

# Vulnerable Veterans - halting the revolving door

## Project Review

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### Overview:

The Vulnerable Veterans project was created with the objective of researching the issues facing vulnerable ex-service men and women, reserves and their families in Surrey. The project was further tasked to support veterans in contact with the criminal justice system and/or who were homeless and train mentors to support them. The project is also required to work with current service providers across the county. From August 2016 to March 2017 following funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Surrey we report against the following:

1. To maintain an accurate record of the support available to veterans, reserves and their families and signpost service users to the appropriate support for them in Surrey.
2. To extend, train and maintain a team of mentors [ G2G's ] to support ex-service personnel, reserves and their families in contact with the criminal justice system.
3. To prevent service personnel and their families from becoming victims.
4. To prepare the project to go regional or national presenting a feasibility report and funding options by 31st March 2017.
5. To ensure that every pound is spent cost effectively in support of vulnerable veterans, reserves and their families.
6. To monitor outcomes closely and present regular reports to the OPCC on progress against targets and budget.

The project was always seen to have more potential than its original objectives: It is a way to reduce demand on local policing and health resources. Vulnerable Veterans now feed into Surrey's Transforming Justice programme and this fits well with the work of the Surrey Civilian Military Partnership Board and Mental Health projects across the county.

The project has been funded with £40,000 in total and it is known that by keeping ex-service personnel, reserves and their relatives out of prison, families intact and in employment the project is 'self-funding'. It is currently cost effective and within budget.

The Vulnerable Veterans project has been blessed with the support of the OPCC for Surrey and that of the Surrey Civilian Military Partnership Board whose critical input and contacts have made it possible to achieve the results reported in the short time to date.

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### Executive Summary:

This report benchmarks what the Vulnerable Veterans Project has achieved in 15 months. We have brought together new data from Surrey Police, the prison service (HMPS), the probation service, Armed Forces Covenant champions, Veterans Groups and Charities. The collection of new and more focussed data is ongoing.

Vulnerable Veterans has helped 27 ex-armed forces veterans, reserves and their families who have come into contact with the criminal justice system or become homeless. We are proud to report that all our clients who were homeless have been housed. We have made progress against earlier findings and recommendations. Surrey Police and local councils are changing their forms to include the question “have you ever served in our armed forces?” and training their point of contact staff in veteran specific issues.

There is a lot of support available for veterans and their families provided by many organisations<sup>1</sup>, nationally, geographically and by arm of service. This support has been improved with the introduction of the Armed Forces Covenant (Phillips, 2014; Veterans Gateway, 2017) but there are areas of overlapping support (SSAFA, 2016). Research reveals over one hundred and seventy five organisations that support ex-service families in Surrey (Nield & Nield, 2016).

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 Transforming Justice programme to divert ex-service personnel from going to prison or on leaving prison never to return.

<b>Comparitor Chart P1 to P2</b>				<b>FINAL</b>
	<b>Phase 1</b>		<b>Phase 2</b>	
<b>Objective</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Achieved</b>
<b>Help and support Veterans</b>	10	12	To increase	27
<b>Select and Train G2G’s</b>	10	10	To increase	15
<b>Interim Report</b>	31.03.16	✓	15.01.17	✓
<b>Final Report</b>	14.09.16	✓	30.05.17	✓
<b>Complete within budget</b>	Achieved	✓	Achieved	✓

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 nine veterans and has identified a group of fifteen volunteers who have been trained under our bespoke G2G programme.

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<sup>1</sup> See the Veterans Support Organisation document accompanying this report.

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 five ex-servicemen out of prison.

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

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### Data Sources:

The data sources for this document come from official reports, independent academic research, Third Sector sources and our own investigative research plus our experience over 15 months working with vulnerable veterans. 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.

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### 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 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 and we are working to address this going forward. Whilst the recidivism rates of this project are exceptionally good, the low numbers and short time frame do not allow us to usefully extrapolate from the data although it is exciting and reinforces our commitment to the 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 fifteen months of this project.

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### 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 male<sup>2</sup>. They typically use alcohol and turn to violence to resolve issues (Kelly, 2014). 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; MacDonald, 2014). One hundred and seventy five 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

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<sup>2</sup> The proportion of female homeless ex-service personnel is around 1 in 20 people (Mike Jackson House, 2016)

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 stage in our Project. It is covered during our Mental Health First Aid and G2G mentor training.

The Armed Forces Covenant exists to recognise the sacrifices made by those who serve<sup>3</sup>, 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 (Nield and Nield, 2016; Royal British Legion, 2011; Phillips, 2014).

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.

Veterans often present with multiple issues often brought on by a period of neglect and distress. We have included mental health and PTSD together for simplicity as we are not clinicians and record what the client tells us. As a result of these results we have a programme to train staff in mental health first aid.

We are pleased to report that all our clients who needed housing have been housed.

With regard to unemployment among our clients this is strong data but requires careful handling. There are a number of clients who simply want to get a job and others who cannot work because of injury or illness. Several cannot work because of existing court cases and employment law. The vast majority of the unemployed clients do wish to work and are volunteering their time. Current legislation effectively prevents them from utilising all their available time in these pursuits.

It should be said that there are only two clients who we feel we have not had a successful outcome. One left Surrey to start a new life and has struggled with ongoing alcohol problems that have caused medical issues in his chosen location. The other who has substance misuse issues did not fully engage with us or their referring agency and also left our area of support. That person has recently returned<sup>4</sup> and appears to be making progress to resolving their problems (drugs, unemployment and homelessness). We are available to assist them further.

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<sup>3</sup> 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).

<sup>4</sup> They have not yet been re-entered on our records.

## Veterans supported:

Vulnerable Veterans has helped 27 veterans to date and we currently are supporting 9. They range in age from 20 to 59 years and whilst the army is most strongly represented we have worked with RAF, Royal Marines and Royal Navy ex-service folk. Interestingly in this last phase we have also begun to support family members alongside their veterans.

### Veterans Supported-End Phase 2

VV	Referred	ISSUES	SERVICE	GENDER	AGE	OUTCOME
1	Police	MH, Injury	Army	F	50	Retired Good health
2	Charity	PTSD	Army	M	30	TFR other charity
3	Police	PTSD, Homeless	Army	M	40	SHBC, TRBL
4	Other	Employment	Army	M	40	Employment gained
5	Probation	PTSD	Army	M	50	Volunteer
6	Other	PTSD, alcohol	Navy	M	50	Left Surrey
7	Self-Referral	Unemployment	Army	M	40	GCC march 2018
8	Court	PTSD, Family	Army	M	30	Volunteer
9	HMPS	MH, Drugs	Army	M	40	Re-housed
10	Self-Referral	MH.	Army	M	40	Training to work
11	Charity	MH, Money	RAF	F	40	Training to work
12	Self-Referral	Money, MH	Army	M	40	Crisis resolved.
13	Police	PTSD	Army	M	30	Court - Con Dis.
14	Charity	MH, Money	Army	M	30	Haig Housing
15	HMPS	Alcohol	Army	M	30	Court - fine
16	Charity	PTSD	RAF	M	40	Other Charity
17	Police	Alcohol, MH	Army	M	50	RBC, SSAFA
18	Self-Referral	Health	Army	F	20	Health restored
19	Other	Crime	Army	M	30	Left Surrey
20	Charity	PTSD	Army	M	50	Volunteers
21	Court	MH	Army	M	50	RMC July 2017
22	Police	Alcohol	Army	M	47	Cautioned.
23	W-o-M	AD	RM	M	31	Looking for Work
24	W-o-M	-	Family	F	29	Looking for Work
25	SAFDI	Health	Navy	M	55	Health
26	SAFDI	Health	Family	F	52	Carer
27	Police	MH	Army	M	41	Signposted SSAFA

Vulnerable Veterans interventions have prevented five men from being sent to prison. We have helped to house a woman and a three men plus we have a veteran who has applied to work with in the Probation Service. Fifteen of our veterans have undertaken training and ten have joined us as G2G's [see *post*]. Three have also undertaken mental health first aid [MHFA] training which is an area that will become even more important in the coming months. Two are currently bailed to attend court in July 2017 and March 2018. We believe that these results fully justifies the trust, responsibility and the funding given to us and have provided savings to police, courts, prison and the NHS totalling slightly more than £550,000.

### Veterans Issues and solutions

With fifteen months experience it is possible to comment on the reasons clients have presented to Vulnerable Veterans and the solutions they have achieved. Firstly though it is useful to reflect on the changing demographics of our clients.

#### Forces Representation:

Most veterans we support are from the army (74%) and the navy, air force and family members make up a fifth of the group (7% each), with the Royal Marines now represented too.

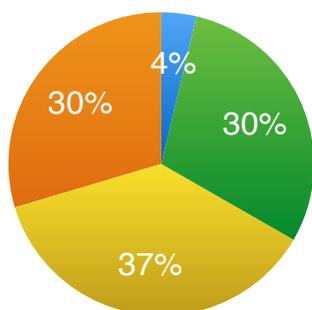
Services Representation

Service	Number
Army	20
Family	2
Navy	2
RAF	2
RM	1

#### Age Groups:

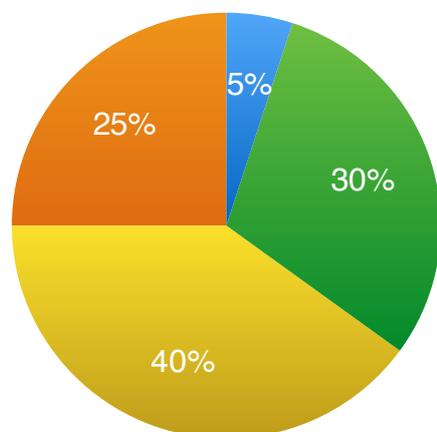
The largest age group are veterans in their 30's and the majority are men. Women make up only 15% of the total at this point however this has grown over the project.

Ages of our Vulnerable Veterans Dec 2016



● 20's ● 30's ● 40's ● 50's

Ages of Veterans June 2017

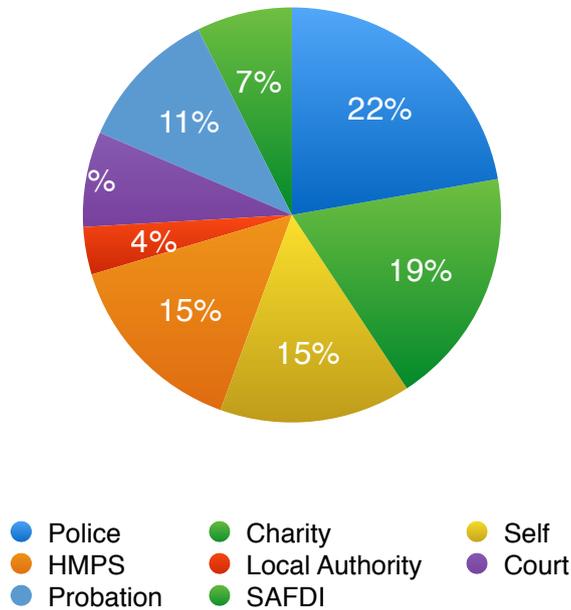


● 20's ● 30's ● 40's ● 50's ● 60's=0

**Referrals:**

As expected the variety of routes referrals have reached the team have increased. Whilst the police, charities and self-referrals continue to lead the way it is interesting to see HMPS and probation services referring to us with SAFDI beginning to feed in clients too<sup>5</sup>.

**Referrals by end of Phase 2**



**Presenting Issues:**

The issues clients present with are numerous and often linked and as we are not clinicians we have collated self-reported PTSD with mental health issues. One might argue that Adjustment Disorder is more common although PTSD has kudos 'on the street'. Physical injury and mental health often affects the employability of people particularly if linked to alcoholism. One issue preventing people returning to work is that if the work proves too much or their employment is terminated they fear they will struggle to get back onto the benefits system.

**Issues presented**

Issues presented	number
Interaction with CJS	15
Physical injury	9
Mental Health including PTSD	16
Alcohol	10
Homelessness	4
Unemployment	19
	73

<sup>5</sup> we have received a referral via social media after the date of this report.

A pleasing statistic is that none of our veterans who have interacted with the Criminal Justice System have received custodial sentences. Five clients who might have been given custodial sentences have not. We argue that this has been because of the support we and others have provided. Unsurprisingly these defendants have been given other sentencing disposals and five ante been referred to probation services.

Fifteen clients are volunteering and five have found employment. It is simpler for a person in the benefit system to volunteer up to 16 hours a week than find a part-time job that fits their needs. Volunteering is mostly viewed by clients as a stepping-stone to employment.

### Solutions

<b>Solution</b>	<b>number</b>
<b>Employed</b>	5
<b>Housed</b>	4
<b>Volunteering</b>	15
<b>Other Charity</b>	4
<b>Retired</b>	1
<b>On Going Support</b>	9
<b>To HMP</b>	0
<b>Probation</b>	5
<b>Ongoing Investigation</b>	3
	46

Whilst it is positive to report none of our clients has been sentenced to imprisonment that sanction will at some point be handed down. It is also true that none of our veterans who have been to prison have returned there.

We are pleased to report that all of our four homeless veterans have been housed.

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### Surrey Armed Forces Drop-in

Vulnerable Veterans has taken a temporary lead in managing SAFDI following the removal of funding for this group during the MH provision realignment (Virgin Care Serves lost their funding and the replacing agency has chosen not to support it) and the illness of the current director.

This deviation from our mission has had interesting consequences. Firstly it has given our growing number of veterans and particularly our ex-clients, a time and place to visit us thus saving administrative resources. Then SAFDI has enabled us to invite service providers to meet our group and share what they do to a wide audience. Lastly the drop-in is just that, a drop-in for local veterans in the centre of Surrey.

The location at Woking Football Club in a bar is not ideal. However there is good parking and it is easy to find with good foot access from the town centre and is close to public transport links.

Unfortunately it has only adequate disabled access and is in a licensed bar.

Notwithstanding that the bar is closed it is part of our Code of Practice that we do not support or encourage drinking alcohol.

Therefore in the future the location will be reviewed and these issues will be addressed by January 2018.

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## Results:

The project team were tasked to

### **1. To maintain an accurate record of the support available to veterans, reserves and their families and signpost service users to the appropriate support for them in Surrey.**

As well as our open source publication on the Service Providers for Surrey Based Veterans we support COBESO and the Veterans Gateway. We have met with and share information with the NHS Transition, Intervention and Liaison Veterans' Mental Health Service and ASDIC who are collating armed forces veterans drop-in services across the UK. We regularly correspond with SSAFA Surrey, the Royal British Legion, and the Surrey Civilian Military Partnership Board. Linking these organisations with groups such as Soldier to Civvi, the MCC's disability cricket team and drop-in services such as the exceptional Surrey Heath Veterans and Families - Listening Project has enabled us to keep the record vibrant, expanding and of practical value to service providers and service users alike.

### **2. To extend, train and maintain a team of mentors [G2G's] to support ex-service personnel, reserves and their families in contact with the criminal justice system.**

The project has selected and trained fifteen G2G's and has a short list of recruited G2G's waiting to be trained. Six of the veterans we have helped have volunteered to train as G2G's. However 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.

### **To prevent service personnel and their families from becoming victims.**

We support veterans and their families from becoming victims by engaging with and training individuals and providing safety advice and seminars. For example we provide a general "on-line safety" package alongside other computer skills. We also advocate on behalf of clients with the military and others to ensure they receive fair treatment [VV 7, 12 and 18<sup>6</sup>].

### **3. To prepare the project to go regional or national presenting a feasibility report and funding options by 31st March 2017.**

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<sup>6</sup> VV7 ongoing criminal case, VV12 successfully completed HMBF challenge, VV18 successfully resolved military discharge challenge.

Our team are currently investigating the benefits of seeking charitable status versus deploying as a social enterprise and are in talks with the NHS Transition, Intervention and Liaison Veterans' Mental Health Service<sup>7</sup> discussing how we are to work together going forward. Meanwhile we have the support of Surrey's Transforming Justice programme and Safe Havens that also reach into north east Hampshire. Working within the British Army's 11Bde boundaries is another option although this covers almost a quarter of England.

**4. To ensure that every pound spent is done so cost effectively in support of vulnerable veterans, reserves and their families.**

The project has been funded with £40,000 in total. The MoD funded the first six months with £20,000 and the OPCC for Surrey has match-funded this through the Community Safety Fund. We are very keen to ensure that our administration costs are low so that the money intended to support veterans does so. To this end we have kept expenses at a minimum across all three sections of the project. The only categories we have spent more on at this point is the training of G2G's.

**5. To monitor outcomes closely and present regular reports to you on progress against targets and budget.**

During the project to date the OPCC has been regularly updated on Vulnerable Veterans progress and their advice has been followed<sup>8</sup>. This report now completes the Community Safety Fund Application Agreement dated 15th July 2017.

Other notable successes are that we are now training Surrey Police custody staff about the needs of detainees who have served in the armed forces.

We have clients across Surrey, in Hampshire and Berkshire and have supported veterans in Cornwall and Humberside.

We are in the process of gaining charitable status.

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## Budget

The budget for the Vulnerable Veterans-halting the revolving door project was set at £40,000 of which £20,000 was a grant from the Ministry Of Defence Covenant Fund for the first phase and the second phase was match funded by the Police Crime Commissioner for Surrey.

Over the course of the project we have been able to make savings on staffing management and premises costs. The savings in these areas were more significant in the early months but have risen in line with projections as our work has multiplied. Indeed these costs rose in the final stage of the project as we undertook work with SAFDI, DBS checks, and research with the MoD records department in Glasgow. However the expanded training, advertising and administration places Vulnerable Veterans in good position going forward.

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<sup>7</sup> NHS Transition, Intervention and Liaison Veterans' Mental Health Service came into being in April 2017.

<sup>8</sup> The OPCC suggested the project reporting form in February and the timeline of reporting in August 2016

For example we have saved on training by creating our own package and delivering it ourselves which is enhanced by bringing in outside speakers and commissioning other providers to build on the learning experience such as mental health first aid. Other savings have been made by undertaking our own publicity copy writing and the deployment of our own display equipment allowing us to hire less expensive training venues.

Budget comparison table

Expense Categories	Budget £k	Total Spent £
Staffing	24	£ 23,230.00
Contribution to Expenses & Logistical Support	4	£ 4,940.00
Training of Mentors [G2G's]	3	£ 4,861.00
Budget for G2G's working with Clients	3	£ 3,101.00
Management on Costs for the Project	3	£ 1,578.00
Premises Costs	3	£ 2,290.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>£ 40,000.00</b>

Overall we have achieved our budget and learned a great deal about the changing cost profile of taking a start-up project into the mainstream veterans community.

We would not have achieved as much so quickly without the generous support to the Ministry of Defence, the OPCC and the Surrey Civilian Military Partnership Board.

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## Recommendations:

From this research we recommend that where possible organisations work together to streamline the application processes 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 the most appropriate services. Potentially this reduces demand on other services<sup>9</sup> and tackles 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 and works against the new Veterans Gateway to replicate other services and to have different definitions for the service users.

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<sup>9</sup> E.G. reducing demand on Police and the CJS, NHS and Council services.

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 further 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.

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## Conclusion:

It is of note that the project has exceeded its targets and been delivered within budget. It has proved its value to date and there are exciting opportunities developing from the current work. We are seeking additional funding and are engaging with other organisations to capitalise on the work already undertaken.

We would like to thank the following people for their tireless support without which we would not have achieved the results for 27 veterans whilst saving the nation half a million pounds.

Mr Jeff Harris Surrey	County Councillor for Tadworth, Walton & Kingswood
Mrs Shannon Saise-Marshall	formerly Runnymede Borough Council councillor
Deborah & Roy Sellstrom	SHV&F-LP
DCC Gavin Stephens	Surrey police
Mr David Munro	PCC for Surrey
Maj. Jodie Kennedy-Smith	British Army
Canon Peter Bruinvels	Surrey Civilian Military Partnership Board
Mr Ben Byrne	SCC Transforming Justice Board
Peter Saunders	University of Reading
Ryan Andrews	Veteran

The Vulnerable Veterans project is in a good place to move forward working with regional and national organisations to continue to provide support for our armed forces veterans, reserves and their families who come in to contact with the criminal justice system.

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