

Veterans WORLD

Issue 36

Veterans WORLD GOES DIGITAL



At Veterans UK we want to make sure that as many Serving Personnel, Veterans and their families are aware of the many kinds of support and advice available to them, when they need it, and that it is up to date.

Veterans WORLD is now a fully digital publication, available as a PDF and via ISSUU, and will no longer be produced and distributed as a paper version. This and future digital versions can be accessed via GOV.UK. There are many benefits to a digital magazine and these are set out below. Additionally, instead of four issues a year, Veterans World will now be issued six times a year, so we can publish **more** information about veterans services as **quickly** as possible.

If you previously received a paper copy, and we had your e-mail address on record, you will be sent a link to each new issue. If not, and you would like to receive a link, please send an e-mail to Veterans-UK-veteransworld@mod.uk to tell us if you are a Veteran or an Advisor and any organisation you are linked with, and we will add you to our distribution list.



REACH



increase the reach of the publication, by readers sharing digitally



TIMELY



more frequent issues and information available to advisors and customers as soon as possible



SOCIAL



Social Media platforms can be integrated with the publication



MULTI ACCESS



publication can be accessed via multiple platforms and devices



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lower production and ongoing publishing costs



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Veterans World is distributed to those who work in an advisory role.

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Want to make an editorial contribution?

Contributions are most welcome. To raise awareness of an initiative, scheme or organisation that offers help, advice or support to veterans, contact the Editorial Team by email: Veterans-UK-VeteransWorld@mod.uk or by calling: 01253 338816.

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Publication of articles on services provided or developments affecting the veterans community does not mean that they are endorsed by *Veterans WORLD* or the Ministry of Defence.

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NEWS

Free Legal Advice for X-Forces Businesses



Entrepreneurs in the X-Forces network will now be able to access free legal advice and expert guidance from Harrison Clark Rickerbys via their legal advice helpline without charge.

The top 100 UK law firm, Harrison Clark Rickerbys, is building on its role as a Corporate Member of X-Forces by extending support available to the X-Forces business community.

FORCES
NAVY - ARMY - RAF

X-Forces business owners who are interested in accessing this provision should email: info@x-forces.com for more details.



Dorset Veterans Community Initiative

Dorset HealthCare has come together with representatives from the Armed Forces to sign a Corporate Covenant Pledge to recognise its commitment to enhancing the care available to veterans. The ex-Service community living in Dorset is estimated to be around 89,000; therefore, the Pledge will go a long way towards providing awareness to those veterans and their families of the services available to them.

Andy Gritt, locality manager for mental health at Dorset HealthCare, and trust lead for the Armed Forces Community, said: "We have created a Transition Toolkit as returning to civilian life presents unique challenges and many can find this difficult once the discipline and routine of the military is removed". He went on to say: "We recognise the huge value and contribution of serving personnel, both Regular and Reservists, veterans and military families within our community. Every individual deserves to receive care that will support and rehabilitate veterans and their families and this pledge marks our mission to reach this goal."

Jon Beake, regional employer engagement director for Wessex Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association added: "Dorset HealthCare's public adoption and signing of the Corporate Covenant demonstrates their high levels of employer support towards defence personnel and their families." Jon added: "We value any employers' commitment, but Dorset Healthcare has developed some far reaching pledges and we are keen to work with them, and other Dorset organisations, to build further support for mutual benefit."

Employment Support pilot to be launched

The Veterans' Employment Transition Support (VETS) Programme is to be launched in November. VETS is a coalition of partners including the MOD/Career Transition Partnership, Service charities and companies, such as Barclays, that have come together to share employment transition best practice. Many employers recognise the importance of helping veterans find the right job that optimises their potential and enables them to transfer their unique skill sets into the commercial workplace. The purpose of the VETS Programme is to join up the efforts of the Government, the Military Charity sector and a number of specific employers to improve the wider employment outcome for veterans; therefore benefitting the individual, employers, the economy and society as a whole.

For further information go to: www.gov.uk

Employ-Able in Scotland



Poppyscotland's 'Employ-Able' programme offers support to people who are living with mental health conditions and need assistance to find or sustain employment. People that are living with depression, anxiety and other mental health conditions can benefit greatly from participating in volunteering or moving into a work placement or employment. 'Employ-Able' is available throughout Scotland and offers one-to-one and group support to develop a tailored pathway to employment. SAMH (Scottish Association for Mental Health) Employment Advisors are aware of how health can impact the lives of veterans and their families and can assist them to achieve their hopes and aspirations.

To find out more about 'Employ-Able' call 0131 550 1568 or email: d.pringle@poppyscotland.org.uk

Career Transition Partnership (CTP) Contract Commences

In the last edition of Veterans WORLD we reported on the awarding of the Career Transition Partnership contract to Right Management Ltd. This contract commenced on 1 October 2015 and will now provide a single integrated service. This means that all Service leavers regardless of length of Service or reason for leaving will be entitled to resettlement support from the CTP.

A number of independent programmes will be brought together under the new CTP contract which will be a great advantage to Service leavers by providing seamless support through one point of contact rather than through a number of different organisations. The different programmes that CTP will offer as part of its new integrated provision will be:

Core Resettlement Programme – available to those who have served more than six years and all medical discharges (regardless of time served);

Employment Support Programme – available to those who have served

between four and six years;

Early Service Leaver Programme – available to those who leave before the four-year point or those who lose entitlement to other programmes because of a compulsory discharge. This support is delivered under the brand of CTP Future Horizons; **Specialist Support Programme** – a specialised career service to support the wounded, injured and sick to achieve a sustainable and fulfilling career, regardless of time served. This is known as CTP Assist.

The new contract also provides additional elements which will initially run as two-year trials:

Spouse Employment Support Trial – designed to offer employment support for eligible Service partners;

Reservists Employment Support Trial – eligible Reservists will be entitled to some job-finding support, regardless of whether they are in civilian employment or not.

For further information visit the CTP website: www.ctp.org.uk

Ground broken at National Memorial Arboretum

An inspiring new Remembrance Centre is to be constructed at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. The new centre is being developed as a result of the Arboretum's rapid growth in popularity, its increased national significance and a desire to attract new visitors. Dame Penelope Keith, a member of the Arboretum's fundraising Appeal Council, assisted

by Sea Cadet Beth Molyneux, broke the ground for the new construction recently in order for the project to be completed by late 2016. The Centre will inspire, inform and educate up to 500,000 visitors per year, including up to 25,000 schoolchildren on organised visits.

Visit www.thenma.org.uk for more information.



Ballot open for Somme Centenary Commemorations

John Wittingdale, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, has opened the public ballot for tickets to attend the Battle of the Somme centenary commemorative event in Thiepval, France, next year. The ballot is open until 18 November 2015, the day the battle ended in 1916. The event will take place on 1 July 2016 at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Thiepval Memorial in Northern France and will also be televised in neighbouring towns and throughout the UK. Given the level of interest in attending, this will be a ticketed event. Applicants, who must be residents of the UK or Ireland, can enter online through the Somme 2016 Ballot website at:

www.Somme2016.org

Tickets are free, and will be distributed in pairs to successful applicants in 2016. Unwanted tickets can be returned once the ballot closes on 18 November. Facilities will be in place for attendees with disabilities.

In order to enter the ballot it is important to remember the following key points:

- You must be a resident of the UK or Ireland,
- You must hold a valid passport and provide proof to the Organisers on request,
- Applicants must be 18 years of age or over, as of 1 July 2016,
- Guests under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult in order to enter the event.

The event will be led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, on behalf of the UK Government, and the French Mission du Centenaire de la Première Guerre mondiale, on behalf of the French Government, in partnership with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and The Royal British Legion.

Ride to the Wall

3 October saw an estimated 20,000 motorcyclists converge at the National Memorial Arboretum for this year's Ride to the Wall event.



sound of thousands of bikes as they rode to the wall. The event was very colourful with the many flags displayed from bikers. We managed to hear a little bit of the service which was emotional and moving and brought the crowd to standstill.

"After the service, the crowd spilled out to the Veterans Village where the VWS stand was located. Lots of people came over to our display, some simply took away leaflets and information, others stayed and shared their stories with us.

"One young man, who had experienced the trauma of war, shared with us his very moving journey since he left the Armed Forces. He

The National Memorial Arboretum is the UK's year-round centre of Remembrance; a spiritually uplifting place which honours the fallen, recognising their service and sacrifice. It is a beautiful and lasting tribute to those who serve their country, die in conflict or have a special reason for being remembered.

'Ride To The Wall' is a unique motorcycling fundraising ride with a dedicated service of remembrance. The event provides an opportunity for all motorcyclists to ride as an organised group to the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire to pay their respects and recognise the sacrifice made by the Servicemen and women whose names are engraved on The Wall of the Armed Forces Memorial. It has raised over £320,000 since the first ride in 2008.

The Veterans Welfare Service (VWS), who are part of Veterans UK, had a stand in the Veterans Village with Teresa Kokiet and Derek Hughes from the Kidderminster office on hand to offer advice to veterans and their families.

Teresa and Derek explain: "The event was extremely well attended and the Arboretum was filled with the

had become homeless and lost everything dear to him. He is now in a better place, and wanted to say thanks, and seek reassurance and positivity from the VWS staff on the stand. He mentioned the wonderful service he received from his Welfare Manger, Anne Da Rocha, and praised the work that the VWS does to support veterans. We heard similar moving stories from other veterans we had helped.

"Visitors to the stand who hadn't heard about the work of Veterans UK and the VWS have gone away with information on how we can help them."



*“A spiritually uplifting place
which honours the fallen”*



“The crowd was addressed by the Chaplain, and all fell silent for the last post. Thousands of poppies were dropped from a Tiger Moth plane which was a beautiful and moving colourful display. This was a poignant moment when all fell silent. The end of the service was marked by the stirring sound of the Dire Straits song, “Brothers In Arms”, bringing a sense of comradeship and unity.

“An amazing display from the Royal Signals White Helmets took place in the morning.

We were blessed with good weather, and the mood of the crowd was light and friendly; people gathered on the lawns and shared picnics with friends and family. The whole of the Veterans Village was a busy place and at times we had quite a crowd round us! The event was an invaluable opportunity to publicise to veterans, including Service Personnel attendees, of the work we at VWS do. It was a special day, held in a moving environment, and people came from all corners of the UK to share and remember those that had gone before and pay their respects.”





The BBC television programme, DIY SOS, took on their largest project yet in September this year. The team, in partnership with Manchester City Council, local housing groups and charities Walking with the Wounded and Haig Housing, have transformed a partially derelict street in East Manchester into new homes for Veterans.

DIY SOS rely mainly on volunteers, both skilled in trades and those willing to help out generally, to give their time and services, free of charge, to make the projects they take forward a success.

As this particular project was for Veterans, particularly those who have been injured, physically and mentally, as a result of their service in the Armed Forces, staff at Veterans UK were eager to get involved.

Over 30 staff from Veterans UK, who as part of Defence Business Services (DBS) administer the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, the War Pension Scheme and the Armed Forces Pension scheme, gave their time and were set to work gardening, clearing rubble, shifting bricks and sweeping up the site. Others helped by keeping the various trades people, who had also volunteered, supplied with endless cups of tea,

sandwiches and moral support, as they worked into the night to try to finish the project on time.

Members of the Armed Forces also volunteered. Sapper Anthony Gaunt, a reserve soldier in the Royal Engineers, said: "I came down with the aim of doing a bit each day but I'm now sleeping at the local Territorial Army (TA) centre so I can get as many hours in as possible – this project will have a massive effect on the Veterans who get these homes and I'm more than happy to help."

The vast majority of Service personnel leave service and go on to succeed on their return to civilian life, and around 84 per cent of those who look for work are in full-time employment within six months of leaving the Armed Forces. But there are a small number who struggle, which is why the Government has a wide range of support schemes in place. Under the Armed Forces Covenant, councils give preference to veterans with urgent housing needs, and give seriously injured veterans high priority for social housing.

The DIY SOS initiative complements this work and includes homes that have been specially renovated and adapted for veterans who have lost limbs. One of the



“Giving my time and effort to this was the least I could do to show my respect and gratitude to the men and women of the Armed Forces, whose dedication and courage keep us safe and secure”.

- Bobb Newman, Veterans UK

veterans who will be moving into one of the homes with his family is Lamin Mennah, who lost both his legs and one of his arms in Afghanistan in 2011 while serving with the Irish Guards. He said, “I’m really excited about this project and very grateful for all who have got involved – it’s a dream come true for me and this house will give me the opportunity to take a more active role in my family life and with my children”.

Their Royal Highnesses the Duke of Cambridge and Prince Harry gave the project the royal seal of approval when they visited the site and met the volunteers. They got involved, lending a hand with painting, laying paving and chatting to the volunteers and the veterans.

Bobb Newman, works as a Compensation Scheme Caseworker at Veterans UK, volunteered on site for a number of days. He summed up the feelings of many of those who worked on the project when he said; “Giving my time and effort to this was the least I could do to show my respect and gratitude to the men and women of the Armed Forces, whose dedication and courage keep us safe and secure”.



Have you seen Veterans UK on GOV.UK? You can find us at: www.gov.uk/veterans-uk

Whether you want information about how to apply for a medal, or need more urgent assistance as a veteran in a crisis, the **Veterans UK** webpages have information to help you.



What do you think?

We welcome your feedback
Please email: veterans-uk@mod.uk
or visit us at: www.gov.uk/veterans-uk

Veterans UK Helpline 0808 1914 218.

Explore the Universe of Forces Charities

New Website detailing 2,200 Armed Forces Charities is now available

ARMED FORCES CHARITIES.org.uk

Do you know what Fishing for Heroes does? How about Surf Action? These are just two of the 2,200 Armed Forces Charities out there which are set up to help serving and ex-Service personnel and their families. This new project, from the Directory of Social Change, helps you to navigate the Armed Forces charity sector through an online search facility comprising of information from thousands of Armed Forces charities.

With so many charities out there, it can be hard to know where to start. If you're a veteran or still serving in the Forces, knowing what provisions exist and how to apply for support can be a daunting task. Equally, for charities and organisations, trying to find other charities to work with can be very difficult. Fortunately, all the hard work has now been done for you and all the information you need is available online for free.

This new website is an independent and dedicated Armed Forces charity resource, providing clarity and direction through the sector. If you are a past or present serving member of the UK Armed Forces, a family member or dependant, or if you represent an organisation working with the UK Armed Forces, then this new project is tailored for you. It's also there to help other people interested in the sector

The website offers a fully-searchable database with details of over 2,200 Armed Forces Charities in the UK.

This ongoing research project is being carried out by the Director of Social Change (DSC), and is funded by the Forces in Mind Trust (FIMT).

The universe of the Armed Forces Charities in the UK comprises a wide range of organisations with different charitable objects, activities, operating models and beneficiary groups.

such as policy makers and journalists.

Individuals can use the web resource to search for Armed Forces charities that provide welfare support and general advice. Organisations can use the web resource to search for specific charities that could potentially provide grants or complementary services to your organisation. You can also use it to understand the type of charity provision in your area or to make contact with other charities that share your vision.



The Directory of Social Change is an independent charity with a vision of an independent voluntary sector at the heart of social change. Our Armed Forces Charities project continues to provide the clarity and guidance for Armed Forces charities to deliver social change for UK veterans.

Contact

Directory of Social Change

Phone 0151 7020164

Web: www.armedforcescharities.org.uk

Twitter: @forcescharities

An Independent Voice

The Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committees (VA&PCs) are an independent voice here to help and support ex-Servicemen and women, whenever or wherever they served.



Formerly known as the War Pensions Committees, the VA&PCs advise and liaise with veterans, their families and relevant organisations on their needs, issues and concerns. They assist, raise awareness, act as advocates and champion the rights of veterans. There are 13 VA&PC regions across the UK. Each regional VA&PC is made up of a Chairman and between 12 and 20 unpaid volunteer members, drawn from a cross-section of the local community with a genuine interest in furthering the support available to veterans and their families.

Here is a brief outline of their responsibilities:

- Assisting veterans within each region to move into civilian life, ensuring independence and integrity.
- Advising the Minister of State for Defence Personnel and Veterans and reviewing government initiatives about the veterans' community.
- Communicating veterans' welfare concerns and issues to MPs, the Veterans Welfare Service, local authorities and the health sector, the Media, The Confederation of Service Charities (COBSEO) and various other organisations.
- Developing relationships with local and national charities to support and enhance the assistance they provide.
- Working with, supporting and advising various sectors and organisations with implementing the principles of

the Armed Forces Covenant and Community Covenant to ensure best practice.

- Liaising closely with Veterans UK to offer and assist individuals with independent pensions and compensation advice and representation.

The VA&PCs work closely with Veterans UK and twice a year they host a Chairman's conference that is attended by the Head of Veterans UK, Jon Parkin. The Conference is a chance for the VA&PC Chairs to get together and discuss any current or emerging issues that may affect the Veterans communities in their respective areas, and to share best practice.

This year the conference was opened and attended by the Minister of State for Defence Personnel and Veterans, Mark Lancaster, who said, "The VA&PC's make an enormous contribution and are a really good example of a more collaborative approach between volunteer organisations and the public sector".

Veterans can get contact details for their local Committee by calling the Veterans UK Helpline on 0808 1914 2 18 or by visiting:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/veterans-advisory-and-pensions-committees-x13/about

Have you served in the Armed Forces since 1975?

If so, it's possible that you have an unclaimed preserved pension, that is payable at age 60 or 65. If you think you may be entitled to a preserved pension, the following information may help you to understand if you may qualify.

The two Armed Forces Pension Schemes that you may qualify under are AFPS 75 and AFPS 05.

- AFPS 75 pension benefits are based on rank and length of Service. This scheme was in place for individuals who joined between 6 April 1975 and 5 April 2005. Pensions are payable at age 60 for service prior to 6 Apr 2006 and at age 65 for service after this date under this scheme. Benefits payable at age 65 under this scheme can be paid at age 60, with a deduction made for early payment.
- AFPS 05 pension benefits are based on length of Service and the best 365 days of Final Pensionable Earnings in the last three years of service. This scheme was in place for those who joined on or after 6 April 2005. However, personnel who were in service on this date who were members of AFPS 75, were given the option to transfer to AFPS 05. Pensions are normally paid at age 65 under this scheme unless an application is made to have them paid early at an actuarially reduced rate.

There are some differences between the schemes that cover both retired benefits and dependents benefits. To find out more about the benefits please visit GOV.UK and search for Armed Forces and Reserve Forces pension schemes guidance booklets.

Before 6 April 1975 there was no provision for the payment of preserved pensions and Service personnel who left the Armed Forces had to have either:

- completed 16 years service from age 21 if they were an Officer or;
- completed 22 years service from age 18 if they were Other ranks.

before they qualified for pension benefits, unless they left the Services on invaliding terms, for which separate rules apply. Those who left before that date without completing the above criteria lost all pension entitlement.

From 6 April 1975 pensions could be preserved for payment at age 60 for all those who left the service and at the time were over the age of 26 with a minimum of five years service.

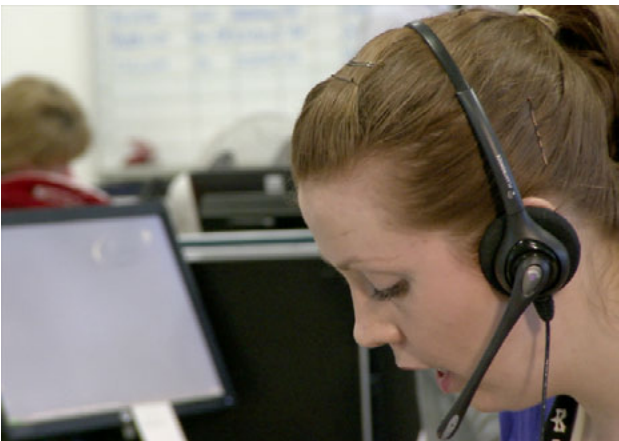
On 31 March 1978 the age criteria was removed and on 6 April 1988, the qualifying period was reduced from five to two years.

Preserved pensions have to be claimed at age 60 (or at age 65 for service after 6 April 2006). However, you can claim your preserved pension sooner if you become permanently incapable of any form of full time employment before reaching your preserved pension age.

If you think you are entitled to an Armed Forces Pension that you have not yet claimed, you can do so by completing and returning a paper copy of form AFPS 8 which can be found by visiting GOV.UK and searching for AFPS Preserved Pension Claim form. Details of where to return it to are included on the form.



MOD's JCCC launches new app and briefing films



The Ministry of Defence's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC) has launched a mobile app and two briefing films to help Service personnel and their families access their services.

The JCCC provide a focal point for casualty administration and notification and requests for compassionate travel (for those personnel serving overseas) in respect of members of the British Armed Forces. The JCCC, part of Defence Business Services (DBS), is based in Gloucestershire and is manned 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In order to help Service personnel and their families access accurate information quickly in an emergency, the MOD ICE app has been developed and two short films produced – one for Service personnel and one for families – to explain more about the JCCC services.

Once downloaded to a mobile phone or device, the MOD ICE app provides a very simplistic 'click and call' facility that will direct the user to the most appropriate organisation that can help them if or when they are faced with a family emergency.

When emergencies occur, the JCCC is there 24/7, 365 days a year to take immediate action for the Service person and their families. The app, which will run alongside the JPA P001 card, guides the user to the correct point of contact, even if the emergency is to be managed outside of JCCC's remit, for example by Service welfare or a charity partner.

The MOD ICE app is now available to download by Service and MOD personnel visiting the 'Defence Gateway' website. Service personnel can login using their details. The user will need to visit 'Defence Gateway' on the mobile device that they wish to host the app. They can then repeat the action with the relevant devices of family members and the app can be downloaded multiple times from the same 'Defence Gateway' account.

Once it has been downloaded, the Service person's name, rank and service number, together with the most relevant welfare officer's details are entered into the app. It can be used by both the Service person and their wider family at any time of day or night – whenever it is needed.

Alongside the new app, DBS has produced two short films to highlight JCCC's work, the types of support provided and to explain some key actions personnel should take now to update Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system and make a Will. Both films are introduced by the Chief of Defence Staff, General Sir Nicholas Houghton, who encourages all personnel and their families to watch them and take the actions recommended. One film is aimed directly at Service personnel with the other more relevant to their families.

The Service Personnel film is presented by popular BBC presenter Ellie Harrison and explains the role of JCCC and the services provided. It details what happens if a Service person becomes a casualty, or a fatality, the role of a Casualty Notifying Officer and Visiting Officer, information about the Dangerously Ill Forwarding of Relatives (DILFOR) process and the support JCCC

“The role that the JCCC undertakes in Defence is a key part of the Military Covenant. Service Personnel must be confident that there is a dedicated organisation providing immediate support, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to all in uniform and their loved ones, should an incident occur.

To ensure everyone who is involved in an emergency are given the care and attention needed, it is important you know what you must do: keep your Emergency Contact and Next of Kin details on JPA up to date and make and maintain a current Will.

I encourage the Armed Forces community to watch the JCCC Briefing Films and download the ‘MOD ICE’ App.”

**- Vice Chief of the Defence Staff,
Air Chief Marshal Sir Stuart Peach**

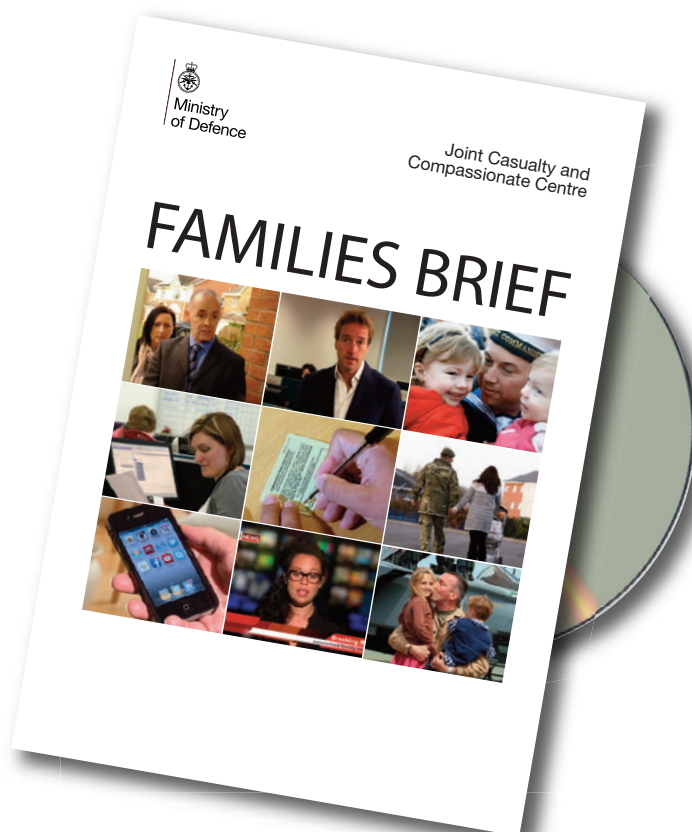
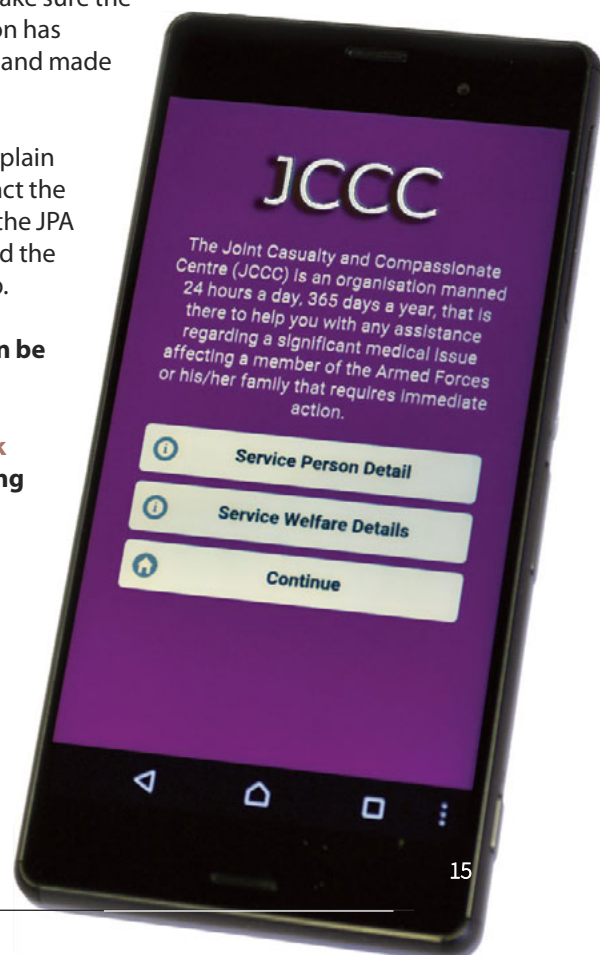


provides during a family emergency. The film explains the important difference between an Emergency Contact – which is a personal choice – and Next of Kin, which is a spouse or blood relative. The film also highlights how it is essential to make a Will and ensure all these details are accurately recorded on JPA.

The families’ film is presented by adventurer and broadcaster Ben Fogle. It highlights similar issues to the Service personnel film but focuses on information specifically relevant to families, including encouraging families to make sure the service person has updated JPA and made a Will.

Both films explain how to contact the JCCC, use of the JPA P001 card and the MOD ICE app.

The films can be viewed by visiting www.gov.uk and searching for “JCCC”.



FORWARD ASSIST



The journey from soldier to citizen can be difficult for some. That's why Forward Assist, a North East based charity is helping

ex-Servicemen and women who've hit rock bottom.

Forward Assist offers practical support and guidance as they adjust physically and mentally to life as a civilian. The charity involves veterans in projects to benefit the individual and the wider community.

With a team of six full-time staff, five being ex-military, Forward Assist offers vocational skills training, including the acquisition of accredited qualifications and life-changing opportunities.

It was founded by former Royal Marine Tony Wright, now the Chief Executive Officer. Tony explains: "We believe that active citizenship smooth that rocky path from soldier to citizen.

"We aim to give veterans the opportunity to become community champions and put their skills to use, for example, in our community benefit projects.

"Forward Assist has been able to assist veterans and other disadvantaged groups engage in activities that improve the mental and physical wellbeing of both parties. As a result, veterans gain the respect of the civilian community therefore improving their own self-esteem, confidence, social networks and future employment prospects."

Forward Assist also delivers projects to improve social inclusion and future employability. The initiatives include a communication skills project with Newcastle University students who taught veterans British Parliamentary debating skills. The ten-week course culminated in a Veterans Debate which was judged by MPs. The students and veterans toured the Palace of Westminster and watched debates in both Houses. They also attended a private select committee, hosted by supporter Dave Anderson MP. Veterans asked Rory Stewart MP and Dan Jarvis MP about their transition to civilian life.

In 2011, Tony Wright was funded by The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust to spend six weeks researching veteran support services in the USA. He established a UK-US Veterans Exchange Programme with exchange visits in 2013 and 2014. A third is planned later this year.

Other initiatives include a veterans angling academy; horticulture project; annual football tournament; employability project with Sunderland Football Club;

mentor training course in HMP Northumberland (thirteen veterans in custody gained an accredited qualification); listed building renovation project and specialist mountain climbing cadre with veterans of all ages working towards a Single Pitch Award climbing qualification.

Forward Assist has also delivered several creative writing and photography courses and the 'Cook2Give' team regularly cook a free, three course meal for veterans aged 70 years plus.

With 'Starbucks', the team designed a unique project for six unemployed veterans to train as coffee baristas. The two week placement included personal tuition, CV skills and mock interviews. Three previously homeless and unemployed veterans were offered jobs with the chain and it's hoped to roll out the project nationally.

"That's what it's all about," said Tony. "We really do make a difference...in so many ways."

www.forward-assist.com

Case study



After twenty-four years in the Royal Navy, Pat Barraclough struggled with the transition to civilian life and in 2014 was referred to Forward Assist by the NHS Veterans' Wellbeing Group.

He says: "Forward Assist has been wonderful, compassionate and full of empathy. They have helped me to get my fitness back through regular gym sessions, swimming and outdoor activities such as archery, sailing, angling, climbing and hill walking.

"As a result, I have gained an accredited qualification in football coaching, safeguarding and first aid. I'm also training to become a Veteran Specific Forgiveness Project Mentor and have taken part in an exchange visit to the USA organised by the charity...outstanding! "

Veterans UK staff working in partnership to help our customers

