



ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY HEALTH/WELLBEING & SOCIAL INCLUSION 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 various others to work on a veterans project in the Blackpool, Wyre & Fylde community which primarily concentrates on health & wellbeing. Our role 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 9 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 superbly 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 through. We have visited many veterans in their own home and between myself and Alf then decide the best way to help. 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 to fund the CIC and we believe Alf continues to support us because he sees the real results and progress being made within the armed forces community.



Alf Clempson pictured above with me, Dave Whitworth

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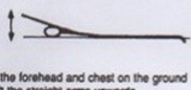





A gathering arranged as a result of work carried out in conjunction with the GPs surgeries.

NHS: The local GP surgeries are the key to finding veterans, due 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 them of the 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 1600 veterans in total this year (our database has 450 individual veterans currently). 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.

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



Events: Our funding is also used to run socially inclusive events. We run a weekly **breakfast club** in Fleetwood, in collaboration with Mens Shed. We have a cooked breakfast, as many brews as we can drink and great social interaction/banter for some of our older veterans. Mens Shed host & serve the breakfast to us. Their motto is "you have served us now we will serve you".

Coffee mornings are held monthly in Thornton Cleveleys at a local church community hall, where we have coffee/tea & biscuits and a subsidised 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.



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. They are fun nights, excellent social interaction/inclusion activities and not too difficult. At our next event we are hoping to collaborate with a local veterans choir.

Over the last 12 months we have arranged 13 **trips** that have been hugely popular and very well attended. We have visited Eden camp, Leeds armoury, the maritime museum in Liverpool and local barracks to name but a few. We are planning trips to the national arboretum with the WRENS & a visit to an RAF museum as soon as it is safe to do so.



Kayaking has been a popular event. Working with the outdoor adventure group, Fleetwood. We have managed to run 4 events and we are planning more. 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.

Walking: We have arranged a few walking days, which have been enjoyable bimbles for all age groups. 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 levels with the aim of taking part in a charity walk sometime in the next 12 months.



DWS Lifeskills CIC - putting veterans first

Summary: We firmly believe that collaborating with other organisations in the local community is the way forward & we help each other bring different groups closer together. We have had great help & support from Alf Clempson (LCC armed forces champion) who has attended our events as a veteran and takes part in the many activities we offer. The GP surgeries have been extremely helpful, enabling us to do the hardest thing, which is identifying veterans & getting the message out that there is support & socialization events for them. As the Covid-19 restrictions ease, we are looking forward to the many outdoor activities, trips and social events we are planning in order to continue to support the armed forces community. Our goals over the next few years are to engage with more veterans through the surgeries in Wyre, Blackpool & Fylde.

Gallery:

