



Forces Online CIO

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



Volunteer Handbook

Welcome to the Forces Online Volunteer Handbook:

Definition: "Forces Online" means both Forces Online CIO Registered Charity (England & Wales) Reg No. 1188955 & Forces Online Scotland (Scotland) SC050678 Unless the Policy indicates it refers to Forces Online CIO or Forces Online Scotland.

Definition: "Forces Online Staff" means any person that is registered/authorised to work in an official capacity for Forces Online. They can be paid, volunteer or be engaged in either long- or short-time work for the organisation. All Forces Online staff will carry ID and be listed in the staff media pack.

1. Organisation Mission Statement

Forces Online has been set-up for:

The relief of former members of the armed forces services/emergency services personnel, their families and dependents; who are in need by reason of age, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage, in particular but not exclusively providing them by multi-disciplinary team (advice, information and signposting and bespoke support), through collaboration, networking and campaigning for better access to services, we aim to continue to improve the lives of our beneficiary's so that they have an enhanced quality of life and overall wellbeing for their benefit, by the provision of services as the trustees feel fit.

This means that we help and support armed forces veterans and their dependents wherever we can, across the whole of the United Kingdom through:

Signposting and information: <https://www.veteransdirectory.org.uk>

Communication and Direct Support <https://www.virtualhub.uk>

Welfare and Therapeutic services and referrals <https://www.welfaresupport.net>

Substantial Social Media Network including <https://www.facebook.com/groups/forcesonline>

Forces Online CIO Charity Registration Number 1188955 & Forces Online Scotland Charity Registration Number SC050678 aims to provide an initial response to beneficiaries who enquire about our services during the day within 20 minutes of receiving a request for help, support, or information enquiry.

Our full contact methods can be found on <https://www.forcesonline.org.uk/contact-us>

2. Objectives/Goals of the Organisation

- (1) Forces Online is a cross-border charity which means we are registered in England & Wales as Forces Online CIO with the charity commission (Registration Number 1188955) registered on the 7th of April 2020, and OSCR in Scotland as Forces Online Scotland (Registration Number SC050678), registered on the 21st of January 2021. Whilst we do have a Scottish Office the main administrative responsibility lies with the CIO.
- (2) The Forces Online core activity is to Help/Support armed forces veterans and their dependants wherever we can. We do this by providing information and direct support via our three websites which are all fully interlinked:
 - a) [VeteransDirectory](#)
 - b) [VirtualHub](#)
 - c) [WelfareSupport](#)

You will notice that the words to the links above are represented by keywords associated with the websites. Our social media links can be found in the footer section of all the websites which include Facebook, Twitter, Linked-In and YouTube.

3. Forces Online Media Pack

- (1) The Media Pack which shows staff working in the organisation can be found at <https://www.veteransdirectory.org.uk/mediapack>
- (2) Forces Online is a standalone organisation that does not have affiliations with other organisations that support armed forces veterans and their dependants. These can be seen in our Media Pack, and Veterans Directory.
- (3) Forces Online was founded back in October 2013 by Len Chappell. It was first called Forces United, but Len decided to change the name following a legal conflict with ForcesReunited.
- (4) The artwork used for the badges and organisation identity are Len's own work which were later professionally reproduced by <https://militaryinsignia.blogspot.com>. All the images are fully copyrighted and can only be reproduced with the express written permission of the Senior Development Team who manage Forces Online.
- (5) The logos and copyright notices relating to our badges can be seen at <https://www.veteransdirectory.org.uk/logo>

4. Volunteer Coordination

- (1) Forces Online has its own HR department responsible for coordinating staff. Links to the vacant positions within the organisation can be found on the main website at <https://www.forcesonline.org.uk> in the volunteer menu at the top. This section includes a description of the vacant positions plus a brief application form to start the process and arrange an informal chat and interview.

- (2) Staff can communicate via many different methods including telephone, messenger, chat, <https://www.virtualhub.uk> and through our own staff portal. The HR department is headed up by the head of HR who can be found via the Media pack. Any one of the Senior Development group or department heads are available to coordinate with staff and deal with any issues arising from working/volunteering with Forces Online. Staff agreements, contracts, training records and other statutory administration will be available on the staffing portal and discussed during the induction phase of new starters.
- (3) Often Volunteer roles and agreements are very personal to the volunteer. Forces Online will give individual volunteer coordinators to work with specific volunteers and these are usually the people in charge of the various departments or their deputies. The agreements will detail all the specifics of the role and include induction and training needs for the volunteer as well as outlining responsibilities and who they specifically report to and the expectations to attend training and development meetings which are usually conducted online in the VirtualHub.
- (4) All staff will be trained in first line response to that they are able to represent the organisation and be confident that they adopt the right approach to dealing with any eventuality as well as looking after their own safety and welfare. The Welfare Team will arrange and conduct this training.
- (5) At Forces Online we value staff welfare, and the organisation will conduct supervisions with all staff to ensure that training and developments needs are fully met, to look after the staff welfare within Forces Online, to ensure that all opportunities to progress within the organisation are fully outlined and explored.
- (6) For the safety of staff Forces Online monitors all staff hours via an easy-to-use staff portal with a signing in/out system.
- (7) Where HR have identified that specific roles of the organisation require minimum credentials and qualifications these will be applied to individual job descriptions and checked during the application and interview stage of the recruitment process.
- (8) Forces Online believes that previous experience, transferrable skills, and personal qualities should be applied to ensure success in any of the Forces Online roles and that training, qualifications and employment development opportunities can be provided and build into contracts and agreements.
- (9) Forces Online has an ongoing evaluation process for all staff to ensure all development opportunities are fully explored which will allow Forces Online to look include in-house recruitment opportunities to staff vacancies.

5. Map/building plan

- (1) Where staff are employed or volunteer at the specific Forces Online facility, they will be provided with specific documents relating the facility. This will include a plan of the building and they will be invited to a tour of the facility during the application process. The plan will include places where breaks can take place.

- (2) Each place of work will have its own emergency procedures which will be available to staff working in a Forces Online facility. These will include health and safety, fire, emergency exits, first aid points plus an organisational chart to show people in charge.

6. Each Forces Online facility

- (1) Whether online or offline each Forces Online resource is likely to have its own opening times and these will be available to all staff working within specific area.
- (2) If the facility is a physical location details of parking will be included in the plan. The use of company vehicles or details of using a personal vehicle for Forces Online will also be included. The staff will also have access to generic and specific policies in the staff portal including our vehicle policy which will be looked at during the induction process of any staff.
- (3) Staff will be provided with equipment/clothing which is necessary for them to perform their role in the organisation.

7. Confidentiality and Data Protection

- (1) At Forces Online we have specific policies outlining GDPR, some of which relate to staff and routine use of our systems and administrative requirements when using our websites. All staff will be expected to read, sign, and abide to all our Data Protection and confidentiality policies which will be available to them in the staff portal. This will be covered during the induction process for people joining the organisation.

8. Communication with Forces Online

- (1) From time-to-time staff may be approached from members of the public or official bodies wanting to know more about Forces Online. When this happens, they should be referred to the Media Pack <https://www.veteransdirectory.org.uk/mediapack> or asked to call 0300 300 2288 which is our official charity telephone number. Our founder/CEO is currently designated as the best person to answer any inquiries or issues relating to Forces Online or in his absence the Assistant CEO or other designated official will respond to all personal or media enquiries that cannot be satisfied via the information in the media pack.

9. Paid Staff and Volunteer Relations

Where there are both paid and volunteer workers in departments or facilities Forces Online will identify:

- (1) Who is responsible for what work?
- (2) Who is responsible for volunteer supervision, given that volunteers may be working in areas that involve paid staff?
- (3) How shall each be recognized? How much input shall volunteer, and paid staff have into the development of your Organisation? What are the avenues for such input?

10. Volunteers and Benefits

- (1) Forces Online is fully compliant with the law relating to voluntary working conditions, so that it does not incur penalties for the volunteer, especially if they are in receipt of state benefits, and cause income tax and national insurance issues for the organisation. We will offer of pocket expenses to volunteers as part of there volunteer agreement and receipts will be required. If you as a volunteer, choose not to take expenses you can always “donate” them to Forces Online so we can keep a true record of how much it costs to run the organisation.

11. Grievance Policy

- (1) The Forces Online Grievance procedures are covered in our grievance Policy which is in our staff portal. A copy of the procedure will be given to all staff and discussed during the induction phase of joining the organisation along with all the other necessary core policies.

12. Staff Leaving Protocol

- (1) Staff who wish to leave the organisation should follow the conditions laid down in their employment contract/volunteer agreement which will have details about the period of notice and how to leave.
- (2) There are many varied reasons why staff may wish to leave Forces Online which may include wanting to progress with another organisation, retirement, ill health, or they have come to the end of an agreed period of work with us. We view staff who want to move on as a positive (unless it is for health reasons) and want to make the process as easy and productive as positive.
- (3) With all staff we would hope to conduct an exit interview, and this can be through our VirtualHub platform or a phone call with a senior Forces Online representative so we can reflect on the positive relationship and wish them all the best for the future. It gives the organisation the chance to find out what we could have done better to strengthen our workforce. We always advocate the opportunity for staff to leave on a positive note.
- (4) Dismissing a staff member is never a pleasant task, but it is made much easier if the grounds for terminating a staff contract is clear from the beginning. Grounds for termination will be stated on all employment contracts. Reasons that apply to termination will be ‘agreement-breakers’ like breach of confidentiality, failure to carry out duties assigned in role description and/or failure to complete required training.

13. Insurance and Liability

- (1) All staff are covered by our Employers Liability insurance which is displayed in the staff portal and covered during the induction phase for new starters.

14. Forces Online Statement

(1) Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that all the details included in this document are correct at the time of publication, Forces Online does not accept responsibility for the accuracy of any information quoted above.

Date of Change:	Changed By:	Comments:
01/12/2021	LC	Handbook adopted by the Trustees 30/12/2022 LC KS ME
03/01/2023	KS/LC	Updated for Website