



# Forces Online CIO

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



*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: “veteran” Veterans are defined as anyone who has served for at least one day in Her Majesty’s Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve) or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations. Our use of the word veteran includes anyone still serving in the armed forces.*

*Definition: “Beneficiary” means a veteran or someone still serving in HM Armed Forces, or a close family member.*

*Definition: “Family Member” means someone that is in the immediate family circle. i.e., mums and dads, spouses and children.*

*Definition: “Agency Worker” means a worker from a registered armed forces community, or other organisation that as part of their work come into contact/offers support for an armed forces veteran and/or their close family members.*

*Definition: “Close Military Associates” means someone that has served or is still serving with the beneficiary.*

## CROSS-BORDER CHARITY SUPPORT POLICY

### Introduction

Forces Online is an organisation that helps and supports armed forces veterans and their families wherever they can. They do this through the provision of online services which can be found and accessed via <https://www.forcesonline.org.uk>

Forces Online do this by information services and signposting, face to face services on the VirtualHub and direct Welfare support. Welfare support offers a huge range of help from free counselling down to providing information.

To gain support from Forces Online you will need to be able to establish who you are and have satisfactory checks in place:

### Veterans

- If you are self-referring, Forces Online will need to see a copy of an official document that confirms that you have a service number on it otherwise they may need to conduct lengthy checks to prove your ID. Genuine people should have no problem proving this. In some cases, Forces Online can help determine your status, but cannot move forward without it. This is not something that can be done over a phone. The best solution would be to visit the <https://www.virtualhub.uk> and talk to an advisor or complete a WelfareSupport referral (See links on <https://www.forcesonline.org.uk>). If you phone the 0300 300 2288 number, this is the advice you that will be given. Forces Online are unable to help over the phone for anyone that is not willing to prove their id to them. Forces Online are happy to start

sending support information of things like local hostels that can help with homeless crisis through a text service to the mobile you contacted them with, if your support request is through a phone. Your mobile will not be charged for this service. Forces Online cannot provide any financial support at short notice for anyone that cannot confirm their ID to them. The best solution is to start talking to Forces Online before you get to this stage. There are times when people complain they are hungry, and the best the organisation can do at short notice is provide a meal deal from your nearest store. The next day Forces Online can make phone calls to local support agencies to support any hardship. We do not give out money.

- **Agency**

You will always require the permission of the veteran or family member before approaching Forces Online for help. The organisation cannot accept phone support requests from Agency Workers without ID, unless they already know you. If your initial request is over the phone, then as a minimum requirement you will need to text or message Forces Online a copy of your current ID card, which they reserve the right to check. The best solution is to contact Forces Online through your official email account which will have your organisation details on it. Forces Online will not accept excuses like "sorry I am only on mobile". Support workers with access to mobiles and work a similar way to Forces Online will usually have mobile email or other messaging systems on them. Smart phones can access websites, hubs, etc., and this includes the Welfare Support side, where Forces Online will need a referral form completed, before any support can be offered, which is usually the next day onwards. Any requests should be via our referral system as it can check your location and other details which helps Forces Online with fraudulent requests. Forces Online is happy to accept further case information by text, messenger, email and phone once the ID process has been completed.

- **Family**

Family members can refer directly to Forces Online for help through the Welfare Support Service. Whilst phoning is a good initial option, the Forces Online operators can only offer advice over the phone, or they can help go through a referral request with you if you do not have access to complete the online referral at <https://www.welfaresupport.net/referral>

You will need permission from the beneficiary for this as the Welfare Support assessment team will need to speak to the beneficiary which is usually within one working day. Each case is different, so Forces Online does not have a standard response to any given situation. Where possible it is always best to contact Forces Online in the daytime (excluding Sundays). After hours which is usually from 1700 hours onwards the organisation's support is limited. Forces Online does provide a couple of evenings a week where the Hub is open see <https://www.virtualhub.uk> All communication with Forces Online is dealt with within our confidentiality policy, and we will not share information with any third parties without the express permission of the beneficiaries.

- **Close Military Associates**

Forces Online allows referrals from close military associates, and these are people that the beneficiaries have served with. The organisation will always ask that the veteran knows you are contacting Forces Online on their behalf. Contact from military associates is dealt with through the organisations confidential signposting service. It can be done over the phone or any other contact media. The Forces Online operators can help with the referral process, and most of the time providing you have permission, they are happy to directly call the veteran on your behalf. Forces Online will need to complete the referral process, which is something they can help with, and an assessment will quickly follow. Whether the beneficiary is still serving or ex-forces the confidentiality remains high. The Welfare Team will of course open a conversation to ascertain whether the veteran, is still serving and are they safe and could not intentionally or accidentally harm other veterans or family members in the normal course of their job. Forces Online would hope that this has already be considered before the contact with them. Forces Online does however have a duty of care to all veterans and family members regardless of how hard the conversation may be.

- **Referral Process**

Once a referral has been received by Forces Online a member of the assessment team will be in touch to with the beneficiary to ensure they have the right details and id in place. The organisations Welfare Support team does not dwell on hearing the veteran's story all over again and the assessment is so that Forces Online can internally or externally signpost the veteran or family member to the right support.

- **Fraudulent Activity**

Forces Online knows that life in today's world can be very tough, especially with money and increasing prices. However, their experience tells them to not be so trusting as they have been the past. Forces Online could write a book based on all the excuses and objections they have faced with people wanting support, many of whom are not even connected with the armed forces community. Whilst Forces Online take every precaution to avoid falling into to the trap of fraudulent activity, their policy is to act against people committing such acts. If you knowingly attempt to gain support or take money from an organisation through deception this is fraud which it is illegal. The Policy of Forces Online is to protect others from this activity, and where possible to inform the police/other agencies when these attempts are made. This has impacted on the Forces Online's help and support systems requiring them to be more diligent, with anyone looking for support from any of the Forces Online projects.

If you are unsure whether your contact with Forces Online is a referral or support enquiry please visit <https://www.forcesonline.org.uk/contact-us>

## Change Record

Date of Change:	Changed By:	Comments:
13.08.22	LC&CR	Policy adopted by the Trustees 13.08.22