A STRATEGIC FIT ACROSS SECTORS



Our Strategy 2022-25 will help Forces Children Scotland to support action across sectors dedicated to serving children and the military.

The Scottish Government's Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach always underpins our work with children, young people and families, and we will work collaboratively with children, young people, families and stakeholders from across the military and children's sectors to ensure UNCRC incorporation truly makes rights real for Armed Forces children and young people in Scotland.

We will work to support the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant to make sure that Armed Forces children and young people are treated fairly, while also embedding the principles of the UK Armed Forces Families Strategy across all aspects of our activity, ensuring that Armed Forces children and young people are recognised and respected, informed and empowered, and listened to and understood.

Our commitment to early intervention, trauma-informed practice and an ecological understanding of child wellbeing will ensure our strategic plan aligns with several public health priorities for Scotland:

A Scotland where we flourish in our early years

A Scotland where we have good mental wellbeing

Furthermore, Strategy 2022-25 will ensure that the work of Forces Children Scotland contributes to the national outcomes in Scotland Performs – the National Performance Framework.



Our work will support the following outcomes:



We grow up loved, safe and respected, so that we realise our full potential.

We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.

We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely.

We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society.

We are healthy and active.

We respect, protect, and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination.

We will ensure robust monitoring and evaluation of our work over the next three years to evidence our contribution to these wider priorities and outcomes.

RESPONDING TO CHANGE WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES



“More of the Army will be deployed across the globe, more of the time. Greater forward deployment will improve our ability to anticipate crises and be ready to compete beneath the threshold of open conflict. It will prevent conflict by reassuring allies and partners and deterring adversaries.”

- Future Soldier, 2021

It is essential that our new strategy also responds effectively to what is happening within the Armed Forces and several developments are currently on our radar.

FUTURE SOLDIER

As part of the Integrated Review in March 2021, the British Army outlined a plan for its most radical transformation in 20 years, called Future Soldier. The new Integrated Operating Concept (IOpC) has characterised a range of factors within an evolving, volatile external environment which means radical transformation is required with regards to thinking differently about emerging threats and how they are dealt with, as well as the structure, resources and equipment needed to be fit for the challenges of the future.

Persistent forward deployment within key strategic locations will provide improved global access and enhanced interoperability, allowing our forces to respond rapidly, when required, to situations which arise around the world.

We are already thinking about how we can support both the children and young people currently engaging with Forces Children Scotland, as well as extending our reach and building new partnerships to meet anticipated growing numbers who might benefit from our projects and services because of transformational change within the Army, through Future Soldier.



MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF STRATEGY 2022-25



Over the next three years, we would like to make significant progress in creating big changes across the sector. To help us achieve our aim, we need to realise a measurable expansion of our work and sustainable growth as a charity. Therefore, we have set some goals to help measure the success of our strategic plan.

We will have helped achieve big changes

We will have evidenced a significant increase in our role in influencing big policy and practice changes. Furthermore, we will have demonstrated the outcomes and impact of this work and will be leading the sector in delivering the changes required.

We will have built more partnerships

We will have established 10 new partnerships with organisations who share our values, across a range of sectors which engage with children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families. We will do this to maximise impact as well as to enhance reach and influence.

We will have set a new standard

We will become the go-to charity when it comes to working directly with children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families to co-produce impactful projects and services across Scotland which serve to achieve big changes.

We will have enhanced our reputation

We will reach and engage greater numbers within professional and military sectors to provide our breadth of expertise to support those working with children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families across Scotland.

To do this, we want to be speaking on behalf of even more children and young people, as well as supporting more people across the professional and military sectors.

So we will...

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Expand our staff team

We will increase our staffing capacity by 25%



Reach more children and young people

We will aim to engage with 1,000 more children and young people through our work. This includes 300 more children between the ages of five and 11 and 100 more young people whose voices are seldom heard. We want to have reached 10% of the Armed Forces children and young people population within Scotland.



Reach more families, professionals and civilians

We will have reached professionals, family members and civilians through our new website and have engaged people through our training and resources.



Provide direct support to more children, young people and families

We will have reached 2,000 young people through our Your Mind Matters mental health and wellbeing digital platform, and a further 450 through face-to-face support. We will have worked with 300 families through our new family support service and have supported 20 additional grant recipients through our new leaving home fund.



Increase our ability to measure and report on impact

We will have developed our outcomes framework to measure what big changes really mean for children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families across Scotland, for Forces Children Scotland, and the wider sector.



Maximise our fundraising

We will maximise our fundraising in compliance with the law as it applies to charities and fundraising and will commit to best practice, as outlined within the Fundraising Code of Practice. We will monitor fundraisers, volunteers and third parties working with us to raise funds, ensuring that they also comply with this Code of Practice.



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JOIN US TO BECOME A FORCE FOR BIG CHANGES

The changes children and young people need cannot be achieved by one organisation. Please join us in working together to improve outcomes for children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families.

To explore partnership opportunities with us, please contact our Chief Executive Officer, Laura Falconer

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CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES