



Tri Services and Veterans Support Centre



Background.

Across the United Kingdom (UK) there are 2.6 million Armed Forces Veterans (Ministry of Defence (MOD), 2016). This equates to 5.2% of the UK population however, Armed Forces veterans are predominately male and over 50% are aged over 75 years old. This is due to the National Service requirements ending during the 1960's (MOD, 2016). That said, veterans often remain in the area of their last posting and therefore, the distribution of veterans is not uniform across the UK.

Nevertheless, in Staffordshire the number of veterans is in keeping with the national average as there are 210,000 veterans or 4.6% of the county have served. However, this figure may be set to rise following the investment and growth in sites such as MOD Stafford and DMS Lichfield. This growth means that the charity is ideally positioned to assist serving, transitional or veterans now and in many years to come.

The Annual Population Survey (MOD, 2016) identified that the three major health problems for veterans were musculoskeletal injuries, cardiovascular and mental health problems. These three major health problems were not significantly different to their non-veteran counterparts however, often veterans living with conditions such as those affecting legs/feet where reported 7% more frequently (MOD, 2016). This burden of treatment lies with the National Health Services however, it is known that veterans often may be reluctant to seek help (Royal British Legion (RBL), 2013). Veterans potentially are reluctant to seek help due to a fear of being 'misunderstood' by civilian professionals (RBL, 2013). However, if a veteran does not seek support they may potentially cause further damage and it may impact on the individual's quality of life. Therefore, attendance at a supportive, informal and friendly environment such as that provided by the charity, may see veterans seek timely help and support.

The Charity.

The Tri-Services and Veterans Support Centre was formally opened in October 2015 and currently opens on a Wednesday 1000 – 1630hours and Thursday 1700 – 2200hours. The charity has a growing number of volunteers and to date 95% are veterans themselves. This fosters a supportive and informal environment, which has been found to encourage disclosure and help seeking (RBL, 2013). This may explain why, to date, the charity has had over 2800 visits to the centre and has successfully helped over 60 people. The veterans helped to date often require a range of support from mental health support, support with pensions or they may indeed be homeless. The research around veterans and the homelessness currently suggests that 6% of all homeless persons are veterans (RBL, 2013). However, the numbers of homeless veterans the charity is currently referring to church organisations or the Lou Macarri Centre, is somewhat contrary to the numbers recently released in the press, regarding the current state of homelessness in Staffordshire (Burnett, 2017). These figures state that



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54 people in Staffordshire are homeless. However, this contradiction may be expected because homeless veterans are said to have more complex issues than their non-veteran peers and thus more likely to seek a familiar supportive environment such as that which the charity provides (RBL, 2013).

The Charities Objectives.

- To promote and address, via signposting to appropriate agencies and local engagement, the socio-determinants of health for serving, transitional and veterans of the Armed Forces.
- To create an informal environment in which serving, transitional and veterans can seek the support they need.
- To provide serving, transitional and veterans of the Armed Forces with structured courses in order to advance an individual's understanding and knowledge.
- To continuously develop, review and meet the needs of serving, transitional and veterans of the Armed Forces.

The Charity and Staffordshire County Council.

This report has outlined some of the potential burdens that the veteran population of Staffordshire may account for in the region. However, when this is compared to the recent changes in council run services, many areas of service delivery may see this burden rise. For example, recently Staffordshire County Council has reduced its information advice & guidance services, mental health services, along with drug and alcohol services, these are key services for potentially 46,200 veterans in the region. Numbers such as this will place substantial pressure on Staffordshire's Community Capacity Building Agenda. Nonetheless, the charity is ideally placed to assist serving, transitional and veterans of the Armed Forces whilst maintaining a continuous dialogue with Staffordshire County Council and other multi-agencies.

The Centre.

The charity is currently based in Newcastle-Under-Lyme, Staffordshire. The centre was originally a derelict building, which to-date has required £19,000 investment, in order to ensure the centre is fit for purpose. There is an estimated £35,000 program of work to upgrade the roof and heating system, which the charity would include responsibility for if a reasonable purchase price could be agreed. The charity could afford to offer a total of £40,000 to purchase the building however, this would be as a £20,000 first payment and a further £10,000 per year for the following two years. This payment would allow for the centre to continue to open for one day and one evening a week. This is because any further increase in opening hours would reduce the funds available for purchasing the building. The purchase of the building will enable the charity to continue to support veterans as well as providing them with a permanent place in Staffordshire.