



THE GEN



May 2020

VETERANS IN CRISIS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

This newsletter is aimed at the community of veterans and their families in Sunderland. We hope you enjoy it!

Please contact us if you would like to comment on any of the items in these pages. We are planning to issue it every month, get in touch if there is anything you would like to contribute to the next edition. Email john@veteransin crisis.co.uk or call Ger or Claire on 0191 5671878.

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We did it!

Everyone knows that VICS' headquarters is The **ERV** in Roker. What you may not know is that we are tenants of the building: it is owned by our training partners, Springboard North East.

We have an excellent relationship with Springboard, but we want to own the building ourselves. Apart from the security that will give us, we will be able to invest in it knowing that it is ours.

We have therefore launched a campaign in March to buy it. The building has been valued at £120,000 and early supporters have been Frank Bruno and Ross Kemp.

We started with a Crowdfunding campaign in partnership with Aviva, the insurance giants. We passed our £15,000 target with two weeks to spare, and by the time the campaign ended we have raised almost £16,000. We are grateful to the 202 people who contributed – from all over the country and abroad.

Watch this space for news of more fundraising plans to buy the **ERV**.

[#veteranshelpingveterans](#)

It's a drop-in, Jim – but not as we know it

The backbone of the VICS operation from day one has been the drop-in at the Gunners in Mary Street. The idea was to replicate the atmosphere of the NAAFI – great crack, some food and drink (non-alcoholic, of course) and a chance for everyone to meet friends and make new ones.

Of course, Covid-19 and the social distancing rules put paid to that. Undeterred, the drop-in has gone on-line. Every Tuesday from 10.00 am until 1.00pm you can join everyone else at the virtual drop-in on Messenger – like the VICS page on Facebook and you'll be added.

Anyone who wants to keep in touch outside of these hours can join the VICS Whatsapp group open [this link](#) or email claire@veteransin crisis.co.uk and she'll add you.



ERV

Army veterans will know this, but for everyone else's benefit ERV stands for 'Emergency Rendezvous'. This is the place designated before troops go out on patrol; if anything goes wrong, everybody heads for the ERV where they know they'll be well looked after.

All rise!

VICS has had many supporters since we started, and we are grateful to you all. There's one that deserves special mention, though – Greggs the Baker. They have gifted us pies, pasties, cakes and sandwiches every Tuesday for the drop-in.

When the Covid-19 restrictions came in, and we couldn't meet, they have carried on. They have given us trays full of delectable eatables to distribute to people who can't get out.

After us, on the count of three – thank you Greggs!

Funding news

We are delighted to announce that VICS has been awarded two grants from the Armed Forces Covenant. We are delighted because they will secure the work of VICS for the next two years.

Under the Positive Pathways strand, we will be funded to run activities in partnership with our many partners. They will be co-designed – which means that all our members will have a say in what we do. It could be outdoor adventuring, climbing, abseiling, or running



Dianne Breheny of Greggs and Ger with bags of Yum Yums for distribution

on the beach.

We are partnering with the Foundation of Light, Sunderland Football Club's charitable arm, to deliver the other programme. "Removing Barriers to Family Life" is designed to help the families of veterans to enjoy a full and healthy life with their

partners and children.

Everything from cooking to football will be on offer at the Beacon, the Foundation's state of the art facility in Roker. If you are interested in this programme, contact Claire on 0191 567 1878 or by email at claire@veteransincrisis.co.uk

Sunderland Together

The Sunderland football community has come together for a very special fundraising initiative to support four local good causes playing their part to protect the most vulnerable during the COVID-19.

Wearside supporters' groups, Sunderland Branch Liaison Council, and the Red and White Army have joined forces with Sunderland AFC to launch "Sunderland Together" which aims to raise vital funds for charities tackling food poverty, social isolation, poor mental health and unemployment.

Together they have nominated Foundation of Light, The Salvation Army, Washington Mind and Veterans in Crisis to benefit from the campaign with all money raised being split equally between the good causes to provide life-changing services during and after lockdown.

Sunderland AFC Manager Phil Parkinson said "This is a fantastic initiative by the supporters' groups. Once again, our fans have shown that they will support each other, and those in need, when it matters most.

"I would encourage supporters to give what they can. Just £1 will make a difference to local lives and help to ensure that thousands of people across the region get the support they need."

To make a donation visit the dedicated **Sunderland Together** fundraising page <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/sunderlandtogether>



VICS in the pandemic

VICS' mission is veterans helping veterans, and during the Covid-19 lockdown we've been doing just that

Ger and Claire have been contacting everyone by phone, email or social media to make sure that they are well. Food parcels are being distributed to anyone who needs them, and special arrangements are being made for anyone who needs anything else.

Ger has also been busy delivering vital equipment to hospitals and GP surgeries in the VICS van.

If you, or any veteran you know (or someone in their family) needs help, contact Ger or Claire on 07850263421 or 07495 825858 or the office number: 0191 567 1878.

Keeping in touch

Not being able to see other people during lockdown is tough. Help is at hand, though! You can still see Ger and a host of interesting people by logging on to the weekly podcast on the VICS Youtube channel.

Past interviewees have included our patron, Kevin Ball, SAFC Directors Tom Sloanes and the Sky Television presenter Dave Jones, and many of our own members. The current conversation is between Ger and Sophie Ashworth, Head of Marketing at the Beacon of Light, when he finds out about Sunderland Together campaign.

You can log-on [here](#)

VICS doing its bit

VICS Directors Gloria Middleton and Ger Fowler have led the line for us in our response to Covid-19.

Gloria (retired partner in the Westbourne Medical Group) is now the Armed Forces lead for Sunderland CCG as well as one of the four hub managers for the GP Extended Access Service.

Working out of the Houghton Covid-19 Assessment Hub, she sees patients referred from GPs who may have the virus. On her days off, she is on-call as a first responder for the ambulance service.

Gloria takes inspiration from Captain (now Colonel) Tom: 'We should all follow in his footsteps...a few steps each day will take us to where we want to be,' she said.

Ger and Claire have been busy too, making sure that VICS members are well and have everything they need.



Engagement Rendezvous!

Veterans Pam Maddocks and Kev Dyer got more than they bargained for when they joined VICS' drop-in at the Gunners.

They went for the friendship and support of fellow veterans, but Pam and Kev found each other. Both widowed and in their late fifties, they weren't looking for love, but it blossomed anyway.

'There was an initial attraction, and we got on like a house on fire,' said Kev, a veteran of the 1st Battalion Royal Fusiliers. 'One Remembrance Day we went to the official opening of the ERV and then onto a pub for a drink with everyone else,' said Pam, a medic in the RAF. 'Then Kev asked me to go out for a meal with him, and that was it.'

Covid-19 lockdown meant that they had to decide – either have a long-distance relationship or join forces. 'The happy thing about Covid-19 is that Kev wouldn't have moved in without it and we wouldn't have realised that we are so suited to each other,' said Pam.

Kev agreed. 'Pam has her dog, and I've got mine – and even they are getting on great!' he said.

They are now formally engaged, and the big day is planned for next March. 'If it wasn't for VICS we would never have met,' said Pam. 'We are just one big happy family.'

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www.veteransincrisis.co.uk

youtube.com/channel/UCVmFwTusBMTj-5AVF6IVGHA

contribute to the next edition.

Email john@veteransincrisis.co.uk or call Ger or Claire on 0191 5671878

ERV, 1 Roker Avenue, Sunderland, SR6 0BY

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