



RPOAS Wellbeing programme



RPOAS

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Date: July 24, 2024

Retired Police Officers Association Scotland (RPOAS) has introduced a wellbeing programme for our members of the Retired Police Officers Association in Scotland.

It has been in existence for around 3 years now including planning and implementation. We have worked with and supported over 70 families and it continues.

Matt Hamilton, President of the Association has been an active member of SOPA for over 4 years.

Transition and Wellbeing – care and support in retirement for the police family

As we get older, no matter how well we take care of ourselves, and no matter how capable we are, there comes a time when we need some help, support, and advice, or perhaps we simply want someone to talk to, when things go wrong.

During our working lives, we tend to have the benefit of peer support – friends and colleagues whom we can discuss things with, someone to refer issues to, and a feeling that we are part of a team.

We don't tend to realise just how much this matters until we retire, when – overnight – our entire way of life changes. The whole structure of our lives is suddenly different, and we are very much on our own.

It can be a real shock to the system, and never more so than if you have been part of the emergency services, or the military – organisations where we learn to depend totally on one another, and where there is a strong sense of loyalty to our colleagues.

Challenges of Retirement

Retirement can be a blessing, but it can also be quite lonely, particularly if one suffers ill health, or is confronted with problems which we have never had to deal with before.

Who do we turn to? Who can help? What can I do?

As we all know, even if we have spent a lifetime helping others, it is very different when we, or our immediate family, are affected.

Yes, there are plenty of excellent organisations out there who might offer help, but **who do you turn to?**

And that is exactly why RPOAS, working with Police Scotland, and other interested partners, decided to address this issue.

Establishing the Transition and Wellbeing Team

We all like to speak to someone to whom we can relate – and police officers tend to want that person to be somebody with the same life experience, who has done the job, and who can understand, and for that reason it was decided to set up the Transition and Wellbeing Team, appealing to retired officers to act as “Signposters” – people prepared to undergo extensive training, covering everything from mental health to benefit entitlements, as well as bringing their own life skills to the table.

The team covers the whole of Scotland, and is ready at any time to support retired officers with absolutely any issue on which they need help – Ill health; financial and debt problems; access to entitlements; pensions; housing; family matters and personal concerns, and indeed anything at all which is causing them worries.

Accessing the Service

Any member of RPOAS can access the service and can either refer themselves or be referred by a family member or a friend. They can be assured of total confidentiality, and they can be certain that they are always the priority – all the T & W staff are volunteers, and all are dedicated to providing 100% support to members and their loved ones.

Success and Feedback

T & W has been a great success, and the feedback from members has been very positive indeed. In many cases, people have said that they really just needed someone to talk to, someone who would listen, and who could gently steer them towards a solution, with the ability to take on the more complex issues when needed.

Perhaps **other organisations might want to consider setting up a similar service?**

There is no doubt that being able to speak to people with a shared background, and a commitment to help former colleagues as they travel through retirement, is hugely beneficial, and it benefits not only the members, but also the volunteers, the Association, and everyone involved.

Life is a journey. It does not end with retirement – a whole new road opens up ahead of us, so let's help each other to enjoy it.

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