



VETERANS MENTORING SERVICE

Annual Report 2017/2018



LOTTERY FUNDED



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1. Introduction



Sacro's Veterans Mentoring Service (VMS) aims to support men and women who have completed service within the UK Armed Forces and are at risk of becoming involved, or are already involved in the criminal justice system. These can be veterans who have been released from prison, who are presently in prison, or who have been sentenced to, or who have completed any of the various orders used as an alternative to imprisonment including supervision orders and community payback orders. VMS is also a preventative service for those veterans on the periphery of the criminal justice system and used as a means of early intervention.

The service also includes those veterans about to leave the Armed Forces through dishonourable discharge or disciplinary dismissal and those who have been identified as being likely to become involved with the criminal justice system.

VMS is an intensive mentoring and one-to-one peer support service that is focussed on supporting veterans, the mentees, at a time of significant challenge in their lives. It assists mentees to recognise and develop their life skills including accessing education and employment training, sustaining their tenancies and accommodation and building the confidence to make critical changes in their lives. These critical changes include addressing their offending behaviour, understanding the effects of this on their lives and the lives of their families and friends, as well as those who live in the local communities; it also assists in addressing alcohol and substance use issues, mental health problems, and social isolation.

The veterans referred to the service often need assistance to engage with health services to support their mental and physical well-being and their mentors aim to support them to develop their self-esteem and work towards sustainable independent living.

The service is funded and made possible by Poppyscotland, The Armed Forces Community Covenant, Veterans Scotland and the Big Lottery Fund. This level of funding has enabled the VMS to expand the service nationally which provides a greater service to veterans that need its assistance.

The service presently operates with the equivalent of four full time mentors, all of whom have previous military service. They are supported by a team of fully trained sessional workers.

2. Service Description

The service operates in two phases

- > **Initial/Intervention Phase:** A referral can be made by any support agency (Social Work, Scottish Prison Service, voluntary organisation/any stakeholder working with veterans) or made by the veteran themselves.

An initial discussion with the mentee - and the referrer if appropriate - will take place to discuss the service and ensure that the service user wishes to engage. The veteran will attend for initial risk and needs assessments during which time an action plan will be jointly developed and agreed with the mentee taking into consideration all their wishes and aspirations.

It is anticipated that engagement with the mentor will last between 9 to 12 months. Throughout this phase, the action plan will be regularly reviewed and updated as necessary to ensure progress is being made.

- > **Exit Phase:** When it is assessed that the mentee is ready to move on and is thriving within the local community, they will be matched to a volunteer mentor, if required or requested, to continue with planned support for a further four to six months, working towards a planned exit. The veteran will also continue to engage with the relevant support agencies involved in their action plan and only once they are deemed to have achieved their desired outcome will their case be closed.

The VMS aims to help veterans to:

- > Build self-confidence and self-esteem;
- > Address alcohol and drug addictions;
- > Address offending behaviour;
- > Address physical and mental health issues;
- > Access support services;
- > Keep appointments with other agencies;
- > Enhance life and social skills such as maintaining correspondence and bills;
- > Access education or training;
- > Build self-support groups and networks;
- > Find employment opportunities;
- > Carry out training which will benefit themselves and others (safeTALK/ Assist);
- > Reintegrate into the community;
- > Become more inclusive and participative citizens.



Karen McArthur who delivers the Veteran's Employability Service raised funds for the 100th Anniversary of The Royal Air Force. Karen is a RAF veteran who wore her beret and RAF T-shirt proudly on the day and carried a bucket heavy with donations throughout the Kiltwalk.

3. The Funders

Armed Forces Community Covenant



VMS received grant funding of £20,000 from the Community Covenant for the financial year 2017/2018. This money provides sessional staff in specific areas that are identified as hotspots for vulnerable veterans. It also allowed the service to target veterans who are hard to reach and who do not reside close to, or in the major conurbations.

Big Lottery Fund



In June 2016 the VMS was awarded the sum of £600,000, over five years to 2021 from The Big Lottery Fund in Scotland. This funding enabled the VMS to expand the service out of the central belt of Scotland and into Elgin and Dundee. Both of these areas were identified

as having significant populations of veterans. This expansion allowed the service to employ additional staff and target veterans throughout the country, opening pathways to collaborative working with stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Poppyscotland



Poppyscotland has again supported the Veterans Mentoring Service and in 2017/2018 was provided with a further £25,000 instalment by them to support the cost of running the service. This will continue to fund the contracted staff and allow future progress and development of the service.

Veterans Scotland



In 2017/2018, Sacro VMS was awarded a grant of £30,000 to provide bespoke one-to-one peer support for employability services for veterans on short term sentences. This service has now established contacts and referral protocols with Scottish Prison Service staff in various prisons in the central belt. The VMS Employability Mentor has visited veterans in HMPs Addiewell, Low Moss, Glenochil and the open estate at HMP Castle Huntly.

4. Key Events and Activities

1918 Poppy Pledge

Sacro's VMS staff from four offices, have signed up for the 1918 Poppy Pledge. This is a year-long campaign to honour all members of the Armed Forces who fought in The Great War and the many conflicts since. As well as paying tribute to Britain's bravest, the aim is to raise £1,918 over the year which will help Poppyscotland continue supporting the Armed Forces community resident in Scotland.



Sacro's VMS staff from four offices, have signed up for the 1918 Poppy Pledge, aiming to raise £1,918 to support the armed forces community

Glasgow Kilt Walk – 29 April 2017

Sacro's VMS staff accompanied a group of veterans on the 26 mile Glasgow Kilt Walk. This was the 2nd year that they had participated and the aim of the walk was to provide a personal challenge to those taking part and to raise funds for the Poppy Pledge. The weather was kind to the group and the rain stayed away until the last 5 miles. Although tough, the veterans were determined to ensure they overcame some personal challenges along the way. They expressed how they thoroughly enjoyed the challenge and experience of this long distance walk and the benefits gained from the event include comradeship, increased motivation, self-belief, confidence and a reduction in social isolation. The Glasgow Kiltwalk's Mighty Stride started enthusiastically in Glasgow Green and after eight hours, and various pit stops, ended in pain and exhaustion in Balloch (Loch Lomond).

VMS staff continue to raise funds for The 1918 Poppy Pledge and a magnanimous gesture by Sir Tom Hunter has added an additional 40% on top of what the team raised. They managed to raise £1,526 on the day towards The Poppy Pledge.



Prior to the start of the Kilt Walk, two of Sacro's VMS staff – Scott Muir and Phil Stevenson managed a quick chat with Sir Tom Hunter when they described the work of the VMS and explained about their Poppy Pledge



The Garden Project

As part of the regular group work sessions facilitated by VMS staff for veterans a number of them visited Sacro's Garden Project at Tollcross Park in Glasgow. This project allows participants to increase self-confidence and improve mental and physical health whilst improving amenities within the community.

The veterans concentrated on an area that previously housed a flag pole and worked towards reclaiming the space. This has become their main focus within the park and it is hoped that a flag pole will be able to be re-erected in time for this years' Remembrance Day.

Parliamentary Cross Party Group on Veterans

Sacro's VMS staff continue to attend and participate in the Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Armed Forces Veterans held every quarter. These meetings enable the VMS staff to be involved at parliamentary level, with the support available to the veteran community in Scotland. It also provides an opportunity to promote the VMS and to build new, and maintain existing working relationships, with other veterans services and organisations.



Veterans worked with Sacro's Garden Project in Tollcross Park, to restore a space that previously housed a flag pole. They hope to have the pole re-erected by Remembrance Day.



Group Work Sessions

The VMS facilitate a fortnightly group work session in their Glasgow office for armed forces veterans. This drop-in session involves those veterans who are currently engaged with the service and those who have successfully exited the service, to come together and participate in group based activities.

This group session also provides the opportunity to share ideas and experiences and this has led to the veterans establishing their own, informal, peer mentoring service. The members of the group have also undertaken monthly visits to the Gallery of Modern Art where they have received tuition in art. These sessions have now empowered an attendee to start his own art classes for other veterans to enjoy.

Drop-In Sessions

Poppyscotland Hub - Kilmarnock

On 21st March 2018, staff from Sacro's VMS were invited to attend the opening of Poppyscotland's branch office in Kilmarnock. Air Marshal Stuart David Atha, CB, DSO, ADC opened the Branch which provides additional support, activities and specially run courses in Ayrshire. A VMS mentor works closely with the Poppyscotland team in Kilmarnock to support the veterans in Ayrshire.

Suicide Prevention 7-a-side Football Tournament



Current and former VMS staff were joined by other Sacro staff and service users to participate in the Suicide Prevention five-a-side Football Tournament which was held at Ravenscraig. This annual event is held to raise awareness of the increase in the rate of suicide amongst young men.

The Sacro team, even though they had not trained together prior to the event, did well and narrowly lost 2 – 1 in the afternoon's knockout section. A lot of positives were taken from the day and the whole team enjoyed being part of this important event.



Veterans attended Group Work sessions at the Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art



Sacro's Scott Muir and John Canavan-Daly attend the opening of Poppyscotland's branch office in Kilmarnock

5. Collaborative Working – Veterans' Organisations

A critical element of Sacro's VMS is the assessment of individual veteran's needs. In order to provide enhanced support, Sacro's VMS has established a strong and collaborative working relationship with other organisations.

Throughout the reporting period, VMS engaged with a total of 27 different organisations. A two-way referral pathway has been established and this has resulted in veterans receiving focussed and tailored individual support.

Table 1: VMS Referrals

Support Type	Comment	Numbers
Employability support	Employ-Able (Poppyscotland)	17
Other organisations	RFEA	2
ASAP	Welfare rights advice and support	74
SSAFA	Referrals resulted in grants awarded to individual veterans totalling £11,241	11
SAMH	Mental health support	18
Housing	Scottish Veterans' Residences	25
Health and addictions	Local authority addiction services	23
Mental Health	Art Therapy Workgroup Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow	6
Onward referrals	Veterans First Point	59
Combat Stress		6
Total		241

Some of Sacro's VMS mentors are trained SSAFA caseworkers.



6. VMS Performance and Outcomes

The period covered in the report reflects the development of the Veterans Mentoring Service and represents an up to date picture of the service. The figures quoted in the outputs and outcomes cover 1 September 2017 to 31 August 2018.

The service is led by a manager, with one part-time service coordinator/mentor based in Glasgow covering East Ayrshire, Dunbartonshire, Renfrewshire, Inverclyde and Glasgow. Six part-time mentors are based in hubs in Dundee, Edinburgh, Elgin and Glasgow. Sacro's VMS is also supported by four sessional mentors. All staff have lived military experience with almost 50 years of military service between them.

Sacro's VMS continue to work towards establishing volunteer staff, consisting of veterans and non-veterans to support the mentees through their journey and in transition to the exit phase when they leave the mentoring service. Initial attempts to involve volunteers with lived experience has proved problematic and has been much more challenging than anticipated. A veteran, who had reached the end of his support journey with the VMS, was keen to become a volunteer and completed the assessment and was undergoing assessment in the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme. However, his personal circumstances changed and he was no longer able to commit to the role. VMS staff are continuing to assess potential candidates for this role and expect to have volunteers in place within the next six months.

The construction of a strong foundation for VMS has allowed the service to continue to raise its profile and grow in stature. It is now continues to be regarded as a respected service within the Scottish Prison Service, Scottish Court system, and is viewed as a credible intervention amongst Sheriffs in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

The mentors are regularly fully involved in the Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) process throughout the country, and the service has gained a highly valued reputation within statutory social work services, physical and mental health services. The VMS is also highly regarded within the Armed Services Charities community.

Sacro operates a cloud-based electronic case management system (CMS) with extensive reporting capabilities. Services produce Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and outcome statistics on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. The review of this data is also carried out by senior management and Sacro's Corporate Management Group.

Outcomes Star™

Sacro has introduced the Outcomes Star™ assessment tool. This tool allows service users to focus on their aims and aspirations in a number of different areas of their lives, such as housing, health, employability and desistence from offending. Workers carry out an assessment with the veteran agreeing needs, priorities and goals and review this it at regular intervals, dependent on service requirements, which could be weekly or monthly and is responsive to changing circumstances.

The Outcomes Star™ tool has been integrated into Sacro's CMS, making it easier to monitor, analyse, evaluate and report evidence-based outcomes. This is a collaborative process where the individual will be supported to make decisions on SMART actions that will be:

- > Specific
- > Measurable
- > Achievable
- > Relevant
- > Time-bound

Sacro's VMS currently uses the Justice Star™ to assess need and measure outcomes for veterans. It covers ten areas:

1. Accommodation
2. Living skills & self-care
3. Mental health & well-being
4. Friends & community
5. Relationships & family
6. Parenting & caring
7. Drugs & alcohol
8. Positive use of time
9. Managing strong feelings
10. A crime-free life

The figure overleaf illustrates a completed, redacted Justice Star™ which shows three readings. It is a graphic representation of the journey and progress made by the individual.

It is anticipated that as more Stars are completed and more readings are taken for individuals in Sacro's VMS this will form a rich source of anonymised data that can be analysed, assessed and used to inform both veterans and the future development of the service.

9 - 10 Self-reliance

7 - 8 Learning

5 - 6 Believing

3 - 4 Accepting help

1 - 2 Stuck

Visit 1 Visit 2 Visit 3 Visit 4 Visit 5 Visit 6

STAR: STAR-0-00394

CASE:

SU:

SW:



Justice Star™ © Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Ltd
Authors: Sara Burns and Joy MacKeith
www.outcomesstar.org.uk



Performance Analysis 2017-2018

Table 2: VMS Performance against Targets 2017-2018

Outputs (as a percentage of Veteran's taking up the service)		Target 17/18	Actual no. engaged to date	Actual no. met outcome to date	Actual % met outcome to date
1	Number of veterans provided with specific/ individual employment related advice/guidance	70%	118	90	76
2	Number of veterans participating in volunteering	20%	118	37	31
3	Number of veterans supported into employment	30%	118	18	15
4	Number of veterans supported to sustain employment	50%	118	20	17
5	Number of veterans to participate in work related/vocational training	50%	118	41	35
6	Number of veterans in receipt of advice/ training on money management	50%	118	88	75
7	Number of veterans in receipt of support/ advice on debt/multiple debt	30%	118	57	48
8	Number of veterans provided with benefits advice	70%	118	102	86
9	Number of veterans provided with housing/ homelessness advice	50%	118	67	57
10	Number of veterans participating in capacity building/personal development opportunities	80%	118	83	70
11	Number of veterans provided with specific/ individual health information and advice	50%	118	105	89
12	Number of veterans supported to address alcohol problems	50%	118	70	59
13	Number of veterans supported to address addiction problems	50%	118	74	63
14	Number of veterans supported to address family relationship issues	50%	118	61	52
15	Number of veterans supported to sustain a tenancy	30%	118	95	81
16	Number of veterans engaged in stakeholder research/ surveys	70%	118	118	100
17	Number of awareness raising/promotional events held	3	N/A	57	1900
18	Number of research/study/surveys initiated	50	N/A	44	88

The figures show that for all 118 veterans who have engaged with the service, their overall output achievement. Due to the establishment of nationally located VMS mentors the number of referrals has increased over the reporting period. It is anticipated that due to the continued development of referral pathways in these areas, the number of referrals will continue to increase over the next reporting period.

The support journey can last from 6 – 12 months and there is a continual turnover of veterans as those who are at the end of the support process exit the service and new cases are opened up. This means that the veterans supported by the service are at a variety of stages in their journey. When new cases are opened, a risk assessment and Outcomes Star™ is carried out to ascertain the support needs of the veteran. An agreed support plan is then put in place for the veteran. This needs assessment is reviewed every 6 weeks and the support plan is changed accordingly. The initial needs assessment generally indicates that many of the veterans require support in areas like housing, family relationships and addictions. At this stage they are not sufficiently stable to be looking for employment, learning or vocational training. This is illustrated in Key Performance points 3, 4 and 5.

The VMS has provided help, advice or training on money management to 88 veterans (75%). This has included help with household budgeting and finance awareness (Key Performance point 6).

Working in collaboration with the Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP), 102 veterans received help or advice with welfare benefits. This support included, making sure the veterans were aware of the benefits system, completion of application forms and support at medical examinations and tribunals. (Key Performance point 8)

Key Performance point 10 (Number of veterans participating in capacity building/ personal development opportunities) has increased in the reporting period.

Key Performance point 17 (Number of awareness raising/ promotional events held), has increased markedly due to the need to publicise the service in the new expanded areas. This has increased the referral rates from both the existing and the new geographical areas.

Key Performance point 18 (Number of research/ study/ surveys initiated), relates to the number of reviews completed by veterans on exit from the service. This figure is low due to the national expansion and the increase in new referrals coming from new geographical areas who are yet to exit from the service.

Outcomes Analysis 2017-2018

Table 3: VMS Outcomes Analysis 2017-2018

Local Model Outcomes (based on 118 service users)	Number	Percentage
Increased motivation to engage with Mentors and support services	105	89
Increased motivation to change behaviour	84	71
Increased sustainability of accommodation	104	88
Increased understanding of offending behaviour and consequences	81	67
Increased confidence in ability to change	74	63
Improved Veteran's volunteering	27	23
Reduced risky behaviour	80	68
Improved personal relationships	72	61
Increased physical/mental wellbeing	77	65
Increased employment skills	36	31
Sustained engagement with mentors	95	81
Decreased or stopped substance use	74	63
Increased independence of veterans	78	66
Increased self-esteem of veterans.	82	70

These outcomes are based on 118 service users which shows an increase from the previous reporting period. Many of the referrals are early in their mentoring journey and are not yet in a stable enough position to address certain issues.

VMS - Independent Academic Evaluation

In March 2018, Dr Elizabeth Frondigoun, Senior Lecturer, University of the West of Scotland (UWS) submitted a bid to the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) to obtain funding to allow a three-year evaluation of the VMS. The outcome of the bid is awaited.

Dr Frondigoun's primary area of research is in policing, violence, young people and effective and early intervention policies. Her PhD critically examined Violence in Institutions, specifically Schools and Hospitals and the experiences of it for front line service providers at work. She has also for over 10 years supported students

at under-graduate and post-graduate level as part of their assessed studies in undertaking research for a variety of community, voluntary and statutory organisations, such as Strathclyde Police and (now) Police Scotland, Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board and Sacro to name but a few.

Dr Frondigoun's is working with colleagues at UWS and Worcester University on two research bids with Sacro and Poppyscotland in relation to criminal justice and support for veterans transitioning from a life in the military to civilian life and also support for veterans in later life.

7. Case Studies

Case Study 1 – Bob

Bob is a 55 year old who in the early 80's, served four years in the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards. In 1984 Bob left the Guards at the rank of Trooper for medical reasons that deemed him operationally unfit for further service. His time in the Army saw him serve in Senelager (Germany) and Northern Ireland during the height of the troubles. During his time in Northern Ireland, he was attacked during a riot and was hit in the face with a brick. A year later whilst on exercise, his friend was killed in an accident involving a tank.

Those incidents have left Bob suffering with severe anxiety and depression; his low moods were exacerbated as his career was unexpectedly cut short. His transition to civilian life was difficult, he found himself working for various companies as a delivery driver for over 10 years in addition to finding casual work as a labourer within the building industry. Since his discharge from the Army he felt that he was unable to move on from what might have been a successful career. This led to him drinking often and over time becoming alcohol dependent, subsequently leading to his offending behaviour.

Bob was referred to Sacro's VMS from HMP Low Moss Through-care Team whilst serving a 15 month sentence for Domestic Violence. In addition to this conviction he had previously been arrested and charged with benefit fraud and Breach of the Peace and was imprisoned for 4 months. Bob stated that his alcohol dependency was the main reason for his offending history.

During an agency visit in 2017, staff from Sacro's VMS met with Bob at HMP Low Moss during to discuss the services that could be offered on his liberation. In April 2017 he was released and immediately committed to turn

his life around. In addition to being supported for his alcohol addiction and anger issues, Sacro identified, through consultation with Bob that pursuing a new direction in terms of employment would provide a new focus and have a positive impact on his rehabilitation.

Through Sacro's VMS, Bob enrolled on an assistant chef training programme with the Marie Trust, Glasgow. However, unfortunately after a further incidence of domestic abuse he received another custodial sentence.

On Bob's release, Sacro's VMS began again to work with him. Ensuring he kept appointments with Social Work (SW) and providing support for any concerns he had. With support from SW and the support of his wife, Bob moved back into the family home where he worked hard to right his wrongs.

In Spring 2018, Bob gained employment with a logistics and transport organisation and has now secured a fulltime contract working a continuous nightshift. Through his hard work and determination to provide for his family he has been promoted to Team Leader on his shift thus giving him more responsibility and increased pay.

Although he is still being supported by the VMS, his attitude, confidence and motivation has completely turned around. He feels ashamed of his actions in the past toward his wife and only now realises the struggles that she had trying to provide for her family on her own. She can now take time away from her work as Bob is fully providing for her. Bob admits that this alone has boosted his self-worth. He has not consumed alcohol in the last 11 months, and has begun to regain his fitness through playing rugby at his local club.



Case Study 2 - Andy

Andy served 18 years in the Royal Navy and rose to the rank of Chief Petty Officer; on the surface everything was going well, but deep down he was suffering from mental health issues which at the time were not properly diagnosed. His behaviour led to several discipline issues which ultimately resulted in him being discharged from the service.

On discharge Andy's mental health continued to deteriorate as he struggled with the transition to civilian life. In an effort to obtain stability and employment he contacted Poppyscotland about their Disclosure Service. He was referred to Sacro's VMS, who work in partnership with Poppyscotland to deliver the Disclosure Service.

At his initial interview it became clear that as well as helping with employment related issues, the VMS could provide additional support and he engaged with the service. After the initial meeting Andy remarked that he had received more help in the first hour from the support provided by VMS than from anyone else since leaving the Royal Navy.

With the help of Sacro's VMS, who led the holistic multi-agency case management, Andy has now begun to move on with his life. He has been referred to Veterans First Point and the Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP) who are both providing specialist support to him. He has also linked in with HorseBack UK who use horsemanship to inspire recovery, regain self-esteem and provide a sense of purpose and community to the wounded, injured and sick ex-military personnel. He has greatly benefitted from his time spent at HorseBack UK. To aid his travel to and from Aberdeenshire he uses the services of Fares4Free which is a charity that provides transport to veterans.

Although progressing well, Andy's still has two pending court cases which VMS will support him with. However, his general well-being and self-esteem has been greatly enhanced with his engagement of VMS the support given by the team. Andy has stated he would not know where he'd be if it wasn't for Sacro's VMS.

Case Study 3 – Dave

Dave is an Army veteran who served 11 years in the infantry. Throughout his service Dave carried out three Operational Tours – the Falklands (after the end of the conflict) and two tours of Northern Ireland. He and his wife separated not long after his discharge from the army. After discharge Dave was working full time and received a good salary.



Dave was accused and convicted of sexual offences and received a term of imprisonment. Approximately three years ago he was released from prison but a short time later breached his Sexual Offences Prevention Order which resulted in him being returned to prison. He was released in January 2017 and is a registered sex offender for life.

Upon his release from prison, he was referred to Sacro's VMS by Glasgow's Helping Heroes. VMS liaised with all of the relevant parties including Social Work, the Scottish Prison Service and Police Scotland. This helped to create an individual needs and risk assessment that allowed staff to work with Dave to address his offending behaviours with the aspiration that he wouldn't reoffend.

Dave has been referred to relevant veterans organisations and VMS staff have supported him to attend the initial visits. He now comfortably attends independently at drop-ins and other meetings. Dave has also found his Faith and has been volunteering at his local church and reports he is getting a lot out of attending church services; he has also built up a new network of friends there. With the help of Sacro's VMS, Dave is now living independently in his own tenancy, debt free, receiving his military pension, is in full time employment and has settled back in to society.

Case study 4 – John

John was a 66 year old male referred to Sacro's VMS on his release from a short term prison sentence.

Initial consultation ascertained that he was keen to secure employment despite being of retiral age and was referred to Poppyscotland. However prior to receiving any support he managed to secure employment as a salesman and stated he did not require further support.

On his release from prison John returned to the family home, however prior to his imprisonment he had accumulated a considerable amount of credit card debt which had increased during his sentence due to his wife by his wife relying on them whilst he was in prison. This caused considerable worry and placed a strain on both of them.

In order to provide support and guidance with the outstanding debt and financial matters John was offered the services of ASAP. However this was declined with John stating he wished to address the matter himself.



John's wife then contacted VMS staff and informed them that he had sadly passed away. She stated that she was unsure of what was required in relation to making arrangements for his funeral. The VMS staff worker provided support, advice and guidance to John's wife which provided great comfort to her. The staff worker also arranged a referral for John's wife to ASAP to provide support and guidance about the outstanding debt. This work is ongoing.

A successful referral was made to SSAFA for assistance with John's funeral costs which was of great relief to his wife.

8. A Veteran's Letter

A letter was received from a veteran which is transcribed below:

Dear Sir

May I take this opportunity to thank Sacro for all the help they have provided to me over the last year to 18 months.

I was sent to prison in 2016 and thorough the prison authorities they put me in touch with Sacro and Scott Muir and Gary Hillhouse.

The help you have given me is second to none and the advice and help I have received is first class.

I would recommend Sacro to any member of the forces who need expert help. My mentor Gary Hillhouse has been an inspiration to me and has been a fantastic help in keeping me on the straight and narrow.

Since I have come out of the prison for the second time I have now found full time employment and I am now back in the family home and life could not be better.

The service you provide to people like myself is truly fantastic and the help you give is great with trying to get us help with mental health, employment and anything else we need. I know it's a service through Poppy Scotland and as an ex-soldier I am proud of what you and your staff do to help us and to stop us reoffending.

I will be forever in your debt for everything you and your staff have done for me especially Gary Hillhouse.

I now look on Gary not just as my mentor but a friend and it's good to have someone to talk to.

I know I cannot say this enough but you and your staff should be rewarded for the work and effort you put in to help us all through our troubles and all the advice you give us to live a normal life as well as a trouble free one.

THANK YOU ALL FOR EVERYTHING I REALLY APPRECIATE IT AND TO MY MENTOR GARY HILLHOUSE THANKS FOR BEING THERE.

Yours faithfully

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