

FCSE Veterans Hubs Needs and Gap analysis for Surrey



Executive Summary.

Surrey has three Veterans Hubs that are ASDIC¹ registered and four Armed Forces Breakfast Clubs (AFVBCs) serving over forty two thousand veterans (see Figure 1 and Appendix 1). Most South East veterans² (66%) are unaware of the location and services provided by their Hubs [Nield and Nield, 2018]. The support provided for these veterans across the county is of high quality yet not available to everyone in need. There are identified gaps in provision and it is recognised that some veterans are hard to reach and to engage with.

National research undertaken by [Latter, Powell & Ward, 2018] shows that a significant majority of people (64%) say they have not heard of the Armed Forces Covenant and this is also reflected across research carried out in the South East [Nield and Nield, 2018].

Our research is supported by the views of ASDIC members across the UK and shows that Veterans' Hubs have a significant role in advocating for and sharing the goals of the Armed Forces Covenant.

Therefore, in Surrey the key tasks to address these findings are:

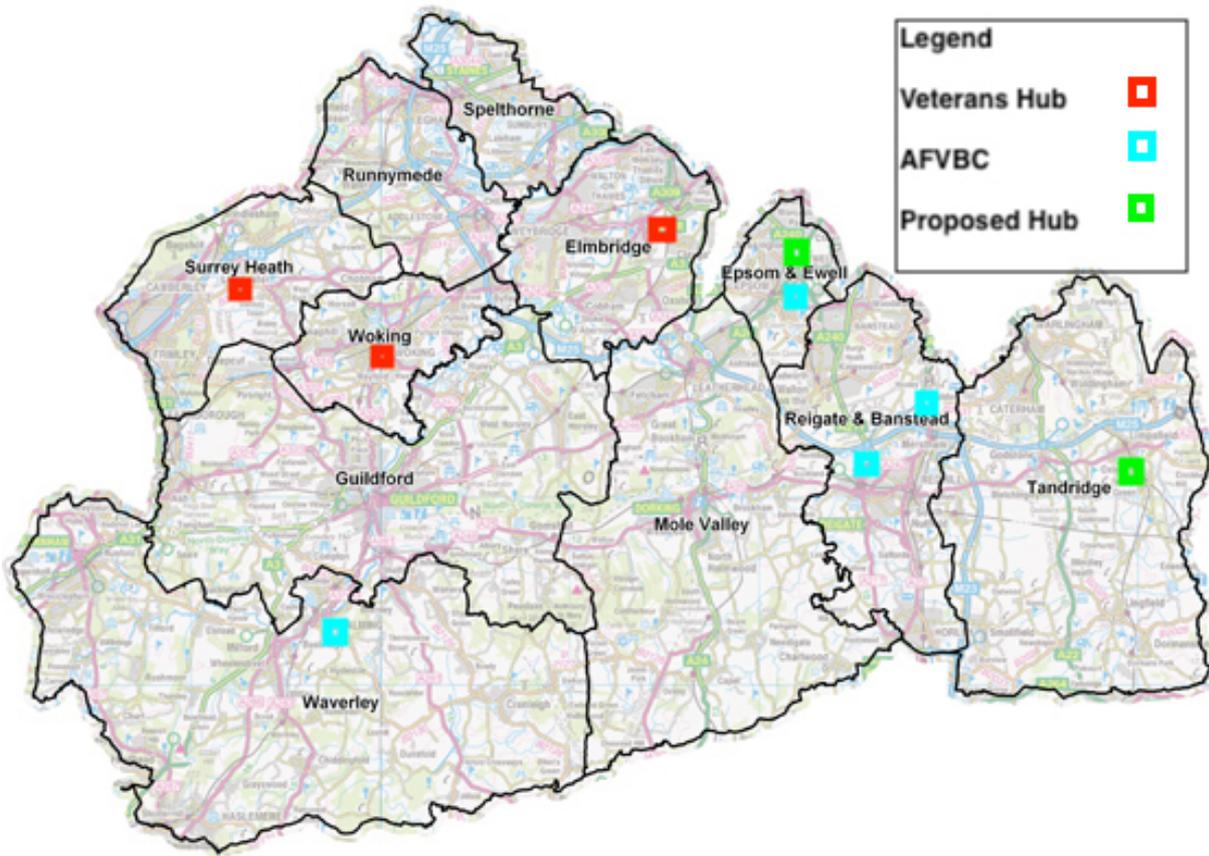
- To put the current Hubs 'on the map' and advertise their presence and services.
- To signpost identified veterans with needs to the Hubs (or other appropriate services).
- To ensure that both existing and new Hubs are sustainable in the long term.
- To identify the locations of veterans, especially those that are hard to reach.
- To help explain to the public what the Armed Forces Covenant is and what is being done locally to support veterans and how this links into the Hubs.

Research across Surrey has shown that the current veterans' provision is strongly appreciated by service users and their families. The present hubs are well used and integrated locally. Veterans from their 20's to their 90's regularly attend them and meet a range of service providers. In addition to the very necessary current provision, there is an identified demand from veterans and service providers in Surrey for new hubs in Epsom town and the Tandridge District Council area. However work needs to be done to re-advertise the existing Hubs provision as well as celebrating and improving links with Surrey's 12 elected councillor Armed Forces Champions. By taking a proactive approach through Surrey's veterans Hubs, it is anticipated that there will be a reduced demand in future on statutory services by taking a preventative approach and addressing issues before they escalate [Runnymede Local Policing Plan 2015].

¹ ASDIC is the Association of ex-Services Drop-In Centres, a project funded under an Armed Forces Covenant Grant to record all the veterans' drop-ins across the UK. ASDIC works with COBSEO and is under the umbrella of the Veterans Outreach Service.

² A veteran can be aged 18 years old having served in HM Armed Forces.

Figure 1. Showing the locations across Surrey of the current and proposed provision of Veterans Hubs.



Introduction

The Forces Connect South East Veterans Hubs Project (Veterans Hubs) is funded through the Ministry of Defence Covenant Fund and commenced on the 21st of May 2018. Our first priorities were benchmarking the provision for veterans and a needs and gap analysis to identify areas where additional support is required. Alongside this we aim to raise awareness of veterans' services available across the South East region comprising Surrey, Hampshire, East Sussex, West Sussex and Kent. This paper provides the current picture of need in Surrey as well as current provision and makes recommendations how to address identified gaps and issues.

Background

Veterans' Hubs provide access to services and support for veterans in the FCSE area under ASDIC principles. ASDIC defines a drop-in as an organised group for veterans providing a warm welcome, refreshments and general welfare support. Some have additional activities such as music, sports, veterans' news updates and guest speakers to promote wellbeing and/or access to mental health support. A drop-in takes place normally monthly under one roof in an informal environment. A Veterans Hub is defined as a drop-in having at least two support organisations regularly attending its meetings [ASDIC, 2018]. As well as veteran drop-ins and Hubs, there are Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast Clubs (AFVBCs) and Men's Sheds that provide comradeship and a social gathering. Some Breakfast Clubs provide more and these could become Hubs under ASDIC criteria which would be

achieved by extending their offer and having two or more service providers such as SSAFA or Combat Stress attend their meetings. ASDIC would regulate this.

In addition to specifically veterans facing events, Men's Sheds are self-support groups that welcome ex-services people. These provide support and signposting. Surrey has 11 such Men's Sheds.

The Hubs team have supported the three existing Surrey Hubs to become ASDIC recognised. This has been achieved by helping facilitate the Hubs to meet ASDIC's requirements, supporting their applications and advising ASDIC.

The majority of veterans living in Surrey are either not involved in veterans activities or are members of other community groups that are not military facing. The recent 'Lifting the Lid on Transition' report calls for a more coherent offer of veterans services [Heaver, McCullough and Briggs, 2018]. Service leavers and families also need to evolve to better understand the breadth of transition and the need to engage with it from an earlier point in a Service leaver's career. This includes the importance of advance planning, specific education to cover transition entitlement and processes and tailoring support to families' specific needs [Heaver, McCullough and Briggs, 2018]. Both Veterans Gateway and ASDIC are working to address these deficits by mapping the locations of services for ex-service personnel and their families but support at local level from Hubs and veterans groups is crucial. Almost half of Veterans (45% nationally [Heaver, McCullough and Briggs, 2018]) say it is harder for them to get a job than it is for people who have not served in the military. From contacts in 11 Brigade this percentage in Surrey is thought to be lower. More research is required.

Overall perceptions of how veterans are treated differ across age groups, and there is some criticism for those in Central Government [Latter, Powell & Ward, 2018]. In Surrey, county, borough, district and parish councils are committed to addressing veterans' needs through the implementation and regular review of the Armed Forces Covenant.

Recently displayed Silent Soldiers across Surrey have positively influenced public perceptions of councils' support for veterans. Notwithstanding that many of the silhouettes were sponsored by local businesses, they were seen as an act of remembrance and they have made residents think about local veterans.

Research shows that it takes 12 years on average for an ex-service person to ask for support [Ashcroft, 2014] which suggests that services must be offered proactively [Latter, Powell & Ward, 2018]. However the current services available are not generally known [Nield and Nield 2018] and in order to address this, the aims and goals of this project around raising general knowledge of what is available to help veterans has taken on an increasingly significant role.

Objectives

Our main objective following research into supporting Surrey's veterans is to identify and connect veterans with the services they require to succeed as valued members of Surrey's communities by:

- Researching current veteran provision in the county.
- Researching the location of veterans and analysing their needs and requirements.
- Identifying and addressing gaps in provision, by both provision and location.
- Promoting services available.

This will be achieved in a number of ways, including:

- Helping to inform the public about the Armed Forces Covenant through trained Front Line and Contact Centre Staff who will be able to advise what support is available in Surrey for serving personnel, veterans, reserves and their families.
- Encouraging new hubs to open in areas where there is a demonstrated veteran's need by gathering support from service providers and engagement from the local Armed Forces Champion.
- Working to ensure that veterans hubs achieve ASDIC standards and are sustainable beyond June 2020, and
- Encouraging all Hubs to provide a preventative approach to help reduce demand on other public services.
- Using innovative tactics to identify veterans in need and raising awareness in the public about local support for veterans and the Armed Forces Covenant.

Methodology

To complete these objectives we have and continue to carry out research through surveys, personal interviews and have listened to the experience of SSAFA, RBL, ABF the Soldiers' Charity [Army Benevolent Fund, 2014] and other service charities as well as speaking to FCSE members, Local Government Covenant Officers, the local military Personnel Recovery Unit, local military units and veterans themselves. We have met with elected councillor Armed Forces Champions and made visits to local Hubs. These interactions have allowed us to help promote and publicise existing provision and to promote stronger connection between local services. We are supporting the establishment of new provision in areas of identified need and encouraging and supporting the sharing of best practice with the first of three publications³, a guide to setting up a Hub. The other two documents will be published with extended good practice based on ongoing research.

In September 2018 we conducted a Veterans Hubs Survey. 312 self-selected veterans took part in this survey which was then followed up with focus groups and mini-surveys. Four thirty minute group conversations and eight 60 minute one-to-one interviews were used to explore provision for veterans across the South East, looking in detail at perceptions of veterans, what they need to participate in their communities and where they believed additional Hubs or provision were needed.

These groups were made up of all military branches and all groups were a cross section of society by gender and age. Due to the low numbers of BAME and Gurkha respondents to the initial survey and to gather information from older veterans, 14 additional individual surveys were undertaken.

The information provided from the above has been tested during visits to Veterans Hubs, Drop-ins and at AFVBC events. It has also been discussed with the Transition Intervention and Liaison

³ A Simple Guide to Starting a Veterans Hub is available now at www.smpl.org.uk

Service (TILs), elected councillor Armed Forces Champions, Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee members and at Reserve Centres.

We have further looked at the services provided in Surrey's Hubs by visiting them all and comparing them with services other ASDIC members supply and against the requirements which were identified during the research.

Results and Analysis

Firstly we addressed an issue that had raised national concerns, what should veterans be called? Many ex-service personnel do not like the term 'veteran' and the image of elderly men that they believe it conjures up in the public mind [Heaver, McCullough and Briggs, 2018]. However, research carried out for the project showed that most veterans accept that agencies and charities will call them veterans even if they prefer another title. Of the respondents (n=128) 72% said they were happy to be called veterans or didn't mind and 28% preferred to be called ex-services. Veterans tend to refer to themselves as ex-Ship/Squadron/regiment or Corps plus their role. For general use we recommend using the term 'ex-service personnel' which is almost universally accepted. However for this document for simplicity we shall use the term veteran. A veteran can be aged 18 years old having served in HM Armed Forces.

Surrey has three Veterans Hubs that are ASDIC registered and four AFVBCs (please refer to Figure 1 and Appendix 1) as well as 11 Men's Sheds which are available to any of the 42,000 veterans in Surrey in need of additional support.

Our Veterans Hubs Survey of 312 veterans discovered 50% of respondents who used a Hub found it very convenient or convenient to visit. Inconvenience was defined as the location being too far away from good transport links or being held at a time/day that they could not attend due to other commitments.

Although 62% of respondents have never visited a Hub, over 71% in the South East recognise that such provision provides a useful safety net and that they would visit in future when necessary. The main reason for veterans not visiting a Hub is a lack of knowledge about them, the services they provide and their location.

Over 40% of respondents said they were willing to be interviewed further on their veterans-in-need views. These formed our focus groups [Nield and Nield, 2018]. Veterans are clear about what services they would like each Hub to provide and these are set out in Appendix 2.

The following key points were made during the focus groups:

- Hubs should be safe places for everyone, including veterans, staff, service providers and visitors.
- Veterans will self-organise and this should be capitalised upon.
- There is a clear need for branding, advertising and sharing news between Hubs.
- Hubs should be encouraged to work together to support every veteran.
- A diary of veterans' events across the region⁴ was requested and has been produced.
- Some veterans are willing to travel a considerable distance to a Hub (e.g. people travel from Guildford to the Veterans Outreach Service in Portsmouth).

⁴ This should include all civil-military events and Passing Out parades where veterans are welcome.

- Some veterans engage well with social media while others eschew it and we need to reach all through a variety of media platforms.

After reviewing the data from our survey suggesting that hubs were not well marketed we tested a theory to discover if hubs that open irregularly in locations are less effective and are consequently less well supported. In other areas Hubs based at libraries, community centres and church halls that co-exist with general support have the most positive connections to other communities. This means that a hard to reach veteran (or their family members) attending that location for another purpose may learn of the Hub's existence. We are also trying to discover if opening Hubs for more than one day a month would make a significant difference to their uptake and use. Research suggests that more needs to be done to publicise the management, location and the services available to increase the number of veterans attending the Hubs. Further research is ongoing.

In addition we will be monitoring a "Travelling Hub" initiative that is being launched. This is a vehicular based Hub travelling around villages and remote locations with poor public transport links such as a "mobile bank" or "police station" that is being trialed in Kent.

Figure 2. A Simple Guide to Starting a Veterans Hub.

A Simple Guide to Starting a Veterans Hub

And what you want to think about.



What is a Veterans Hub?

We consider Hubs to be a specialised form of a drop-in service for veterans in their communities.

A Veterans Hub is a warm & welcoming venue that, in addition to the expected support of comradeship and a brew provides access to two or more agencies/charities at least once a month.

Not all Hubs begin in this format. we know from experience that building a Hub takes time.

Some are very vibrant and provide a lot of support including welfare, wellbeing, mental health and on-site assessments.

Are they needed?

YES! Our research with veterans identifies that 71% recognise that one day they may need the services of a Veterans Hub. Yet 62% of veterans asked are unaware of their local Hub! [Nield & Nield 2018]. So there is work for us to do.....



How we can help you

1. Provide Support and advice.
2. Knowledge on how to avoid some pitfalls
3. Guide you to training that can enhance your meetings.
4. Provide a mentor system for the organisers.
5. Share knowledge of groups that could assist your Hub.
6. Funding application guidance.
7. Access to a library of useful document templates.

Common Issues

1. Telling people & advertising where you are based
2. Informing people what you do & provide.
3. Funding and making a Drop-in sustainable
4. Providing a one size fits all Drop-in.
5. Do you choose a military type venue or not ?
6. Could a licensed premises be a problem?
7. Setting guidelines for your group and accountability.
8. Who can access your services - and how?



We have surveyed the 35 ASDIC Hubs and the Veterans Outreach Service⁵ and have distilled best practice in our initial leaflet 'A Simple Guide to Starting a Veterans Hub' (Figure 2) in order to provide the best practical advice to anyone seeking to set up a Hub in the FCSE area. Best practice keeps being identified and our Simple Guide will be extended and improved.

⁵ The Veterans Outreach Service is a major veteran's hub based in Portsmouth that is funded in part by an Armed Forces Covenant grant.

Our research, which is supported by the views of ASDIC members across the UK show that veterans hubs have a significant role in advocating for and sharing the goals of the Armed Forces Covenant. We argue that even greater engagement between local elected councillor Armed Forces Champions and Veterans Hubs will significantly improve the public perception of the Armed Forces Covenant, increase awareness of veterans' services across the county and reassure the public that councils are improving services for all communities. Other organisations including sports and football clubs and local businesses can be symbiotic and make a Hub sustainable. Further research is required.

Due to low numbers of BAME and Gurkha respondents to our surveys we have made contact with people from those communities to ensure their views are represented. This matter will be addressed in ongoing research.

On the analysis before us there is a need and an opportunity to launch a new Hub in Epsom town. This is supported by local veterans and RBL staff who work in the area and we are supporting them to open this Hub. There is also a demand from veterans for a hub in the Tandridge District Council area but this is aspirational at this time. Further research and discussions are required.

However setting up a Veterans Hub carries risk in terms of safeguarding procedures, GDPR, lone worker, insurance, budget planning and food hygiene. This risk can be mitigated by following the Simple Guide (Figure 2) and achieving the criteria to join ASDIC. For new or current Hubs that apply to this project for a grant their sustainability will be addressed through supportive conditions and ongoing oversight set by the Hubs Project board.

It is expected that supporting this project will be cost neutral to the Forces Connect South East authorities and that it will provide an ongoing reduction in demand on their services that can be re-deployed.

Recommendations

We propose that the following steps be followed to address the needs identified and to strengthen the offer to veterans in Surrey. Tackling these points will support the outstanding overall goals of the project, to create a best practice guide to develop sustainable services (Hubs) alongside the ASDIC project and to roll out best practice and develop locally tailored services based on identified need.

- We propose that this project works ever closer with elected councillor Armed Forces Champions to make use of their local knowledge and contacts, for example by inviting them to join the management committee of each Hub and if appropriate, support access to local funding and signposting to community services.
- To address the evidenced need for further Hubs in Epsom town and also the Tandridge District Council area. We will continue to work with Epsom Drop-In team who are in the process of modelling an Epsom Hub and encourage support from the Epsom AFVBC to provide an improved local service. In Tandridge we are seeking volunteers to manage and run a Hub based on the Simple Guide to Starting a Veterans Hub.
- We shall be supporting existing Hubs through providing best practice and mentoring to enable them to be or become self-reliant and more connected so they are able to learn from each other (and across the FCSE area). This will include support on governance, insurance, health and safety and DBS accreditation amongst many other areas.

- We will support Hubs to extend their reach through FCSE branded material and enhanced promotion via the media and social media. Simple measures such as posters in libraries, doctors' surgeries and other local amenities and businesses will help to connect to hard to reach veterans. Furthermore the respected Surrey Disability Register Newsletter and other community news channels add to the support the dissemination of veterans' services.
- We are championing Forces Connect South East mobile app⁶ and the use of the hashtag #VeteransHubsSE across social media platforms to raise awareness of veterans' issues, events and service providers.
- Our current diary of veterans events will be expanded to incorporate local government and other civil/military and veterans commemorative events including Armed Forces Day Flag-raising and civic receptions, and will be linked to the Surrey Armed Forces calendar. The diary has been successfully trialed on a monthly basis, but will be moved to a longer timeframe as further dates are gathered.
- We support local doctors and mental health services with social prescribing for veterans.

Conclusions

Surrey has vibrant veteran communities but not all of them are connected and so there is a need for further promotion of available existing services. There is public and veteran support for the provision of sustainable well identified Hubs that can address the needs of veterans locally.

Surrey has 42,000 veterans many of whom are not engaged with the available veterans' services. For many of these invisible veterans this is a choice. Others, who could benefit from support simply do not know that there are Hubs across the county that can assist them. However, for the marginalised few who have a need, the services that are openly available are not reaching them. We seek to address this hard to reach group and engage them as appropriate. In providing an improved framework of well known, accessible Hubs and other services in Surrey we will discover these hard to reach veterans. We are aware that there are many other veterans working for the Emergency Services as well as the Prison Service and we need work with colleagues through the wider Forces Connect South East project and the training provided through the Armed Forces Networks to help inform them of all the services available so they can help signpost veterans for advice and support.

If veterans in need engage with support services at an earlier stage, this can help reduce demand on local services. A good veterans Hub, supported by the local elected councillor Armed Forces Champion, can help ensure greater community cohesion locally.

⁶ Search for "Forces Connect" in your app store of choice.

Appendix 1:

Veteran Hubs, Drop-ins and Breakfast Clubs by Surrey Borough/District:

Borough	Hub/AFVBC	Services Provided	Veterans attending	Veterans in receipt of AFPS or WDA*
Elmbridge	Veterans Support Association HUB (West Molesey)	STOLL AFC Champion Indoor and outdoor games.	10 out of 856 members	354
Epsom & Ewell	AFVBC (Epsom)	Companionship	10	169
Guildford				807
Mole Valley				298
Reigate and Banstead	Merstham(AFVBC)	Companionship	8	413
	Redhill (AFVBC)	Companionship	9	
Runnymede				240
Spelthorne				301
Surrey Heath	SHV&F-LP (Camberley) HUB and the brand new: Naffi Break Cafe	Royal British Legion Action For Carers TILs Combat Stress Vulnerable Veterans Companionship Tea & Coffee	30 of 350 members	860
Tandridge				289
Waverley	AFVBC (Godalming)	Companionship	25 of 101 members	430
Woking	Surrey Armed Forces Drop-In (Woking) HUB	AFC Champion. Vulnerable Veterans Royal Naval Association SSAFA	13 of 440 members	171

Within the County there are also The Royal British Legion clubs and branches that provide support as well as other non-veteran specific provision, such as Men's Sheds that we know veterans access for support.

* Numbers in Surrey by Local Authority claiming under the Armed Forces Pension and Compensation Scheme.

List of Hubs times and locations:

- SHV&F-LP (Surrey Heath Veterans & Families -Listening Project), 1000-1300- St Mary's Church and Centre, Park road, Camberley GU152SR.

- SAFDI (Surrey Armed Forces Drop In), 1100-1300 at Woking Railway Athletic Club, Goldsworth Road, Woking GU216JT.
- VSA (Veterans support association), 1000-1600- 3rd Molesey Scout Hut, St Peters Road, West Molesey KT8 2QE.

Armed Forces Breakfast Clubs can be found on the website <http://www.afvbc.net>.

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Appendix 2. What Veterans want from a Drop In:

Subject	%
Comradeship	85
Wellbeing	70
Tea/Coffee	90
Cafe	30
Organised Events	45
Visits	38
Sport/Exercise	38
Veterans Family day	31
Access/Funding to Education and Training	46
Housing Support	31
Assistance with pension/benefit claims	23
Work Opportunities	23
Warrior Programme	15
Life Skills Course	31
First Aid/ Mental Health First Aid training	58

[N=251]

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