



VIC Newsletter



Veteran agencies join forces to aid ex-Combat medic

VETERAN David East is delighted to at last get a proper night's sleep in a bed after three-and-a-half years of being stuck with just a reclining chair.

David, 81, has Veterans In Communities to thank for his new fully adjustable medical bed after they were made aware of his predicament.

During Covid, David was in hospital with double pneumonia and complications meant he ended up needing to have help with his breathing for eight hours every night.

He was given a back rest for his bed, but it kept leaving him lying flat so he didn't feel safe. It was Covid, so there was no medical bed available.

Instead, David adapted his situation and bought himself a reclining chair, however years later he was still sleeping in the same chair.

In the 1980s David served in the Queen's Lancashire Regiment as a Combat Medic and he is well known in Rossendale as 'Dave the dog' because he was the Dog Warden for 22 years, ran Rossendale Dog Training Club and worked with young people to educate them on good dog ownership.

David, who is a resident at Ferrier Court in Blackburn, said: "I contacted the armed forces charity SSAFA and although they asked me for all my service details, they never explained why they were unable to help."

Then John Wilson,

Armed Forces Community Support Officer at East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust was made aware of Dave's situation and he called on VIC's help.

Initially, Operations Manager Phil Speddy said he did not know how they would be able to resolve the problem.

Then, the day after the inquiry, veteran Peter Sharples from West Lancs Armed Forces Family posted that he had access to a handful of medical beds, worth around £3k each, which had been supplied by Colin Erskine at Places for People. Phil contacted Peter who agreed that David could have one, then veteran Karl Hunter facilitated collection and arranged free storage with Jamie Baybutt.

Veteran Ron

Flowers from VIC's Almoners Service stepped in immediately and became David's point of contact, and he has supported him ever since.

David, who founded Blackburn Armed Forces Breakfast Club, said: "I cannot thank John from the hospital and VIC enough.

"If John had not put that appeal out, I would have had to try to get a bed myself on HP [Hire Purchase]. The authorities had said I needed a medical bed when I left hospital but one was not available and I didn't want to go out and ask."

David has also been struggling with grief following the

loss of his wife Stella and his son Jason, who died just over a year ago from Long Covid.

He added: "I was not talking to anyone, and people who know me know that I like to talk. I got help from the Wigan Armed Forces Community and they sent me a counsellor who really helped.

"Now I am talking again; I am talking to you. I am very grateful to everyone from the armed forces community who has helped me.

"I have now joined VIC and I am looking forward to getting involved at the centre in Haslingden.

"Thanks to the supportive network around me, I am in a good place."



VeteransHQ



Launch of VALOUR NW

THERE will be an official launch in Lancashire of the VALOUR Recognised Centre Programme on May 12 at Chorley Fire Station from 10am to 2pm.

In last month's newsletter, we announced that a consortium involving VIC, Armed Forces Community Support Warrington and Liverpool Veterans HQ had secured £1M over three years to lead a new Government

veterans' initiative in the North West.

At the Forces Wellbeing Collective Lancashire Showcase on May 12 not only will attendees find out more about VALOUR North West, but partners, including VIC, will showcase the success of Thrive Together North West.

Roadshows will continue in Cumbria on May 20, and in Cheshire at a date to be announced.

Chief Executive Officer

Amanda Walton said: "At event, VIC, Armed Forces Community Support and Veterans HQ will be presenting VALOUR North West to brief and update what it will look like.

"The showcase is an opportunity for organisations to join the collective and see what work is being done."

To register for a free place on the Lancashire event visit <https://forceswellbeing.org/event/lancashire-roadshow-2026/>

Plants on offer

A BIG thank you to Kathryn Williams who own Adventure Neighbourhood above Accrington where VIC is involved with scent training horses.

She has generously offered strawberry runners and possibly some raspberry canes which we will be looking to add to our outdoor area at the VIC Centre.

Padiham parade

VIC will be having as stand at the two-day event Padiham on Parade event at the end of Armed Forces week on June 27 and 28.

The annual community event celebrates the 1940s and the Armed Forces community from veterans to cadets.

Hub's new home

THE Creative Community Hub at the VIC Centre in Haslingden will soon have its own specially fitted out workshop in a converted upstairs store room.

Thank you to Howden Kitchens for providing a free kitchen worktops and to a friend of Phil Speddy's who sorted the flooring.

Chief Executive Officer Amanda Walton said: "We are now preparing the walls ready for repainting and we will be fitting two laser etching machines, including one that has been purchased for VIC by County Councillor Gary Kniveton, the LCC Armed Forces Champion.

"We will have space for the sublimation kit and 3D printing equipment and there will be shelving on the wall for products that



have been made to order and those made to illustrate the work we do which we take to events.

"We will then have a proper workshop and Volunteer Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell is being assisted by Outreach Worker Steve Butterworth who is on retiring, but staying with VIC to help in a voluntary capacity."



VIC-FIT evaluation

OUR VIC-FIT pilot programme is coming to an end shortly, but already interim results are looking very positive for all the participants.

The unique veteran-centred programme was backed by a £925 grant from Rossendale Borough Council and involved veterans working together to improve their health and fitness by utilising Rossendale Leisure Trust facilities for free.

An evaluation of the success of the project will be carried out and, if further funding is acquired, it could be extended or introduced into other areas.

Life lessons

HANDS on practical advice on how to save a life was delivered by Rossendale Community First Responders Dawn and Dean.

The first aid training included practical demonstrations of CPR and how to safely use a defibrillator.

The expertise of Dawn and Dean, along with their calm, practical approach, gave our staff and volunteers the confidence to know they could step in should an emergency arise.



Choir entertains

RESIDENTS of Jubilee Court in Helmshore were treated to a fantastic sing-a-long when the VIC Choir visited their home.

The choir was invited by Bernard and they enjoyed seeing the joy on residents' faces and them joining in with the choir's 'Golden-Oldie' numbers.

Thank you for the individual donations which were made by the residents to VIC; we will be back in the Autumn.

Caring shoppers at Asda said they felt their shopping experience was enriched by the VIC Choir's singing.

Thanks to Asda Community Champion Laura Saxton for hosting and arranging the performance; we raised £142.15.

If anyone is able to assist the choir to hold a collecting bucket while the sing at supermarkets, please contact Administrator Amy Thompson on 01706 833180 for future dates.



Stay safe online

EXPERT advice to help veterans try to avoid being defrauded or scammed was delivered by Roger Hussey, Veterans Fraud Safeguarding Officer.

The Haslingden meeting was part of a series of Veterans Fraud Protect Advice Sessions, which have been co-ordinated by VIC across Lancashire.

It was well attended and in feedback those who went said they gained a valuable new insight into online risks, common scams, and

practical steps they can take to better protect themselves in future.

Thank you to Lancashire Police for their time, professionalism, and continued support to help veterans understand and reduce the risk of online fraud.

VIC works closely with Lancashire Police to ensure veterans and their families have access to the information and support they need to help them and their family stay safe.

Sessions have also been held in Burnley, Accrington, Clitheroe, Barrowford and Preston.



Camping

VIC members are invited to join our good friends the Throttle Twisters Motor Cycle Club at an annual camp in Cheshire from June 12 to 14.

This year they will use a different campsite – Boundary Park, Chelford Road, Ollerton, Knutsford, and the cost is £6.50 per night.

For more information and to book a place email trustee Bob Elliott on bobelliott@vic.org.uk

New venue

THERE is a new venue for Rossendale Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club who now meet at The Circle, Burnley Road, Bacup, on the second Saturday of every month from 10am-12noon.

Wellbeing

A PHYSICAL activity and wellbeing festival will be held at Marl Pits in Rawtenstall on Saturday May 2.

This is a free fun event and attendees can try triathlon, rugby union, disability sports and inclusive events, American football, a guided walk, a football tournament or yoga.

To register email 411531@EastLancsLearning.ac.uk

Support Op Stand Easy

A SPECIAL donation will be made to the Royal Navy Royal Marines Charity from events being held at The Armed Forces Support Group in Barrowford.

On May 13 and 14, from 10am to 12 noon, the group, which meets at Holmefield House, Gisburn Road, Barrowford BB9 8ND, will be holding an Op Stand Easy which will be open to all veterans to enjoy a warm brew, a biscuit and banter and a donation will be made to the charity – RNRMC.

Respects

VIC Administrator Amy Thompson, who is The Royal British Legion's Standard Bearer for North West Region and Lancashire County, carried the VIC Standard at the funeral of Royal Navy veteran Lieutenant Commander Anthony Quinn on April 17.

Our usually Standard Bearer Jacko Pearce was unavailable, so Amy stepped in to cover the service at Charnock Richard Crematorium, Chorley.



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

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

SUNDAY

Drop-in

10.15am-12.30pm

SECOND SATURDAY IN THE MONTH

Rossendale Armed Forces and Veterans' Breakfast Club

10am-12.30pm

Haslingden Community Link Cafe, Bury Road, Haslingden BB4 5PG (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

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.

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,

VIC – 01706 833180

Chief Executive Amanda Walton

amandawalton@vic.org.uk

Operations Manager Phil Speddy

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Project Worker Ray Sharkey

raysharkey@vic.org.uk 07741 902 188

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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