

CASE FOR SUPPORT

Organizational History

Garelochhead Station Trust became a Scottish Charity in 2018 when a group of veterans and their spouses recognised that there are no local services delivering social opportunities for veterans and their families., in 2024, at the request of the members the charity changed the name to Garelochhead Support Trust (GST)

Since 2018 the organisation has moved to larger premises to accommodate the increase in membership to over 200.

The sharing of skill and social opportunities for the benefit of the community and other charities has been a highlight of GST achievement

The beneficiaries

We strive to enhance the lives of veterans and their families and value their contribution to the local community.

The beneficiaries are military veterans, their families and members of the wider community who live in an area of high deprivation as identified in the SIMD

Most, but not all of the members are over 65 years of age and on fixed income, some have lost their partners and living alone, others are supporting partners through illnesses, some are dealing with illness themselves.

The needs and challenges the beneficiaries face

- The provision of social opportunity to share stories, skills and experiences thus having a positive impacting on social isolation and loneliness.
- In an area of high deprivation the cost to beneficiaries of engaging in social events can be prohibitive, thus increasing isolation and the impact this can have on mental wellbeing.
- Since the inception of GST the membership has grown from 30 to over 200+, this has been mostly through word of mouth and our reputation as a caring listening organisation. Members are regularly consulted on the services to be delivered and as one member said when taking part in an independently facilitated workshop ` Being a part of GST is like being wrapped in a warm blanket, you know that everyone cares about you,' another said `You feel valued and listened to'.
- One member when asked at the Brunch club by a visiting partner organisation why she came to GST said ` I have been recently widowed and without the help and support I have received from GST I would now be sat at home, on my own, waiting to join my husband.' This member is provided with transport to all GST social events as well as to any dental and hospital appointment and to do her shopping. She has now built up a supportive network and takes part in social events out with GST.

- To be able to deliver this service we need a focal point for service delivery, this comes at a cost of £7,800 per year, along with staff to support the volunteers and trustees the total running costs are £80,000 per year

Service Delivery

The cornerstone of GST service delivery is the fortnightly brunch club with a free breakfast style meal for between 55 and 65 members, raffle, lending library, and, at special brunches such as our remembrance brunch, entertainment. Members of the RN also attend these brunches to chat with the members. At the request of the members we hold 9 special brunches throughout the year.

We also encourage other organisations, such as Citizens Advice to attend our brunches and discuss with the members the service they provide.

The positive impact on mental wellbeing that having the opportunity to share stories with your peer group, make plans and engage with members of the wider community has on the members can be summarised by one member when he gave the treasurer a small donation saying 'That's for making me feel a part of a big family, Thank you'.

Demand for services

The organisation carries out regular member consultation at all of our activities. We also invite independent organisations such as the TSI to facilitate 'evaluation of service delivery' workshops

We are the only organisation within Argyll & Bute, and only one of seven in Scotland to be chosen to work with academics from the University of Highland and Island to carry out a comprehensive peer review of service delivery.

This is an 18 month review, training trustees to be peer interviewers and, in partnership with the university produce an academic research document showing the impact that membership of GST has on the mental wellbeing of veterans.

Our trustees presented their interim finding to professional researchers at the university summer school and received positive feedback

Why is GST the best way to deliver these services

As all of our trustees and staff are either veterans or the spouses of veterans they have a lived experience of military life and an ongoing empathy with the members.

As any member of the armed services will confirm the military have a language and sense of humour of their own. GST has been instrumental in the integration of veterans into the wider community thus enhancing the skill set within the community for the benefit of all concerned.

An example of this is the number of members that are now also trustees/ members of other organisations. As one member of the community said at a brunch 'If you are not military you are never made to feel second class, everyone is treated equally and GST provides whatever you need irrespective of your background'

How will a donation/grant be used

The donation will be used to increase the number and variety of services delivered that have been requested by members.

Currently, at the request of members we have the fortnightly brunch club, fortnightly craft and model groups, weekly line dancing and carpet bowling groups and monthly bus trips to places of interest as suggested by members. All of these activities are free to members so that no one is excluded due to financial constraints. Lifetime membership of GST is £1

The impact of this current service delivery has had on members wellbeing can be seen in the increase in numbers attending each activity. As one member said when asked by another seniors group to talk about GST ' The value of an organising is the positive impact it has on those it serves, GST has turned my life around, I now feel valued and have an active social life'

Acknowledgment of doner contribution

- All members are made aware of donations at the brunch club and on our Facebook page
- All doners receive the annual report in which they are acknowledged.
- All doners are invited to attend the brunch clubs and meet the members.