



Forces Online CIO

Unit 5, Workshed Carriage Works
London Street, Swindon
Wiltshire, SN1 5DG.

Telephone: 0300 300 2288

Registered Charity: 1188955 (England & Wales) SC050678 (Scotland)



Trustees' Annual Report for the period

From 07 April 2021 Period start date. To 06 April 2022 Period end date.

Charity name: Forces Online CIO Charity Registration Number: 1188955

Objectives and Activities

Summary of the purposes of the charity as set out in its governing document (SORP reference Para 1.17.)

The purpose of the Charity as set out in the governing body is: "The relief of former armed service personnel, and their families and dependents. Former emergency service personnel and their families and dependents, who are in need by reason of age, disability, financial hardship, or disadvantage. In particular but, not exclusively by providing them with help and assistance and by offering them a signposting service to expert support providers for their benefit". The charities' purpose was changed by the Trustees in a meeting on 16th February 2022 to include the emergency services personnel.

Summary of the main activities in relation to those purposes for the public benefit, in particular, the activities, projects or services identified in the accounts. (Para 1.17 and 1.19)

The main Forces Online website is <https://www.forcesonline.org.uk>. Recently the website has been separated from the Veterans Directory which can be found on <https://www.veteransdirectory.org.uk> which has become a Forces Online project.

The <https://www.virtualhub.uk> Veteran's portal, continues to be available for a minimum of 50 hours a week run by volunteers. The VirtualHub is utilised by the Welfare Team as a counselling and as a virtual drop-in tool, handling the full spectrum of veterans and family support issues and enquiries. The VirtualHub is further used by departments for secure, safe meetings, training, and general day-to-day administration of the charity.

The <https://www.welfaresupport.net> website is for the dedicated Forces Online Welfare Team, which has a full online secure referral application form, guidance notes and welfare benefits. This is managed by the Head of Welfare Wendy Powell-Jones. Wendy has previously worked for the NHS as a qualified Senior Practitioner/Counsellor. Wendy is currently managing a team of voluntary Counsellors and Welfare Workers who offer a wide

range of services and support. Just recently a couple of the student councillors have qualified under Wendy's guidance and have opted to continue to volunteer to help veterans and their families through the welfare department.

Statement confirming whether the trustees have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit (Para 1.18)

Forces Online CIO confirms that it has expanded to six Trustees listed below have had regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit.

Additional information (optional)

Policy on grant making (Para 1.38)

Forces Online CIO policy for the financial year

2021/2022 for grant making. In December 2021 the Charity voted in favour of a membership register of Trustees and operational staff/volunteers who would have responsibility to make decisions on grant making. The register can be found at <https://www.myfol.uk/membershipregister2021.pdf> Forces Online is still looking to appoint a senior grant making volunteer.

Policy on social investment including program related investment (Para 1.38)

Forces Online CIO does not have a policy on social investment including program related investment in its current financial year.

Contribution made by volunteers (Para 1.38)

On the 26th of June 2021 Len Chappell resigned as a Trustee to take up a strategic role of CEO/Founder and moved to a full-time role within the organisation, after many years of working as a volunteer.

Four more Trustees were appointed as seen below.

The changes made to the volunteer structure of Forces Online CIO in the current reporting year are as follows:

- CEO – In Place
- Management/Administration/Operations – In Place.
- Personnel and Human Resources – In Place
- Marketing, Communications and Campaigning – In Place
- Volunteer Management – In Place
- Policy Development and Research – In Place
- Fundraising – In Place
- Grants Officers/Advisors – In Place.
- Charity Chair/Secretary - in Place.

- THMHF – In Place.
- Finance and Estates – In Place.
- Welfare – In Place.
- Membership – In Place.

Achievements and Performance

Summary of the main achievements of the charity, identifying the difference the charity's work has made to the circumstances of its beneficiaries and any wider benefits to society as a whole. (Para 1.20)

To save money and resources the management of the charity was moved to a virtual office in Swindon. The team which is spread out across the United Kingdom all work virtually through the VirtualHub, with occasional physical meetings when required.

The LiveChat service provided by Chat Heroes (which is an external organisation that provides experienced operators to answer enquiries from the main Forces Online website and will be added to all future web sites within the group), continues to be an easy access point to veterans and family members visiting our websites. The <https://forcesonline.org.uk> website is now much easier to navigate and provides a signpost access point to <https://www.veteransdirectory.org.uk> <https://www.virtualhub.uk> and <https://www.welfaresupport.net> All of the website are developed and maintained in-house and all have links to Chat Heroes and other direct communications systems.

The VirtualHub has been adopted for training and administrative duties and open for veterans and their dependants to drop-in daily and during a couple of evenings a week. The VirtualHub is recognised by and listed on ASDICs website. <https://www.Asdic.org.uk> and Forces Online and ASDIC continue to foster a positive professional and supportive relationship.

The VirtualHub can be accessed via a PC, Laptop, Phone, Tablet and a Facebook Portal device which needs very little technical knowledge.

The <https://www.welfaresupport.net> is a dedicated Forces Online Welfare service web site which was launched to provide access to FOL welfare systems. The team under the management of Wendy Powell-Jones formed the service which can be accessed on or offline with a referral process that is accessible to beneficiaries, their dependants, close military friends and other armed forces community organisations. The services provide support for veteran's dependants (including spouses, children, and parents). This service has received referrals in from other organisations regarding family support and veteran's themselves some of whom are currently members of COBSEO cobseo.org.uk

Phones for Veterans was introduced whereby Forces Online has given away phones to Veteran's suffering through hardship issues. The process which can be seen at [Phones for Veterans | The Veterans Directory](#) which

is one of a number of initiatives that can be seen on the front page of the <https://www.veteransdirectory.org.uk> Phones for Veterans is agency led and we have worked with a number of charities, and the NHS in providing free phones and sim cards sponsored by Vodafone.

Forces Online has developed several quick help information pages in the Veterans Directory to deal with the day-to-day enquiries at the lower end to deal with finding people and family records, missing medals, pensions, and other enquiries. Forces Online has linked up with a number a specialised social media groups which offer good advice and support for benefits and other military support, including PIP, War Pensions, etc. As part of the Welfare Benefits work, we manage a Benefits Calculator which is veteran led, and has been used successfully to help veterans and their families.

In January 2022 Forces Online had 67 cases and continues to show an increase on last year's beneficiaries.

The ages of and service status of people asking for help and support has been 18-90+, from all three services.

The web administrative team have been making some changes to the referral and contact process of the charity and have come up with the "Which-Way" system which can be seen on <https://www.forcesonline.org.uk/contact-us> and gives a choice to whether the communication is a general enquiry, which is handled by either our administrators or it is a plea for help in which case, it requires a welfare referral which is handled by our welfare team. Both the administration and welfare teams discuss all communication to check to see if enquiries need any support from them. The 0300 300 2288 number is monitored daily.

All four active websites within the Forces Online service now have LiveChat on them provided by Chat Heroes and is very responsive in that we strive to engage with people contacting LiveChat within 20 minutes of receiving the enquiry or support request. Welfare has provided risk and first response training to our VirtualHub operators. Forces Online provides support for veterans and their dependants across the whole of the United Kingdom, and our current list of beneficiaries bears testament to this. With the cooperation of both the VirtualHub and Welfare Support the organisation has spoken to actual veterans in hospitals, at their bedside, on streets via mobile and some of the agents supporting them.

Our main <https://www.forcesonline.org.uk> site services are slowly being developed to quickly answer and manage enquiries, we have many enquiries regarding medals, about family members/dependants of those that served the UK Armed Forces, pensions and other financial circumstances and hardship. Some self-help sections have been created on the main Forces Online website, such as medals <https://www.forcesonline/military-medals> where Forces Online is working

in partnership with <https://www.medal-locator.com> for specialist medal loss and found advice. Kevin Mann who has now become a trustee of Forces Online CIO developed Medal Locator some years ago and works directly with the police and armed forces veterans with medal issues.

Forces Online has formed a relationship with Wolverhampton City Council/Wolverhampton Homes and because of this a joint community project was formed called The Moathouse where Forces Online volunteers are able to share a former Residence Association building provided by Wolverhampton Homes as a veterans and community drop-in centre.

<https://www.veteransinneed.org.uk> (VIN) joined Forces Online VIN have strong links to many resources on their website and now helping Forces Online to further develop stronger informational approaches. Some of the Veterans Directory pages are linked to Veterans In Need.

In all our enquiry-based communication's we use our extensive knowledge and expertise to give very concise and professional based answers. All welfare requests are directed to our own in-house welfare team through the <https://www.welfaresupport.net/referral> link, where a full assessment of needs may be conducted by the welfare team to find the best possible support outcome, some of which occasionally get signposted to other professionally approved organisations. Our extensive documents relating to care and support first shown to the Charity Commission in the application to convert our CIC to a CIO has been adopted as the guiding welfare document. Appendix 2.

There is a media pack which can be accessed at Appendix 3.

It is expected that Forces Online CIO will make an application to join Cobseo <https://www.cobseo.org.uk> following this annual report being published following their guidance of running the charity for at least 12 months with a first return and accounts filed with the charity commission.

This is currently ongoing.

Financial Review

Review of the charity's financial position at the end of the period (Para 1.21)

The charity founder, Len initially pledged to keep the charity afloat in any lean periods. Working in Covid19 restricted conditions was initially hard when the Charity was formed. Forces Online CIO converted from Forces Online CIC and all the resources and assets were transferred to the charity. Since then, there has been opportunities to fund some of the various activities through Facebook, PayPal, Amazon, Merchandise, and some smaller donations and support from the social media members groups.

Forces Online has completed two years as a charity with the 2nd set of accounts being added here, and this opens more doors relating to Fundraising with many sponsors and other large organisations wanting evidence of two years accounts before helping, an example of this is Network Rail.

The trustees have worked hard on the structure of the charity, and it was agreed to start the formation of the grant funding department at the start of year two. We are making inroads with this.

Appendix 1 – Statement of Accounts.

Append

Statement explaining the policy for holding reserves stating why they are held (Para 1.21)

Appendix 4 The Forces Online Reserves Policy.

Amount of reserves held (Para 1.41)

An amount of £2,000 was agreed in the trustees meeting on the 21/04/2021. Currently where there is a short fall in the interim period it was agreed that the Founder Len would provide any financial assistance with money earned through his current employment.

Details of fund materially in deficit (Para 1.41) None.

Explanation of any uncertainties about the charity continuing as a going concern (Para 1.41)

The current concerns are the continued uncertainties that the current Covid19 pandemic cause, and the current economic climate in the United Kingdom.

Additional Information (optional)

The charity's principal sources of funds (including any fundraising (Para1.47)

At the start of the year of the Charity Forces Online applied to various giving sources including eBay, PayPal, Facebook, and Amazon, all of which were successful and small monthly donations were granted to the charity.

<https://www.forcesonline.org.uk/funding> Forces Online is listed on the Funding Regulators website Appendix 5.

During 2019-2020 Forces Online had worked in Scotland under the CIC constitution. In various locations throughout Scotland at Shopping Centres to raise awareness and the organisation profile. Following the conversion to a

charity Forces Online applied to OSCR to register in Scotland and this was confirmed on the 21st January 2021.

The Forces Online CIO merchandising department which is based in Wednesfield (West Midlands) was formed in 2021 and became new source of funding. In the year we were lucky to be able to work with eBay through their Charity platform and received training and support for the platform. The Forces Online store which was based on a WordPress site was closed in favour of using eBay where we have been able to sell items donated to the organisation as well as our own branded merchandise.

Investment policy and objectives including any social investment policy adopted (Para 1.46)

Nothing in this period.

A description of principle risks facing the charity (Para 1.46)

The charity still considers the pandemic a risk, and the latest issue surrounding the financial increases to people in the United Kingdom is becoming a concern in terms of the amount of money collected through donations and sales of items and other limited resources. Luckily the organisation is predominantly online.

Structure, Governance and Management

Description of Charities Trusts

Type of governing document (trust deed, royal charter) Para 1.25

Not Applicable

How is the charity constituted? (e.g. unincorporated association, CIO) Para 1.25

The charity is constituted as a CIO <https://myfol.uk/cioconstitution.pdf>

Trustee selection methods including details of any constitutional provisions e.g. election to post or name of any person or body entitled to appoint one or more trustees (Para 1.25)

7th April 2021 – 7th April 2022 it was decided that Len (Founder) would resign as a Trustee to take up the post of CEO/Founder of the charity and a further six trustees be taken on. Currently four have been appointed see the list of trustees below. Forces Online will continue to look for a couple more trustees

in the next reporting year as well as replace two that are coming to the end of their three-year period.

Policies and procedures adopted for the induction and training of trustees (Para 1.51)

During the year the trustees introduced new people into the operational structure on a probationary period. The volunteers ranging from welfare, merchandising, accounts, HR, and Administrative included policy makers whom, assisted the trustees in forming the departments required to support veterans and their families across the whole of the United Kingdom. The volunteers will be considered for trustees' applications after April 2021.

Forces Online has an online application process, which conducts checks on references and DBSs. People connecting with the organisation are expected to complete a minimum three-month probationary period and sign a confidentiality agreement before any contracts relating to voluntary employment are issued.

During the latter part of the year training on risk and first response was available and utilised by personnel working in Welfare-VirtualHub. The training was conducted by the Head of Welfare.

Reference and Administrative details

Charity Name – Forces Online CIO

Other Names the Charity Uses – Forces Online

Registered Charity Number 1188955

Charity's principal address Unit 5 Workshed Carriage Works, London Street, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN1 4GW.

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

Trustee Name	Office if any	Dates acted if not for the whole year	Name of person (or body entitled to appoint trustees)
Phil Ellaway	Chair/Secretary		Len Chappell
Michael Emm	Trustee		Len Chappell

David McMullen	Trustees		Len Chappell
Sean McCallum	Trustee		Len Chappell
Bill Harley	Trustee		Len Chappell
Kevin Mann	Trustee		Len Chappell

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustee report above:

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature



Full Name: Philip John Ellaway

Position: Chair during June 2021 – April 2022

Date: (Signed Off) 15th September 2022)

Appendixes

Appendix - Mr Keith Shields – Head of Finance & Estates has prepared the financial returns for Forces Online CIO period April 2021 – April 2022 as attached and certified 15th September 2022. The fiscal year ending 31st March 2022 has found Forces Online CIO growing in its services and its financial demand to support veterans and their dependants, (Welfare and financial support) to this end

we are moving forward on grant funding applications, and other sources of fundraising to keep up with the financial restraints of supporting our veteran's.

2022-2023 – Expect that Forces Online CIO will become a member of COBSEO (Confederation of Service Charities). Forces Online is an ASDIC (Association of Service Drop-In Centres) member and has been working closely with the organisation throughout 2021/22.

Forces Online CIO. Charity No 1188955
Unit 5, Workshed Carriage Works, London Street, Swindon,
Wiltshire, SN1 5DG

Period Year to Date 31 March 2022

Fixed Assets

Caravan	5000	
		<u>5000</u>

Current Assets

Bank Account	1127	
Go Cardless	407	
		<u>1534</u>

Current Liabilities

Directors Loan LC	2294	
		-
		<u>(2294)</u>

Reserves

General - Surplus/deficit for year to date	2796	
Retained Surplus	1471	
		<u>(4240)</u>

Examination by KTR Shields

Signed:

Yours Respectfully



Keith Shields

15-Sep-22

Appendix 2 - Mr Darren Warren – Paxton Independent Examiner has completed and independent examiner's report on the accounts period April 2021 – April 2022 as attached.

Appendix 3 - <https://myfol.uk/forcesonlinecioaimsmaster.pdf>

Appendix 4 – <https://www.veteransdirectory.org.uk/mediapack>

Appendix 5 - <https://myfol.uk/reservespolicy.pdf>

Appendix 6 - <https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/directory/forces-onlinecio>

Forces Online CIO. Charity No 1188955
Unit 5 The Workshed Carriage , London Street, Swindon, SN1 5D0

Period Year to Date 2020 31 March

Sales

Donations	13219.96	
Grants	38872.50	
Fund Generation - Fund Raising	23727.79	
Charitable Activities	1163.78	
		76984.03

Purchases

Charitable Expenditure - Grants Payable	52002.89	
Cost of Charitable Activities	307.76	
		52310.65

Direct Expenses

Charitable Expenditure - Stock for Charity Shop	10933.69	
Cost of Fund Generation - Charity Shop	-27.91	
Cost of Fund Generation - Fund Raising	12500.76	
		23406.54

Gross Profit/(Loss):

1266.84

Overheads

Support Costs - Rent and Rates	-4680.20	
Support Costs - Printing and Stationery	445.67	
Support Costs - Telephone and Computer charges	2429.50	
Support Costs - Maintenance	86.00	
Support Costs - General Expenses	89.00	
Management & Admin - Gross Wages	41.00	
Management & Admin - Professional Fees	591.86	
		-997.17
Net Profit/(Loss):		2264.01

Examination by KTR Shields



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38872.50
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76984.03

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52310.65

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1266.84

-4680.20
445.67
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86.00
89.00
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-997.17
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Forces Online CIO. Charity No 1188955
Unit 5 The Workshed Carriage , London Street, Swindon, SN1 5DC

Period Year to Date 31 March 2022

Fixed Assets

Caravan	5000	
		<u>5000</u>

Current Assets

Bank Account	1127	
Go Cardless	407	
		<u>1534</u>

Current Liabilities

Directors Loan LC	2294	
		<u>-2294</u>

Reserves

General - Surplus/deficit for year to date	2796	
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Examination by KTR Shields



Sep 15, 22