

Help for Scottish soldiers struggling to adjust to civilian life

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Volunteering charity TimeBank has been awarded a grant of £50,000 from ABF The Soldiers' Charity, to support Scottish soldiers who are struggling to adjust to civilian life and reduce their risk of social and economic isolation.

The grant will enable TimeBank to extend its volunteer mentoring project, Shoulder to Shoulder Erskine (S2SE), for a further year in partnership with the Scottish veterans' charity Erskine, and to focus on the needs of ex-Army personnel.

Helen Walker, Chief Executive of TimeBank, said: "Many ex-service men and women are in a state of crisis in their lives, with complex problems including financial hardship, homelessness, alcohol dependency and health issues. Volunteer mentoring can be a vital aid in their transition to sustainable, healthy and productive civilian lives."

Brigadier (Ret'd) Robin Bacon, Chief of Staff ABF The Soldiers' Charity adds: "Whilst most soldiers transition to civilian life with very few problems, there are some that may find it difficult. The Soldiers' Charity is delighted to be supporting TimeBank in its important work helping those veterans who are struggling."

S2SE was set up in 2014 to recruit and train volunteers to provide one to one mentoring support to members of the ex-services community in Glasgow and Edinburgh. Mentors encourage them to manage their finances, use public transport, take exercise and write CVs, to access local support services and sort out housing issues. The project draws on TimeBank's extensive experience of delivering volunteer mentoring projects that support vulnerable people through difficult transitions in their lives.

An external evaluation of the project last year by Edinburgh research consultancy The Lines Between highlighted the success of the project and its positive outcomes. It found that S2SE is filling a gap in service provision, and the fact that mentors are volunteers helps to create a unique and valued bond which complements other veterans' support services.

One ex-serviceman, Dougie, said: 'Goals were difficult at the start, however Cathy (my mentor) is good at pushing me; my confidence and self-esteem have improved and I can now go to shops on my own and not feel as anxious going to new places.'

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