



Road to recovery aided by National Lottery cash

SPECIALIST psychological support is now available for veterans after Rossendale-based charity REAL won a National Lottery Awards For All Grant.

The award, of £9,896, means that ex-servicemen and women who are returning to Civvy Street can now access psychological support and personal skills training to better enable them to reintegrate into society.

REAL will be able to support 22 veterans through this transition by delivering structured group therapy.

REAL Community Development Worker Pat Smith said: "Returning to civilian life is sometimes a difficult time for members of the armed forces, many who will have complex life problems.

"Men and women who have served in various conflicts return home different

than when they left, some may have returned years ago but are still experiencing difficulties in their day to day living.

"It will enable veterans to manage their disorders, support each other and make positive contributions to their communities, with an opportunity to train as support workers using their skills to help others."

VIC Manager Bob Elliott said: "Two of our members have already benefited from a similar programme last year and this funding means many more will have the same opportunity.

"This lottery money is going to allow us to continue the good work that is already going on in the Valley."

It is hoped that the scheme can be fully operational in early spring with the first course running in March.



REAL's Pat Smith

What **VIC** has done for me...

I found my life spiralling into decline through depression and anxiety, not having focus or aims. Joining VIC art group gave me a new purpose and through the excellent tuition allowed me to develop a new skill. I also found the occasional walks gave me time out to clear my thoughts. I am now looking forward to helping other veterans develop new skills in domestic maintenance.

Veterans' WAGs Club

MILITARY Wives became an international success after they formed a choir, now a new club in Rossendale is setting up called Veterans' WAGs - wives and girlfriends.

Living with a veteran who is struggling with mental health issues can be very challenging for their wife or girlfriend.

VIC member Suzanne Preston said: "This is of special interest to me after all I have been through of late it will be great to get together with the other 'wives' without the guys around and be able to speak openly and freely.

"It is much needed and will hopefully give the women an opportunity to speak about the challenges they, and their families, cope with.

"It will hopefully develop into an

opportunity to share coping strategies and gain support and experience from each other.

"It is something that already happens within service with many wives finding it especially useful when the men are on tour or on board ship."

The first get together is on Friday January 18th at 1pm at Crystal Rocks, off Bacup Road, Waterfoot.

Suzanne added: "I think it is a definite step forward in the development of VIC. Very few organisations are doing this at present – they all state that they support the veteran and his family but there is very little in place."

For more information contact Suzanne on suzannepreston@veteransincommunities.org or call VIC manager Bob Elliott on 07961 554 006.

Community Covenant pledge event



On 24th November 2012, Rossendale Borough Council, REAL and VIC hosted a second event at Alder Grange School in Rawtenstall to bring together all the different agencies, veterans' organisations and community groups that were not able to attend at the initial Armed Forces Covenant signing in July 2012.

One of the purposes was to ask for pledges from these organisations to support veterans and their families living in, or returning to, Rossendale.

Over 100 delegates attended on the day and a number of workshops were available for delegates to attend run by VIC, NHS Military Veterans Services, Live At Ease, Royal British Legion, Remploy and VIA. Alder Grange provided the venue and students were involved in running the event.

Commanding Officer of the 4th Battalion, the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Johnny Lighten explained that the region provided nearly 20 per cent of service personnel. He praised all those involved with the covenant for making sure it really did lead to change.

There has been a great deal of interest generated by the Rossendale Covenant. Lancashire County Council's Armed Forces and Veterans' Champion County Councillor Mike



Lieutenant Colonel Johnny Lighten is presented with the covenant pledges by Deputy Mayor Amanda Robertson.



France described it as trail blazing and said he would be watching its progress and seeing how the ideas can also be used in other areas.

The event has led to many more meetings being planned with 42 Brigade in Preston, NHS, local services, other local authorities who are still to sign their Armed Forces Community Covenants, Lancashire Council, Live At Ease and Remploy.



We will remember them

VIC members attended many of the Remembrance Services across the Valley in November in Haslingden, Rawtenstall, Bacup, Waterfoot, Helmshore and Stacksteads.

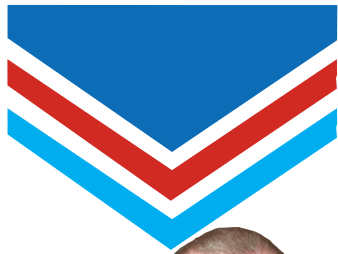
VIC was asked to escort the Deputy Mayor Amanda Robertson at the Waterfoot and Bacup services. Bob Elliott said: "It was a privilege to be asked to escort the Deputy Mayor and so good to see the different ages at all the services." VIC members were able to pay their respects at several services.



Christmas cheer

VIC handed out food parcels to veterans and families in need over the Christmas period.

Parcels were donated by St Stephen's School in Bury and RAFT in Rossendale, Bob Elliott said: "Christmas can be a difficult time for veterans and their families who are struggling and these parcels do make a difference."



Veterans cards raise £350



MORE than 20 pieces of artwork produced by the veterans' art group was well received at the Army Art Society's exhibition in Salisbury in November.

VIC was one of three organisations the society supported this year.

VIC member Darren Horsnell, who runs the club, is in the process of establishing a veterans' art website where the art produced can be shown on-line. Several exhibitions are also planned for the next 12 months.

Darren said: "It is an opportunity for any veterans and their families to become members of an art organisation run by veterans for veterans.

"I would like to give them the

opportunity to take an active roll in this and design a logo for the Veterans Art Organisation (VAO)."

VIC was asked to help decorate the Christmas tree in Bacup before the Bacup Arts and Crafts Christmas Market in December.

The market was another opportunity to display the veterans' art work and to raise some money through the sale of Christmas cards that the art group painted.

Darren added: "It was a great opportunity for those whose paintings were chosen to see them in print. Next year we hope to produce another set of cards."

Sales raised more than £350.



Clogs On T'Cobbles in Rawtenstall

What **VIC** art group has done for me...

Since coming here I have started to regain my confidence and I have completely surprised myself - the last time I did art was in school and my teacher shook his head. I started off on painting with numbers and now I paint places I have been. I find myself able to switch off and drift away from everything.



Bacup Christmas Market

Nominate a cause

You nominate, you vote, and we give back through a charitable contribution. Tell us the local causes you would like to see supported in your community, including local charities, schools or community projects.

ASDA

At Christmas we were one of Asda's three chosen charities at Christmas - here is what we told customers.

Veterans In Communities

This is a newly formed, voluntary run organisation that works with ex-military and uniformed personnel. The group offers friendship, support and advice for men and women from 18 years of age who find themselves unable to ease back into "Civvy Street" and are struggling with their daily lives.

The groups meet regularly in Bacup and Haslingden, providing housing and job search advice as well as art classes, listening groups and reading sessions. They are currently looking to recruit new members and to expand on the help they can offer them all.

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What's On and Where

VIC Outreach Service

MONDAY

11pm-3pm

Haslingden Community Link, Bury Road, Haslingden, BB4 5PG.

WEDNESDAY

11am-3pm

REAL Office, St James Square, Bacup, OL13 9AA.

VIC Art Group and drop-in

FRIDAY

11am-1pm

REAL Office, St James Square, Bacup, OL13 9AA

Walking Group

THURSDAY

Walks are arranged on the 2nd and 4th Thursday, weather permitting.

Veterans' WAGs Club

FRIDAY

Meetings are arranged for Wives And Girlfriends every fortnight at 1pm at Crystal Rocks, off Bacup Road, Waterfoot, BB4 7AW.

VIC update

VETERANS In Communities (VIC) has opened its doors to all former uniformed service personnel including firefighters, police and paramedics.

More than 20 ex-service personnel have accessed the organisation and it is hoped, once funding is secured for a building, VIC will be able to help even more.

Ex-Royal Engineer Bob Elliott manages the group and is bidding for money from the government's Armed Forces Community Covenant and the National Health Service among others.

"Our walks are very popular and we often get 10 people and their dogs coming along. We have now got a good core of veterans aged from 24 to 90, and their families running VIC and three of our members are case workers for the Royal British Legion.

"It can take up to 15 years for someone to realise they are suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). We have worked with three or four people who have suffered physical disability but most people are suffering illnesses that you can't see.

"We have links with the Military Veterans' Service and Combat Stress for psychological and mental health illnesses including PTSD cases. What people gain most is being able to talk to others who really understand what they are going through."

Anyone wanting to find out if they can be helped by VIC should contact Bob.

Useful Contacts



www.veteransincommunities.org

Manager Bob Elliott

bobelliott@veteransincommunities.org

07961 554 006 / 01706 871730

Suzanne Preston

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VIC Art Group

Darren Horsnell

darrenhorsnell@veteransincommunities.org

Combat Stress Helpline

0800 138 1619

PCT Military Veterans Service

0161 253 6638

Rossendale Citizens' Advice Bureau

0844 499 4121 (from a landline)

0300 456 2552 (from a mobile)

The Samaritans

01706 830999



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www.facebook.com/VICVeteransInCommunities

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