



VIC Newsletter



Veterans' charities secure £1M

THREE charities with more than 35 years' of combined experience supporting veterans have been awarded £1M over three years to lead a new north west veterans' initiative.

Veterans in Communities, VIC, Armed Forces Community Support, Warrington and Liverpool Veterans HQ are pleased to announce that the consortium has secured funding through the VALOUR Recognised Centre Programme, administered by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

This award forms part of the UK's first government-funded network of veteran centres, with 14 locations nationwide selected to provide joined up local support as part of VALOUR, a new £50 million system designed to connect veterans with coordinated services across health, housing, employment and wellbeing.

The award will support the launch of VALOUR North West, a coordinated network of veteran support centres across



Chair of VIC Ronnie Barker and Chief Executive Officer Amanda Walton

Lancashire, Cheshire and Merseyside, with outreach extending into Cumbria and the Isle of Man.

Amanda Walton, Chief Executive Officer at VIC, said: "This funding represents a transformational opportunity for the North West by bringing together three experienced organisations.

"We are creating a coordinated system of support, built around the real needs of veterans and their families. VALOUR North West will reduce barriers, improve outcomes and ensure no veteran is left behind."

Over the next three years, the programme will provide integrated support to over 5,500 veterans and their

families, focusing on health and wellbeing, housing, employment, financial resilience and social inclusion.

Chief Executive Officer at Armed Forces Community Support Arnie said: "We are delighted to be part of VALOUR North West. This investment will enable us to strengthen support across Cheshire and reach even more veterans who need timely, practical help with housing, welfare and wellbeing."

VALOUR North West will improve access to support by offering a consistent, joined up system, ensuring veterans no longer need to navigate multiple services or repeat their stories.

Ian Tumilty, Chief Executive Officer at

Veterans HQ, said: "For veterans in Merseyside, this programme will make a real difference. VALOUR gives us the tools, partnerships and capacity to support those facing crisis, social isolation or transition challenges – ensuring they get the right help at the right time."

VALOUR North West will operate from April 2026 to March 2029, leaving a long term legacy of collaboration, increased capacity and improved support pathways.

Minister for Veterans and People Louise Sandher Jones MP said: "This government is stepping up the nation's commitment to its veterans. We are building the first

ever system that brings together a headquarters in the heart of government, coheres charities and support services, and connects a network of veteran support centres... Our message to veterans is simple: this Government is on your side."

MP for Hyndburn and Haslingden, Sara Smith said: "I'm delighted that VIC has secured Valour funding, something I've lobbied the Government to support.

"Whenever I have visited them in Haslingden, I have seen first-hand just how special they are. There is a real sense of trust, shared experience and helping each other get back on their feet. We are fortunate to have such a brilliant organisation in our community.

"The people they support have served our country in the greatest sense. This funding means that work can continue and more veterans can find their place and purpose again whilst adjusting back into civilian life; supporting them with housing, employment and so much more."



Fitness pilot progress

by Jack Tracey

OUTSTANDING progress has been made by all 11 participants involved in a new veteran-centered fitness programme.

After receiving a £925 grant from Rossendale Borough Council to support a new fitness and wellbeing enhancement initiative, VIC launched the VIC-FIT programme.

The idea behind the project is to improve the health of the veterans involved.

The programme operates on a buddy system, ensuring that every veteran has another member of VIC to attend the gym with, helping to ease social anxiety.

VIC Operations Manager Phil Speddy said: "The programme will hopefully reduce social isolation within the veteran community.

"It has been running for six weeks and the changes are already clear, everyone is moving well, every participant has adapted their diet in some way, people are feeling better, stronger and more positive,



and wellbeing is noticeably on the rise.

"The Whatsapp group has been buzzing with constant messages, encouragement, ideas, updates and plenty of

get trim, but more than that if I was doing it on my own I probably wouldn't do it, but because we're in a team it motivates me and we all motivate each other."

Another participant Craig Glynn said: "VIC-FIT has helped me with my physical and mental health."

Centre Assistant Carol Duckworth said: "VIC-FIT got me out on a winter's evening. It helped improve my balance and flexibility, and it meant I met new people, I found the group really friendly."

Phil added: "It's been so positive, everyone has gained something from it.

"A huge part of our success is thanks to our brilliant partnership with Rossendale Leisure Trust, whose facilities and support have given our veterans the space, structure and encouragement they need to thrive."

"Their team has been fantastic, and this collaboration is proving exactly why community partnerships matter."

VIC is looking to secure further funding to extend the project.



laughs. The peer support has made a huge difference."

VIC-FIT pilot is currently at its halfway stage and all the participants are on a three-month membership and have shown commitment, consistency and determination from day one.

VIC Volunteer Arts and Crafts Coordinator Darren Horsnell said: "I like the good opportunity to lose weight and



Next venture

AFTER completing the London to Haslingden bike ride and Rossendale Remembrance walks, VIC member Bob Brindley and Operations Manager Phil Speddy are planning an even bigger fundraiser.

Keep reading future newsletters for more information on their plans and how you can support their efforts.

Brews and banter

VETERANS can expect a warm welcome at the Brew, Breaky and Bants mornings held on the last Friday of each month organised by Recycling Lives Charity.

The sessions bring veterans together in a relaxed, welcoming environment where connection comes naturally.

Doors are open from 9am to noon at Recycling Lives Centre, 1A Essex St, Preston. There is no need to book, just call in.



Room renovation

A ROOM at the VIC Centre which had been used to store donated items, has now been cleared to make space for the Creative Hub to expand.

A lot of the items were redonated to Rossendale Responsible Animal Rescue which has a shop in Bacup.

Thank you to everyone who helped.





Veterans voices captured



VIC is capturing the memories of veterans to create a lasting record of their service while also highlighting the support they, and their families, have received.

A project entitled Service & Support Legacy Media will ensure memories live on and, veterans have complete control as to what happens with the footage and what is discussed.

Operations Manager Phil Speddy said: "We are hoping to create a video database, to ensure these memories of conflicts, like The Falklands, Afghanistan, Iraq and others are captured, alongside the memories of some of our older members.

"We are also bringing in the family to get them involved. Our first film features veteran Michael Leather who reflects on his military service, his

transition, and the support that shaped it. It is a powerful start to the project."

A military wife has also been interviewed to capture the impact having a relative in the armed forces has on other family members and what support there is.

Anyone wanting to be a part of the project should email Administrator Amy Thompson on amythompson@vic.com



Amy retains NW title

OUR Administrator Amy Thompson retained her title as The Royal British Legion North West Regional Standard Bearer.

She is already The Royal British Legion Lancashire County Standard Bearer, a competition that is held annually to recognise the skill and dedication of those who carry the Standard.

The winners go on to represent their County or District at regional level, and from there, to national.

Amy has dedicated many hours to training, both in Lancashire and Staffordshire – and it paid off.

She said: "I am super excited that I managed to retain my title as North West Regional Standard Bearer.

"All the training I've been doing both in Lancashire and Staffordshire has really paid off and I'm so grateful to all who helped me along the way. Thank

you. Next stop – nationals."

Operations Manager Phil Speddy said: "We couldn't be prouder of you Amy.

"Your dedication is fantastic, your work ethic inspiring, and you deserve every accolade that comes your way.

"Keep smashing it Amy, we're all behind you."

Amy will now go on to the RBL National final.

Veterans' dinner

THE annual Padiham dinner for servicemen and women, which also welcomes members of the emergency services, will be held on Saturday April 25.

Tickets are £25 and the event is being held at the Masonic Assembly Rooms in Padiham. For more information contact Peter Haigh on peter62clarets@hotmail.co.uk

Battlefields tours update

THERE are potentially going to be two trips to the French and Belgium battlefields this September to satisfy the number of VIC members wanting to go.

At this stage, Operations Manager Phil Speddy is looking at a First World War tour in

Normandy and a Second World War tour to Ypres.

Phil said: "With the rising costs, we are already looking at the trips costing £500 per person. Anyone else who is interested in attending either of the trips should contact Administrator Amy Thompson on 01706 833180."



Our VIC Riders enjoyed the good weather and went on a trip to the Dalesway Café in Skipton

Our March Painting in the style of Bob Ross class created this tranquil scene, if you would like to join a future class, the cost is £50, with a non-refundable deposit of £15 and all materials are supplied. Contact 01706 833180 to book.





Veterans honour Dorothy

A GUARD of honour was formed by members of VIC at Dorothy Mitchell's funeral in Burnley.

On March 6, the VIC Centre in Haslingden was closed for the duration of her funeral and there was standing room only in the crematorium as Dorothy had touched the lives of so many people.

Affectionately known as the 'Rossendale Rotweiler', former senior nurse Dorothy's dogged determination enabled our first Operations Manager Bob Elliott to realise his dream of creating a veterans' support charity.

Current Operations Manager Phil Speddy said: "Dorothy played a pivotal role in the early years of VIC.

"Her dedication, compassion and commitment helped shape who we are today, and we owe her a tremendous debt of gratitude. Her legacy will remain firmly rooted in the heart of our organisation."



Edward Mason

It is with great sadness that we share the news of the passing of Veteran and VIC Member Edward (Eddy) Mason.



Standard Bearer Jacko Pearce, along with other veterans, attended his funeral at Accrington Crematorium on March 24.

Eddy was a familiar face at the VIC Centre in Haslingden, often calling in for a brew, some friendly banter, and to share stories from his years of service.

He will be fondly remembered for his warmth, humour, and the pride he carried as a member of our veteran community.

He began his military career by signing up for National Service in 1952, before enlisting as a regular in the Royal Navy and also serving in the Royal Marines. His career spanned around 20 years.



Soldiers remembered forever

A POIGNANT act of Remembrance brought communities in Middleton together for a special dedication ceremony.

Streets and a local park were named in memory of three former local soldiers whose service and sacrifice continue to be deeply respected.



At Willow Park, Langley, a service honouring Lance Corporal Scott Hetherington, Corporal Joel Halliwell and Fusilier Lee Rigby was held.

Their names now live on in Hetherington Way, Joel Halliwell VC Park and Rigby Way. Family members of all three soldiers were in attendance alongside local residents and veterans.



Crafting

VIC members have been invited to a special taster day to learn new skills and crafting experience with local company Deni Deni, who manufacture bespoke products.

Last year, the business, based in Haslingden, generously created handcrafted poppy keyrings for VIC, now they are offering six members the chance to learn new skills.

The session would normally cost £195 per person but this course has been heavily subsidised to just £70.

Operations Manager Phil Speddy said: "This is

a fantastic opportunity to learn new skills, get hands-on with high quality materials, and experience the level of craftsmanship that has earned Deni Deni serious recognition in their field.

"This is a rare chance to access a premium creative experience at a fraction of the usual cost, delivered by a company with an impressive track record and a genuine commitment to community collaboration."

Contact Administrator Amy Thompson on 01706 833180 to book a place.

Choir raises nearly £230

A MASSIVE thank you to our VIC Choir members and our dedicated collector Jacko Pearce for their participation at Tesco's Burnley.



customers for donating nearly £230 during the two-hour performance.

Anyone who wants to volunteer to collect at future choir

appearances can contact Administrator Amy Thompson on 01706 833180.

Life saving training



MEMBERS of VIC took part in some fantastic first aid training, including a practical hands-on demonstration of CPR and how to safely use a defibrillator.

A huge thank you to Dawn and Dean from Rossendale Community First Responders

for delivering clear, engaging and life saving guidance.

Their expertise, and calm, practical approach, gave the members the confidence to step in and help if an emergency ever arises.

It was an incredibly valuable session – and a great reminder that the skills learnt really can make all the difference.

VIC has a Community Public Access Defibrillator fitted outside its HQ.



Thriving together

A NETWORKING event was held at Chorley Fire Station involving partners from the Forces Wellbeing Collective, FWC.

As an alternative to the planned showcase, the networking aim was to promote open, two-way conversations between FWC members from Lancashire.

Current and potential future members and external professionals, provided presentations and gathered feedback on the wishes of the collective about its current situation and its future.

VIC Chief Executive Officer Amanda Walton and Community Capacity Builders John Pluckwell, who is based at VIC, attended the meeting

John works across the county to create a network of different organisations to work with veterans, families and their carers.

Amanda said: "This was an opportunity for all the organisations that are supporting the armed forces community to be able to connect and meet each other.

"I gave an overview of VIC and what we have been carrying out."

Amanda discussed with Blackpool and Fleetwood FC staff on best practice and assistance for

volunteer opportunities.

The attendees also produced a Lancashire Asset Register for the members of the FWC.

This includes:

- VIC – rooms available, minibus, emergency food bank items, welfare support.
- Bay Veterans – rooms available, signposting locally, community hub space.
- Armed Forces Support Group – rooms available, possible access to a minibus.
- AFC Fylde – support to veterans and family members, signposting.
- Recycling Lives – food, housing, employability, training, space.
- Fleetwood Town – support, signposting, garden.
- Lancashire Fire and Rescue – home fire safety, recruitment, rooms throughout Lancs.

John said the event was an overall success and there are plans for an online meeting in April and a showcase event in May.

Thrive Together is the legacy phase of the VPPP – Veterans Places, Pathways and People and uses what was learnt from the two-year programme, which VIC was a part of, to provide safe places for veterans to access.





ROSSENDALE

Activities at the VIC Centre, Bury Road, Haslingden, BB4 5PL, unless otherwise stated.

Outreach Service

MONDAY-FRIDAY

9am-4.30pm

For a home appointment call 01706 833180

MONDAY

Crafty Chatters

10am-12 noon

TUESDAY

Art Group

10am-3.30pm

Cost £6 places limited book on

01706 833180

WEDNESDAY

Allotment

Help on the allotment in Holcombe Road,

Helmshore. Contact 01706 833180

THURSDAY

Greggs RV

1pm-3pm

THURSDAY

VIC Choir (weekly)

6.30-8.30pm

FRIDAY

Art Group

10am-3.30pm

Cost £6 places limited book on

01706 833180

SECOND SATURDAY IN THE MONTH

Rossendale Armed Forces and Veterans' Breakfast Club

10am-12 noon

The Circle Cafe, Burnley Road, Bacup.

(book in advance)

EVERY MONTH

Painting in the Style of Bob Ross art classes

Contact Darren 01706 833180

Walking Groups/ Social Inclusion trips

see Facebook or website for details

BURNLEY AND PENDLE

Outreach Service

MONDAY

10am-noon

Breakfast Club at Burnley Miners' Social Club, Plumbe Street, Burnley, BB11 3AA.

Contact 01706 833180 for dates of outreach at: Burnley FC in the Community; Pendle Armed Forces Support Group, Holmefield House, Gisburn Road, Barrowford; Morrisons in Nelson and Asda in Colne.

HEYWOOD, MIDDLETON AND ROCHDALE

VIC Outreach

TUESDAY

The Mess Tin - cafe and drop-in

1pm-2.30pm

The Lighthouse Project, Middleton Shopping Centre, M24 1AB.

THURSDAY

Rochdale Veterans' Breakfast Club and VIC Outreach

9am Flying Horse Hotel, Packer Street, Rochdale, OL16 1NJ.

HYNDBURN

Outreach / Drop-In/ Model Railway Club/ Art Group

FRIDAY 10am-3pm

VIC Hyndburn, Accrington Arndale Centre, BB5 1EX.

Accrington Stanley Breakfast Club/ Drop-In

LAST SATURDAY EVERY MONTH

10.30am-noon

Stanley Sports Hub, Thorneyholme Road, Accrington, BB5 6BD.

BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN

Veterans' football

MONDAY 8-9pm

Blackburn Rovers Indoor Centre, Ewood Park, Blackburn BB2 4JF. A cost applies.

Outreach Service

TUESDAY 10am-noon

Rovers Breakfast Hub, Legends Lounge, Darwen End, Blackburn Rovers FC, Ewood Park, Blackburn, BB2 4JF.

Contact Chris McGrail 07787 585109

RIBBLE VALLEY & PRESTON

TUESDAYS

Redoubt Coffee Morning and Outreach

10am-noon

Trinity Methodist Church, Wesleyan Row,

Parson Lane, Clitheroe, BB7 2JY.

Sandbag Cafe

10am-12.30pm

St George's Church, off Lune Street,

Preston PR1 2NP. This is a joint session

with Lancashire Armed Forces Association.

VIC – 01706 833180

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Community Capacity Builder

John Pluckwell

johnpluckwell@vic.org.uk

Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator

Darren Horsnell

darrenhorsnell@vic.org.uk

VIC Choir Bookings Barry Hyde

b.hyde@ntlworld.com

Veterans at risk of homelessness

or organisations working with them are

encouraged to contact **OP FORTITUDE**

0800 952 0774 or visit riv.org.uk/opfortitude

Combat Stress Helpline

0800 138 1619

NHS Military Veterans Psychological

Therapies Service (NW)

0300 323 0707

The Royal British Legion

0808 802 8080

7 days a week 8am-8pm

SSAFA

email Lancashire@ssafa.org.uk

01772 260 462

Citizens Advice East Lancashire

0808 278 7975 freephone Mon-Fri 9am-5pm

The Samaritans

01282 694929

Mon to Fri 9am-9pm

Freephone 116 123

Op Courage

0300 373 3332 email

opcourageNORTH@cntw.nhs.uk

Veterans UK Free Helpline

0808 1914 218

East Lancashire Single Point of Access via

GP or self-referral

0800 0130 707

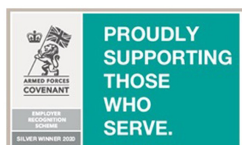
Veterans In Communities
Charity Number 1151194

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