



£80,000 health grant to improve veterans' lives

VETERANS across East Lancashire can look forward to a brighter future after Rossendale-based charity REAL secured £80,000 to improve health services.

The money provided by the East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) will enable Veterans In Communities (VIC), a Rossendale-based group, to better assist ex-service personnel. Burnley based Salute will also receive a further £75,000 from the CCG.

REAL assisted VIC to become incorporated last September and now, thanks to the funding from the CCG, the post of project co-ordinator is being advertised.

VIC manager Bob Elliott said: "We are delighted to have received the funding from the CCG as it gives us the chance to work across East Lancashire.

"This allows us to continue the successful service we have established in Rossendale and be able to extend that to the whole of East Lancashire working with many more veterans and their families."

Director of REAL Dorothy Mitchell said: "We are delighted with the faith that the CCG has shown in our ability to deliver much needed services to veterans and their families.

"Our sole aim is to link the Armed Forces Community Covenants in East Lancashire for the



benefit of veterans and their families and highlight the immense skills they bring to us. It is central to the aims of our Armed Forces Community Covenants that we recognise that thousands of veterans return home as different people to those who left.

BELONG

"Many feel they no longer 'belong' and many very highly skilled men and women returning to communities of high unemployment, with a low wage economy and limited prospects for young people, find it difficult to settle."

Di Van Ruitenbeek, Lay Chair of the CCG, said: "There is an estimated 24,000 serving or retired military personnel in East Lancashire. I am confident that these voluntary organisations will work effectively in partnership with Local Authorities and all other organisations who are co-signatories of the covenant, to improve the health and wellbeing of serving military

and ex-military service personnel and their families living in East Lancashire.

"Locally our health services, including GP's and specialists, are working hard to meet the specific health needs of armed forces personnel. However, East Lancashire CCG recognises that we need to do much more to meet the needs of this important community."

Statistics show that 30 per cent of service leavers settle in the North West. Of those four per cent have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder while nearly 20 per cent struggle with depression.

Veterans In Communities has been working with a number of veterans across Rossendale by holding outreach services, art classes, walks, fishing trips and many other activities to help ex-service personnel integrate back into life on Civvy Street.

Dorothy added: "Local veteran outreach is very necessary and we will offer any help we can to promote this and make local veterans purposefully active. Returning veterans offer the chance to make East Lancashire prosperous again."

What VIC has done for me...

I have grown in confidence and self esteem. I love helping others out and with my military history I can relate to other Veterans' issues. Art was a massive therapy for me and now, thanks to VIC, I am running an art group every Friday at REAL, Bacup. The group has grown well and we have been involved with projects within the community. VIC has made me feel wanted, worthwhile and an important part of an organisation that focuses all its energy to helping other Veterans and their families.



Rochdale supports VIC

VIC was successful with our application to Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale (HMR) CCG funding.

This will allow us to deliver a number of similar activities across the patch. The funding will go towards the costs of materials for the art group, outdoor activities, outreach, support worker training and including HMR on a social Prescribing Database.

We are in the process of looking for a venue that has easy access for all three areas; we still plan to run the outdoor activities in Rossendale due to its close proximity and its open spaces, the support worker training will be included in the 'Manage Your Health' courses starting this month.

Bob Elliott said "VIC has



some members in the area already and with Combat Stress and NHS Military Veterans Service operating in those areas, it means they can refer through to the art, outdoor activities and outreach"

In February an 'Armed Forces Community Information Event' was held for GPs and Medical Professionals. VIC were one of the many speakers which included; Veterans Council, REMPLOY, MV

IAPT, Combat Stress, Live At Ease, RBL, Army, and Amputee Rehabilitation Medicine. The event was well received as a great many organisations supporting veterans were present.

What VIC means to me...

VIC means a lot to me it's given me a sense of belonging again and helped with my confidence and self esteem. I feel over the years VIC will offer veterans a safe and familiar setting for individuals and their families to learn new skills, build confidence and be around like minded people to help them reintegrate back in to society. I would like to achieve one or two big fund raising challenges one group one and one individual one.



Chance to win this stunning painting

ARTWORK created by Veterans will be going on show in a summer exhibition at Alder Grange High School, Rawtenstall.

VIC art group is co-ordinating the exhibition and as well as showing artwork created by the group that meets every Friday at REAL in Bacup, they are also hoping to attract work from Veterans from other areas of the country.

Art group organiser Veteran Darren Horsnell said: "If anybody sells their work they would be required to donate

25% of sales to VIC. To raise more funds I am donating a painting of my own as a raffle prize."

Judges who will be asked to select their favourite pieces of work.

Darren added: "Seeing your own work on display gives a sense of achievement and self worth but having a piece chosen by an independent artist as being the best on the day is a proud moment." If you would like to take part email Darren on darrenhorsnell@veteransincommunities.org or call 01706 871730.



VIC helpers dig deep to aid a comrade in need

VETERANS are springing into action to finish a house renovation project for a comrade who is battling leukaemia.

Andrew Worrall served in the Royal Air Force and when he left in 2008 he became a self-employed property developer.

Andrew, 27, and his wife Laura, 35, live in a cramped flat on the second floor of a block in Haslingden, with their nine-month-old son James.

RUN-DOWN

They bought a run-down house in Clayton-le-Moors, in June 2011 with the aim of renovating it into a family home and relocating.

But just six months later, mid-way through the project, Andrew was diagnosed with leukaemia and spent five weeks at The Christie in Manchester having

chemotherapy.

By the end of May he was suffering severe headaches and he suffered a seizure. Further tests that showed the leukaemia had spread from his bone marrow into his spinal column.

Fortunately his younger brother Alex, 14, was a perfect match and his stem cells were harvested and transplanted into Andrew last August.

REMISSION

Now Andrew is in remission but he is still on fortnightly check ups and is not well enough to work – so the family home remains unfinished.

Then he found out about Veterans In Communities. Manager Bob Elliott said: “We have many members with a variety of skills and we are all willing to help Andrew to carry out the jobs that he wants doing to complete the house so that

his family can move in.”

VIC member Suzanne Preston, who is also a Royal British Legion volunteer caseworker, was able to assist Andrew to apply for some much needed grants from the Royal British Legion and the RAF Benevolent Fund; they have both also offered their support to this family during this difficult time. VIC members have already pledged to provide free manpower.

Andrew said: “Some days I am more tired than others, it often feels like three steps forward and one step back.

TABLETS

“I take 17 tablets a day and will be on penicillin antibiotics for the next 15 years. I am very grateful to my younger brother for donating his stem cells.

“I am getting a little better fitness wise but I am

nowhere near what I should be. Hopefully, with the help from VIC, I can get the house renovation finished and we can rent the flat out and live in the family home we always wanted. Then I can try to forget that I was ever ill.”

Bob added: “We would appreciate any support the wider community can give us to get the project finished as soon as possible so the young family can move in and start to rebuild their lives.”

Can you help?

Many hands make light work so please contact Bob or Suzanne on 01706 871730 or email info@veteransincommunities.org if you would like to know how to help Andrew and Laura.

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.

Useful Contacts



www.veteransincommunities.org

Manager Bob Elliott

bobelliott@veteransincommunities.org

07961 554 006 / 01706 871730

Suzanne Preston

suzannepreston@veteransincommunities.org

VIC Art Group

Darren Horsnell

darrenhorsnell@veteransincommunities.org

VIC supported by:



East Lancashire
Clinical Commissioning Group



Rossendale
Borough Council

Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale
Clinical Commissioning Group



Combat Stress Helpline

0800 138 1619

PCT Military Veterans Service

0161 253 6638

The Royal British Legion

08457 725 725

Rossendale Citizens' Advice Bureau

0844 499 4121 (from a landline)

0300 456 2552 (from a mobile)

The Samaritans

01706 830999



VIC update

In addition to the good news about the CCG and HMR NHS funding; with the support of REAL we have made a further application to the Armed Forces Community Covenant grant scheme for further funding to establish a Veterans Community Link.

If successful, this funding will allow us to open a centre in Rossendale where veterans and their families are able to access a number of our services and other agencies.

In December we were invited by ASDA to be one of the three local charities they support every month, VIC.

Bob Elliott said: "We received the most support from customers and I was delighted to collect a cheque for £200."

VIC is planning to work with ASDA this year and will have a stand in the foyer, where customers can come and see the work we do. ASDA has a number of rooms that the community can use at no cost and we plan to utilise these to deliver training as its central to Rossendale.

In January we announced National Lottery funding was being used to deliver some psychological support group sessions. The first 'Manage Your Health starts in March that will give veterans the skills 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. The first course will be delivered in Bacup and 11 veterans will take part in the pilot.