

Veterans WORLD

Issue 34



Man's best friend helps get the wheels turning



"Learning something new tests my brain and gives me something else to focus on"

PAGE 6 READY...STEADY...COOK!



The Veterans Welfare Service supporting veterans in custody

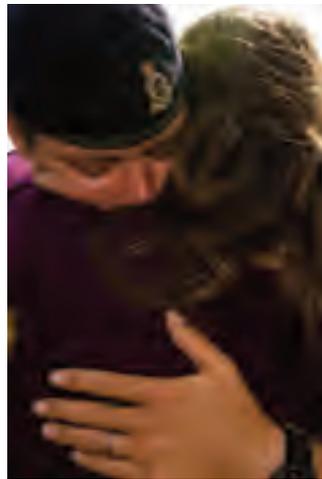
PAGE 8 VETERANS IN CUSTODY



Advice from the Forces Pension Society about pension transfers

PAGE 18 PENSIONS

HELP AND SUPPORT FROM **Veterans UK**



Call the Veterans-UK Helpline: 0808 1914 2 18

Email: veterans-uk@mod.uk

Web: www.gov.uk/veterans-uk Facebook: Veterans UK

Twitter: [@VeteransUK_MOD](https://twitter.com/VeteransUK_MOD)

**You may be offered a call back if lines are busy*

“It’s good to know that someone cares”
- Page 9



“The Invictus Games has changed my life”
- Page 13



6



14



10



8

CONTENTS

- 4 News
- 6 Ready...Steady...Cook
- 8 Veterans in Custody
- 9 HMS Heroes
- 10 Ex-Marine gets wheels turning on charity partnership
- 12 Navy veteran becomes UK’s first blind chartered tax consultant
- 13 Let the games begin!
- 14 Helping bereaved service families heal
- 16 The Armed Forces Covenant
- 18 Pension transfers
- 20 Military to civilian
- 21 Connecting service leavers to the business community
- 22 Support for veterans facing homelessness

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NEWS

2014 SIR JOHN HOLMES INDEPENDENT MEDAL REVIEW UPDATE

Eligibility and application details for new awards.

Berlin Airlift

The General Service Medal 1918-62 with clasp 'BERLIN AIRLIFT' will be awarded for at least one day's service to all aircrew, RAF and civilians who took part in the Berlin Airlift operation from 25 June 1948 to 6 October 1949 inclusive. Applications for the new clasp will be assessed from 1 March 2015 onwards. The first of the awards will be made towards the end of that month (however these timings remain under review).

Cyprus 1955-59

Those who participated in the suppression of acts of terrorism in Cyprus between 1 April 1955 and 18 April 1959 will qualify for the General Service Medal 1918-62 with clasp 'CYPRUS' if they served for 90 days or more. The qualifying period has been reduced from 120 days, bringing it into line with the qualifying period for service during the Kenya anti-terrorism campaign.

Cyprus 1963-64

Following The Sir John Holmes Independent Medal Review the government has announced that a new clasp has been given approval. Those servicemen who served in Cyprus

during the period 21 December 1963 to 26 March 1964 will be awarded the General Service Medal (1962) with clasp 'CYPRUS 1963-64'. Applications for the new clasp will be assessed from 1 March 2015 onwards. The first of the awards will be dispatched towards the end of that month (however these timings remain under review).

South Atlantic: The South Atlantic Medal

The medal with distinguishing rosette was awarded for 1 days' service in the Falkland Islands or their dependencies or in the South Atlantic, south of 35° south and north of 60° south, or for 1 operational sortie south of Ascension Island, between 2 April and 14 June 1982. Following The Sir John Holmes Independent Medal Review the qualifying period for the award of the South Atlantic Medal without the Rosette will be extended from 12 July to 21 October 1982, when the airfield at Mount Pleasant became operational.

Applications for all medals are being accepted and will be assessed and dealt with in a strict date order.

Application form link:

www.gov.uk/apply-medal-or-veterans-badge/apply-for-a-medal

NEW EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT FOR VETERANS IN NORTH WALES



**THE
POPPY
FACTORY**

A new employability consultant has been appointed by The Poppy Factory to assist wounded, injured and sick veterans across Wales into mainstream employment.

Nicola Darton, based in North Wales, is the latest addition to The Poppy Factory's "Getting You Back To Work" programme – a nationwide service offered by the charity to help veterans overcome medical barriers to civilian employment.

By helping ex-Service personnel understand their transferable skills and by working with employers to provide life-changing work opportunities, The Poppy Factory aims to support 1,000 disabled or sick veterans into meaningful and sustainable employment by 2018.

The Poppy Factory has been working for nearly a century to ensure that every disabled veteran who wishes to work has the opportunity to do so.

Nicola will be working hard to provide assistance to the veterans she supports to help them identify job and career preferences and to create a realistic plan towards achieving their aims. How this is achieved will vary depending on each client's individual needs, but might include:

- developing employability skills and awareness
- creation or enhancement of a CV
- job search and job vacancy matching
- assistance with job applications
- identification of training needs and sourcing external funding
- facilitating work placements/experience
- interview preparation and coaching
- job start planning and preparation
- in work support for up to 12 months.

Nicola will also work with employers to explore and negotiate any workplace or role changes and support (often called 'reasonable adjustments') that might be needed to enable a veteran with a health condition and/or disability to successfully gain and remain in employment.

Would you like to know more?

Take a look at the website:
poppyfactory.org/lookingforwork
Phone: 020 8939 1837
Email: gybtw@poppyfactory.org

Not in Wales? Don't worry there are Employability Consultants already in place across England who can work with you. Just get in touch as above. They look forward to working with you.

VETERANS HIP & KNEE SURGERY SERVICE

The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt 
Orthopaedic Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

A service for military veterans to have their hip or knee arthritis assessed and, if appropriate, have joint replacement surgery has been launched. It is led by Lt Col Carl Meyer, Military Consultant Hip and Knee Arthroplasty Surgeon at Oswestry's specialist orthopaedic hospital.

Lt Col Meyer is a regular serving officer who is an Orthopaedic Trauma Surgeon with 16 Medical Regiment, Colchester.

The service is open to anyone who has been in regular military service, including national service.

It is based at the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (RJAH), Oswestry, Shropshire; a centre of orthopaedic excellence specialising in lower limb replacement surgery.

To obtain an NHS referral please ask your GP to make a named referral to Lt Col Meyer at the Veterans' Hip & Knee Surgery Service in Oswestry.

Contact information:

Email: rebecca.ann.jones@rjah.nhs.uk
Tel: 01691 404344



ARMED FORCES DAY 2015

Guildford, with its strong historic and present day military links, has been chosen to host the prestigious Armed Forces Day national event on Saturday 27 June 2015.

Guildford Borough Council is planning an exciting line-up of events including a special service at Guildford Cathedral, a formal parade in Guildford High Street, and a spectacular military show at Stoke Park followed by 'picnic and proms in the park'. An impressive air display will complete a memorable day. Keep an eye on the website for more updates:

www.armedforcesday.org.uk/index.aspx

VETERANS UK IS NOW ON WWW.GOV.UK

December 2014 saw the Veterans UK website archived and its pages moved to the GOV.UK website. The move is part of the government's new web strategy to bring information from all parts of government together in one place.



Veterans UK has been given its own unique url/web address: www.gov.uk/veterans-uk. This allows users to access content directly instead of going through the GOV.UK homepage.

Users with saved links or website addresses may have noticed that a redirect has been put in place which automatically takes users to the new information on GOV.UK, or the archived pages.

So Why Change?

By migrating our website across to GOV.UK, Veterans UK is in a much better position to improve services for veterans.

For example, we hope that in the future, claims for services such as the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS), Armed Forces Pensions Scheme (AFPS) and War Pension Scheme (WPS) will be possible online as part of this initiative.

The GOV.UK site will also improve the visibility of information for veterans to a much wider audience and will ensure all content meets the highest standards of accessibility for disabled users.

For further information please email veterans-uk@mod.uk or call the Veterans UK helpline on 0808 1914 2 18.

READY...STEADY...COOK!

An individual's recovery is like a combination lock – Help for Heroes just help them find the code



Last Autumn, five servicemen, women and veterans from Help for Heroes Recovery Centre Phoenix House in

Catterick, took part in a 'cook off'. Devised by Swinton Park, a luxury castle hotel, and sponsored by Yorkshire Game it inspired wounded heroes to consider catering as a future new career.

The benefit that the competition and training had was felt by all of the competitors.

Army Medical Corps Veteran Giles Farrington said of the experience, "I feel empowered that I could now accomplish anything I want to and that a group of professional chefs had total confidence in my abilities has really boosted my self-esteem. This has helped my recovery by helping reinforce a positive mental attitude about myself and my abilities and what an ordinary man like me can do."

Mentored by some of the region's top Michelin-starred chefs, each participant spent a day in their allocated chef's restaurant being taught how to create a dish using game. They then had to

reproduce it themselves at Swinton Park Cookery School, against the clock and against their fellow competitors. The winning dish of 'Loin of venison, with a haggis pasty, celeriac puree, pickled brambles and parkin with a 'Yorkshire' sauce' was produced by RAF Veteran, Ted Granger.

Cooking takes mind off mental traumas

Ted joined the RAF in 1985 and served with the 56F Sqn, DLF and 54F Sqn, reaching the rank of SAC by the time he left nine years later. By then, he had completed 16 tours of duty, including five in Cyprus, two in Turkey and others in Italy, Canada and Scandanavia.

In 2008, Ted was diagnosed with Post-traumatic stress disorder, having suffered without help for over 14 years. With hindsight he believes that his mental suffering began within three years of joining up. It made him rebellious and short-tempered; he had nightmares and drank heavily.

Introduced to Help for Heroes just a year ago, he credits staff at Help for Heroes Northern Recovery Centre, Phoenix House, with improving his quality of life (and therefore that of his very supportive wife and daughter, Melanie and Sian) for the first time in 20 years. At the Centre he enjoys mixing with other veterans and those still serving in the military, many of whom understand the manifestation of his traumas.

The practical components of activities like cookery and woodwork take Ted's mind off the mental traumas that have caused him so much distress over the years, "Learning something new tests my brain and gives me something else to focus on."





And the winner is...

"I was surprised to win, but after working with James Mackenzie (Ted's mentor and owner/chef of the Michelin-starred Pipe and Glass in Yorkshire), I knew I was in with a chance. James was an inspiration – he told me to take my time, and to win it I needed to achieve the flavour. I didn't have time to work from the notes I made, so I used my brain to remember how everything tasted from my training! I didn't consider myself to be a chef, I like to work with wood – there are similarities and that's why I think I was successful. I can look at a piece of wood and know exactly what I need to do to achieve a design and I think it's the same with food ingredients.

I'm going to speak to the team at Swinton Park about what happens next – I'm very pleased to have learned about the methods and rules of professional cookery – James will be proud."

The idea of the competition really appealed to the wounded, injured and sick...

Mo Usman, Manager of Phoenix House Recovery Centre, said, "The aim of Help for Heroes is to inspire, enable and support individuals to lead active, independent and fulfilling lives. This support comes in many forms – from individual grants to educational and practical courses to sporting activities that improve personal independence, raise morale and recreate the camaraderie that so many of them lose when they leave (temporarily or permanently) the Forces," he explained.

"Vocational visits also play a vital role facilitating their smooth transition to civilian life but Swinton Park generously took this to another level completely. Its competition not only gave the participants a unique insight into the work as a professional chef and an experience they will never forget, but also gave the winner a fantastic step up into making it their new career, should that be the path they choose to take."

Web: www.helpforheroes.org.uk/
Email: Catterick.enquiries@helpforheroes.org.uk
Phoenix House Recovery Centre tel: 01748 834148

VETERANS IN CUSTODY

By Barbara Forster- Welfare Manager for the Veterans Welfare Service.



It has come to light over recent years that there are a significant number of veterans in prison. It is thought that there are many more

who prefer not to present themselves as being a veteran.

The justice system has realised that veteran offenders can be more complex than civilian offenders and have changed the way they deal with those from when they are arrested right through until they have completed their prison sentence. Each police custody suite has an officer assigned to deal with military veterans and each prison has a Veterans in Custody Support Officer (VISCO). Development in this area of work continues to progress.

Much of the work to address the issues surrounding veterans in custody has been carried out by Live at Ease. This NHS backed organisation facilitates meetings attended by many of the ex-service organisations and charities who work with veterans. This includes VISCOs, probation officers, Police, The Royal British Legion, Warrior Programme and Combat Stress. These meetings are a great opportunity to meet with other professionals who are helping our clients.

I have established good connections with the VISCO's in HMP Liverpool and other prisons in the Merseyside and Cheshire areas and I am often called into the prison to see clients who need our help. This can be anything from completing a claim form to ensuring the correct benefits are applied for prior to release. I work very closely with our partner organisations such as RBL, SSAFA, local councils and the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure that everything is in place for when the veteran is released. This could include helping to secure accommodation, exploring employment opportunities or ensuring that appropriate benefits are claimed.

There are two ways I get to see the clients. If they contact me directly I arrange an appointment via the prison legal

visits appointments system and see the client in the prison visiting room. The time allowed for these visits varies depending on the prison.

More often I am contacted by either the prison VISCO or counsellors who feel that the veteran needs our help. In these instances I am signed in as a guest and have access to the prisoner's wing and cell. Some of the cases I have helped with have not only been to help the veteran in prison but also his family on the outside. These can be anywhere in the country and I sometimes have to call for help from other Welfare Managers or organisations in their area.

The majority of the veterans I see are in prison for violence related incidents, such as getting into fights and many are later diagnosed with Post-traumatic stress disorder.

I have recently helped a veteran who committed a robbery – he told me he didn't need the money and gave it to the homeless. He did it because he wanted the police to shoot him dead because of the way he is affected by PTSD. He has since been released into supported accommodation in Yorkshire and my colleague in that area is now in regular contact with him.

In December, I attended a family day at HMP Liverpool. This was an opportunity for families to come into the prison and meet with the ex-service organisations to find out who can offer help and support to the veterans and their families.

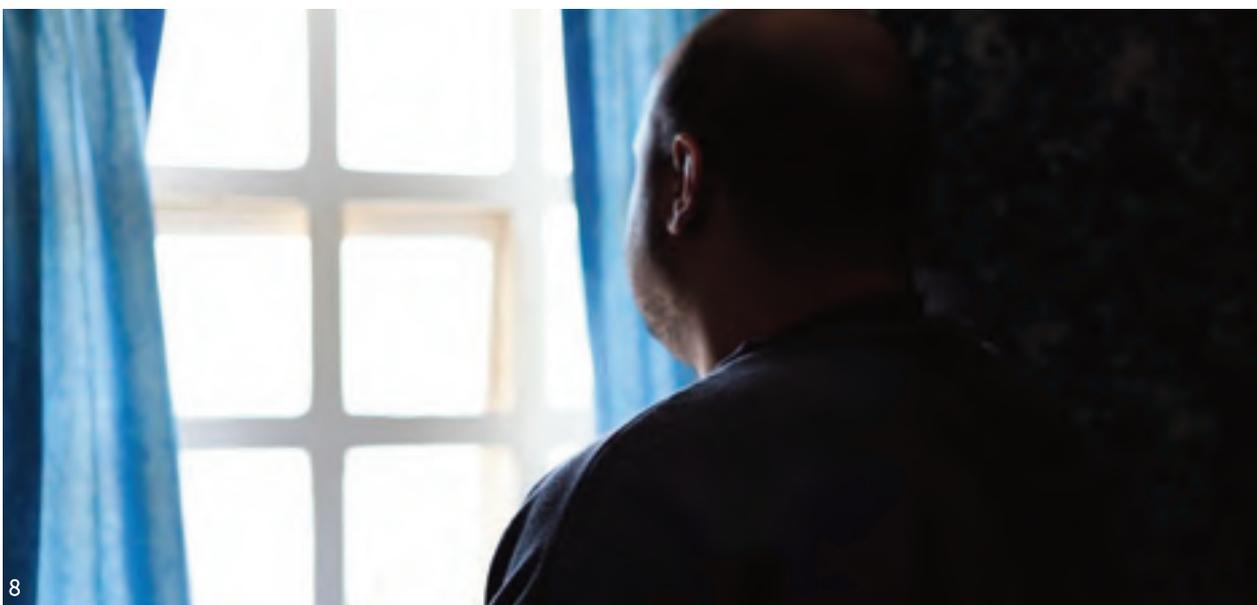
It was an informal event where the veterans were given the opportunity to spend the day with their families who came to see them.

I spent time with each family, advising them of the help available from Veterans UK and the Veterans Welfare Service. I will be revisiting one veteran to help with a war pension review and I am referring another to the RBL for advice with his debt problems.

This was a valuable event and there are future events already planned for 2015.

Veterans UK helpline: 0808 1914 2 18

Web: www.gov.uk/veterans-uk



HMS HEROES

Friends for each other in times of need



HMS HEROES 

HMS (Her Majesty's Schools) Heroes is a unique international pupil voice group supporting Service children and young people. It originated in Plymouth and

now has member schools worldwide. HMS Heroes is affiliated with the Royal British Legion and is for all service children of our Armed Forces, the Reserve Forces, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and veterans.

HMS Heroes is aware that some veteran's children and Reserve Forces children may be the only military children in the school and they are not to be forgotten. Five schools, that joined HMS Heroes Catterick and Richmond in North Yorkshire, are known as the Hambleton Heroes. There are only a few service children in each school so they've come together for joint membership, bringing their community together and giving important peer support.

One of the Hambleton Heroes explains: "I thought I was the only child with a mum and dad in the Army and felt really different. It was great to meet children like me."

Sharing with others is key to giving service children confidence to understand that they're not unusual, and that there are likeminded friends they can turn to for support.

The initiative goes far beyond peer support, HMS Heroes members act as ambassadors to provide insight into what it's like to be a service child – helping to bridge gaps between school staff, fellow pupils and the wider community.

The network stretches across the globe. A recent message from Mount Pleasant Falklands HMS Heroes to the Catterick and Richmond group said: "It feels like we are part of one big school together, even though we are miles apart. It's good to know that someone cares about people who are part of the military family and to have people who understand how we live even if we are 8,000 miles away."

HMS Heroes exists to raise the profile of service children and help to explain the unique challenges that go hand-in-hand with being part of a military family. The aim is for school groups to support each other, organise events and activities and engage in local community projects. If you are a veteran and you feel your child and their school could benefit from membership of HMS Heroes please email Pete Ogburn or Hazel Thomson at: hmsheroes@btinternet.com
Web: www.hmsheroes.co.uk.



EX-MARINE GETS WHEELS TURNING



A former Royal Marine whose life was transformed by an assistance dog after he was injured in service has launched a major new partnership between National Express and the Canine Partners charity.

They say a dog is a man's best friend and it's a saying veteran Jon Flint knows more than most people to be true as he welcomes a link between the UK's largest coach operator and assistance dog charity Canine Partners.

Jon, aged 38, who lives in Stedham in West Sussex, is welcoming a new initiative, believed to be the first of its kind, which sees National Express provide free travel to people training assistance puppies to help with the process of familiarising the dogs with public transport.

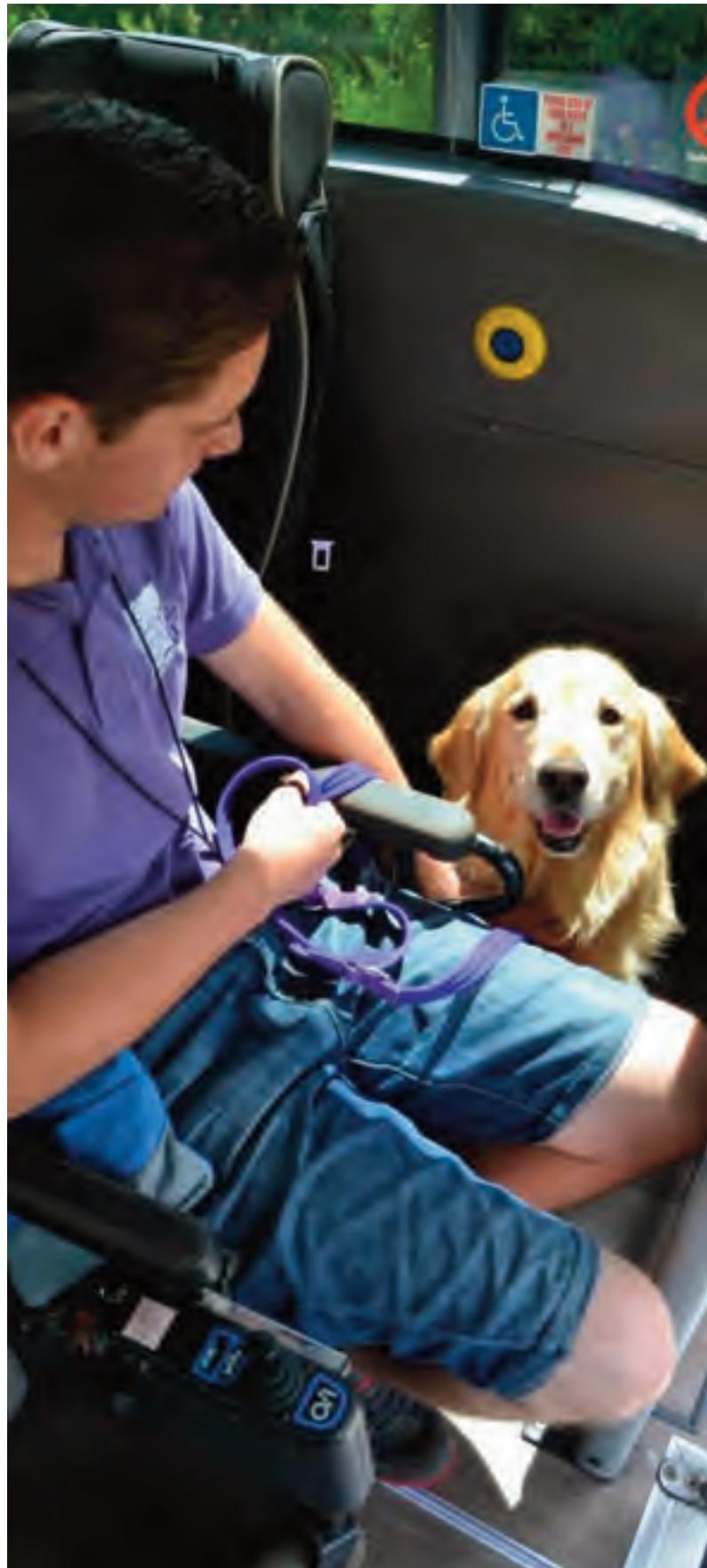
People giving up their time to look after the puppies will be eligible to travel free with their young dog to and from any of approximately 1,000 National Express stops across the UK. The partnership comes as Canine Partners, which operates from several bases across the country, including 14 Puppy training groups, celebrates its 24th year supporting disabled people.

The link-up is set to benefit disabled people across the UK, including civilians, veterans and servicemen and women injured in service. It will also see National Express set up a donation tab on its website, enabling people to donate to the charity as they book online as well as the creation of a special Canine Partners coach in the charity's signature purple hue.

Thousands of hours training goes into every assistance dog before they are ready to be teamed up with a person who needs their support. Canine Partners trains the dogs to be able to work in scenarios in all areas of life from loading and unloading a washing machine to taking cash out of an ATM. Familiarisation with public transport is also a crucial part of this training.

Canine Partners is very close to Jon's heart. For the former Royal Marine, who was injured in service, relies on the help of assistance dog Varick, provided by Canine Partners, to help him with everyday tasks including those which require bending, such as picking up dropped items.

Incredibly, Jon who undertook operational tours in Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan walked around with a broken back for ten years, before he realised something was seriously wrong after a fall during an abseiling training exercise.



NG ON CHARITY PARTNERSHIP



Jon was subsequently partnered with flatcoated retriever Varick, who he credits with giving him back his independence, and as testament to the success of the partnership Jon is now an ambassador for Canine Partners.

He said: "It is wonderful that National Express is supporting Canine Partners. I know first-hand that assistance dogs are life-changing creatures. They are a man's – or woman's best friend and helper all rolled into one and they help give people back their independence. Before I was partnered with Varick, I hated leaving the house. The pain in my back is constant and I have poor balance, which means it doesn't take much for me to fall over. Having Varick has given me my confidence back and our bond has helped turn a very difficult situation into something positive".

He added: "Charities such as Canine Partners rely on the generosity of the British public and business donations and it is great National Express has come up with this innovative way of supporting them."

Tom Stables, Managing Director UK Coach added: "National Express has a long track record of pioneering accessible travel, for example by introducing the first wheelchair lifts to coaches, and this partnership is another example of our commitment to adding value to the communities in which we serve and providing travel that is accessible to all. Canine Partners is a fantastic charity that changes the lives of the people it serves and we're really proud to back them".

Support for Canine Partners is the latest in a long line of initiatives rolled out by National Express to support the Armed Forces, veterans and families. National Express offer guaranteed interviews for its driving vacancies to veterans and the biggest travel discount in the UK to ex-service personnel.

Web: www.caninepartners.org.uk/
Tel: 08456 580 480



NAVY VETERAN BECOMES UK'S FIRST BLIND CHARTERED TAX CONSULTANT



When someone loses their sight, the effects can be devastating, especially without dedicated support and services to help them adjust. Blind Veterans UK focuses on giving vision impaired veterans the skills and support they need in order for them to live independently and enjoy life to the full. It doesn't matter the

cause of sight loss or when they served, if they are battling severe sight loss, Blind Veterans UK can help.

For 43-year-old Navy veteran Jamie Weller, it was a lifelong ambition to join the military. He joined in his early twenties, training at HMS Daedalus and HMS Raleigh before joining 899 Naval Air Squadron. Just three years in, Jamie's sight began to fail and he was diagnosed with cone rod dystrophy. Due to the severity of his sight loss, Jamie was discharged and registered as blind.

Jamie said: "Losing my sight felt like my world had just been turned upside down. I had to figure out how to get back on my feet and move my life forwards again – I didn't want to let this horrible disability beat me."

Jamie began receiving support from Blind Veterans UK in 2002, which has helped him overcome the challenges of sight loss and go on to become the UK's first blind chartered tax consultant.

Jamie said: "When I realised that Blind Veterans UK would not only be there for me for the rest of my life, but also that their support was open to all vision impaired veterans, I knew then that I wasn't going to let my blindness manage me – I was going to manage my blindness."

As well as providing vital emotional support, Blind Veterans UK offered IT training which enabled Jamie to go on to further education and achieve a degree in Mathematics. He then joined the tax department at Deloitte and became the first blind member of the Chartered Institute of Taxation.

In 2012, Jamie was honoured to represent Deloitte as a London Olympic torch-bearer: "Being a torch-bearer was absolutely amazing. It was a very proud moment for me and I was so lucky to be given the opportunity. It is a memory I will never forget.

"I've always said that my blindness is just an inconvenience, and one that I've managed to work around with help from Blind Veterans UK."

If you know an ex-serviceman or woman who is now battling severe sight loss, Blind Veterans UK can provide a lifetime of support.

Tel: 0800 389 7979

Web: www.noonealone.org.uk



LET THE GAMES BEGIN!



Help for Heroes were proud to support the MOD in the training and selection of the British Armed Forces Team, as part of their extensive Sports Recovery Programme.

The team was the biggest British military sports team ever assembled from wounded, injured or sick servicemen and women and would have been the 10th largest nation, out of a total of 164 competing nations, at the 2012 summer Paralympic Games in London.

Former and current members of our Armed Forces came together in London for the Invictus Games, which were championed by Prince Harry. The event captured the

imagination of the country as more than 400 competitors from 13 nations demonstrated their incredible determination and strength, using the power of sport to inspire recovery, support rehabilitation, and generate a wider understanding and respect for those who serve their country.

Some had lost limbs in Iraq and Afghanistan, others suffered long-term injuries, while many dealt with the day-to-day trauma of mental scars brought on by their service on the front line in conflict zones. Using the power of sport, the Games were created to inspire people to better themselves, never give up and keep fighting no matter what life threw at them.

The British Armed Forces team was made up of 132 men and women that won a total of 139 medals, topping the Invictus Games medal table.

Sam Livy



(Photo credit: Darren Kamara)

Sam Livy went to the inaugural Invictus Games as an archer and left them as a double rowing champion. MOD civilian worker Livy, who was diagnosed with ME 12 years ago and started training with Bath Archers in April 2014, reached the quarter finals of the mixed recurve competition. But her involvement in the Invictus Games didn't stop there as she then accepted a late offer to join The British Armed Forces indoor rowing team. And it was a decision that would prove triumphant as Sam took home gold in the team and individual women's IR5 sprint on the Saturday of the Games.

Rowing was the sport I had to give up when I became ill and when they put out a shout for more women rowers, I couldn't resist, she said. It was a total shock that I managed to win medals.

To anyone with ME, I'd encourage them to try archery because it's really accessible to a whole range of disabilities.

Sam continues with her archery, and is looking forward to the year ahead.

Participating in a sport provides a wide range of physical, psychological and social benefits and is often the first step in developing confidence at the start of the long road to recovery.

Help for Heroes run three distinct pathways within the Sports Recovery Programme which include a Recreational Pathway, an Employment, Education and Training Pathway and the Performance Pathway.

Sports Recovery has grown hugely since it started in 2008, in

AJ Pingram

Alastair, known to friends as AJ, was a Marine Engineer in the Navy before suffering ankle injuries.

He was a part of the British Armed Forces team that triumphed 19-9 over the USA in the wheelchair basketball final at the Copper Box in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. The 38-year-old was initially only planning to attend the Invictus Games as a spectator before then being encouraged to try out for the team.

Help for Heroes took us out to America to train with the American team so we knew a few of the guys, they're friends for life.

It was amazing and the atmosphere was unbelievable – our coach trained us hard for five months. We weren't aiming for second place, only gold. The Invictus Games has changed my life, it really has. I had not played sport for 14 years but I applied for Invictus tickets and they asked if I did anything. I had just started playing wheelchair basketball, so I went to trials and I was severely out of my depth. But I pushed hard and trained five days and two mornings a week. I have lost two stone in five months, it's unbelievable. Life is good.

Since the Invictus Games, AJ was the proud recipient of Denbighshire's Disability Sport Award and will also be Denbighshire's Community Sport Ambassador 2015 helping to promote community sport in Denbighshire and represent Denbighshire at national events.

the past year providing funding for over 1,800 individuals to take part in over 50 different sports.

The inspirational effect of hosting a home Paralympic Games and Invictus Games is further demonstrated by Help for Heroes awarding 1,168 individual sporting grants since 2012, this represents an 80% increase on the previous year, and enables greater participation in a range of physical development activities.

Web: www.helpforheroes.org.uk/sports-recovery/
Email: anna.shaw@helpforheroes.org.uk



(Photo credit: Roger Keller/Help for Heroes)

HELPING BEREAVED SERVICE FAMILIES HEAL



Royal Air Force
Benevolent Fund



A grant from the RAF Benevolent Fund to Families' Activity Breaks (FAB) has helped provide bereaved service families with an exciting holiday in a supportive environment.

Amanda Brumpton was just 29 years old and a mother of two young children when she lost her husband, Leading Aircraftman Gary Brumpton, while he was in training at RAF Halton in 2010. For the past five years, she and Connor, now 15, and Amy, now 10, have attended a FAB camp in Whitby, North Yorkshire.

Amanda said: "I honestly don't know what we would have done without FAB. Nobody really understood what my kids and I were going through, but every other family at FAB understood and had been through the same thing. The activities they offer are fantastic, but the real value of FAB is that it restores confidence and creates bonds that help a family heal and cope with loss."

The RAF Benevolent Fund provided £10,000 to FAB this year, helping them offer four one-week camps in Whitby, Coverack, and Lewes for 50 families. Each camp is funded by charities and staffed by volunteers from the Armed Forces, Ministry of Defence and ex-service personnel, all of whom receive bereavement counselling training.

Amanda said: "Losing a partner feels like all your future is gone. But at FAB, everybody understands. It gives you confidence and new friendships. For me, it was a brilliant confidence boost. I thought, 'I can do it.'"

Paul Hughesdon, Director of Welfare and Policy at the RAF Benevolent Fund, said: "The RAF Benevolent Fund provides support for all members of the RAF Family in need, and it is particularly important that we help the families of those who have lost their lives in service to the country. Losing a parent, child, or sibling forever changes a family and the RAF Benevolent Fund is honoured to support FAB in its efforts to help these families through a most difficult time. We also help in other ways, such as individual grants, educational support and breaks at our Seaside Cottages on the South Coast."

In the past year, the RAF Benevolent Fund, as the RAF's leading welfare charity, spent more than £18 million helping over 60,000 members of the RAF family with a range of services, from child-care centres and youth workers on each station to relationship counselling and assistance with financial, housing, and medical needs. We are keen to hear from anyone from the RAF Family who is in financial need and might need our help.

Web: www.fabcamps.org.uk

Tel: 0800 169 2942



“It was a
brilliant
confidence
boost”
- Amanda
Brumpton





THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT

An enduring covenant between the people of the United Kingdom, Her Majesty's Government and all those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown and their families

2014 Annual Report Update



Armed Forces Covenant

The Armed Forces Covenant is an agreement between the Government, the Nation and the

Armed Forces which the Government has enshrined in law. It commits to supporting the entire Armed Forces Community and ensuring that Service personnel and their families are not disadvantaged by the sacrifices they make to keep the nation safe.

Last year our Armed Forces played a vital role in keeping us safe through their work, providing humanitarian and military support internationally and in the UK helping to protect communities from 2014's floods. It was also an important year for the Government delivering on its Covenant commitment:

- The Government has awarded a further £40m from bank fines to Covenant projects bringing the total the Government has made available to £140m to support the Armed Forces Covenant.
- All Local Authorities in Great Britain have now signed up to the Community Covenant so wherever people live in the country, whether serving or retired, they must take into account their needs when delivering their services – from schools to housing.
- More than 370 companies have now signed the Corporate Covenant making a range of commitments from guaranteeing job interviews for those leaving the Forces to making it easier for staff to become Reservists.

But there's still more to be done

In the next 12 months the government will:

- Introduce a new Service Complaints Ombudsman with increased powers so that if personnel feel a complaint hasn't been handled properly there is a new, strengthened system in place to address it.
- Open up the Armed Forces Pension Scheme to Reservists.
- Launch a new £10m annual fund to continue delivering Armed Forces Covenant commitments.

Find out more

To find out more about the Armed Forces Covenant and what it means, visit:

www.gov.uk/the-armed-forces-covenant

If people think they have suffered from a disadvantage because of their service we want to hear about it. Contact either a Service Families Federation or the MOD Covenant team by emailing:

covenant-mailbox@mod.uk

To find out whether Forces Help to Buy could help you to buy your first home visit:

www.gov.uk/forces-help-to-buy

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Getting a Home



The Forces Help to Buy Scheme has made £200m available to help serving personnel on to the housing ladder. They can borrow up to £25,000 interest free over 10 years to help them get a deposit for their first home. It has already given more than £29m to over 1,900 families to help them put down roots. Forces Help to Buy recently helped Sergeant Nicholas Brett and his family purchase a three-bed detached house in Tidworth. Sgt Brett said that “without it [Forces Help to Buy] I wouldn’t have been able to purchase a property at this moment in time.”

Education for Forces Children



Travelling around the country to follow a Forces parent’s career and changing schools regularly can disrupt a child’s education. This year we introduced the Pupil Information Profile (PIP) to make a child’s learning as seamless as possible when Service children move. Detailed information about the child can be transferred between schools in the UK to help them settle in quickly and ensure continuity of learning. In the last financial year the Department for Education allocated £17.4m to support the needs of 57,940 service pupils.

Childcare

The nature of setting up Military Units means that many around the country and the world have evolved

without the same standard of purpose-built childcare facilities that civilian families can expect. That’s why the Government has made £20m available to update existing childcare and provide new purpose-built buildings to ensure that service children get the best start in life.

For example almost £3m will be spent on a childcare project at the RAF base in Akrotiri, Cyprus.

Health

Serving in the Forces is a physically demanding job and access to top quality healthcare is essential for personnel. All Service Personnel are offered enhanced occupational healthcare to include dental and hearing assessment and eye tests – all delivered by the new Defence Primary Healthcare which caters solely for the health of our Forces. The Government has also started work on the new Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre in Loughborough to make sure that if people are injured in service they will receive world-leading care tailored to the unique needs of Service personnel.



Reserves

As our Reserve Forces grow to around 35,000 in the coming years, we know that the Government has to do more to support Reservists and their employers. Reservists are now entitled to paid annual leave for the time that they are training or called up, and small-and medium-sized employers can now claim an additional payment when Reserve employees are mobilised to help with any additional costs.

The Forces railcard has also been extended to all Reservists this year giving a third off all rail fares in mainland UK and putting them on an equal footing with Regular service personnel.

Veterans

The Government’s commitment to the Forces continues beyond service. This year £40m has been awarded to Veterans accommodation projects which will help 16 organisations to provide specially adapted accommodation to adjust to civilian life after serving. The Royal British Legion Industries will be using 1.95m of this to build 20 homes at its village in Kent to help Service Personnel transitioning from the Forces to civilian life to get the help they need to do this.



PENSION TRANSFERS



Currently personnel leaving the Armed Forces with insufficient service to qualify for an immediate pension have a choice regarding their accrued pension entitlements. Major (Rtd) Anthony Henderson from the Forces Pension Society explains the options available.

Personnel can leave their entitlements where they are and claim a Preserved Pension when they reach age 60 or age 65 (depending on which scheme they are a member), or they can transfer their entitlement out of the Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS) into another scheme.

Personnel leaving with an entitlement to an immediate pension (ie after 22 years' service as an OR/rating, 16 years' service as an officer on the '75 scheme or on reaching age 55 on the '05 scheme) simply receive their pension immediately on discharge or retirement and therefore there is no scope to transfer the pension elsewhere as it is actually put into payment straight away. This group is not affected, only those leaving before they have served sufficient time to receive an immediate pension.

It is considered extremely likely that following the pension rule changes recently announced by the Chancellor that personnel in defined-benefit, unfunded schemes (eg. The Armed Forces Pension Scheme) will not be able to transfer their entitlements out of their existing schemes after

1 April 2015 and this has led to a proliferation of applications to transfer and of companies targeting ex-Forces personnel with messages of doom and urgency, inviting a transfer before the opportunity to do so disappears.

However, it is rarely a good idea to transfer an Armed Forces Pension entitlement out of the scheme and therefore personnel considering this course of action must ensure they seek sound financial advice to inform their decision.

I will explain how transfers work:

Pension Transfers

Should an individual leave the services with a 'Preserved Pension' entitlement it means that they receive none of their pension on leaving, but receive their accrued entitlement when they are older; Preserved Pensions are payable at age 60 and age 65 for '75 scheme entitlements (at age 60 they receive their pension based on reckonable service up to 5 April 2006 and at age 65 they receive their pension entitlement based on their service from 6 April 2006 to retirement/discharge) and at age 65 for '05 scheme entitlement. '75 Scheme members can request their entire preserved pension as early as age 60, however the element which would have been payable at age 65 is then actuarially reduced to reflect the earlier payment and potential longer payment term. AFPS 05 members can take their preserved benefits at any age after age 55 but, again, with actuarial reduction.



You can also transfer your entitlements out of the Armed Forces Pension Schemes and into a new employers' scheme if you wish. I cannot offer advice regarding how your new pension might work of course as I have no visibility of the other employer schemes; however I can explain what you would lose by following this course of action. You must request details of your new scheme from your new employer to inform your decision.

Your Armed Forces pension is calculated on the day you leave the Services and is payable as explained above. However, from retirement/discharge and your reaching age 60/65, your pension entitlement is protected against inflation by the annual application of the Consumer Prices Index (CPI). Your first application will be in the April following retirement/discharge and will be proportional based on when in the year you left. Every subsequent CPI application will be at 100% of whatever the CPI is. Additionally when your pension is put into payment you also receive a tax-free lump sum of 3 times the annual pension amount. If you were to transfer your pension to your new employer's scheme, you could lose the protection against inflation (annual CPI applications) and lose the entitlement to the tax-free lump sum.

Your Armed Forces pension is also a guaranteed and defined benefit (ie it is absolutely safe and you know exactly what you are going to get when it comes into payment). If you transfer your pension to a civilian scheme you must ensure you understand fully how that scheme operates. The chances are it will not provide an automatic, additional tax-free lump sum (but will allow you to take some of your pension fund as a tax-free sum)

and it will probably be linked somehow to the money markets – therefore introducing risk to the value.

You must remember to claim your Preserved Pension as you approach the relevant age, but my view is as you reach age 60/65, pension entitlements will be at the forefront on your mind and you will not forget you served! You should not therefore forget or neglect to submit a claim.

Another point that should be considered is re-enlistment. If you were to leave, transfer your pension out of the Armed Forces Scheme and then re-enlist, you can apply to transfer your pension entitlement back into the AFPS, however it will simply be a transfer of pension value, not pensionable service. If you leave and re-join you can currently apply to have your separate periods of service aggregated (ie added together for pension calculation purposes). Therefore if you served for ten years and left, on re-joining you could aggregate and only need to serve for a further eight years to receive Early Departure Payments (EDP) on the '05 scheme – if you transferred your entitlements out of the AFPS and then transferred them back in again, you cannot aggregate and therefore must serve for the full eighteen years following re-enlistment to receive EDP. As I said, few people will expect to re-join on leaving, however I have seen a surprising number of personnel who have done just that and regretted transferring their entitlements out of the scheme as it now prevents aggregation and EDP entitlement on their current engagement.

Tel: 020 7820 9988

Web: www.forcespensionsociety.org

MILITARY TO CIVILIAN



Robert Locking served in the British Army for 18 years and was medically discharged following a sporting injury, which resulted in a back operation leaving him with 30% disability in his left leg. Being discharged from the Forces due to injury was not something that had crossed Rob's mind, however having come to terms with it and in true military fashion he set about facing the future as a civilian.

Rob joined the Army at the age of 22 in 1994. After completing his basic training at ATR Bassingbourn and his Infantry Training at Vimy Barracks, Catterick he joined his regiment, 23 Pioneer Regiment RLC based in Bicester.

During his last two years, Rob spent a considerable amount of time going through rehabilitation at Headley Court. It was during this time that he started building his network; he also gained valuable advice from the agencies that work within Headley Court and from others that were also on their own rehabilitation.

Rob's hardest decision was what suitable employment to look for due to his disabilities, but after attending several of the British Forces Resettlement Services (BFRS) Career Fairs

and many hours networking with various employers who were exhibiting at these events he decided to book onto a CCTV Operators course, with a view to joining the security sector.

Rob applied for several positions and eventually gained employment from a networking lead with one of the UK's largest security companies - VSG Security, where his CCTV qualification proved to be very valuable and he was based at the Disney European Distribution Centre at Magna Park in Leicestershire.

Not entirely happy with his position and having to work night shifts he continued to use the BFRS website and Career Fairs to hopefully open up more opportunities for employment.



His relationship with the BFRS team got stronger and stronger, and his qualities were noticed by the CEO Harry Dean who was very keen to interview Rob and talk about the possibility of having a position within BFRS. Although Rob was still working, an interview was arranged for him to meet with Harry Dean and Neil Dean (Managing Director) at the BFRS offices in Leicester. After a lengthy interview Rob was offered a position as the BFRS Military Engagement Officer. This position requires him to travel around the country promoting the BFRS Career Fairs and what BFRS has to offer the Forces Community, which he has grasped with both hands.

When asked what he thought of his position, Rob replied: "I found leaving the Army harder than joining the Army. It was a part of my life that was missing. The position I was offered by Harry and Neil was perfect, it enabled me to still have the contact with the Forces Community meeting with many Ranks, and most of all I was able to pass on my experiences of resettlement and promote the excellent services BFRS offer."

Harry Dean CEO BFRS, said: "Rob is proof of our claim that 'ex military demonstrate a set of skills and qualities, which go above and beyond and are rarely found in their civilian counterparts'. Since he joined us over a year ago he has increased our Armed Forces Community reach, in particular he has managed to build relationships with resettlement professionals 'behind the wire' and helped to raise our overall image."

Email: robert.locking@bfrss.org.uk
Web: www.bfrss.org.uk/
Tel: 07812 742950



CONNECTING SERVICE LEAVERS TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY



those transitioning to civilian life across the UK.

Transition Force is a programme to help men and women leaving the Armed Forces build their support networks and find employment. It uses events and technology to connect service leavers to volunteers in the business community who can provide personalised support to

Employers fill many job openings through the unadvertised, or hidden, job market. It has been estimated that as much as 70% of all jobs are found through informal networks. Armed Forces leavers can be a significant disadvantage as they may lack understanding and confidence in the civilian world and may have limited contacts.

A significant amount of time and effort is spent supporting leavers during their resettlement process, successfully for the most part. However, there is often still some confusion and dissatisfaction around best practices to find relevant, worthwhile work that fits their skills, aspirations and lifestyles.

Transition Force has been funded by the social investor, Nominet Trust. Its mission is to mobilise the business community to support service leavers by bridging the gap between the military and civilian worlds. They do this by helping leavers to forge links with ex-military and civilian individuals who can give them a hand to navigate the job market. At the heart of it lies an online tool that allows service leavers to match themselves to these professionals, which was launched in December 2014.

Transition Force was originally piloted with its founding sponsor BT, the multinational telecoms company, where they ran events and matched service leavers to BT employees. To date, more than 200 service personnel have attended over 20 workshops held at BT locations across the country, with 97% of all attendees being willing to recommend them to a friend. Mike Harris, from Middlesbrough, was a former Sergeant in the Army and was part of the pilot. He was matched with a BT employee during his application process to BT Openreach.

“Being connected to someone in BT definitely had an impact on how I performed in my interview and played a big role in them offering me the job. Because I'd made the effort to get to know the company, I was well-placed to succeed in the interview.”

Transition Force is now expanding to include other corporate employers in a variety of different employment sectors beyond telecoms.

Transition Force has created an online platform to make it simple for service leavers to get personalised advice from industry experts, both ex-military and civilian. If a service leaver wants to know what working for a particular company is really like, is interested in finding out how other ex-military personnel managed their resettlement, or would like

industry-specific guidance on CVs or interviewing, they can login and get the advice they're looking for.

Web: www.transitionforce.com

Tel: 0203 102 1627



Transition Force Testimonial Mike Harris

Coming out of the Army, my main concern was my age (41), and not having any real civilian qualifications despite extensive experience in several areas. I also worried about having to start from the bottom of the ladder again. Although I was quite willing to do this, I wanted to ensure that the end wage would allow my wife Wendy, my son Ryan and I to still live a life as we did in the Army.

My BT buddy match, Allan was perfect and really helped me get the job I wanted at BT.

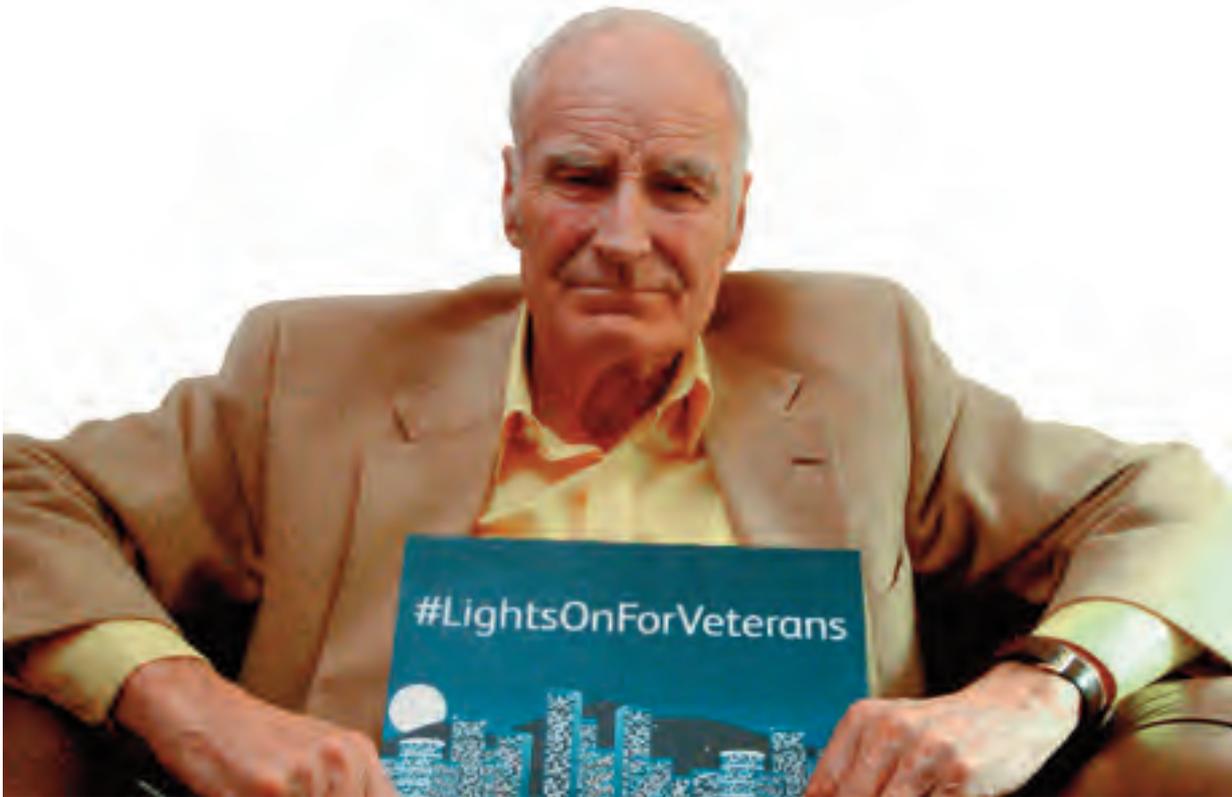
Allan was in the Territorial Army so even though he hadn't served like I did, he understood military speak and where I was coming from. Although he wasn't doing the job I was applying for, he understood the organisation, how it was structured and the way BT does things.

He even organised a day trip for me to come into his office, and speak to him and his colleagues. It was especially useful for me to understand the difference in timescales when applying for a big company like BT. I had assumed that I was doing something wrong because things weren't happening as quickly as I was used to in the Army.

I'd highly recommend Transition Force to anyone leaving the Armed Forces.



SUPPORT FOR VETERANS FACING HOMELESSNESS



Riverside Housing Association has a track record in providing specialist support for homeless veterans going back fifteen years. To date they have helped over 13,000 ex-Servicemen and women to make a successful transition back into civilian life by promoting independent living and delivering innovative, award-winning services in local communities.

Riverside's marketing co-ordinator, Susan Littlemore, has been working on their veterans services from the start and explains some of the important developments for veterans in 2015.

"At the end of last year our national housing advice line for veterans, SPACES (Single Person's Accommodation Centre), reached the landmark target of giving housing advice to over 13,000 veterans. Again and again I have heard from veterans that contacting us had marked the start of a real change to their lives, with many having faced homelessness and other problems after leaving the Armed Forces.

"SPACES was given a tremendous boost at the end of 2014 when Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg and BBC Broadcaster Peter Snow helped launch Riverside's #LightsOnForVeterans Twitter information campaign. This campaign is aimed at getting the advice line's web and telephone details out to local communities, as well as agencies working with veterans so that any veteran facing homelessness who needs help knows who to contact."

But Riverside's work with veterans extends far beyond the provision of their current services. In the run up to this year's General Election Riverside will be leveraging their

understanding of veterans' needs to highlight the importance of more targeted support for them.

Susan Littlemore continued: "We are the first civilian housing association to have signed up to the Armed Forces Corporate Covenant, committing to push the boundaries of support for veterans through housing, training and employment opportunities. And through research with York University and partners Stoll, we are calling for three key commitments from Government in 2015 to enhance support for veterans."

Riverside's three 'asks' for veterans in 2015:

- the development of a National Veterans' Housing Strategy
- the commissioning and funding of additional services to meet the needs of veterans at risk of homelessness
- a review and improvement plan for the process of veterans' transition from the Armed Forces into civilian life, relating to housing and housing support.

This year will also see the development of additional on-the-ground support services for veterans by Riverside and its partners. New accommodation centres are already planned for Colchester and Aldershot with further announcements pending.

Tel: 01748 833797, 830191 or 872940

Email: spaces@riverside.org.uk

Web: www.spaces.org.uk



**Veterans
UK**



VETERANS WELFARE SERVICE

The Veterans Welfare Service can help anyone who has served in the UK's Armed Forces. Support is provided on issues from benefits to housing, by either telephone contact or a home visit by one of our Welfare Managers.

Contact the Veterans Welfare Service on the Veterans UK Helpline:

0808 1914 2 18

email: veterans-uk@mod.uk or visit: www.veterans-uk.info



**“Each year we all
gain so much
from FAB as the
children get
older and we all
move along this
journey”**