



Ministry
of Defence



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT

SMALL GRANTS CASE STUDIES



Army Welfare Service NI: “HEROS Programme (Hockey Reaching Out to Society)”

Priority met: Community Integration

Funding awarded: £19,612

Region: Northern Ireland

The Hockey Education Reaching Out to Society (HEROS) programme was proposed as an initiative to encourage young people to form relationships across individual backgrounds, by breaking down barriers to integration. This involved using ice hockey as a way to engage the interest of a diverse group of young people, whilst promoting healthy eating, confidence, self-esteem, team working skills and physical activity. Wherever possible, the Army Welfare Service (AWS) utilised military facilities, further promoting the idea that the Armed Forces were a ‘Force for Good’ within the local community.

The AWS were able to identify a number of barriers to effective community integration within Northern Ireland. In particular, they recognised that Ireland as a whole is a complex environment for the Armed Forces community, and that service personnel were often marginalised and isolated as a result. The organisation also recognised that initiatives aimed at encouraging integration were often focussed on those who had left the services, rather than those who were still part of the Armed Forces community. The AWS therefore felt that in order to encourage long term integration amongst the service population, there needed to be active intervention amongst young people. Working with this group of people, the stereotypes and myths attached to the Armed Forces could be more effectively challenged amongst the next generation, therefore promoting positive relations for the future.

Additionally, the project organisers recognised that tensions amongst other divisions also existed within society, these

The project involved a range of activities and events, taking place across the year. The programme began by the AWS gathering groups of young people on a weekly basis, and delivering educational workshops on relevant areas. This ranged from information about the political environment of Northern Ireland in regards to attitudes towards service personnel, to workshops on understanding the importance of healthy eating.

The first residential event took place on the weekend of 17-19 June 2016, where young people were divided in to various ‘Squads’ overseen by Senior HEROS participants. These Senior HEROS were individuals who had completed the programme in the past, helping to promote further leadership skills amongst young people. The weekend involved various team building exercises such as rope walking, kayaking and coasteering. A second Residential event took place in the middle of August, this time a week long. Here a heavy focus on ice hockey was put forward, and coaches from Canada provided young people with training sessions. There was also an emphasis on healthy eating during this week, allowing young people to experience the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. A final ice hockey match and presentations concluded the programme; medals were awarded to those who performed well in front of their family and friends.

There were a number of positive outcomes identified by those who took part in this programme, which was able to reach 46 young people. This included 20 service children, and 26 civilian. Organisers commented on the lasting relationships

cemented by the end of the project, with young people across the region coming together and maintaining contact even after the project had come to an end. A number of other benefits can also be seen from the project, for example, school attendance of the participants increased.

A further benefit can be seen in that many of the Senior HEROS participants expressed interest in more volunteering opportunities with the AWS and many have agreed to join the programme in support and volunteering roles. This has resulted in a greater benefit to the wider community.

The project also had some surplus funding, which will be invested in to the running the project in its next round. There are hopes the programme will be launched in Scotland, with Leuchars military base in Scotland having already expressed some interest.



Participant during Hockey practice

Macrobert Arts Centre: “5 Soldiers- The Body is the Frontline”

Priority met: Community Integration

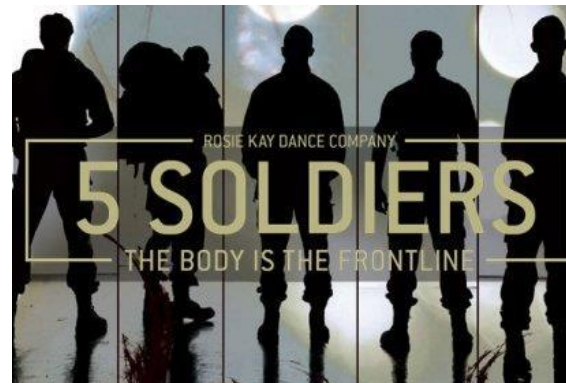
Funding awarded: £19,917

Region: Scotland

The Macrobert Art Centre has a history of launching discussion around themes that are important for the local community, and so looked to launch a project to address stereotypes associated with the military and its relationship with the local civilian community. The centre looked for a creative way to promote dialogue between communities and generate positive relationships. This manifested itself in the staging of three performances of Rosie Kay’s dance production ‘5 Soldiers: The Body is the Frontline’ and using the themes highlighted in this to deliver a package of workshops, discussion events and a photography exhibition.

The Centre launched this project in a response to local need. A report published in 2014 by Education Scotland highlighted the importance of eradicating negative labels and perceptions towards Service children in furthering their educational potential. The Macrobert Arts Centre rose to the challenge in helping to address these negative perceptions. In particular, they recognised that they were placed at the heart of the community, which would allow them to actively promote effective integration between both civilian and service personnel communities. This was enhanced by their partnership with the Royal Caledonian Education Trust (RCET) and with a local arts charity Artlink Central. Their primary objectives were to enhance an understanding and empathy between civilian and military families and reduce the struggles endured by service families in terms of isolation and stereotypes.

Rosie Kay’s performance first premiered in England, and met widespread acclaim about its depiction of conflict, through the lens of the human body. The dance theatre work was made up of four male, and one female dancer, and was written and constructed following a period of field research where the choreographer examined the impact of warfare on the human body. As Rosie Kay herself states, the piece aimed to reframe war inside the context of the soldier’s body and thus encourage a greater understanding



Title design of the performance

amongst civilian audiences about the sacrifice and experience of soldiers. This therefore made it an appropriate and effective tool in encouraging community integration in the area.

Covenant Funding allowed the staging of three live performances of this piece in the Macrobert Arts Centre in May 2016. Across these three performances, they were able to attract 561 audience members. Evaluation of this audience showed that 32% of these members were new to the Macrobert Arts Centre, indicating that the Centre was successful in attracting a new crowd to these performances.

An important feature of these performances was the post-show discussion event hosted after each performance, which included attendance from military representatives, performers and Rosie Kay herself. Significantly, 127 tickets were awarded free of charge to four local schools, therefore also allowing young people to engage with the message of the show.

Feedback was also very positive:

"It was a great atmosphere and a moving and thought-provoking spectacle; I noted that the youngsters enjoyed it too..."

- John Fotheringham, Military Civilian Integration, 51st Infantry Brigade and HQ Scotland

"Amazing. Five Stars. Excellent Show. Especially enjoyed the end-of-show discussion. Surprised and delighted to see Rosie Kay there and fascinating to hear her story. Also interesting to hear opinions of serving soldiers and those of dancers"

- Audience Members

As highlighted above, the major aims of the project placed emphasis on dismantling existing perceptions young people had towards service families, and seeking to promote positive relationships. In light of this, engaging young people formed a core part of this project.



Stars of the show

Funding enabled the delivery of over twenty hours of workshop activity to local schools, military family organisations and youth groups.

These workshops encouraged young people to think about their response to the piece, and based on these ideas design their own creative piece which would be performed as an opening act before the performance of '5 Soldiers'.

This engagement proved to be hugely successful, and led to the group of young people being invited by Major Jimmy Pearson, 7 Scots to

perform at the Stirling Military Show. The Show was met well by audience members.

The project also included the screening of three films, each examining a representation of war in a different light. These included, 'Come and See', 'Beau Travail', and 'The Hurt Locker'. Each film was followed by a discussion, where audience members- made up of both civilian and service families- were able to engage and discuss ideas about conflict.

Funding also enabled an evening of discussion with Evelyn Cook, a PhD student at the University of Stirling, who is examining the experience of children and young people from armed forces families in educational settings. This allowed audience members to better understand and engage with the issues facing service children in schools.

Macrobert Arts Centre formed a partnership with a local arts charity, Artlink Central, to develop an exhibition. This was examining the role of service life within the family, and encouraged a public awareness and understanding of this. The exhibition was entitled 'Military Families', and was formulated over 5 weeks from August-September 2016, by Military families working in Forth Valley and Artlink artist Jenny Wicks. Participants were identified through contacts made by the Macrobert Arts Centre at the '5 Soldiers' performances, as well as by contacting relevant charities and military family organisations. The artist held a number of 'participatory workshops' which meant the artist could work with the servicemen and their families to collaboratively construct an artistic response. It was decided that the theme of 'identity' would be explored. A range of stories, events and memories were uncovered and then converted in to photographic representations, these included traumatic experiences, the impact of military service on relationships and the media portrayal of the Armed Forces.

It was found that many veterans appreciated the opportunity to discuss and share their experiences, with many commenting that it was the first time they had shared certain memories with members of their own family.

'It gave me an incentive to get out of the house and do something. To be honest I would have just sat in the house and not talked to anybody.'
– Veteran participating in the project

The resultant photography exhibition was very well received, the opening was held on 4th October and local community members had the chance to hear insights from the artist and the participants. The exhibition was initially on display in the Macrobert Arts Centre, with viewing by around 2000 people. There are plans underway to take the exhibition on tour, and use it as a background to facilitate further discussion and workshops.

In February 2017, the arts centre continued to explore the theme of conflict and war through drama by the staging of the play 'Pink Mist' examining the story of three servicemen as they experienced deployment in Afghanistan, and the impact of this on their relationships with those left behind.



A photograph from the exhibition

There are plans to take the 'Military Families' photography exhibition across the UK, and use it as a means by which further discussion can be conducted. It also seeks to dismantle any boundaries between civilian and service personnel, by encouraging transparent dialogues, rooted in a greater understanding.

The project also has a legacy in the working relationships that have developed between the Arts centre and organisations such as the RCET and Artlink Central. Perhaps most importantly, the links between local schools and military units is another legacy of this project, thus promoting further potential integration projects to take place.

This project represents a highly successful use of Covenant Grant Funding in that it has achieved its aims of promoting and fostering community integration. Perhaps most impressive is the ability of organisers to utilise funding in so many different ways, yet work towards a common aim and objective. From co-ordinating choreography for young people to working artistically with veterans, this project has been truly diverse in its approach and its reach.

SACRO: The Veterans' Mentoring Service

Priority met: Former Service Personnel in the Criminal Justice System

Funding Awarded: £20,000

Region: Scotland

Through Covenant Grant Funding, SACRO was able to launch the '[Veterans Mentoring Service](#)' (VMS). This was an intensive course, lasting a minimum of six months; targeting ex-service personnel who were already part of the Criminal Justice System, or at risk of entering or re-entering it. SACRO launched this initiative after recognising that although signposting services existed within Scotland, there were few which managed or mentored Veterans through any difficulties or issues they may be experiencing.

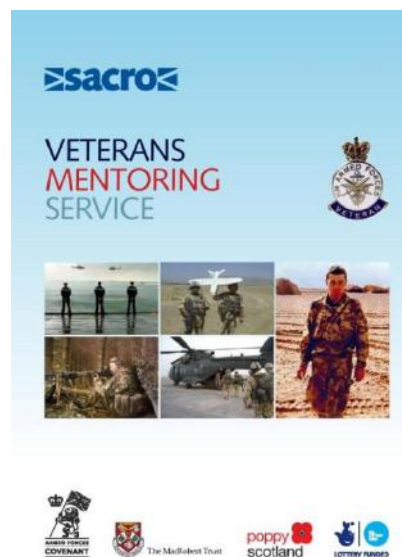
SACRO is a well-established community justice organisation based in Scotland, with over forty years of experience in operating within the criminal justice system. The organisation provides mentoring support across the whole of Scotland, alongside a series of other services aimed at promoting conflict resolution and preventing the re-offending of ex-prisoners.

The VMS was designed to cover the Central belt in Scotland, and support 'at risk' ex-servicemen and women. Funding facilitated the appointment of two full time mentors who, over the period of one year, were able to work with thirty veterans each. These mentors were ex-service personnel, thus further encouraging the development of a strong relationship between mentor and mentee, rooted in common experiences.

The project was structured so that it was led by a Service Manager, with one mentor covering particular regions of Scotland, and the other mentor covering a different area. Alongside these key figures, the project was also supported by a bank of volunteer staff, to provide on-going support passed the engagement period.

The VMS utilised a three phase approach to mentoring. This included the 'Initial phase' which involved a referral which was made by either social workers, the Scottish Prison Service, a military voluntary organisation or in some cases,

by the veterans themselves. This was then followed up with an 'Intervention phase' which included assessing the individual needs of the veterans, and then introducing measures to address this in the form of a personalised plan. This engagement with the mentor was planned to last between 6 and 12 months. The last phase was the 'Exit phase' in which the veteran was matched to a volunteer who would direct the user to on-going support for a further 4-6 months. This aimed to allow the veteran to develop coping strategies and problem solving skills, thus preparing them for life after the programme.



Title page of VMS leaflet

Further to this, veterans were also provided with support to seek employment or engage in further education. SACRO also sought to offer peer support and encourage users to take part in community based activities. Alongside this, the VMS mentors were able to signpost participating veterans to appropriate services, for example, helping to secure accommodation or sustain tenancies. Mentors also helped in building confidence, and address alcohol and substance abuse issues.

Between 1st September 2015 and 31st August 2016, SACRO was able to receive 91 referrals, with 49 engaged at the time of submitting their report. 95.2% of veterans engaged were supported to combat alcohol abuse issues and 28 of the veterans were provided direct assistance to secure employment.

John is a military veteran who spent 14 years in the Army. Following a series of overseas tours, John settled with his family in Northern Scotland, where he unfortunately was the victim of a violent attack, one which left him with a traumatic brain injury. He experienced depression and anxiety, which had an adverse effect on his business and his family, eventually resulting in him losing both. John moved in to Veterans Housing in Glasgow, but he was unable to access professional support. He eventually developed a reliance on alcohol and drugs, and he ended up in Prison, charged with driving under the influence. Following his release, he referred himself to the VMS, where the mentor was able to work with John to refer him to Combat Stress, Community Addiction Teams and the Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP). These organisations supported him to form connections with the military and veterans community, allowing him to develop a strong network of support. He is now seeking to gain employment, and has displayed a significant amount of progress.

After being discharged from the army in 2006 following a failed drug test, Bob faced a major relationship breakdown. This eventually led to him being sent to prison on charges of domestic violence. He engaged in further re-offending. Whilst in prison for the second time he was engaged by a VMS mentor, who supported him to identify his needs and address them. This included securing accommodation through work with the Scottish Veterans Residences. Bob also went on a course with a Riding for Disabled School, and was able to volunteer with them on a weekly basis. His offending behaviour is being addressed, as are his substance addiction issues. He has also begun the process of re-establishing a relationship with his children.

Alongside these case study examples, SACRO has collected data from veterans who had completed the mentoring scheme. It was found that 96% of those who participated were motivated to change their behaviour, whilst 90% stated that they felt increased confidence to change. A further 98% recorded that an increased self-esteem and 73% stated that they had experienced an improvement in their personal relationships.

This project was therefore able to achieve its aims within its allocated timeframe, and allowed this group of participant veterans to experience a meaningful change in their lives.

B.A.S.I.C. (SCIO): “B.A.S.I.C. and Cornerhouse Crèche”

Priority met: Community Integration

Funding awarded: £5,900

Region: Scotland

The B.A.S.I.C. Cornerhouse Crèche is a vital facility for the local community, both military and civilian, whilst also functioning as a space within which both communities can interact and engage with each other. Funding was sought to improve the premises and raise the health and safety standards to meet guidelines. The Grant was able to support the installation of new flooring across the building, new sets of wet weather clothing for the children, new staff uniforms and new laptops with hard drives. These improvements have allowed the centre to increase efficiency, meet health and safety standards and provide new activities for service users.

The Crèche had previously used its own funds to refurbish their old premises before unfortunately being forced to move to a new location. This new premises required improvements, which the Crèche now looked towards the Grant to fund.

Helensburgh is a town with a large Armed Forces presence, which means that at any given time one of the parents in a family unit will be away on deployment. The Crèche is therefore somewhat of a ‘lifeline’ to many single parents, providing care whilst the parent may be working, pursuing higher education or perhaps looking to take a break for a couple of hours. Crèche staff also noted that many of the military families arriving in the area lacked support networks, and experienced a sense of displacement in their new surroundings. The Crèche is able to address this, and offer a space within which new networks and friendships can be formed.

The internal development of the Crèche was able to take place following the securing of funds. New flooring has minimised risks of tripping or other injury, whilst also adding an aesthetic appeal to the building which did not exist before. The crèche also purchased 20 sets of quality wet weather clothing from a locally based supplier, allowing children to play outside, get fresh air and

take part in newly planned activities. This has been particularly beneficial to children from low income families, who may not have been able to afford the quality clothing for themselves. Staff uniform has also allowed the crèche a greater degree of professionalism, whilst also being helpful on practical level e.g. allowing school staff to recognise Crèche employees when dismissing children at the end of the school day. The purchase of hard drives and laptop has also increased professionalism, and has improved efficiencies. The Crèche was able to introduce exciting features such as the ‘Learning Journal’, in which Crèche employees can upload the progress of individual children online, allowing parents to access photographs of their children completing sessions, and read up on the progress of their child’s development. This was successful in generating greater relationships between the parent and Crèche community.



Children enjoying new facilities

The centre has clearly benefitted from this funding, and has an important role in the local military community. It also acts as an employer to service personnel families, for example both the Convenor and the treasurer are Forces wives. It has strong partnerships with organisations such as the Naval Command Personal Family Support groups. The important role of the Crèche in the local community can also be seen in the increased membership of the crèche service, with

the total number of children increasing from 29 in December 2015 to 47 in February 2017.

“Just to say a big thank you! The crèche has improved not just C's confidence, but mine also.”

- Parent Service User

“The place has such a warm, homely and welcoming atmosphere.”

- Parent Service User



The crèche has been able to reach 47 children in total, including engagement through activities that are held at the centre. They also host an ‘out of school’ service which supports 97 children from 68 families, 15 of which are forces families. Increasing demand on the service has meant the crèche is extending its opening hours, as well as expanding its service to the most vulnerable parents. This includes single parent families. Services include offering free access to music classes with a trained musician for children as young as two. The new facilities have gone far in aiding this extension of services. There was also an underspend of funds due the sourcing of a cheaper contractor. The saved costs are being re-invested to improving boarding in the attic which acts as a storage facility for the centre. Any remaining funds are going to be invested in improving the blinds.



Children enjoying new wetsuits

It is clear that the funding has allowed this important facility in the community to continue its work in a safer environment, with more efficient systems. The project has been successful in identifying the local need and seeking to provide the best possible care for both service and civilian families

Llangwm Community Centre: “WW1- A Village at War”

Priority met: Community Integration

Funding Awarded: £9,659

Region: Wales

In order to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, the Llangwm Community Centre worked in partnership with the local history society and the Village Voices organisation, to put together a bid to stage a performance entitled ‘WW1-A Village at War’.

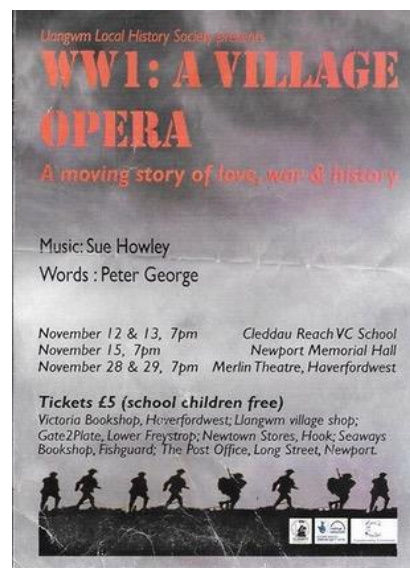
The project aimed to encourage a greater understanding and engagement amongst the local population on the role the village played in the war effort. The involvement of the Llangwm History Society aided this greatly, as they engaged in researching the local history of WWI, and helped in developing this history into a more engaging, and digestible format.

The performance was staged on 2ND June 2016 at St David’s Cathedral, attracting an audience of around 300 people. The content of the opera performance drew inspiration from the local wartime history of the village itself, for example the local women’s boycott of butter when prices were increased by local merchants, as well as the journey of two brothers who left for the war from the village. A particularly impressive feature of the project was that it mobilised the entire local community in the small village. From primary school children to war veterans, everyone was involved in some capacity. This included the creation of costumes, building props and preparing visual backdrops. In this light, the project can be seen as a truly successful community integration project. Funding from the Covenant Grant allowed the paying of Director’s fees, the hire of a small orchestra of 28 musicians and allowed the use of lighting and sound equipment.

Alongside the History Society, the local armed forces community played a key role in this project. This involvement can be seen in the role of military wives in one of the choirs, as well as one acting role being offered to a young soldier

The project organisers were also able to develop strong relations with Colonel Mark Stoter and Lt. Colonel Ian Gumm, through which a greater number of military families were encouraged to help prepare the performance, and attend on the evening. As a result of this project, strong relations between the local community and the 14th Signals Regiment have

been established.



Poster advertising the performance

The ability of this village to so successfully commemorate the sacrifices made by local residents during the war period has proved to be a source of immense pride for participants. Many have remarked upon the large wealth of knowledge they were now able to access about their own local history. Whilst the theme of the project was obviously rooted in WW1, the organiser commented that she felt it was successful in alerting the community to the role of the Armed Forces in times of need.

Elizabeth Rawlings, one of the main organisers of the event commented, ‘It’s appropriate that an

armed services charity is again helping us tell the story of the brave young men and their families back home who had to cope with the horrors of four years of war'. This emphasises the central role the Covenant Grant plays in commemorating the past, but also in raising the profile of the armed forces personnel amongst their local communities.

The performance was extremely well received, and was able to attract a great amount of media attention, for example on the Western Telegraph and BBC website. It was also the recipient of a National Award, a Judge commented:

"We were very struck by the ambition of this project, the mobilisation of so many in the community, its weaving of local stories into national events and the obvious significance it had in bringing the community together. To have such a project reach such a high standard and achieve its aims requires dedication and determination which was evident throughout.

It really was testament to the spirit of the community today and the reflection of the strength and fortitude of the community 100 years ago."

- John O'Brien, Co-founder Remember WW1.



Dave in the role of young soldier, 'Tom'



Local women as Village Fisherwomen

Participants also commented on the increased engagement they felt with commemorating the sacrifice made by members of the Armed Forces, past and present:

"There are many phrases and songs which move me terribly, not just during a performance but during each and every rehearsal - 'both their sons were dead; all of their children'/ we are wading in mud and shedding our blood/ libera me domine - and so much more. I often found myself thinking of the poor men in the trenches, the lovers parted, and the heartache of parents whose sons were at the front, while we rehearsed... the two-minute silence at Armistice is nothing compared to the amount of thought we have all silently given to those affected by the war since we started learning the opera two years ago".

- Anna

A DVD version of this performance has also been circulated, and has even reached the international stage, with countries like Australia, Portugal, Belgium and the USA able to access copies. Some links to the opera performance and comments from organisers have also been uploaded [online](#). Organisers also commented that relationships developed during this period have outlasted the timeframe of the project. This especially includes the relations with the local 14th Signals Regiment, who have experienced a strengthened integration with the local civilian community. This has cultivated the possibility and

potential for further collaborative projects to be organised.

Overall, both participants and audience members offered highly positive feedback and shared the ways in which the performance encouraged greater engagement with the local role of the Armed Forces. The involvement of the local base in helping to prepare the show

The role of the Armed Forces in helping to prepare the show, and participating in the performance, helped to bolster their local involvement in the community. It also helped to



Rehearsal of soldiers preparing for action

highlight the continuity of sacrifices made by the Armed Forces in times of need.



A German Soldier

Rosmini Centre Wisbech: Community- New Friends, New Places and New Challenges

Priority met: Community Integration

Funding awarded: £19,630

Region: East

This community centre based in Wisbech already provides a variety of services and activities for the local community, many of which are ex-service personnel. The project grew out of a steering group of ex-personnel approaching the centre with ideas to create a new support system for the service community, which would allow them to build a social network amongst themselves, but also allow a greater integration with civilian members of the community.

A project co-ordinator was appointed using Covenant funding, this individual would oversee the referral procedures as well as heading the steering group and organising volunteer activity. A Saturday morning drop-in session was held every week for one year, taking place from 8am to 2pm. The morning drop in session was staffed by both the co-ordinator and volunteers.

In addition to the drop-in sessions, there was also an activity and meeting opportunity which allowed members of all groups to come together. The activities varied, but included a monthly model making session which met on the first Monday of each month, where 7 of the 12 regular members were ex-service personnel. The weekly wordwork session held in the community workshop was also popular amongst the local community. A chess club was also held twice a week, and was also open to all.

The centre was also able to use funding to provide a series of skills workshops, with the aim of upgrading CVs and skillsets to aid employability. These courses included

'Emergency First Aid in the Workplace' and 'Food & Hygiene (Level 2)' .

There have been a number of positive impacts felt by this project in the local community. The majority of users were British, middle aged to elderly males, but several other groups were also reached. This included Polish and Latvian individuals, some of whom had served in the Russian Army and found the company of other veterans to be reassuring. Activities held at the centre have allowed greater integration, but have also allowed struggling service personnel and civilians to access key services.

One particularly effective example of the help offered by the centre can be seen in the case of Pip. He was offered help to find employment, the centre was able to provide him with support to complete his paperwork and a volunteer provided Pip transport to his interview. The application was successful, allowing him to take up paid work after a long period of unemployment.

Another user failed to find long term accommodation, resulting in homelessness. A social housing application was undertaken for him by volunteers at the centre. Numerous other examples of delivering services, such as providing transport to hospital appointments, offering food bank vouchers and night shelter referrals, all testify to the success of this project in offering veterans and the wider community vital services.

The centre has been able to deliver a positive service in the local community, responding to local challenges with heavy involvement from

local armed forces communities. The centre continues to offer a number of activities and support sessions for the local community, building on the success of their Covenant Grant project.



Stall on Armed Forces Day



A morning drop in session with both service and civilian community members

"My first impression of my visit to Rosmini Centre Wisbech (RCW) was the very friendly welcome, together with the details provided to me of the facilities available to veterans. It was clear to me that someone living alone, like myself, would be able to fill some of his leisure time in socially welcoming environment. Amongst the activities available is the opportunity to enjoy the frequent trips by Rosmini Centre Community Transport to places of interest; during my short period of membership I have already enjoyed trips to Cambridge, Bletchley Park, St Ives for a specialist antiques show. Particular interests can also be catered for and I was lucky enough to enjoy a trip to Northampton to see my sister, whom I have not seen for many months..... I have been promoting chess club to sharpen the wits by playing chess among friends which is for me a great pleasure and experts have indicated that such activity delays or prevents the onset of mental health issues...."
- Roland Fowler (ex RAF)

Heritage of London Trust Operations Ltd: “St George’s Woolwich: Transition”

Priority met: Community Integration

Funding awarded: £20,000

Region: London

Organisers sought to make the St George’s Garrison Church a space within which both civilian and service personnel could interact and engage with each other. Their five major aims of this project were:

- 1) To share a local heritage building with a cross section of the Woolwich communities
- 2) To ensure the history of the royal artillery is widely accessible and continues to be promoted
- 3) To provide local Woolwich community with a range of free public events in a unique setting
- 4) To use the site as a catalyst for social cohesion amongst the local communities- both civilian and military
- 5) To offer volunteering opportunities for the local communities

In 2011 the ownership of St George’s Garrison Church was transferred to Heritage of London Trust Operations (HOLT-OP), prior to this, the space was used primarily by the military. The organiser thus saw an opportunity through which greater community integration could be promoted. Working in partnership with Woolwich Barracks and organisations such as Greenwich Islamic Centre, Volunteer Centre Greenwich and the University of Greenwich, the organisers facilitated a series of events and an education programme to open up the space for use by both communities.

Through funding from the Grant, an outreach officer was employed to encourage community engagement over a nine month period. The officer worked alongside a team of volunteers to deliver the project. This included an ‘Armed Forces Day’ event where the Royal Artillery Living History group held an interactive session with costumes and memorabilia. Performances from the local orchestra also took place; the day attracted around 150 visitors. This was a mix of

both Armed Forces personnel and local civilian community members. London’s Open Square events also took place at St George’s, where around 200 people visited the space over the weekend. Further examples of the way in which the space has been used to promote community integration can be seen in the Greenwich and Lewisham Young Persons Theatre performances staged at St George’s. This local theatre group showcased several acts including a local Nepalese band, a dance group, a choir and a theatre performance illustrating the history of the Church. The space was also used by the National Citizenship Service, where a group of 16/17 year olds came to learn about the site and its military connections. This proved to be a very successful event with many of the young people inspired to offer their own services as volunteers. A Remembrance Day Service was held on the 11th of November, with around 100 people attending, including representatives from the local barracks.



Schools group on a trip to the Church

Another interesting element of this project was the design and production of an educational resource pack on the history of the Garrison church and the Royal Artillery, this was distributed to local schools to encourage visits to the site. This was designed by a Heritage Learning Consultant and contained four sections: memorials, Myths and Legends, A Local History Study of St George’s and a section on the Legacy of Empire. Each section had its own activities for various ages and abilities, as well as printable sheets containing information. Outreach sessions

to local schools took place where activities relating to the history of the Church and the military connection took place. Students commented: 'I think it was really interesting because some of it we've never heard of before.' The learning pack is free and available to use on [the website](#), and has succeeded in attracting local schools to visit the site.

The success of this project is rooted in the fact that new audiences have visited St George's, including community groups, local schools and local residents. It has been successful in raising the profile of the historic building and its ties with the local military presence. The completed learning pack will be an enduring legacy, which will help shape the perceptions and attitudes of young people towards the Armed Forces and this historic building for years to come. Whilst direct integration was not a major outcome of this project, the results of this project remain important in shaping attitudes and perceptions towards the local Armed Forces presence, particularly amongst young people.

Learning Pack for Schools



This learning pack has been funded with a grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund, awarded to Heritage of London Trust Operations in March 2016. The pack forms part of the eligible work under the grant aided project and was compiled by Julie Ricketts (learnheritage.co.uk).

This digital resource is intended to provide teachers with background information which will enable primary and secondary schools to engage with St George's Garrison Church, Woolwich.

The themes of the pack make connections between the local communities from which local school children are drawn and St George's, looking at its significance as a memorial, as a historic building, as a survivor of enemy attacks during two World Wars, and as a tangible record of the Royal Artillery's presence in Woolwich and, on a global scale, during the British Empire period.

The themes covered are Memorials, Myths and Legends, A Local History Study of St George's and Legacy of Empire. At the end of each section are some Learning Activities. The Myths and Legends activities are aimed at Key Stage 1, the Local History Study of St George's activities are aimed at Key Stage 2 and the Legacy of Empire Activities are aimed at Key Stage 3. The Memorials section has some general discussion topics, instead of activities. Teachers are invited to adapt these activities for different age groups and abilities, and they will find that the themes lend themselves to cross-curricular studies.

The resources are designed to inspire teachers to bring classes to visit the church and it is intended to collect evidence of ways that teachers use the resources pre- and post-visit, in order to share good practice.

Thank you to Royal Borough of Greenwich teachers from Heronsgate Primary, Montbelle Primary, Koinonia Federation, Thorntree Primary and Bishop John Robinson Primary, and to Jim Marrett of Woolwich Antiquarians, Alison Hales from the University of Greenwich, Helen Spencer from Historic England, Carol Fowler and Amanda Coombes for their attendance and input at Consultation events held in 2016. Thank you to Michael Hargrave for research assistance, and to Carolyn Ayers and Pauline Watson (Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust) for the information about the RBG Memorial Plaque.

© Heritage of London Trust Operations (HOLTops), author Julie Ricketts, learnheritage.co.uk | stgeorgeswoolwich.org

Photo: Chris Woodford | Design: Illustration Art Ltd



Havildar Umrao Singh VC

Honorary Captain Umrao Singh won the Victoria Cross in Burma in 1944, during the Second World War for setting 'a supreme example of gallantry and devotion to duty.' A field gun commander in the Mountain Regiment of the Indian Artillery, he withstood a 90-minute bombardment of guns and

mortars from the Japanese Army, then an attack on his gun position by two companies of Japanese infantry. Using a Bren light machine gun and rifle fire of the gunners, he was able to hold off the assault, but was wounded by two grenades.

A second round of attackers was also beaten off and only Singh and two other gunners were left alive, with bullet supplies running out. As a third round of attackers approached, Singh fought back with a heavy iron rod in hand-to-hand fighting, before being beaten unconscious and was found six hours later, with a serious head injury. He was presented with his VC by King George VI at Buckingham Palace in 1945, and is the last name on the VC memorial at St George's.

He met former Prime Minister, John Major at an event to mark the 50th anniversary of VE Day in London in 1995 and complained about the poor pensions received by VC holders, which led to it being increased from £100 to £1,300 a year.

Gurkha soldiers

The Brigade of Gurkhas, its Nepalese soldier units, has been a part of the British Army since 1815. It was firstly involved with conflicts in the Far East, but when Hong Kong was transferred to China, its base was moved to the UK. From 2010, women were allowed to join.

Nepalese Gurkhas, and non-British troops of the British East India Company Army and the British Indian Army, were denied being awarded the VC until 1911. Before then, they could be awarded the Indian Order of Merit. Since 1911, 13 Gurkhas of Nepalese heritage have been awarded VC's, most recently in 1965 to Rambahadur Limbu, during the Indonesia–Malaysia conflict. Today, Gurkha regiments of the Indian Army are given the Param Vir Chakra (PVC), which is India's highest medal and equivalent to the Victoria Cross. The Gurkha regiments are amongst the highest ranking Commonwealth units, in terms of medals awarded.

tions (HOLTops), author Julie Ricketts, learnheritage.co.uk | stgeorgeswoolwich.org

7

Introduction to the Learning Pack offered to schools

Extract from learning pack on the contribution of commonwealth soldiers

South Tyneside Council: Ex-Service Personnel and Reservists Employment Project
Priority met: The Coordination and Delivery of Support to the Armed Forces Community
Funding awarded: £20,000
Region: North East

The services launched under this project aimed to create a system by which the local business community, the service community and supporting organisations could connect and work effectively to overcome barriers to employment for veterans. In the North East, unemployment amongst ex-service personnel was anticipated to become a major issue. The recipients of this funding emphasised that their local region was a traditional 'hot bed' for recruitment in to the services, and therefore due to the Forces Restructuring programme, an increase in unemployment amongst this group would have to be addressed. The local need was also emphasised by the fact that 10,000 reservists are also recruited from the North East. Real, viable employment opportunities were therefore required to minimise the impact of the restructuring.

In light of this, the project identified three major aims:

1. To promote the benefits of employing ex-servicemen and to create permanent links between potential employers and those organisations supporting ex-servicemen into employment.
2. To establish links and pathways between existing support organisations
3. To promote the benefits of employing reservists and the support available to those who chose to do so.

Funding facilitated the recruitment of a project worker, who operated on a part time basis. The project worker helped to establish a 'drop-in' service which took place every fortnight, enabling veterans and reservists to access specific advice from support organisations on issues such as

debt, poor housing and unemployment. Many veterans commented that the sessions allowed them an opportunity to socialise, network and support each other.

The project co-ordinator also worked to educate local businesses on the benefits of employing ex-service personnel, particularly the incentives of the Defence Employer Recognition Team and also the Armed Forces Covenant. Some examples of the work the co-ordinator carried out to meet these aims included:

- Holding meetings with groups such as the Federation of Small Businesses Forum and the local council Economic Regeneration Team.
- Facilitating a 'drop-in' session where local employers from the businesses centre could become educated on these initiatives
- Hosting a recruitment evening with BT where members of the service community, and also some civilian groups, could come and learn about BT, understand the roles on offer and obtain advice on adapting CVs and how to apply successfully.



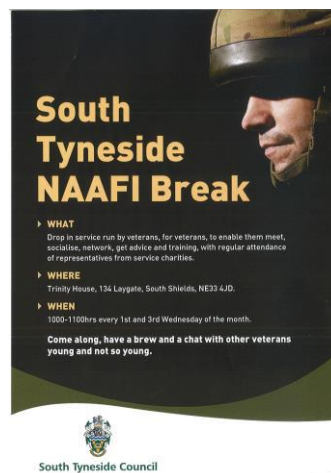
Promotion of recruitment event with BT

The project was successful in cultivating strong links and relations between the service community, businesses and support organisations. This can be seen in that 25 service charities and agencies were contacted and incorporated in to a referral system, which will provide veterans with a smoother access to particular services. These services will offer assistance to veterans in overcoming barriers to employment. As part of this project, the co-ordinator was also able to create a 'map of provisions' which would provide veterans with information about where they can access particular facilities in the North East. This was made available on the South Tyneside website.

Further to this, the council's job website also underwent a major re-vamp, aided by the project co-ordinator. A senior army officer stated that he felt this was the best and easiest website for the use of veterans. The website was presented as an example of best practise in advising other councils of improving their presentation of digital information. This has provided a long term resource for local veterans to access.

A positive example of the effect this work has had can be seen in the example of one ex-forces member. He was able to access help through the outreach service and he eventually managed to secure a project manager role within the South Tyneside Council.

This project represents a successful identification of local need, and an effective and efficient solution to challenge this. Funding allowed the creation of long term relationships, which will continue to offer benefits to the Veteran community in this region. The upgrade of the website and creation of resources, such as the services map, will outlast the lifespan of this project, thus providing real, long term advantages for the service community in the local area.



Promotion of drop-in services

The Regimental Charity of the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment: The Lions of England: Commemorating the past; celebrating the future

Priority met: Community Integration

Funding awarded: £12,000

Region: North West

The Duke of Lancaster regiment have a proud tradition of holding a Sunday remembrance commemoration on the Sunday closest to the 1st of July, the anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. This is particularly important in this region because a large number of the soldiers who fought in the Battle of the Somme had their roots in the North West of England. Recognising that over the last few years it had become an almost totally a military exclusive event, the organisers sought funding so that they could open up the event to members of the local community, and as a result encourage greater community integration.

Organisers therefore proposed hosting a community event, starting at Blackburn Cathedral but then moving in to the cathedral court, where a picnic and band concert was hosted. The Duke of Lancaster Regiment already has a history of seeking to engage local communities and members of ethnic minorities in their activities; this can be seen in an event to commemorate the Jullundur Brigade, held prior to planning this project.

The day began with the service of commemoration at the Blackburn Cathedral. This was a well-attended event, and attracted 5 Lord Lieutenants, 1 Lord Mayor and 17 mayors in their chains of office. Representatives of organisations like army cadets were also in attendance, as were veterans, serving soldiers and members of the wider community.

Following this, there was a parade in the town centre, where soldiers marched with bands, bayonets and flying colours. This attracted a large crowd of well-wishers from the local area, many of whom went on to the Cathedral court, where the band concert was taking place. In the court,

there were a number of information stands to explain the history of the Battle of the Somme, the local history of WW1 and the history of the Duke of Lancaster regiment in the North West. Invited guests were then offered a lunch of pie and peas in the nearby King George's Hall.

There was a total underspend of Covenant Grant Funding of £3140 due to the organisation being provided with resources from elsewhere. The organisation has already put plans in motion to use the remaining money elsewhere. This includes the production of a booklet to educate local communities on the recipients of the 42 Victoria Crosses awarded to members of the Regiment's antecedent regiments during WW1. These will be used to generate interest in another event being planned to commemorate the



Public awaiting the parade



Community comes together at the service

defence of Manchester Hill by the 16th Battalion of the Manchester Regiment.

The event received a great deal of positive recognition, from both the service personnel and wider civilian community. The Colonel of the Regiment stated in a letter:

“The support that we have received from our civic community was tremendous and very impressive. I think that it clearly demonstrated the affection and esteem that we are held in across the region and that the bonds that link us are as strong as ever. It is very humbling and we are deeply grateful.”

- The Colonel of the Regiment



Parade passes through the main road

This goes some way in exemplifying the success of the event in promoting improved relations between the civilian and service communities in the area.

Many participants expressed that they felt the place of the Regiment had strengthened within the local community. The event was thus successful in encouraging the interaction between the civilian and service personnel communities, whilst also educating the wider community on the role of the military, both in the past and in the present day.

FACT: Veterans in Practice Prison Programme

Priority Met: Former Service Personnel in the Criminal Justice System

Funding awarded: £19,750

Region: North West

The Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT) developed and delivered the 'Veterans in Practice: Prison Programme' project. This was a digital arts programme targeting veterans within the Criminal Justice System to collaboratively produce a creative project, which would explore and express the experience of being a veteran and a prisoner. The aim of this project was also to communicate this experience with wider society, and by doing so, target any negative perceptions held towards veterans in society.

FACT already had a history of working with veterans in the criminal justice system, through the 'Veterans in Practise' programme, and was able to make use of existing relationships and links with HMP Altcourse and HMP Liverpool. The project was carried out over duration of six months, over which it worked with around twenty participants and their families. An artist, Katie Davies, was commissioned to work with this group of 13 veterans in custody, and help them to explore and express their experiences.

The result of this work was the [film, 'The Separate System'](#) which was a single-channel cinematic film, and is now available to view online.

The success of the project is also rooted in the strong partnerships and relationships it was able to form with key organisations and individuals. This included two prisons, HMP Altcourse and HMP Liverpool, which allowed them to source potential beneficiaries quickly and efficiently. The veterans' organisation Liverpool Veterans HQ, were also able to provide support to participant veterans and form lasting relationships with them. This meant that the veterans were more likely to access the support and services provided

by Liverpool Veterans HQ once they had been released from custody.

'The Separate System' was premiered at a number of events nationally, with plans to take it to the international stage, allowing it to reach a large number of diverse audiences. Two cinema screenings were held at the FACT in Liverpool between March and April 2017, where it received a positive reaction and feedback. The film has been opened up to public audiences, with screenings planned up until the end of August.



Film still, 'The Separate System'

The project also managed to save some funding, and have allocated this to touring the film to various conferences and screenings. Veterans have also benefitted from the project, by acquiring new skills aiding employability, whilst also gaining important life skills. Veterans expressed feeling more confident, and a sense of pride at accomplishing something whilst they were incarcerated.

I really enjoyed participating in this project. It was a brilliant opportunity to use equipment I have not used before: microphones, sound recorders, cameras and the full session on learning about and how to use a film camera, has left me interested for more. It was a privilege to be involved and have a voice on my experiences in the Service and in community and in prison.

- Mark, participant Veteran

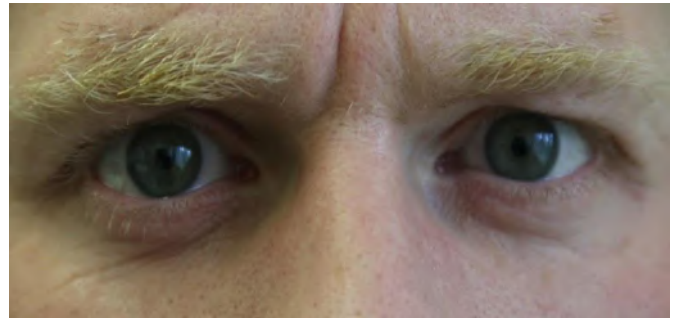
A further positive outcome from the project is the on-going engagement of the veterans in the 'Veterans in Practise' programme. One veteran who was granted release has joined the project organisation team, whilst others have expressed interest in staying involved.

The project has been successful in working towards challenging stereotypes and negative perceptions of veterans in wider society. The film provides a way by which members of society can be better educated on the experiences of veterans across the military and criminal justice systems. It evocatively explores the profound sense of displacement experienced by veterans.

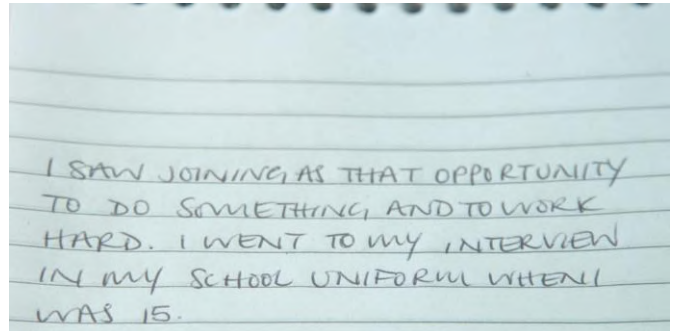
Educating the wider public to make them aware of the issues faced by these veterans is a vital step in providing veterans long term rehabilitation in to society.

The project has helped to widen the artistic opportunities available to veterans and was another great success. The feedback from the veterans involved in the project was extremely positive. The sense of achievement and the creation of something purposeful and meaningful have been evident throughout each workshop. The veterans have expressed their thanks, happiness and pride in creating a piece of art which serves to illustrate their experiences and show the general public with it is to be a military veteran.

- Keith McDonnell, Gym Manager at HMP Altcourse



Film still, 'The Separate System'



Veterans shared their personal experiences of military life in a series of workshops

Hampshire Cultural Trust: “Gurkha Connections”

Priority met: Community Integration

Funding awarded: £20,000

Region: South East

‘Gurkha Connections’ was a project launched to promote better integration amongst the Gurkha population and local young people. It involved young people researching and designing an exhibition and commemorative book aimed at chronicling the contribution of Gurkha soldiers and the wider Nepalese community to Britain. The project culminated in an exhibition held at Aldershot Military Museum. Whilst carrying this project out, the organisers aimed to break down barriers between communities through increased engagement and the development of long term relationships.

Organisers recognised that there was a deal of race tensions in the Aldershot area of Hampshire, as there was a developing diverse community in the area. Applicants felt that these issues needed to be addressed through positive integration and education to combat segregation. The project therefore emerged from this need, but was also driven by the fact that many young people in the area were not given the opportunity to learn about the contribution of Gurkhas or the role they have played in the British army.

The project worked with a group of 27 young people, each aged between 12 and 18. These participants were from a wide range of backgrounds, including White British, those with Nepali heritage, those from service families as well as from civilian backgrounds. They were split in to three groups to research and design the exhibition. There were several key elements to the project. The research element was vital in encouraging the integration aspect of the project, as they interviewed individuals from the Nepalese community on their experiences in Britain, and 11 soldiers from the 10QOGLR were interviewed in their experiences in the war. A group of 12 Gurkha veterans also offered insights to the young people, including stories of conflict and times when they fought alongside their British counterparts. Funding from the grant also

permitted visits to Aldershot Military Museum and the Gurkha Museum in Winchester to undertake further research, and to learn more about designing and delivering an effective exhibition.

Young people were also able to develop their personal skills from the project, and benefitted from workshops delivered by a senior project curator from the British Museum, and the events co-ordinator at the Hampshire Cultural Trust. These workshops taught the young people how to deliver the key messages of their work most effectively. Photography workshops were also delivered to the participants, and they went on to photograph military personnel from 10 QOGLR and civilian members of the Nepalese community. These were then edited to form part of the final exhibition, which also contained objects and items of importance for the Nepalese community as well as items symbolising their relationship to the British army.



Exhibition workshop

The project as a whole is amazing and is providing young people with great opportunities and skills at an early stage that are increasingly hard to come by in the museum sector. It is well-structured and meaningful for the communities involved, exactly the kind of project that smaller museums should be running and that larger museums and funding bodies should be supporting. It was a real privilege to be involved and I can't wait to see the final exhibition!"

- Helen, senior project co-ordinator,
British Museum

The project benefitted greatly from the strong relationships fostered between partner organisations. In particular, the regiment 10 QOGLR provided a great deal of time and assistance to the young people, encouraging positive relations between the youth and the service personnel. Added to this, the participants were also able to benefit from contact with the Maddhat Shamuha organisation, which are a charity providing support to the local Nepalese community. This allowed the students to access a wider network of people. Added to this, the Greater Rushmoor Nepali Community were helpful in promoting the project to key Nepalese groups in the area, particularly in encouraging them to visit the exhibition.



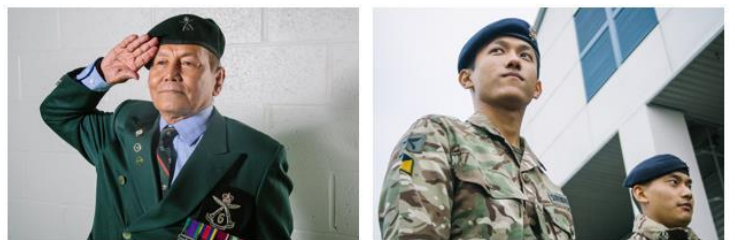
Participants meet Gurkha war veterans



Launch night of the exhibition

The final exhibition was held at Aldershot Military Museum from 25th March to 4th June 2017. It was launched with a private viewing, where participants, their families, and specially selected guests from the Nepalese community were invited to attend. A celebration event was held at the end of the event, where young people shared their successes and experiences.

The legacy of the project will extend far beyond the completion date of the programme. The final photographs taken at the exhibition have been added to the Hampshire Archives. A commemorative book following the project has been distributed to three local libraries, local schools and Nepalese support organisations. The engagement and interaction between the communities has helped to develop cross cultural relationships, going some way in bringing down barriers to community integration. Young people also benefitted, with 22 of the participants being awarded the Arts Award Discover, something which they can use to enrich their own applications for further study or for employment.



Examples of photographs included in the exhibition

Partner colleges also offered feedback on the project, particularly on the positive impact it had on the young people.

'As a College we were delighted to be invited to be part of this project for many reasons...Not only could the students use their skills and knowledge gained from their studies, in a real life context, they were also able to develop a range of new skills. The students were working with new peers, external trainers and members of the community, building their team work and communication skills, plus gaining new practical skills in photography and exhibition design. One of the biggest benefits was for staff and students to find out about the history of the Gurkhas and their role in the British Army...There was a great sense of pride at being able to be part of this project across all the students who took part.'

- Laura Wakefield, Employability
Coordinator, The Sixth Form College
Farnborough

The Surrey Care Trust: “Learning Together”

Priority met: Community Integration

Funding awarded: £19,085

Region: South East

This project grew out of a previously funded proposal, in order to extend the geographical reach of the organisation. “Learning Together” proposed to combine mentoring with ‘first steps’ learning for both military and service personnel, thereby creating an environment within which both groups can interact and engage with each other, whilst gaining new skills.

It was felt that this service would be much in demand, due to the fact that there was a local army training camp at Pirbright. This meant that many service families were new to the area, and therefore facing unique challenges, for example a lack of support networks and the on-going threat of forced mobilisation. Added to this were pressures and obstacles to army spouses finding employment after arriving in a new area. It was felt that through the provision of skills workshops, each of these challenges could be addressed.

Funding allowed the appointment of a home-based project co-ordinator. The co-ordinator’s main goal was to promote interest in the classes, whilst also seeking new ways to engage interest amongst the local community. The co-ordinator worked with the committee at the Garrison community centre and liaised with the Deepcut military base to encourage their involvement. A total of twelve classes took place in a centre close to the Pirbright army training centre, and varied across a range of different topics. These included: DIY, First Aid, Cooking, Improving Confidence and Self Esteem and Budgeting. These ‘pop up’ courses were enjoyed by participants, with many expressing their positive experiences in a feedback collecting session towards the end of the project.

On the mentoring side, the project organisers were able to offer tailored, one-to-one support to military and civilian users. The mentoring service was well received amongst existing agencies, which were able to take on referrals from the service. In total, 119 individuals took part in the short courses offered, 68 of these people were from service backgrounds.



Participants taking up a cooking class

Participants in the project emphasised their positive experience in feedback collected at the end of this project. It is clear that real benefits were felt from the work carried out by this organisation; this can be seen in that 70% of participants stated that they felt a personal benefit from attending one of the courses offered. Course evaluation forms also revealed that participants experienced a positive boost to their social interaction and felt like their confidence in social environments had increased as a result of this. The organisers stated that they particularly felt this from the new mothers in the neighbourhood who lacked support networks outside the home; they now felt that they had a hobby and interest they could explore with new found friends.

The mentoring aspect of the project also delivered some powerful results. Volunteer mentors were able to provide mentees with advice and support regarding a wide array of issues including financial problems, unemployment and a lack of suitable housing. An important case study symbolises the success of this scheme, where a military wife was referred to this scheme from the Homestart charity. She sought mentoring in order to help her find a job, and over a period of time she was able to work with the organisation to increase her confidence and improve her CV. At the end of this, she was able to find employment.

Participants expressed that they ‘enjoyed socialising with other mums’ and stated that they enjoyed ‘the really friendly atmosphere’. The project was thus successful in fostering a positive environment within which new friendships and networks could develop.

The project was able to save some costs and utilised the surplus funding to prolong their mentoring project, and offer a few more short courses. Feedback forms indicated that service users enjoyed these learning opportunities so offering more of these was definitely beneficial for the local community. In the long term, the links established with both the Deepcut military base and the Mytchett children’s centre has allowed the potential for future collaborative working, permitting the delivery of more beneficial projects in the area.

The organisers were thus successful in identifying a real local need for increased integration amongst both groups, but also in recognising that each individual had their own needs. The combined package of learning and mentoring was therefore an innovative and effective solution to address the challenges facing the local area.



Participants taking a first aid class



Participants during a craft class

Devon County Council: “Devon Armed Forces Community Service Directory”

Priority met: The Coordination and Delivery of Support to the Armed Forces Community

Funding Awarded: £12,700

Region: South West

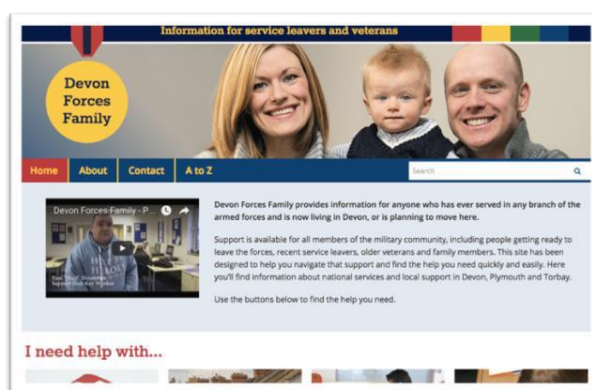
This application was made on behalf of the Devon Armed Forces Community Wellbeing Partnership (DAFCWP) which provides a support service to members of the Armed Forces and work to help improve their health and wellbeing. The proposal was to launch [an online service directory](#) which would contain practical information, effective signposting to appropriate services and would combine existing local directories across Devon. This proposal was seen as a way of targeting the issues presented in a Health Needs Assessment published by the DAFCWP in September 2014. This found that some veterans experienced physical and mental health problems, which civilian services were not equipped to deal with. This often meant that veterans could not access specialised support, with many stating that they found existing systems too complicated to navigate.

In Devon, this was a particularly pressing need, as there is a large proportion of ex-service personnel who have settled in the country after leaving the Armed Forces.

The DAFCWP proposed creating an online platform which would simplify this process by gathering all relevant details of locally available services in one place, thereby making it easily accessible. This directory is valuable in making veterans and their families aware of the services and support systems that are available to them.

Creating an online service directory was seen as the most effective measure to tackle this issue. There are a number of reasons for this, applicants emphasised that websites were easily updated if contact details were changed, and were accessible internationally. This would be of particular benefit to service personnel serving overseas, but looking for available support once they leave the Armed Forces.

A series of focus groups was held with the target audience of the online directory, in order to ensure that the end result would be fit and appropriate for purpose. Following this, a working group was created which commissioned a communications campaign to promote the site.



Home page of the directory website

The approach towards creating this site has been a ‘whole person’ approach, examining their needs across a wide range of categories including health, housing, employment, education and welfare. By carrying out these processes with heavy involvement of the armed forces community, the organisers were able to ensure that their content was suited and meaningful to the audience they were delivering it to. Subsequently, funding permitted the development and maintenance of the site. There was a launch event for the site held in December 2015. The site contained a wide range of printable content, and also included videos made by veterans, for other veterans to use as sources of information.

A film was also produced to encourage awareness and use of this new directory, this was 30 seconds long and it proved successful in generating at least 2,797 people to click on the link to the website.

A campaign was launched to advertise the services of the online directory, and included a number of social media posts on both Facebook and Twitter. The campaign began on 28th June and finished on the 28th of December 2016, and was able to achieve:

- 3,107 new users of the website
- 7,703 page views on the website
- 246 page likes on the Facebook page
- And 2,797 web link clicks from Facebook
- 9,727 new sessions on the website
- 90% people entering the site on to the home page, with 'Information for Families' and 'Housing' pages both being most popular.

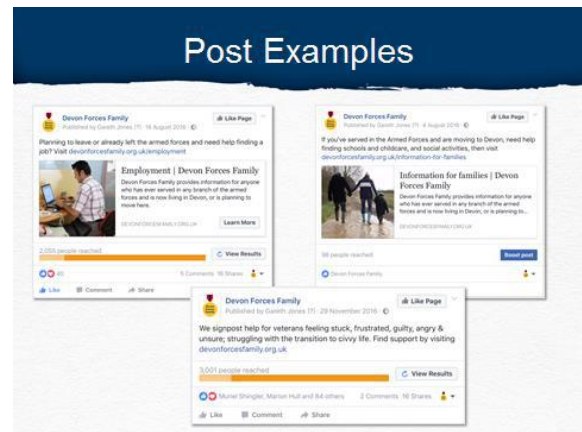
Feedback has been mostly positive, in particular the Royal British Legion has commented on how user-friendly the service is. Teena Barrett, Case Officer for the RBL stated:

“The layout looks user-friendly; the content is informative and provides easy access to relevant services.”

-Teena Barrett, Case Officer. The Royal British Legion

Funding has already been secured to maintain and update the site until 2018, and sustainable funding solutions are being actively pursued by Devon County Council.

The real success of this project is rooted in the fact that it is based on a digital platform, and therefore has the potential to reach a wide audience and range of people.



Some examples of social media posts

1st Battalion the Royal Irish Regiment: “Tern Hill Observatory”

Priority met: Community Integration

Funding awarded: £7,295

Region: West Midlands

The Unit Welfare Officer of the 1st Battalion The Royal Irish Regiment sought funding to get his project of constructing an observatory underway. This innovative idea contributed greatly to encouraging community integration in the area. The location of the observatory was also strategically selected, in the community centre which is used by both civilian and service personnel groups. The observatory thus really targeted a local, specialised need, and was able to meet this need effectively both on time and on budget.

The project was born out of a real local need felt by the Regiment. In particular, there was recognition that the Battalion would be stationed at Tern Hill for a long term period, and therefore it was felt that greater integration amongst the local community was needed. This was felt especially in the case of school children. It was felt that constructing something of this kind would provide both groups an opportunity to interact over a shared facility and activity. There is currently a 50/50 military and civilian split, making this an important consideration. Further to this, there was already an attempt to upgrade public facilities in the area. This included building a community park and a multi games area. These facilities already encouraged a degree of integration, and the building of an observatory complimented this. A local school also commented that they lacked outdoors facilities for children to use, thus the idea was also able to meet this need.

The final observatory measured 2.7m, and was delivered fully within the budget. In addition to this, Covenant Grant funding also allowed the purchase of a SCT telescope, a laptop, a solar filter, a Nikon camera and an eye piece.

An official opening event was held on 2nd March 2016, and was well attended with various local groups in attendance, as well as local notables such as education authority representatives and military senior command figures. The launch was opened up to 365 families, school children from the local area, and the Shropshire Astronomical Society. The Lord Mayor of Market Drayton officially opened up the observatory for use. The impact of the observatory in the local area has been highly positive. A number of interest groups have benefitted from the facility. Local schools have expressed interest in using the observatory to help students completing science projects. In particular, there are nearby grammar schools which offer GCSE Astronomy, making this facility incredibly useful for them. The Shropshire Astronomical Society also runs a Stargazing event on the first Saturday of each month.



Front view of the observatory

Organisers are also looking to introduce new outreach events to encourage greater interest in using the observatory. The local police have also indicated interest in using the facility as part of their educational induction programme, which offers at-risk youth the chance to re-integrate in to society through education. In a similar way, social services have been exploring ways in which children experiencing neglect could benefit from taking up a new hobby.

The level of interest across such a wide variety of organisations emphasises the real need that was felt for a facility of this nature. In particular, the organisers' aim of encouraging greater integration and raising the profile of the military in the local community can be seen to have been achieved.

Looking to the future, there are plans in place to encourage greater involvement with the Royal British Astronomical Society, who would be able to provide informative and educational sessions to the local community. Organisers have also sought ways of improving existing systems by introducing an online booking system, where interested parties would be able to book time using the space. There is also a commitment to keep the usage of the space free of charge, thereby making it accessible for all. Any upgrades or improvements would be self-funded by the regiment, making the project sustainable for many years to come.



Covenant funded technology



**PROUDLY
SUPPORTING
THOSE WHO
SERVE.**
