



Vulnerable Veterans, Halting the revolving door.

Overview:

There is a small but significant cohort of veterans¹ who leave the armed forces and do not thrive in civilian life. Some of these ex-service personnel, reserves or family members fall into crime or homelessness (Ashcroft, 2014).

There is interest around veterans in the Criminal Justice System [CJS] and Government, academic researchers, criminal justice agencies are all working to establish how many veterans there are and the reasons they have offended. Some of the focus of this work has been on the issues of addiction, housing and post traumatic stress disorder [PTSD] (MacDonald, 2014; SSAFA, 2016).

In order to address these concerns the Vulnerable Veterans Project was designed to:

- Support ten Veterans, reserves and/or families in contact with the CJS or homeless.
- To create and train a team of ten “Go to Guys/Girls” or mentors [G2G’s] to support ex-service personnel in contact with the Criminal Justice System [CJS].
- Identify the number of ex-service personnel imprisoned or on licence in Surrey.
- Benchmark the support available to veterans, reserves and their families so that service users can be signposted to support appropriate to their needs.
- To prevent ex-service personnel and their families from becoming victims of crime.

All the objectives of this project have been achieved on time and within the budget allowed.

Executive Summary:

This report benchmarks what the Vulnerable Veterans Project has achieved and forms the basis for a second phase of our work. We have brought together new data from Surrey Police, HMPS, the probation service, Armed Forces Covenant champions, Veterans Groups and Charities. The collection of new and more focussed data is ongoing. This will feed into our reports during the next phase of this project.

There is a lot of support available for veterans and their families provided by many organisations², nationally, geographically and by arm of service. This support has been improved with the introduction of the Armed Forces Covenant (Phillips, 2014) but there are areas of overlapping support (SSAFA, 2016). Research reveals over one hundred and forty seven organisations that support ex-service families in Surrey (Nield & Nield, 2016)

¹ There are currently upwards of 4 million veterans in the UK (Phillips, 2014)

² See the spreadsheet accompanying this report.

A small but significant number of Veterans and Reserves fall into crime or through self-neglect become homeless. A large proportion of those who turn to crime can be identified and supported to stop offending and remain out of the criminal justice system (Project Nova, 2015; Nield & Nield, 2016).

The Vulnerable Veterans Project continues to work to secure and confirm data on the number of ex-service personnel imprisoned or on licence in Surrey. Previously data has been estimated (Ministry of Defence, 2010; BBC. 2008). Alongside this we are working with Surrey's transformational justice programme to divert ex-service personnel from going to prison or on leaving prison never to return.

However there is a reluctance on the part of some ex-service personnel to admit their previous role through embarrassment, fear of being shunned when applying for jobs or for fear of attack when in prison (Packham, 2013). Some simply feel they have failed and withdraw from society ending up at risk of victimisation and homelessness. More work needs to be done with the civilian professionals who veterans meet to encourage accurate reporting (Ministry of Defence, 2010).

The Vulnerable Veterans Project is currently supporting five veterans and has identified a group of 10 volunteers who have been trained under our bespoke G2G programme.

It is known that for every pound invested in diverting an offender from prison four pounds are saved and the Vulnerable Veterans Project has paid for itself by keeping up to 3 ex-servicemen out of prison.

All the objectives of this project have been achieved on time and within budget.

Data Sources:

The data sources for this initial report come from official reports, independent academic research 3rd Sector sources and our own investigative research. We have interviewed prison and police officers, veterans, council staff, charitable case workers and Armed Forces Covenant champions. We have researched psychological journals, with the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Justice, news feeds and the internet.

Limitations:

The data that we have received is the very best available to us at present yet there are issues around the age of some data sets and the small number of clients we have worked with. Furthermore there are some currently unresolved conflicts between data, particularly those supplied by (charitable) practitioners and government bodies. Some key data remains weak. To address this we have an investigative programme starting in the second phase of this project. Further pilots are anticipated and our future reports will include these works. We are inviting academic research into Vulnerable Veterans. This report reflects only the first six months of this project.

Results:

The project team were tasked to help and support ten veterans in the first phase of this project, we have helped 12. The project has selected and trained ten G2G's and has a short list of recruited G2G's waiting to be trained. Three of the veterans we have helped have volunteered to train as G2G's.

Selection to become a G2G is critical to the project as the skill set required is important and is not held by every applicant. We have deferred potential recruits because they need to be fully fit to work with the veterans we serve.

We have completed a table of the support available across Surrey for Veterans, reserves and their families, please see Appendix A.

Our other targets were to submit an interim and a final report and complete our tasks within the budget. The interim report was completed on 31.03.2016 and submitted to the Ministry of Defence and this current document concludes Phase 1. The project was completed within the set budget.

Figure 1: A list of the Vulnerable Veterans project's objectives.

Objective	#	Achieved
Help and support Veterans	10	12
Select and Train G2G's	10	10
Compile a table of Support Available to Veterans	1	✓
Number of veterans imprisoned or on licence	✓	✓
Interim Report	31.03.16	✓
Final Report	14.09.16	✓
Complete within budget	31.08.16	✓

Veterans Helped

The project has helped 12 ex-service people, please see below and at appendix B.

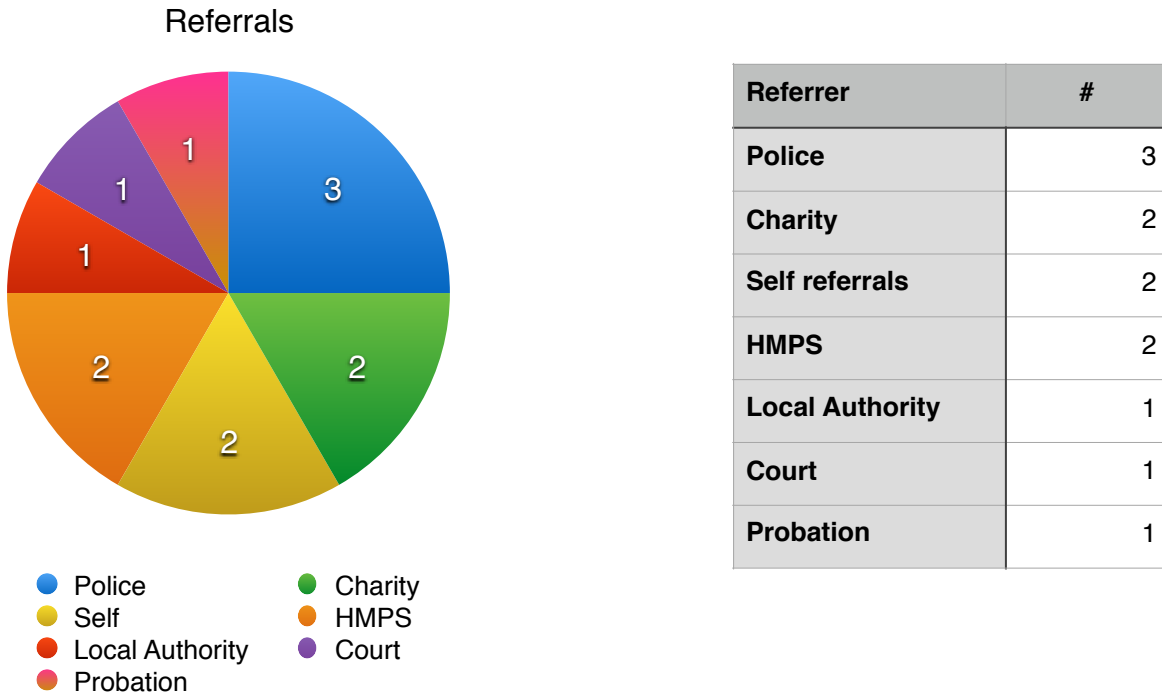
Veteran	Date Joined	Date Complete	Referred	Issues	Gender	Age	Force	Outcomes
1	11.02.16	Ongoing	Police	Health and Mental Health	F	50's	Army	G2G assigned, GP supportive.
2	11.02.16	07.06.16	Charity	Crime, PTSD, Mental Health, Injury	M	30's	Army	Volunteer Mental Health first aid provider.
3	23.02.16	02.03.16	Police	Homeless, PTSD	M	40's	Army	Local Authority Housing, Royal British legion.
4	01.03.16	Ongoing	Self	Health, Stress, Immigration service	M	40's	Army	G2G assigned. Supporting with immigration, GP and employer.
5	02.03.16	27.06.16	Charity	Stress, Unemployed, Housing issues	M	30's	Army	Employed 20hrs a week,
6	17.03.16	10.06.16	HMPS	PTSD	M	50's	Army	Volunteering with local charity.
7	01.04.16	01.06.16	Local Authority	Alcohol, Mental health, health	M	50's	Navy	Left Surrey.
8	02.06.16	Ongoing	Self	Labour dispute, criminal offence ongoing	M	40's	Army	G2G assigned, Support at tribunal and with court procedures.
9	08.06.16	18.06.16	Court	Family issues, PTSD	M	30's	Army	Signposted to Combat Stress who are now assisting him.
10	11.07.16	01.09.16	Police	Mental Health, Drug misuse, Relationship	M	50's	Army	Supported to court and legal advice. Issues addressed .
11	05.08.16	Ongoing	HMPS	Mental Health, Violence	M	40's	Army	G2G assigned, Probation supportive, Local Mental Health services dealing.
12	10.08.16	Ongoing	Probation	Housing, Mental Health, Financial	F	40's	R.A.F	G2G assigned, budget set, supported to housing services

We currently receive introductions to Vulnerable Veterans from Surrey Police, HMPS, charities and we have had self-referrals. One local authority, a court and the probation service have also directed service users to us.

Surrey Police deal with some 11 veterans a month in their three custody centres (Surrey Police, 2016). A majority of these live in the county. No figures are available at this time on how many are dealt with outside custody and on the street.

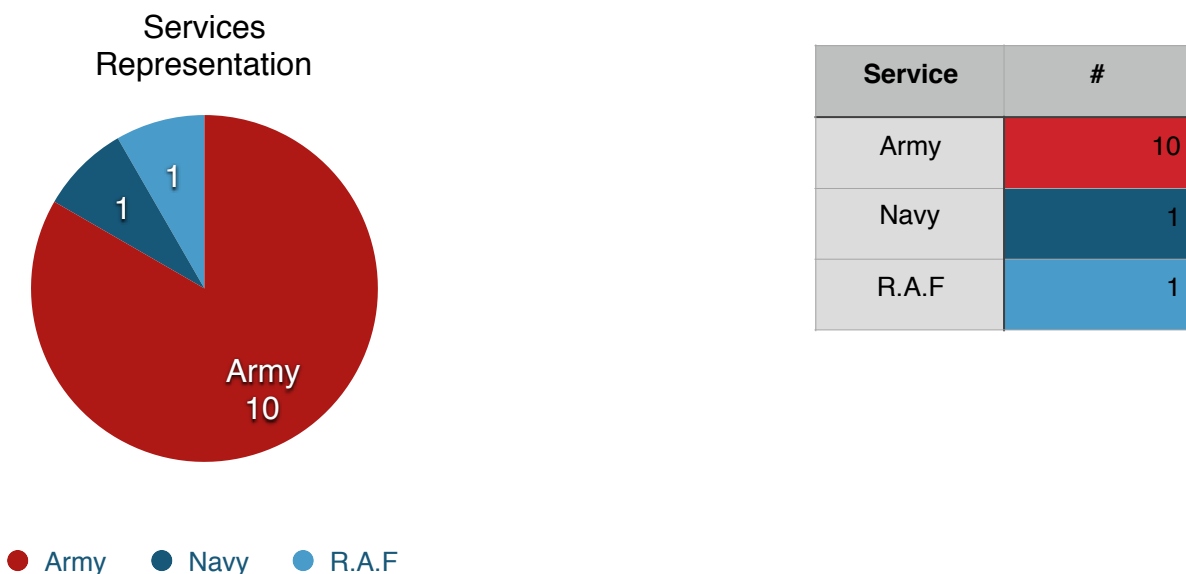
Homelessness is a concern for veterans and across Surrey, around 15 veterans are found accommodation in a year. Housing is a key area of concerns for veterans and their families (SSAFA, 2016).

Figure 2: Where Veterans referrals come from.



It is interesting to note the clients' representation by service, as most have come from the Army. Two are women and it has been noted that the largest group are in their forties.

Figure 3: Representation by Military Service



Mentors/G2G's

The Vulnerable Veterans Project is currently working with 5 veterans and has a bank of 10 volunteer G2G's and has 3 more who are prepared to undergo our bespoke G2G training.

We are supporting the creation of a new veterans self-help group in Surrey starting in September 2016.

Figure 4: Ages of Veterans



Support Available (please see Appendix A).

Of the 147 organisations supporting the military 19 are based in Surrey. They are supporting an un-recorded number of service and ex-services families in the county although there is data from Runnymede that over 450 service families live in that borough.

The range of support available is broad and includes drop-in centres, mental health first aid, canine therapies, sport, the provision of shelter, household goods, regimental events and specific assistance. This direct support covers financial, housing, employment and support should a veteran, reserve or their family come into contact with the criminal justice system.

There are 17 groups providing sporting help, 8 offering apprenticeships, 45 who can provide financial assistance and 65 help programmes.

This is an almost bewildering array of potentially available support that supplements what the armed forces and government offer. However it is not clear how a potential service user in crisis would have access to the services they need. There are a plethora of application forms and rules to allow access to the various services.

This report has recorded the potential services for veterans, reserves and their families across Surrey for the first time and there is work to be done to refine areas such as the list of sixty five help programmes that cover a very wide range of services.

The Vulnerable Veterans project is unique in trying to help veterans, reserves and their families who come into contact with the CJS with a remit to prevent and divert offending.

Veterans in Prison or on Licence in Surrey:

As at 31.08.2016 there were 41 ex-service personnel known to be in prison or on prison licence in Surrey. These data are weak because although there has been change to ask prisoners at their reception into prisons this process has only just begun. Furthermore there is a issue in that often veterans do not admit to being ex-service personnel (Ministry of Justice, 2013). The reasons for this are complex but shame, a failure to recognise themselves as worthy of support and a fear of

being targeted by radical elements are all recognised (NACRO, 2010). One of our prison referrals was only identified as a veteran whilst they were supervised having a shower and their military tattoos were recognised which sparked a conversation.

Fig 5: Prisoner numbers

Prison	Number of known ex-service personnel	raison d'être
High Down	21	A hub prison Cat B with a training and development unit.
Downview:	3	Recently reopened female resettlement prison (May 6th)
Coldingley:	2	A prisoner resettlement centre.
Bronzefield	0	A YOI establishment (privately run)
Send	0	Closed female training with a rehabilitation centre.
Prison Licence	15	

Probation:

The Probation service delivers rehabilitation services in the following ways:

- **in the community** helping those sentenced to a community order through supervision meetings, activities and accredited programmes, as well as supervising Community Payback
- **in custody or released on licence** helping those in prison prepare for resettlement and ongoing rehabilitation in the community as well as supporting those released on licence to serve the rest of their sentence in the community.

The efficacy of the question “have you served in Her Majesty’s Armed Forces?” has yet to fully reach the ‘prison licence’ cadre and thus these figures need further research.

It is recognised that with only data from twelve individuals and over a period of six months that more research is required. This will be undertaken in the second phase of the project.

Budget

The budget for the Vulnerable Veterans -halting the revolving door project was set at £28,700 of which £20,000 was given as a grant from the Ministry Of Defence Covenant Fund.

Although the original bid was for £28,700 we have been able to make savings particularly on staffing and training expenditure. However these costs rose in the final stage of the project as we undertook DBS checks, and research with the MoD records department in Glasgow. This came on top of expanded training, advertising and administration as we built towards the already funded second phase and expansion of the project in Surrey.

For example we have saved on training by creating our own package and delivering it ourselves but this could be enhanced by bringing in outside speakers and commissioning other providers to build on the learning experience. Other savings were made by undertaking our own publicity copy writing and the deployment of G2G’s only when absolutely necessary.

Figure 6: Comparison of Actual Costs v Budget.

Vulnerable Veterans Costs

	Budget	Actual
Staffing	15,000	12,480
Contribution to expenses and logistical support	4,000	2,617
Training of mentors and lifestyle coaches [G2G's]	4,000	3,011
Budget for G2G's working with Veterans	2,000	971
Management on costs for project	2,500	722
Premises costs	1,200	900
Total:	28,700	20701

Findings:

The great majority of those who serve in the Armed Forces return to civilian life without problems and are statistically less likely than their civilian counterparts to commit criminal offences. This reflects the Armed Forces investment into helping ex-service men and women transition into civilian lives.

However in that cohort of veterans that do come to the notice of the CJS they do tend to be older and are more likely to be male³. They typically use alcohol and turn to violence to resolve issues. This small minority have difficulties and find themselves in trouble with the law.

Their offending behaviour is unlikely to have been directly caused by their service in the Armed Forces, but is sometimes contributed to by their experiences (Phillips, 2014). One hundred and forty seven services are available to help these individuals in Surrey.

Post-traumatic stress disorder is often used to explain offending behaviour of offenders who have served in the Armed Forces, yet poor mental health and substance misuse often contribute to their offending (Grimshaw, 2016). Other other risk factors such as homelessness and unemployment also contribute to potential offending behaviour.

Suicide within the ex-armed forces community is recognised and has been studied (Kapur, While, Blatchley, Bray, and Harrison, 2009; Fossey, 2010) but has not been identified as a major risk at this early stage in our Project. It is covered in our G2G mentor training.

The Armed Forces Covenant exists to recognise the sacrifices made by those who serve⁴, demands the identification and appropriate treatment of vulnerable veterans at the earliest possible stage, both for their benefit and that of their families, as well as the public (Ministry of Defence 2015). Offenders should in future be asked at every stage of the criminal justice system whether they have served in the Armed Forces (Royal British Legion, 2011; Phillips, 2014).

³ The proportion of female homeless ex-service personnel is around 1 in 20 people (Mike Jackson House, 2016)

⁴ The huge improvement in battlefield medical treatment and recovery in the past century has led to a four fold likelihood of survival of a major wound. This means that today a significant number of veterans will need ongoing support during a longer and richer life (ABF, 2016).

However researchers continue to be hindered by the absence of robust data enabling the identification of pathways effective in preventing offending on the part of those who have served in the Armed Forces. It would be helpful in the support of vulnerable veterans and their families if such data was routinely collected. A simple solution would be to mandate that all organisations ask potential service users if they have ever served in our armed forces.

Reccomendations:

From this period of research we recommend that where possible organisations work together to streamline the application process and the services available.

All government agents should ask every service user if they have ever served in our armed forces and if they can remember their service number. Recording this data supports the Armed Forces Covenant and will allow access to appropriate services. Potentially reducing demand on other services⁵ and tackling problems in a timely manner. Notwithstanding this many veterans will dissemble and deny their service though shame and embarrassment. This does not mitigate the need to ask the question.

Consideration should be given to a Veterans Card that would replace the military ID card at the start of the transition process and would allow access to Covenant related services.

Services should be streamlined to allow their users ease of access. It is self defeating to replicate other services and to have different definitions for the service users.

The Surrey Hubs would be good places to coordinate the services available to veterans as they are already doing so for other services. We recommend that they receive updates on the Armed Forces Covenant and are briefed on military matters.

We recommend that the Vulnerable Veterans Project is supported to become a mainstream service available to all Veterans, Reserves and their families not just in Surrey.

Conclusions:

It has been proven that there is a demand for the Vulnerable Veterans Project among the veterans and communities of Surrey. It is the only service designed specifically to prevent and divert offending behaviour of veterans, reserves and their families. This project has helped to explode the myths that most veterans are aged over 65 (SAFFA, 2016) and only applies to men. There remain some difficulties in identifying veterans who are in contact with the CJS. However the project has found a willing vein of people who would volunteer to be provide G2G support for such veterans. Veterans having graduated from the project are often willing to help support others who are still struggling with their challenges.

This project receives referrals from HMPS, Surrey Police and probation as well as from local council officers, charities and through our continuing outreach work. It is pleasing to report that veterans have self-referred themselves to the project (Nield & Nield, 2016).

It is in everybody's interests for this to happen because dealing with crime and disorder issues at an early stage prevents offending and reduces demand on key resources. Moreover it improves the lives of veterans, reserves and their families whilst enhancing the employability of ex-service personnel and improves the amenity of the communities in which they live. We can achieve more in this area.

⁵ E.G. reducing demand on Police and the CJS, NHS and Council services.

Helping to stop veterans from offending and removing them from the CJS enhances the reputation of our armed forces and addresses a false but widespread public view that many veterans who have been on active service return with latent problems including PTSD (SSAFA, 2016).

With reference to the reputation of our armed forces SSAFA surveyed 1,000 members of the general public: 69% thought not enough was being done to support veterans and 65% felt veterans were not as valued as veterans in the USA (SSAFA, 2016). This project goes some way to address this perception in Surrey and will do more.

The Vulnerable Veterans Project by quantifying the numbers of ex-forces personnel in contact with the CJS in Surrey, supporting them to access appropriate support and mentoring them and their families will improve Lord Ashcroft's "4 R's" Recruitment, Retention, Reputation and support for our Reserves (Ashcroft, 2014).

We believe that the Vulnerable Veterans Project has begun to provide positive and cost effective interventions for veterans and is working to halt the revolving door to offending and prison.

"Those who served in the Armed Forces, whether Regulars or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most, such as the injured and the bereaved." ARMED FORCES COVENANT

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Attached Appendix: A **Veterans Support Organisations**

Appendix :B

Our Veterans

Veteran	Date Joined	Date Complete	Referred	Issues	Gender	Age	Force	Outcomes
1	11.02.16	Ongoing	Police	Health and Mental Health	F	50's	Army	G2G assigned, GP supportive.
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