



**FORCES
CHILDREN
SCOTLAND**



IMPACT REPORT 2022

REINFORCE | STRONGER TOGETHER

CONTENTS

>> 04-05

Who we support

>> 06-07

A co-production approach

>> 08-09

Big changes / Our team

>> 10-11

Youth participation

>> 12-13

Family support

>> 14-15

Education and learning

>> 16-17

Mental health / Wellbeing

>> 18-19

Policy / Looking ahead

>> 20

How you can help

WELCOME



LAURA FALCONER

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

THE past year has seen considerable growth in terms of our ambition, influence, projects, and services.

We developed a new strategic plan, restructured our team and co-produced our new website. We did this to help us make a greater impact when it comes to helping more children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families.

While making big changes, we kept delivering our wide range of work to support the children and young people who needed our help now.

However, impact is only impact when it is actually having an impact on the

“This report shows the difference we’ve made to the lives of beneficiaries, while laying foundations for the future”

people you are aiming to support – otherwise, it’s only activity. Our Impact Report shows the real difference we have made in beneficiaries’ lives, while also laying the foundations for our future.

That we achieved both growth and sustained ongoing support is a testament to the passion and commitment of our amazing team of staff and Trustees and, of course, the incredible children and young people who worked alongside us on multiple projects, and who will always remain the reason our charity exists.

My thanks to you all.

RUBY

BENEFICIARY

HELLO everyone, and I hope you will enjoy our Impact Report.

I got involved with Forces Children Scotland in 2020 when I moved from Canada to Scotland – that was a big deal!

Moving schools, the charity’s youth forum helped me settle in education-wise and it was great to know I could get support during Covid – my dad was working away from home then and couldn’t always come back regularly.

The first thing I got involved with was an online Book Club that started during the pandemic. I met many other military young people whom I loved seeing each week because I don’t have many military friends.

This year I’ve had lots of different opportunities, including sharing my experiences of being a young person from a serving family at the charity’s conference, being on an interview panel and much more.

I have gained confidence and friends and I’m proud to have raised awareness about forces families, so they can get better support.

“I’ve gained confidence and friends and I’m proud to have raised awareness about forces families”

I’d say to any young person who’s not already involved to just do it!



WHO WE SUPPORT

We have more than 200 years' experience supporting children and young people.

FORCES Children Scotland was founded just four days before the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 to support children and young people whose parents were killed or experienced life-changing wounds during the Napoleonic War.

Today, we support children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families across Scotland, helping them to realise their potential and thrive in lots of different ways.

These children and young people grow and develop within communities which are built upon a strong sense of belonging, lived experience and solidarity.

What is more, compared with civilian peers, they may have embraced greater opportunities to travel, absorb a range of cultures and meet diverse groups of people from across the world.

Equally, some will assume greater responsibilities at home when a parent is deployed and thrive within that role, while others grasp opportunities

to participate in a variety of memorable activities which are not available to their civilian peers.

Much of this helps these children and young people develop a unique sense of identity, purpose and confidence, which sets the wheels in motion to realise further potential and thrive in later life. However, there are aspects of life in a serving, reservist and veteran family that can present many unique challenges to children and young people.

For those in armed forces families, deployment and uncertainty concerning loved ones, bereavement, living with a family member with life-changing

physical or psychological wounds, regular relocations – as well as disrupted friendships, activities and routines – can have detrimental effects on education and learning, mental health and wellbeing, and much more.

Equally, children and young people who are making the transition to becoming a veteran family can feel growing pressure to adapt and maintain day-to-day routines amid what can, at times, be either rapid or gradual transformational change.

This can lead to an acute sense of loss with regards to belonging, community, relationships and identity.

MORE THAN 12,500 > CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM SERVING, RESERVIST OR VETERAN FAMILIES LIVE IN SCOTLAND RIGHT NOW AND THIS NUMBER WILL INCREASE IN THE COMING YEARS.

>> OF THOSE:

4,125 (33%) HAVE A PARENT SERVING FULL-TIME IN THE ARMED FORCES

5,875 (47%) HAVE A PARENT WHO IS A VETERAN

1,187 (9.5%) HAVE A PARENT SERVING PART-TIME AS A RESERVIST

483 (3.5%) HAVE MORE THAN ONE SERVING, RESERVIST OR VETERAN PARENT

875 (7%) HAVE A PARENT WHO DID NOT SPECIFY THEIR STATUS

HOW WE WORK DIRECTLY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Lived experience is at the heart of everything we do.

WE strive to adopt a co-production approach underpinning all of our work. This means that we recognise the lived experience 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 beneficiaries in the development of everything we do.



WE co-produce innovative, impactful projects and services across Scotland which help children and young people to better understand and overcome unique challenges when it comes to mental health and wellbeing, education and learning, making important transitions, and much more.



WE work directly with children and young people to co-produce training and resources to help educators and professionals better understand the lives they lead, and to encourage the adoption of a children's rights approach to help meet unique support needs.



WE co-develop campaigns which amplify lived experience, transform attitudes and champion meaningful change towards greater active participation in future policymaking. This provides life-changing experiences in which children and young people can develop new skills, build confidence and forge friendships through a sense of belonging, shared experiences and collective purpose.



WE listen to the voices of armed forces and veteran families to provide financial support which responds to specific needs and is delivered when it matters most. We support young carers and students to realise their potential and thrive, we help families overcome financial hardship and enable children and young people to dream big and pursue positive futures.

How we put the lived experiences of children and young people at the heart of everything we do...

OUR strong relationships with children and young people are built on a foundation of honesty. As a trauma-informed organisation, we are committed to championing five core principles – safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness and empowerment – within our process of co-production, named **CombinedForce**. Here are the phases of this process...

PROMOTE

We work with children and young people to co-create promotions and identify effective communication channels to reach peers and encourage them to get involved.

ASSEMBLE

We form collaborative groups with children and young people, strategic partners and creative agencies to work together via digital means or via creative residential.

EVALUATE

We measure success against our pre-defined outcomes, to review what we have learned and ensure that learning is embedded in future decision-making.

DELIVER

We deliver impactful launch plans for our projects, services and campaigns, which puts the lived experiences of children and young people at the heart of our communications.

ENGAGE

We decide together upon the most effective channels to disseminate information and engage chosen target audiences within the armed forces community and professional sectors.

DEVELOP

We work to co-develop service delivery aspects, resources, calls to action and creative concepts, plus so much more to bring our solutions to life.

DISCOVER

We explore challenges faced by our beneficiaries and collaborate to share lived experience, knowledge and expertise to find solutions to meet their unique support needs.

DEFINE

We build upon what we have achieved to define a specific set of outcomes which will be used to measure success towards making meaningful change for our beneficiaries.



BIG CHANGES

Last year, we announced that we would make big changes to reinforce our ambition to become a sector-leading charity.

» WE have a new name, logo and strategic narrative.

OUR Forces Children Scotland brand is something we are proud to have co-produced with children and young people, staff and trustees, strategic partners and supporters.



» WE have a new three-year strategy WE have worked with children and young people, staff and trustees to launch our vision to reach and support greater numbers of peers from serving, reservist and veteran families across Scotland.

» WE have a new website

WE listened to the voices of children, young people, supporters and our team to develop a new website. We received funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to work in partnership with Parkhouse Agency to enhance the look and feel of our website and develop clearer pathways for our strategic audiences to find the information they need.

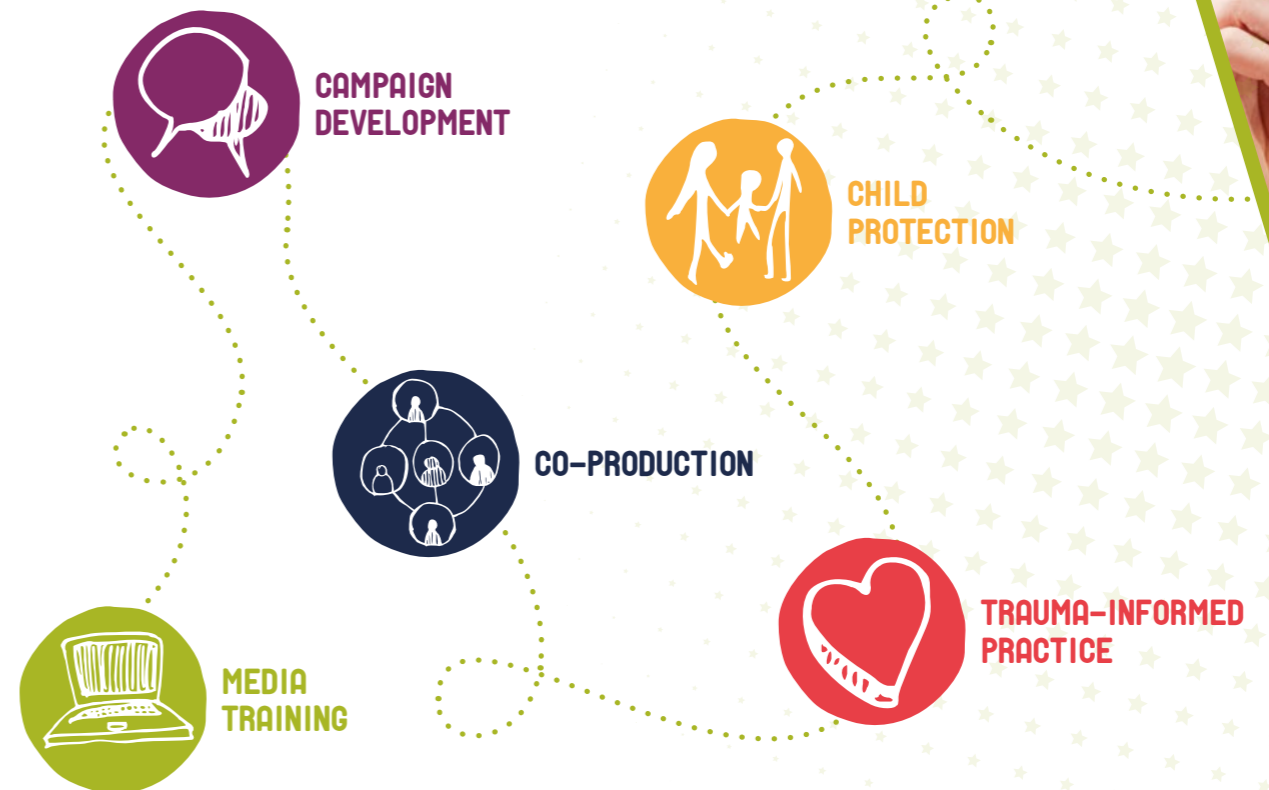


OUR TEAM AND TRAINING

We have expanded our team to reinforce our aim to reach and support greater numbers of children and young people.

WE are committed to supporting our team to grow and develop, so they have a chance to reinforce existing knowledge and skills to better support children and young people from armed forces and veteran families.

Here are some of the development opportunities provided this year:



YOUTH PARTICIPATION

158

FACE-TO-FACE AND VIRTUAL SESSIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

203

NEW CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE ENGAGED IN YOUTH PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES

317

YOUNG PEOPLE WERE INVOLVED IN CONSULTATION ACTIVITIES

We work directly with children and young people from armed forces and veteran families to ensure they have a say in so many innovative, impactful projects.

FROM co-developing the **Forces Life** board game and comic book to bringing children and young people together to forge new connections, develop skills and to have their say on what matters most, we have ensured children and young people across Scotland have been fully supported to realise their potential and thrive.

We have also worked directly with this group to better understand their lived experiences and co-develop initiatives to help educators and decision-makers better understand their lives, while encouraging them to adopt a children's rights approach to help meet their unique support needs.

Forces Life project

MANY children and young people from armed forces and veteran families have told us that they feel like a seldom-heard group and that their lived experience is not on the radar of civilian audiences.

Our **Forces Life** project was about helping them to explore fun, creative ways to start conversations about their lives with civilians.

We received funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and ABF: The Soldiers' Charity to co-develop a board game and comic book to help civilian classmates, decision-makers, and educators and professionals better understand what it's like to live in an armed forces or veteran family.

A working group of our team and young people worked in partnership with Dekko Comics, Edinburgh Napier University and Connect Communications to make things happen.

Young people embraced the opportunity to forge new friendships, listen to each other's lived experiences and work together to develop early versions of the board game and comic book.

Taking things a step further, our young people embarked upon a creative residential experience to learn more about gaming mechanisms, semiotics, persona development techniques and much more to help them co-create the final game and book.

We also received a parliamentary motion of support from

Alexander Stewart MSP, who visited the young people during their residential to learn more about their experiences and what they hoped to achieve through the project. You can find out more by scanning the QR code on the right or visit forceschildrenscotland.org.uk/projects/forces-life-board-game-and-comic-book



Working with young carers from armed forces and veteran families

WE delivered a series of unique creative and bushcraft engagement sessions for young carers from Highland and Moray, Helensburgh and Lomond, and Fife, which provided opportunities to reflect and creatively express what belonging and being a young carer meant to them. Content created assisted our Youth Participation Team's development of a training session for Young Carers Services' Workers, which highlighted their lived experiences and unique support needs.

Book and film club

OUR Youth Participation Team ran an online book and film club in partnership with Community Development Workers from the Army Welfare Service (AWS), delivering 32 sessions over the year, including an online Christmas party. The sessions allowed young people to connect with peers, share their experiences and chat about books they were reading, or films they were watching, plus take part in fun activities.

Co-producing our new three-year strategy

WE engaged with more than 150 children and young people from armed forces and veteran families across Scotland to ensure their lived experiences and views are at the heart of our new three-year strategy, which is something we are very proud to share with you. Together, we have shaped six strategic priorities to drive our ambitious plans forward to become the sector-leading charity supporting children and young from serving, reservist and veteran families across Scotland.



Being part of Forces Children Scotland has been amazing for Sam. He usually tends to shy away from group activities, however, with Forces Children Scotland he loves to be involved. It's helped his confidence and he always looks forward to the next activity. Being unaccompanied can be hard for Sam and he enjoys spending time with kids in similar situations to him and has enjoyed being involved in so many different activities. It was a big step for him to go on the residential but he came home really happy and glad he went." - Mother of Sam, one of our beneficiaries

FAMILY SUPPORT

162

FAMILIES SUPPORTED

325

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SUPPORTED

£114,230

DISTRIBUTED THROUGH OUR FUNDS

150

WELLBEING BOXES DISTRIBUTED

We have supported growing numbers of armed forces and veteran families who have needed a little financial support.

WE revamped our grant-giving to adapt and respond, ensuring rapid assistance is provided to address what children, young people and parents tell us are their specific support needs.

» University and College Fund

WE put students from armed forces and veteran families first. We're here every step of the way to help young people realise their potential and thrive at college or university.



I wanted to thank Forces Children Scotland for the support you have given me over the past four years while I've been at university. I'm pleased to announce that I've just been

awarded a First-Class Honours degree from the University of Bristol. I am well aware this wouldn't have been possible had I not been lucky enough to receive a grant from the charity's University and College Fund and I hope it demonstrates how beneficial your financial and moral support is for students." - Fund beneficiary

» Young Carers Fund

BEING a young carer can be challenging but, with the right support, we help them realise their potential and thrive.

A young carer is someone 25 or younger who cares for a friend or family member who, due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction, cannot cope without support.

Young carers from armed forces and veteran families can face many unique challenges, such as stepping up when a parent is deployed or caring for loved ones living with life-changing physical or psychological trauma. The grants we have provided enabled young carers to purchase sports equipment, laptops, driving lessons and much more to provide respite from their caring responsibilities, enhance independence or to help pursue positive futures. Several recipients have grasped opportunities to work closely with our Youth Participation Team to co-develop awareness campaigns that

aim to help civilian audiences to better understand the lives they lead, using social media and poster-led campaigns in schools and community settings.



As the eldest sibling, John feels he needs to take on the role of 'man of the house', particularly when his dad is deployed, which causes him to feel anxious about his mum and younger siblings. Forces Children Scotland awarded a grant to John and his sister to purchase a trampoline and a Nintendo Switch, which helped them to switch off and relax, and provided welcome respite from their caring responsibilities." - Parent of a Young Carer Fund beneficiary

» Education and Aspiration Fund

LIFE in an armed forces or veteran family can present a range of unique financial obstacles to realising potential and pursuing positive futures.

Children and young people from armed forces and veteran families have used grants from our Education and Aspiration Fund to attend a variety of extra-curricular activities, including Brownies, Cadet Forces, music and dance classes, and much more.

In some cases, we have helped low-income families buy leisure passes for a range of activities in communities across Scotland. The fund has also enabled children and young people to purchase sports and photography equipment and even a specialist text magnifier, helping them overcome a variety of unique support needs to discover creative talents and pursue positive futures, as well as regain independence.

» Crisis intervention and Family Support Fund

WE can provide financial support to help armed forces and veteran families facing significant, complex challenges during these times of unprecedented change.

Financial support has been provided to armed forces and veteran families facing significant challenges such as family breakdowns, physical and mental health conditions, and debt and unemployment.

We worked in partnership with SSAFA (the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association) to provide Christmas Crisis Intervention Grants and offered families in crisis discretionary grants for food and necessities over the Christmas period, without any lengthy paperwork.

» Respite Break Fund

WE understand the difficulties faced by armed forces and veteran families who have a loved one living with a disability - and the unique physical and emotional challenges of ensuring that specific support needs are met.

Our Family Respite Break Fund has enabled 11 families and 29 children and young people to take short respite breaks across the UK to visit various cities and attractions - including Alton Towers and Edinburgh Zoo - to reunite with family and friends and create memories which will last a lifetime.

EDUCATION AND LEARNING

We support children and young people from armed forces and veteran families to overcome unique challenges to education and learning, as well as help educators and professionals better meet their unique support needs.

» Education and learning

WE work in schools and community learning settings to help pupils from families who have been posted to Scotland from across the UK. They may have completed coursework under different curriculums/exam systems or have moved during term time. We work closely with schools and partners within the armed forces to ensure support strategies are in place for pupils during times of parental deployment and so much more.

» Important transitions

WE provide support to pupils who have relocated to Scotland from across the UK and beyond to overcome challenges when attending a new school, such as settling in to new routines and coursework, as well as providing help to form new relationships with staff and peers.

» Academic aspiration

WE work in partnership with widening participation teams within Edinburgh Napier, Heriot Watt, Strathclyde and Abertay universities to bring young people from across Scotland onto campus to meet students and staff and to participate in fun-based activities which introduce a range of academic subjects and pathways towards gaining qualifications to ignite the spark of academic aspiration.

» Training and resources

WE help educators and professionals from a variety of sectors to better understand the lives led by children and young people from armed forces and veteran families, and how this can affect their ability to realise potential and thrive. We work directly with children and young people to co-produce learning resources and deliver events which explore many of the unique challenges faced when it comes to education and learning, as well as introduce effective support strategies.

Professional Learning Activity

WE worked directly with children and young people to co-develop a Professional Learning Activity (PLA) to help educators and professionals to better understand their lives. We received funding from the British & Foreign School Society to work in partnership with Education Scotland, the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland and Connect Communications to deliver this project. Seven short modules – on topics such as understanding aspects of forces life and mental health – were created for educators and professionals to complete in their own time. You can find them at forceschildrenscotland.org.uk/projects/professional-learning-activity

Conference

A virtual conference on trauma, belonging and adversity, and how this relates to children and young people from armed forces and veteran families, was delivered to more than 160 educators and professionals.

Attendees enjoyed virtual presentations from experts Dr Karen Treisman and Lisa Cherry FRSA and took part in group discussions. Children and young people worked with our team to participate in a live Q&A session and co-produce a video presentation, in which they shared their lived experience with attendees.

84%

OF ATTENDEES AGREED THAT THE CONFERENCE HAD INSPIRED THEM TO THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE FROM SERVING, RESERVIST AND VETERAN FAMILIES

86%

OF ATTENDEES AGREED THEY BETTER UNDERSTAND HOW UNIQUE CHALLENGES SUCH AS TRAUMA AND ADVERSITY CAN RELATE TO YOUNG PEOPLE FROM SERVING, RESERVIST AND VETERAN FAMILIES

Primary and secondary schools

WE have expanded our work to reach greater numbers of children and young people within primary and secondary schools across Scotland, to better understand how things such as mobility and deployment can affect education and much more.

We delivered bespoke interactive sessions which allowed children and young people to tell their stories of belonging to a forces family. Many of them told us about the sadness they feel when they have to move and how much they miss the friends they leave behind. They also told us about how hard it is to keep in touch and the challenges of settling in to a new school. The children have been exploring creative ways for improved support for themselves and their peers.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Children and young people from armed forces and veteran families can face unique challenges to their mental health and wellbeing.

LAST year we worked directly with this group to co-develop a new mental health and wellbeing service for peers and wider family members, called Your Mind Matters. We received funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to deliver this.

» Face-to-face support

WE launched pilot face-to-face support services for pupils from armed forces and veteran families within Hermitage Academy in Helensburgh.

One-to-one sessions have delivered early intervention, immediate response and active monitoring to address challenges, as well provide strategies to improve or maintain wellbeing and signposting towards additional help.

Peer support and lunchtime drop-in sessions have proved successful in providing a safe forum for pupils to share their unique experiences concerning mental health and wellbeing with peers, by taking part in discussions to both give and receive advice.

“Our Your Mind Matters Wellbeing Worker has been great and listens when you need someone to listen. I would definitely recommend pupils make appointments with him because he is very understanding, caring and, most importantly, trustworthy. Brian knows how to give the best advice to pupils and his methods are very effective in ensuring we feel much better about ourselves. All your problems can be reassured with just a couple of sessions. Brian has my support all the way.”

- S6 Pupil from Hermitage Academy, Helensburgh

» Digital support

OUR Your Mind Matters digital platform aims to support children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families to better understand and enhance mental health and wellbeing, as well as to support parents, educators and professionals to better understand specific challenges this group can face.

Our commitment to co-production principles has ensured children and young people have contributed their lived experience, creativity and views to co-develop the look and feel of the digital platform, and to co-develop podcasts and resources about specific mental health challenges and how this can relate to forces life.

Children and young people collaborated through regular sessions held over Zoom and we brought together a group in March for a creative residential to co-create many of our digital resources. **Please scan the QR code to learn more or visit forceschildrenscotland.org.uk/your-mind-matters**



“It’s amazing to see everything we have worked together to create suddenly come to life on the Your Mind Matters digital platform and I hope it helps lots of other children and young people with similar experiences to myself about mental health and wellbeing.” - Young person who co-developed the Your Mind Matters digital platform



OUR 'YOUR MIND MATTERS' CAMPAIGN

POLICY AND INFLUENCING

We work with children and young people to effectively engage decision-makers, transform attitudes and advocate for change.



DATA



CHILDREN'S RIGHTS



EDUCATION AND LEARNING



MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

» Online event for Members of the Scottish Parliament

THIS event for MSPs was led by six members of Forces Children Scotland's Military Youth Voice Forum. For the young people involved, it was a fantastic opportunity to share their lived experiences through a powerful presentation which covered topics including moving schools, overcoming challenges to education and learning, mental health and wellbeing, and living in a veteran family. The event was very well received and resulted in several requests for follow-up meetings.

A follow-up meeting with Martin Whitfield MSP proved particularly fruitful, as he then submitted a Parliamentary Motion to raise awareness of the work carried out by Forces Children Scotland, which received significant cross-party support.

» Amplifying the voices of children and young people

» WE submitted eight responses to consultation/evidence requests across the children's and military sectors at both Scottish and UK levels, covering issues including United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC) incorporation, education reform, the proposed National Care Service, Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), and the Armed Forces Covenant.

We have represented the voices of children and young people on several policy groups, pushing for greater recognition of their lived experiences and promoting collaboration to achieve meaningful change.

We were also invited to sit on several groups by Together: Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights, on behalf of the Scottish Government, to work on issues relating to UNCRC incorporation, which has provided opportunities to feed into the UK Government's response to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's inquiries as part of the UNCRC reporting cycle.

Here are some of the policy groups on which we sit:

- Children and young people's cross-party group
- Armed forces and veterans community cross-party group
- Veterans Scotland policy group
- Children in Scotland's Voices Forum
- UNCRC Implementation Strategy Group.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Having launched our exciting three-year strategy, we co-produced a series of outcomes with children and young people from armed forces and veteran families.

TO help us achieve our aims, we needed to co-develop a measurable expansion of our work and sustainable growth as a charity. Therefore, we have set outcomes which will help us measure the success of our strategic plan as we progress into the future.

New funding will reinforce many aspects of our work, which we look forward to telling you more about in next year's Impact Report.



Lighthouse Project

WE have received funding from ABF: The Soldiers' Charity to pilot one-to-one, peer support and mentorship services for pupils at Queen Victoria School in Dunblane, which is a boarding school for children and young people from armed forces and veteran families.



Mindful Connections

WE have received funding from the Scottish Veterans Fund to pilot a holistic family support service for those making the transition to becoming a veteran family. This will help families to overcome many unique challenges, galvanise relationships and promote social integration across central Scotland.



Listen Up!

WE have received funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to work directly with children and young people to co-develop an innovative multimedia campaign which puts lived experience at the heart of a communication which helps civilian audiences better understand what it is like to be a forces child.



Please scan the QR code to learn more or visit forceschildrenscotland.org.uk/projects



Have we inspired you to explore ways we can work together to reinforce our collective work?

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 at laura.falconer@forceschildrenscotland.org.uk

There are so many ways to reinforce our fundraising to become a force for good!



LEARN MORE

 ForcesChildrenScotland
 forceschildrenscotland
 @ForcesChildScot
 [linkedin.com/company/forces-children-scotland](https://www.linkedin.com/company/forces-children-scotland)

[ForcesChildrenScotland.org.uk](https://www.ForcesChildrenScotland.org.uk)

Forces Children Scotland
c/o The Melting Pot
15 Calton Road,
Edinburgh EH8 8DL
Email us: admin@forceschildrenscotland.org.uk
Scottish Charity Number SC038722