

ERSKINE *News*

Issue 42, Spring 2026



PHYSIOTHERAPY AT ERSKINE

Q & A with Erskine's Physio, Andy - Page 10-11

Welcome



After nearly 10 years at Erskine Veterans Charity, now as I step into retirement, I find myself reflecting on what a privilege this journey has been, and how much of it has been made possible by you, our loyal Erskine supporters.

When I joined Erskine, I brought with me over 30 years of nursing experience across the NHS. But nothing quite prepared me for the scale of what we would achieve together in the years that followed.

Thanks to your generosity, we have opened five new assisted living flats, launched Erskine Veterans Activity Centres (EVACs) in the West and North of Scotland, with an East Activity Centre now in development, and established a Support at Home Service that will continue to grow, bringing care directly to Veterans in their own communities.

Within our Care Homes, your support has funded innovations that I can only describe as truly life-changing for our residents.

We have invested in specialist nursing expertise — Nurse Consultants, Clinical Nurse Specialists and Advanced Nurse Practitioners — whose knowledge has transformed the standard of care our Veterans receive every single day.

None of this would have happened without you.

As I look back, I feel immense pride in what this extraordinary community has built together. Thank you, it's your support that allows us to deliver life-changing and life-saving services to Veterans and their families.

With my deepest gratitude and very warmest wishes,

Derek Barron
Director of Care (Rtd)

Meet THE TEAM!

There are many different roles within Erskine and each one is taken on by an amazing individual offering their skills and knowledge to help continue to make Erskine's care of the highest standard.



Tracy Higgins
Accommodation Services

In my 20 plus years with Erskine I've held various roles.

In my current role I manage the non-care accommodation on the Erskine Veterans Village, including our 23 Transitional Supported Apartments. This largely involves giving support and providing a listening ear for the Veterans and families staying in the Erskine Veterans Village. I really enjoy my role and I'm proud to work for Erskine.



Alison Payne
Edinburgh Home Manager

The Erskine Edinburgh Home is my second home. Now in my 15th year here I can't imagine being anywhere else.

You don't have to have care experience or be a Veteran to work at Erskine. We will provide you with training which is second to none.

Every member of staff has taken a different path before going down the Erskine road.



Jordan Hogg
Community Fundraiser

My uncle served in the Army which makes this role all the more meaningful to me.

Our Fundraising team is focused on building strong relationships within the community, supporting our amazing fundraisers, and making sure they know the real difference their efforts make.

The best part of working at Erskine is every day we see how the generosity of our supporters transforms the lives of Veterans and their families.



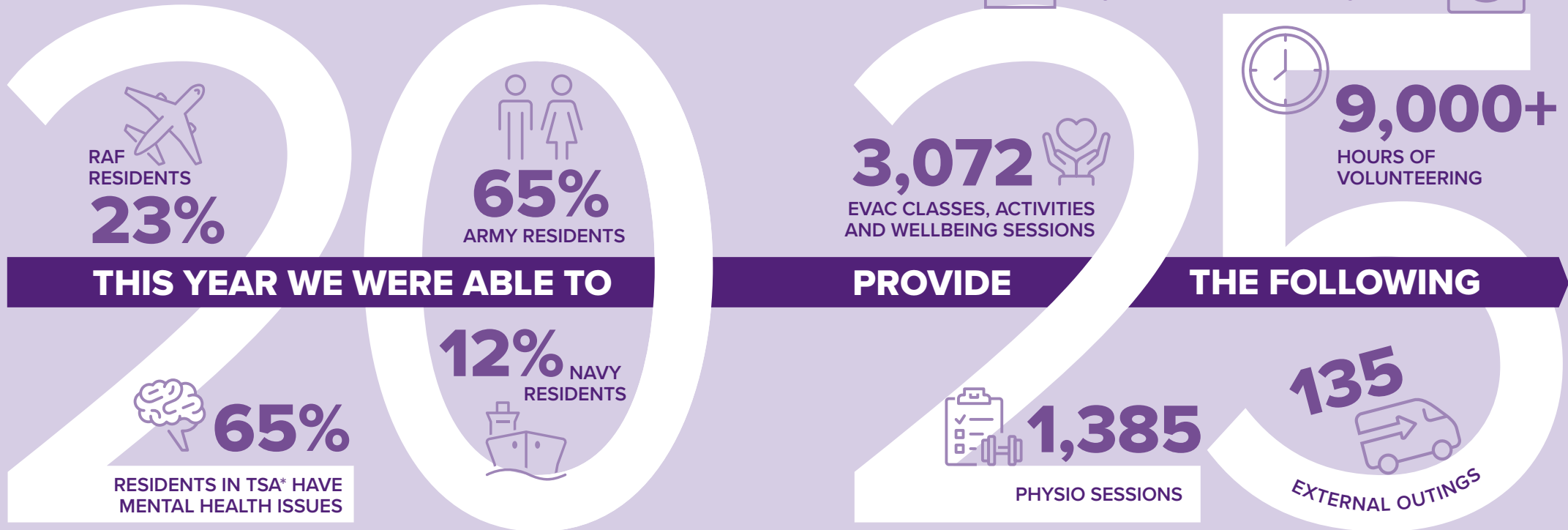
We're proud to care and are looking for people to join us who are proud to care too.
Scan the QR Code to view our current vacancies.

DID YOU KNOW?

YEAR IN NUMBERS

Our vision is a Scotland in which all Veterans and their families are valued and respected, and where high quality care and support enable them to maximise their potential and quality of life.

See how your support makes all this possible.



*TRANSITIONAL SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION



240,900

MEALS PROVIDED FOR OUR RESIDENTS



1,354

PODIATRY INTERVENTIONS



136,951

MILES COVERED BY THE ERSKINE FLEET



869

MEMBERS USE EVAC CENTRES

Looking to the Future - With You By Our Side

Your support helps Erskine be there for Veterans like Shaun. Our new strategy aims to reach more Veterans before crisis hits.

Update

In January 2025, RAF Veteran Shaun Moat was the first through the doors of our new Erskine Veterans Activity Centre (EVAC North). In February, he shared openly that it saved his life. Behind that moment - and every counselling session, every safe space, every connection between Veterans - is someone's donation making it possible.

Many more Veterans have reached out since Shaun told his story. And the truth is, there are Veterans right now in that same dark place he was, feeling they have nowhere to turn. What if we could reach them before crisis hits?

With your help our new strategy aims to reach more Veterans who need support.

Erskine Strategy 2025 - 2031 What it means

Our CEO, Wing Commander Ian Cumming, puts it simply: "Our care homes will always be a sanctuary for those who need them. But if we are serious about Veterans and their families truly thriving, we must intervene earlier - preventing crisis, reducing isolation, and helping shape positive futures long before residential care is required."

Pictured:
RAF Veteran Shaun Moat



Scotland has around 176,000 Veterans, including over 50,000 elderly Veterans and spouses who may need care or support - yet only a small proportion live near our residential facilities.

A younger generation of Veterans is also emerging: more dispersed, more likely to seek support embedded in their local community. Our strategy responds to that reality.

Over the next six years, with your support we're expanding community-based services across Scotland, with a focus on:

New Activity Centres (EVACs)

Target areas include Fife, Edinburgh, Aberdeenshire, Perth/Stirling and south-west Scotland

Wider Home Support

Reaching Veterans in the communities they live

Enhanced Outreach

Supporting Veterans within non-Erskine care homes

Earlier Intervention

Tackling isolation and supporting the transition to civilian life

We're also exploring future additions including Veterans' holiday and carers' breaks, a benevolent fund for unexpected post-service costs, and micro transitional accommodation in underserved areas.

Our ambition? To become the most recognisable and highest-impact Veterans charity in Scotland.

With your support, we can get there.

**We need to raise over
£11m each year to
support Veterans
and their families.**

WHAT IS A VETERAN?

When most people picture a military Veteran, they imagine a soldier. Perhaps decorated, perhaps battle-hardened, probably elderly. But the reality is far broader than that single image suggests.

They might be the quiet man at the end of your street who rarely speaks about his time in the Navy. The grandmother who drove ambulances under fire. The young reservist who served one tour before returning to civilian life. The merchant sailor who braved Atlantic waters during wartime. Or the teenager who signed up at sixteen and never looked back.

In the UK, you are a Veteran if you have served at least one day in His Majesty's Armed Forces. That means the definition doesn't discriminate by how long you served, what rank you held, whether you saw combat, what role you performed, or what gender you are.

It includes:

- Those who served as Regulars or on National Service in the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army or Royal Air Force.
- Volunteers and Reserves who balanced civilian life with a commitment to serve.
- Merchant Mariners deployed on active service; the often-forgotten heroes of the sea lanes.
- Members of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary
- Members of the Home Guard

Veterans come from every background, every corner of the country and Commonwealth, and every era of modern history. What unites them is simply this: at some point, they raised their hand and said **"I'll serve."**

Meet ESTHER

"Erskine has given me a place of stability, a place I can focus on my life and get back on track again. I can't thank the charity enough for giving me a home when I need it most. Not only a home but help and support too."

Esther was born on the small Caribbean island of Saint Lucia. Other than the obvious difference - the warm weather - it was a very different life. Her family was poverty stricken and sadly she lost her father when she was eight.

When the Army was recruiting in the Commonwealth countries and visited Saint Lucia Esther saw it as a lifeline. A way out of poverty.

Having joined the Army Cadets in secondary school, she was always interested in the military. War movies fascinated her! The action was gripping but even more so the sense of camaraderie was what she yearned for.

After passing second phase training, Esther was posted to Oxford where she spent five years. In 2005 she was sent to Iraq with the Royal Logistic Corps.

"I have mixed feelings about it. I think the only people that can really understand are military people. When I got there in my head I had programmed myself to die. I can't explain it. I just knew there was a possibility that I would not make it."

Since leaving the army, Esther had a few difficult years, in between jobs and sleeping on friends couches. When Covid hit, she was made redundant from her job as a nanny. After applying to many housing agencies, Housing Scotland put Esther on to Erskine, where she was offered a place at our Transitional Supported Accommodation.

If you or someone you know would like more information on the services available to Veterans at Erskine please visit

erskine.org.uk



Pictured: Army Veteran Esther Richard

PHYSIOTHERAPY AT ERSKINE MORE THAN MOVEMENT

Talk to Erskine's physiotherapist Andy for just a few minutes and you'll quickly realise his passion for his work is only matched by his dedication to the residents in his care. Here's what he told us.

What does a typical day in the Physio Department look like?

Things vary from day to day. I usually start the day sorting out admin tasks, as most residents are having breakfast or getting up about this time. There are a few 'early risers' who will come down to the gym. Twice a week I run an 'open gym' where residents are invited down to work on their specific goals.

The rest of the time I like to go into the houses to work with residents and staff.

That allows me to see how residents perform and work on things they may be having issues with on a day-to-day basis.

Every other Thursday, I go over to the Edinburgh Home and hold sessions there. I would like to spend more time there, but it is hard to fit everything in.

The end of the day is spent finishing off notes, planning the week and cleaning equipment. I also liaise a fair bit with external services such as the NHS or equipment companies to contribute to our residents' care.

How do you build trust with residents who may have spent decades managing pain?

Empathy helps.



Pictured: Andy with resident Brian.

Letting a resident know that being in pain or struggling with their circumstances is a natural thing. We are human at the end of the day.

Education is also a powerful tool. Knowledge is power and if a resident can understand their condition, it does make it easier to manage.

The biggest thing I come across that requires trust is understanding one's potential. Many residents would like to be able to achieve more and could, but do not have the belief to do so. Building trust in this example is vital, especially when you try to help them do something that is out of their comfort zone. I like to push boundaries, and I think it is important that our residents do also.

What does progress look like - is it always about physical improvement, or can goals be about comfort and independence too?

Goals can come in many forms. Physical improvements are an obvious one and easy to measure. Is the resident able to contribute more to their own care? Can Mr Smith walk further today than last month? Or is Mrs Brown requiring less assistance with transfers?

However, I also aim to look at how the resident is doing overall, just being a human being. Sometimes that can be hard to measure. Are they starting to feel more confident and settled here at Erskine? Are they less scared about what the future holds? Have they got a sense of purpose? These questions are the most important.

Some residents just want to stand, not necessarily to change their level of dependency, but just because they can. I think we should encourage that.

A big aim is to progress the Physio service. Are we doing the best for our residents? Do we need to pull on other resources to help contribute. We can always do and be better.

Is there anything about your work here that surprises people when they hear about it?

The holistic approach to residents seems to surprise people. It's not all about doing leg extensions in a chair, far from it in fact.

I am a strong believer in the mental and emotional side of our residents too. If you are not in a good place mentally it's hard to do the physical stuff.

There is a misconception that you can just make people exercise and all is good. Sometimes the best Physio sessions are talking through worries and concerns. If we can address these, then helping to support someone is easier.

Thank you. It's your support that allows us to provide life changing physio to residents like John.

"When I started working with Andy, I'll be honest, I wasn't convinced I was gaining anything. But, after a few weeks away from our sessions - well, hindsight a wonderful thing as they say.

Being able to support myself while care staff put my jacket on - game changer. It lets them make sure it's laying flat when I sit back in my chair.

Have you ever sat with a bumflap jacket up your back? Annoying!

I would love for Erskine to have more Physios and even an Occupational Therapist available to residents."

Veteran and Erskine resident -
John Roche

CAME FOR SUPPORT FOUND A COMMUNITY

When a Veteran's life changes, so does the life of those around them. Spouses and carers face their own quiet adjustments - because sometimes the person who left for service isn't always the same person who comes home.

The Spouses and Carers Group began at Erskine Veterans Activity Centre West in 2022 following a successful pilot project. With around 30 members, it has become an invaluable part of their lives. A community they have built together.

Through four sessional staff, we provide a range of activities tailored to the group's interests and wellbeing.

Rachel leads arts and crafts sessions - painting, drawing, crocheting, beadwork and card making - giving members the chance to try something new in a relaxed, sociable environment. As they sit and chat, friendships form naturally alongside their creations.

Beauty therapy sessions with Isabel offer something equally important; time just for them. For carers especially, the chance to enjoy some pampering and self-care, and simply feel good about themselves, is not something to be underestimated.

Yvonne supports members in reaching their fitness goals during ladies-only gym sessions at EVAC West. The positive impact on wellbeing is clear, and members value having a space that feels entirely their own.

The music sessions and choir, led by vocal coach Oti, began last year. Some members had never sung before. It has become a joyful, confidence-building activity, and in November, the choir performed alongside Forces Sweetheart Kirsten Orsborn at the Erskine Military Ball, receiving a standing ovation from a packed room. It's a moment they'll cherish.

The group also enjoy annual summer and festive outings and take part in special events at the Centre, most recently the Daffodil Tea Dance, which included afternoon tea and a few lively games of bingo.

What has grown here mirrors what Veteran members find at EVAC West - camaraderie, close bonds, and the comfort of people who truly understand. Later this year, we hope to extend that same support by launching a Spouses and Carers group at EVAC North.

For every £1 we spend:

87p is spent on services to support the Veteran community with 13p going towards raising the next £1.



Pictured: Members of the Spouses and Carers Group

One Mission, MANY SUPPORTERS

Over the past few months, Erskine has been on the receiving end of some wonderful generosity from the charity ScotsCare and its two linked charities and we couldn't be more grateful!

The Charity of William Kinloch, administered by ScotsCare, has awarded a fantastic £117,159.35 towards the core staff costs of our Transitional Supported Accommodation (ETSA) project. The 23 apartments offer a safe place to live for working-age Veterans and early Service leavers who are finding their feet after leaving the Forces. Many of our tenants live with mental health difficulties, physical disabilities and other major challenges after returning to civilian life. We help these Veterans to progress towards a successful transition into long-term employment and accommodation through the dedication and expertise of our ETSA team.

On top of that, we recently received two further grants totalling £106,657.85 - the final remaining funds of The St. Andrews' Scottish Soldiers' Club, also administered by ScotsCare. This generous gift is going straight towards delivering enhanced care for Army Veterans at The Erskine Home in Bishopton, where up to 180 residents receive expert residential, nursing, dementia and palliative care.

Around 60% of our residents there are Army beneficiaries, and our wonderful frontline team makes sure every one of them enjoys the best possible quality of life, even when living with complex health needs.

We're grateful to the Trustees of ScotsCare for their belief in our work, and would like to extend further thanks to ScotsCare's Chief Executive, Shona Fleming, who came along to visit our Bishopton Veterans Village - it was a real pleasure to show her around!

Shona said: *"We're absolutely delighted to have found a meaningful and lasting home for these funds. Supporting Erskine means we're directly contributing to the wellbeing of Veterans – providing safe, comfortable homes and vital support services. It's a cause that deeply resonates with our values, and we're proud to be part of something that honours their service and cares for Scots that have contributed so much."*

ScotsCare is a charity with over 420 years of history, supporting first and second generation Scots living across Greater London. The charity provides a wide range of support services such as family assistance, mental health support, financial grants and sheltered housing. ScotsCare also operates The Charity of William Kinloch and The St. Andrews' Scottish Soldiers' Club, two funds supporting Scots Veterans in need.

A further thanks goes to The Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund who awarded us with a £5,000 grant to support our Erskine Veterans Activity Centre North (EVAC North), with a portion of it going towards something rather special - their very first Christmas lunch.

In December, 103 members and staff gathered for EVAC North's first ever Christmas lunch. For Veterans in the north of Scotland, many of whom found their way to EVAC North after years of isolation, it was exactly the kind of moment the centre was built for.

Opened in January 2025 and based in Forres, Morayshire, EVAC North has already reached over 600 Veterans - offering peer support, wellbeing programmes, and a place to connect, learn new skills and find renewed purpose after service.

David Grant, EVAC North Manager, said: *"This investment empowers us to continue building meaningful projects and strengthen our Veteran community."*

Irene Greenwood, Welfare Programmes Manager at the RAF Benevolent Fund, added: *"The work Erskine Veterans Charity undertakes is vital for RAF Veterans and their families, and the Fund stands ready to help wherever we can."*

Wonderful grants and donations like these are just one of the ways Erskine Veterans Charity receives support.

People like you also play an important role in raising vital funds to give Veterans the high quality care and support they deserve.



ST MIRREN SHARE THEIR SILVERWARE

St Mirren captain Mark O'Hara and cup final hero Jonah Ayunga brought the Scottish League Cup to our Veterans Village in Bishopton - just a few miles from the club's Paisley home.

The visit came weeks after Saints stunned Celtic 3-1 at Hampden in December, lifting the League Cup for only the second time in their history. Ayunga, who scored twice on the day, and O'Hara took time to meet residents and staff, pose for photos, and let supporters hold the silverware themselves.

For 82-year-old Army Veteran Christopher Balmforth, it was a moment to savour twice over. A lifelong St Mirren fan, he was in the

Hampden crowd for December's final but also for the club's Scottish Cup victory over Aberdeen back in 1959! He proudly showed the players a photograph of himself among the crowd at that famous match, as O'Hara and Ayunga swapped stories with him about both occasions.

"To see the smiles when people held the trophy or talked about the game was brilliant," said O'Hara. "The sacrifices these Veterans have made are extraordinary; it means a lot to share this moment with them."



Pictured above:
Army Veteran Christopher Balmforth
Left: Mark O'Hara and Jonah Ayunga

NOT ALL HEROES WEAR CAPES;

but a lot wear purple Erskine t-shirts!



Lace up those trainers and conquer 26.2 miles. Feel your heart race as you catapult into the air. Join thousands of fellow fundraisers in the legendary Kiltwalk, where every step makes an even bigger impact. Paint your workplace purple with a vibrant theme day that gets everyone talking.

These are just a few ways you can create unforgettable memories while supporting our Veterans and their families. Every mile you run, every brave descent you make, and every splash of purple you wear helps fund unrivalled care and support for Veterans at Erskine.

Want to do something different? Let your imagination run wild!

Whether you're planning a quiet coffee morning or hiking a mountain your fundraising adventure will make a real difference in the lives of those who've served our country.

Join our community of incredible fundraisers today – because having fun never felt so meaningful!

Start your adventure today

Edinburgh Marathon Fest	23rd/24th May
Tough Mudder, Glasgow	6th June
Aberdeen Kiltwalk	7th June
Mens/Womens 10k, Glasgow	12th July
Dundee Kiltwalk	16th August
Catapult Challenge, Erskine	22nd August
Ride the North, Angus	29th August
Spey Valley Golf & Spa Day	3rd September
Edinburgh Kiltwalk	13th September
Carnoustie Golf & Spa Day	17th September

If you have a different event in mind please do get in touch. We're here to help!

erskine.org.uk/give-support

A GIFT THAT LASTS A LIFETIME

Writing a Will doesn't have to be daunting - and a gift within it is one of the most powerful ways to leave a lasting legacy.

For Veterans like Kenneth Hill, former Special Boat Service, that legacy is deeply personal. *"I can't say thank you enough for the support Erskine showed me after my time in the Falklands. After a hospital stay, I came to Erskine Veterans Charity and they helped put me back together."* he says.

After serving in the Falklands and facing PTSD on his return to civilian life, Erskine gave him a safe haven. He's now chosen to give one back - through a gift in his Will.

A gift to Erskine costs you nothing today, but could help fund care, safe housing, or simply a listening ear for Veterans in Scotland who need it most.

Thinking about leaving a gift?

Our Legacy Development Manager Sarah Morgan is happy to have an informal chat. No pressure, no obligation.

Already included Erskine in your Will?

We'd love to thank you personally. Please do get in touch with our Legacy Development Manager: sarah.morgan@erskine.org.uk

Find out more at:
erskine.org.uk/legacies



Yes, I want to make a donation to Erskine Veterans Charity today

1 Your Details

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

2

Please accept my gift of £

3

Did you know the taxman can care for Veterans too?

If you are a UK taxpayer, let us know and we can boost your donation by 25% at no extra cost to you.

giftaid it

I want to Gift Aid my donation and any donations to Erskine that I make in the future or have made in the past four years. In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box below and insert today's date: I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 I have given.

I am a taxpayer

Signature Date

Donation Payment

I enclose my cheque made payable to Erskine or please debit my Visa/Mastercard/Maestro

Card No

Valid From Expiry Date Security No. (Last 3 digits)

Signature Today's Date

Please send me information about leaving a gift to Erskine in my Will.

Erskine Veterans Village, Bishopton, Renfrewshire, PA7 5PU Telephone 0141 814 4616 | erskine.org.uk
Erskine Veterans Charity | Company No. SC174103 | Registered Charity No. SC006609

Please cut/tear here

I'd like to make a difference via Direct Debit

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

I would like to make a regular gift of: £8 £12 Other £

I would like this gift to be made: Monthly Quarterly Annually

Please start my payments on: 1st 15th _____
(insert month/year)

Please cut/tear here 



Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit



Please fill in the form and send to: Fundraising Department, Erskine Veterans Charity, Bishopton, PA7 5PU

Name and full postal address of your bank or building society

To: The Manager Bank/Building Society

Address

Postcode

Name(s) of Account Holder(s)

Branch Sort Code

Bank/Building Society Account Number

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society

Please pay Erskine Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this Instruction may remain with Erskine and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank/building society.

Service User Number

Signature(s)

Reference

Date

Banks and Building Societies may not accept Direct Debit Instructions for some types of account.