



LANCASHIRE VETERANS HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROJECT



Introduction: My name is Dave Whitworth and I head up a small CIC, DWS Lifeskills. We are funded by the armed forces covenant and Lancashire county council in the Blackpool, Wyre & Fylde community. We primarily concentrate on health & wellbeing. Our project is to engage with as many veterans as possible and help them to

improve health, both mentally and physically, and any other issues that will improve their wellbeing. I served 10 years in the Army in several corps, RAOC, RLC and APTC. I am utilising my physical training skills to give recovery, mobility and flexibility advice and work closely with other organisations when signposting is needed (RBL, SSAFA, LCC, NHS). I am also receiving reciprocal referrals from all those organisations for veterans in my community, showing hugely positive results.

Lancashire County Council: With support from Alf Clempson (Lancashire's County Council Armed Forces Champion) we have worked on complex individual cases often signposted via the council and adult social care. These cases are generally ex-forces people who are suffering badly and need additional support. We believe having a military background allows us to not only see situations differently, but we also understand many issues that the veteran may be going



Alf Clempson & Dave Whitworth

through. We have visited many veterans in their own home and between us formulate a way forward. Often this entails getting others involved such as the RBL, SSAFA, Military Veterans Service etc. We both have extensive contacts within the armed forces community on both a local and national basis. We are grateful to Alf who himself is a veteran, serving twenty-four years Scots Guards and LCC for helping with extra funding. Councillor Clempson continues to support us because he has needed our support himself, attends our events and sees the real results and progress we are making within the armed forces community.



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Armed forces mentor and health & wellbeing coach









A coffee morning arranged as a result of work carried out in conjunction with the GPs surgeries.

NHS: The local GP surgeries are the key to finding veterans, as we need to adhere to GDPR. We are currently working with 8 surgeries (Poulton le Fylde, Thornton, Cleveleys & Fleetwood). By sending a text to every patient on their books, asking them if they have served in the armed forces. Once they have received the response they catalogue and then inform me of the number (on average 200 per surgery). We then fill the required number of envelopes with a letter inviting the veteran to a coffee morning and informing veterans of our project. We acquire contact details, with the individuals consent and then add them to the database and start inviting them to events and keeping them informed of all our activities. We have contacted about

2000 veterans in total this year (1200 individual veterans have positively engaged with us over the last 12 months). Another positive outcome is that we have had calls from people who don't want to take part in the events but keep our letter and have called us in times of need.

Covid-19: Many of the veterans and their families we have contact with are elderly and some have struggled for various reasons during the recent lockdown period. Knowing isolation could cause anxiety and worry we wanted to do all we could during the Covid-19 pandemic. With this in mind, since lockdown we have been in regular contact with all our veterans of all ages. Still working closely with our GP surgeries and following all guidelines, we have been offering support in terms of shopping, collecting prescriptions, talking to isolated veterans & generally ensuring the health and wellbeing of all is our priority. We have sent lots of tips and examples of how to maintain mobility & flexibility in the home by doing specific exercises. We've sent out some fun quizzes and have also helped individuals with financial & personal problems by signposting to relevant veterans' organisations or social services. We have noticed that our numbers have increased on events as time has moved on and we are now achieving the highest numbers on all our events, even before the pandemic started.

Test	Poor	Average	Good
6.  Keep the forehead and chest on the ground and lift the straight arms upwards.	less than 15 cm	15-20cm	more than 20 cm
SCORE			
7.  Reach behind the back to try to touch the fingers together.	fingers more than 15cm apart	fingers 10-15cm apart	fingers touching
8.  Keep the arms straight and try to cross them over as far as possible.	cross at wrist	cross at elbow	cross at upperarm
9.  Keep the foot flat on a stool and press the knee towards the wall.	more than 50°	40°-50°	less than 40°

An example of the exercise sheets sent out during lockdown to help



Weekly breakfast club hosted by Mens Shed in Fleetwood

Events: Our funding is also used to run socially inclusive events. We host a weekly **breakfast club** in Fleetwood, in collaboration with Mens Shed. We have a cooked breakfast, as many brews as one can drink and great social interaction/banter for veterans. Mens Shed cook & serve the breakfast to us, that we provide free for all our veterans. We invite local councillors and NHS employees to come and discuss their work in the community.

Coffee mornings/lunches are held monthly in Thornton Cleveleys at a local church community hall, where we have coffee/tea & biscuits and a free lunch. We discuss trips that we are going to undertake, and we talk about local issues and any individual problems. We have different organisations visiting to discuss what they are doing in the local community, and we have a trained psychotherapist available to help with any mental health problems.



Coffee at Christchurch, Thornton-Cleveleys



Quiz night at Norbreck Bowling Club

Quiz nights are our most well supported and popular event. They are held monthly at the Norbreck bowling club, who are very supportive and encourage their members to participate which helps social interaction. They are fun nights and the questions are not too difficult. On average we have 65 in attendance.

Over the last 12 months we have arranged 12 **trips** that have been hugely popular, working within the covid guidelines and working around lockdown periods. The minibus has always been as full as we were allowed. We have visited Eden camp twice, Leeds armoury twice, Liverpool maritime & RAF museum, walking days in the lake district and around Lancashire, and local barracks.



Visit to the Wyre light



Spectators at the kayaking Fleetwood boating lake

Kayaking has been a popular event. Working with the outdoor adventure group, Fleetwood. We have managed to run 6 events. They provide the boats and all safety equipment and have a couple of veterans who are the safety instructors. It's a relaxing couple of hours paddling away at your own pace on the boating lake in Fleetwood. This is popular with all age groups and physical abilities. We have had men in their 70's, amputees and granddaughters of veterans taking part. 150 different individuals took to the water over the period, which is fantastic.

Walking: We have arranged several walking days and many local walks ending with a coffee, which have been enjoyable bimbles for all age groups. We have climbed a few peaks and toured the local historical spots. The aim is to give some who would not normally go walking the opportunity to make the most of the outdoors and to improve general fitness. Also to chat and socialize in a relaxed and spacious environment.



Coffee time after an enjoyable walk

Gym & fitness sessions: We have staged weekly fitness sessions in a range of local gymnasiums, which have been popular. Our professional and bespoke fitness programmes have been utilized by dozens of individuals of all ages and abilities.

Psychotherapy: Our therapy sessions, conducted by a level 7 therapist have been extremely beneficial for those attending. We have several attendees now ready to go to work and even more now ready to get back into the community. The results of both group and private sessions have been very rewarding to all the team. We continue to support/advocate for veterans using any services with mental health issues.

Gallery:

