



Ex-Forces Support North Yorkshire Impact Report



**Community First
Yorkshire**

Registered Charity No. 515538



**ARMED FORCES
COVENANT**





Registered Charity No. 515538



Partners



This impact report was produced by Luminaire Consultancy on behalf of Community First Yorkshire (www.luminaireconsultancy.co.uk).

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Introduction

The armed forces community has a strong history and presence in North Yorkshire. While military bases around the region may be decreasing, there remains a high number of veterans living in the region. The geography of this large county with many remote and rural areas means that older veterans in particular are at risk of becoming isolated and lonely. While we can see and feel the local military presence with jets in the air and army vehicles on our roads, older veterans are less visible, quietly living amongst us in our communities.

It is estimated that there are 41,000¹ veterans in North Yorkshire, the majority of whom are 65 or older. Overall in the UK, we know that 90% of veterans are male and 99% are white². In North Yorkshire, we also know that we have a community of retired Gurkha soldiers and their families who have settled in the UK following military service.

Although specific support exists, for example, services provided by military charities, it is not always taken up. Not all veterans recognise and identify themselves as such, particularly so many years after military service, meaning they often do not connect with this type of support. For Gurkha veterans, cultural and language barriers can be an additional obstacle preventing people from getting the help they need.

In 2017, a partnership led by Community First Yorkshire, was funded for three years by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to raise the profile of ex-members of the UK Armed Forces over 65 years old living in North Yorkshire and to address the challenges they face. The Ex-Forces North Yorkshire (EFSNY) project brought together a consortium of voluntary and community services and public sector partners across the region to provide person-centred, practical, financial and holistic support.

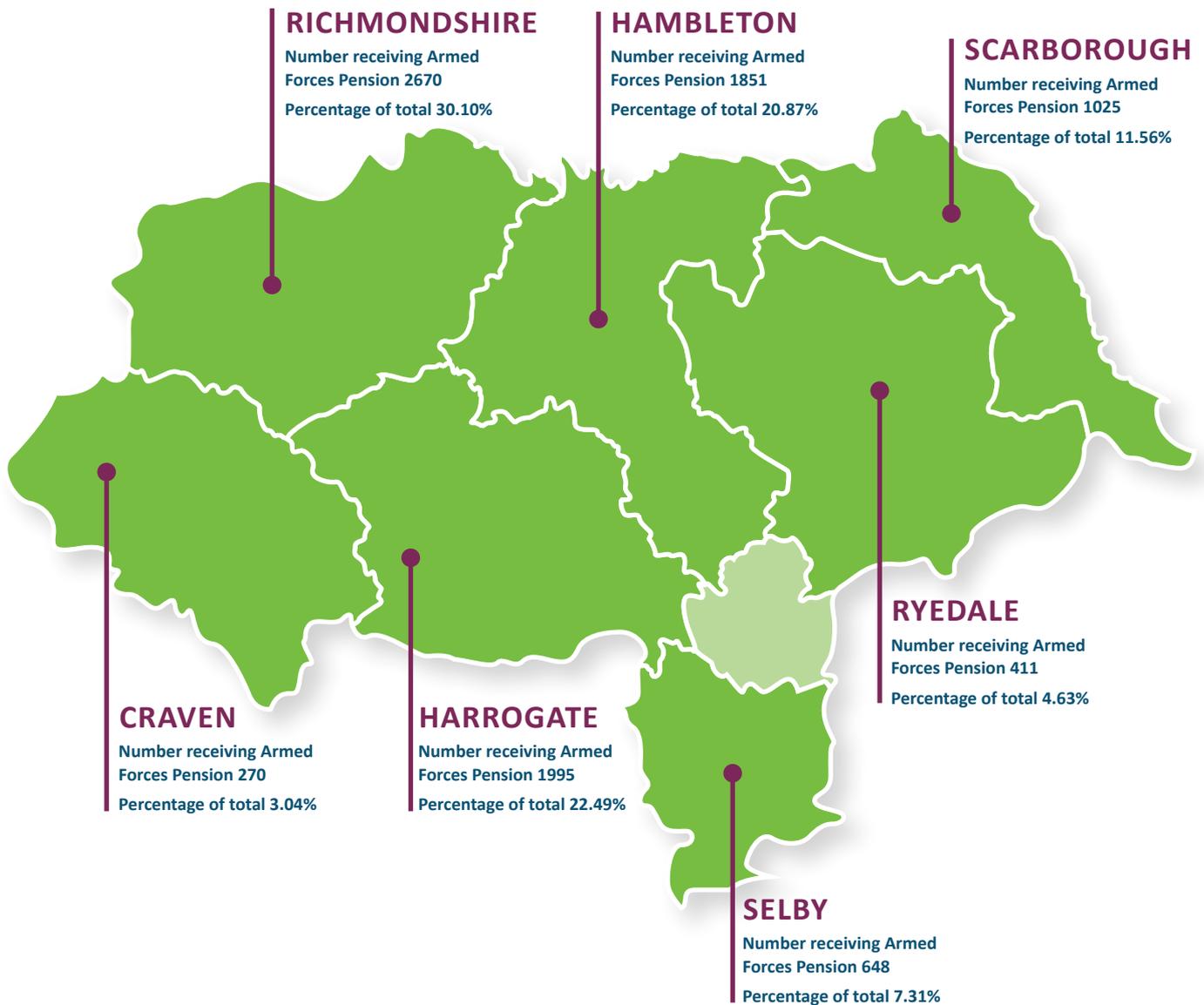
This report aims to share the achievements of the project, providing insight into what worked well and why and also the lessons learnt along the way. It is hoped that by sharing the impact of the project and the success of working in collaboration, other similar projects may benefit and go on to provide much needed support for older veterans.



A day trip for veterans to Elvington Air Museum

1. UK Armed Forces Veterans residing in Great Britain, 2016. Section 2: Location of Veterans, Annual Population Survey.
2. www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-population-survey-uk-armed-forces-veterans-residing-in-great-britain-2017

Although information is incomplete on veterans in the region, Armed Forces Pension Scheme data³ gives a sense of the proportion of veterans living in the different areas of North Yorkshire. The highest numbers of veterans live in Richmondshire, followed by Harrogate and Hambleton.



³ www.gov.uk/government/statistics/location-of-armed-forces-pension-and-compensation-recipients-2017

Age UK Scarborough & District gave support to 131 veterans, with services such as benefits advice sessions and coffee mornings



St Michaels Hospice provided home visits or one-to-one bereavement support to 44 veterans



28 ex-Gurkhas were supported through the Richmondshire Community Voluntary Action project



Community First Yorkshire organised 15 days trips and social events for veterans



Age UK North Yorkshire & Darlington supported 89 veterans with telephone befriending



The Yorkshire Energy Doctor visited 83 veterans in their homes, helping them save an estimated £14,560 on energy bills



14 veterans kept active by joining the gardening club at the Gallows Close Centre



Carer's Resource gave emotional support and counselling to 210 veterans who are carers and those caring for veterans

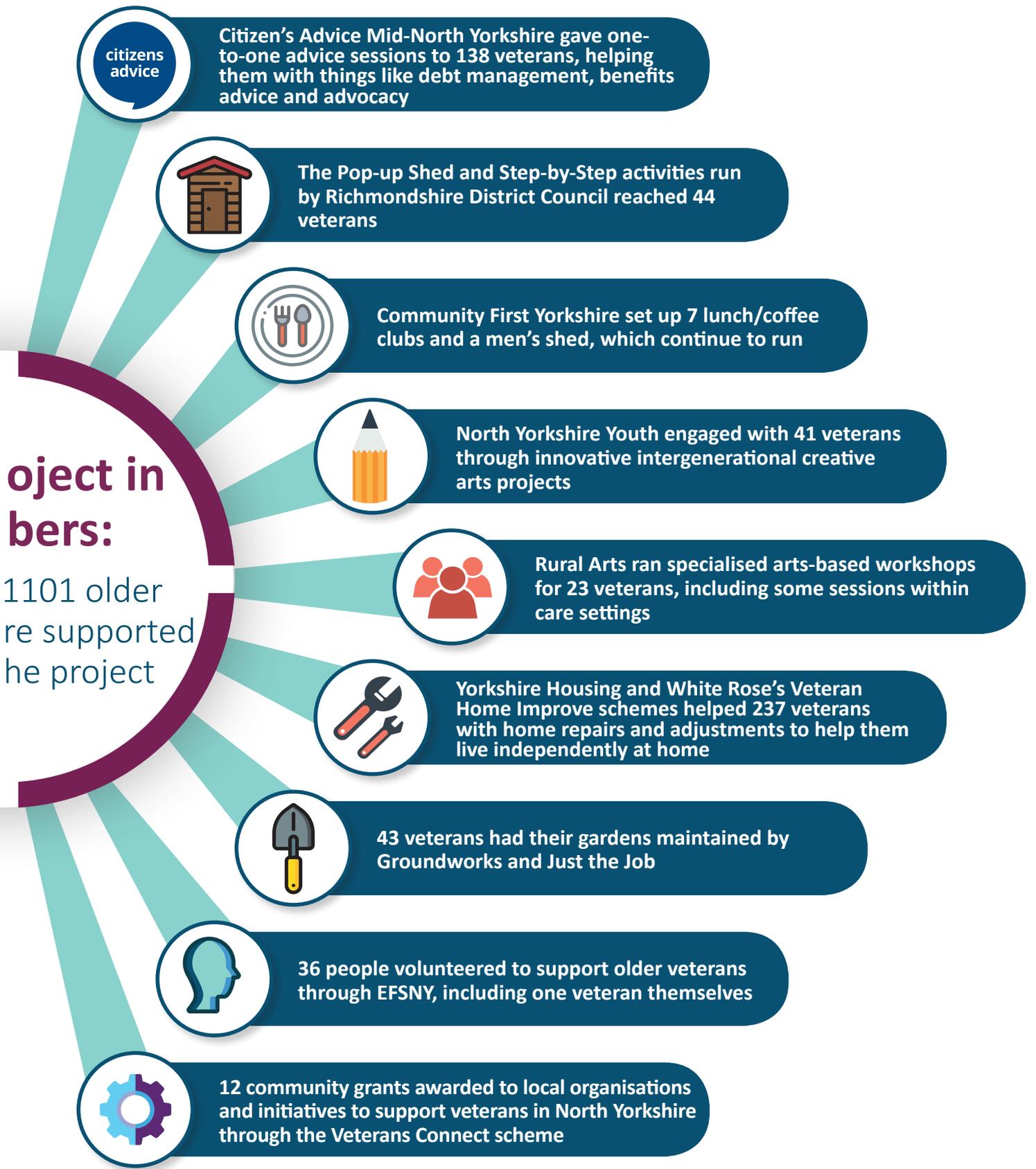


45 veterans took part in Primetime and other activity sessions run by North Yorkshire Sport



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What we did

Ex-Forces Support North Yorkshire (EFSNY), led by Community First Yorkshire, was a partnership project that recognised the need for a diverse range of activities to engage with and support older veterans across North Yorkshire. Community First Yorkshire worked alongside 16 local voluntary and community organisations and a range of public sector partners to bring together a portfolio of projects that would contribute to and widen existing support, providing ‘something for everyone’.

Over the three years partners included:

- Age UK North Yorkshire & Darlington
- Age UK Scarborough & District
- Carers Resource
- Citizens Advice Mid-North Yorkshire
- Gallows Close Centre
- Groundwork
- Just the Job Environmental Enterprise
- North Yorkshire Sport
- North Yorkshire Youth
- Richmond Community Voluntary Action (RCVA)
- Richmondshire District Council
- Rural Arts
- Saint Michael’s Hospice
- White Rose Home Improvement Agency
- Yorkshire Energy Doctor
- Yorkshire Housing



Veterans enjoy a lunch together at Victoria Farm Garden Centre in Whitby

We also worked closely with North Yorkshire County Council’s Living Well team, as well as military charities including SSAFA and Royal British Legion. Community First Yorkshire acted as a single point of contact for veterans enquiring about the project, helping to connect them with the best support for them. However, cross referrals between partner organisations were also a key feature of the project.

Person-centred, practical, financial and holistic support was provided, including:

- Opportunities to take part in activities, learn new skills or to revisit old hobbies.
- Advice and practical support to keep warm, safe and well at home.
- Befriending services, opportunities to meet new people and connect to the local community
- Volunteering opportunities.
- Basic home and garden maintenance.
- Specialist advice and advocacy.
- Support for carers.
- Emergency grants.



Woodwork demonstration by Veteran’s Woodcraft to members of the Ghurka community in Catterick

Our impact

Between April 2017 and March 2020, the project supported 1,101 older veterans with a variety of activities and services. Most veterans were male (86%) and over 75yrs old (77%). Most commonly people connected to befriending and social activities. This combined with other support, such as access to mobility aids and equipment, help with utilities and fuel costs, carers support and practical help all contributed to improvements in the health and wellbeing of older veterans.

In addition to the impact for older veterans, an estimated 847 carers and family members also benefitted from the project. Access to financial help, benefits checks, and home aids and adaptations had a positive impact on those living with and caring for veterans, improving quality of life for the whole family.

The project also offered small grants to local groups and schemes that supported veterans. Twelve grants were awarded in total, including a grant to York Normandy Veterans to part-fund transport costs for veterans on the 'Bomb Happy' tour, a contribution to Coxwold Village Hall to fund D-Day anniversary celebration afternoon tea and funding towards the Great War memorial at Catterick Garrison Barracks HQ. Many of the grants will have long-term benefits for both veterans and the wider community.



Community First Yorkshire staff, volunteers and beneficiaries with the pantomime cast at the Christmas 2019 event



Malton veterans meeting for their regular lunch group



A trip to the Royal Armouries Museum, Leeds for ex-Gurkhas and their families

Social return on investment

A social return on investment analysis was carried out as part of the independent evaluation. Using a tool developed to help calculate social value, the Social Value Engine, it was found that the project had a social value of £7.89 for every £1 invested.

An independent evaluation⁴ of the project found that positive change had occurred in six main ways:

- Reduced loneliness
- Improved mental wellbeing for veterans and their families
- Improved physical health
- Increased independence at home
- Increased financial health
- Broad service offer through effective partnership working

Loneliness and isolation



Gordon, who received support from Saint Michael's specialist bereavement service, Just 'B'

The challenges faced by people who have served in the forces are not dissimilar to those faced by all older people. Loneliness and isolation due to lack of social contact, compounded by age-related hearing and sight loss are common. The rural nature of large parts of North Yorkshire combined with a decrease in public transport across the region make it difficult for older people to access support and connect with others.

The most notable and lasting impact of this project has been the reduction in loneliness and social isolation through connecting veterans with their peers and the wider community. Tackling loneliness head on by providing a wide variety of social opportunities such as men's sheds, day trips, regular group activities and befriending telephone calls enabled EFSNY to reach, and have an impact on, as many people as possible. Specific support for Gurkha veterans and their families further widened the reach of the project. Bringing together older Nepali community members who spoke little or no English, enabled stories to be shared and firm friendships to blossom.

John, who received support from St Michael's Hospice said *'Loneliness is a big part of my life now, which I just have to overcome. Having a volunteer visitor to talk to gives me someone to offload to. I feel very comfortable with her and there are times when I don't want to upset my daughter or worry her, so it's good to be able to talk to my volunteer instead. Knowing she's there each week is a big help for me.'*

⁴ Ex-Forces Support North Yorkshire Evaluation Report (Rose Regeneration) available from www.communityfirstyorkshire.org.uk

Case study one

Ex-Forces Support North Yorkshire project helps to relieve isolation

When my dad lost his mobility last year he became confined to the care home where he lives with mum. Until then we'd been out to church and *Singing for the Brain* regularly. He was becoming socially isolated and it saddened me to see his and mum's world getting smaller.

For years, Sunday at church and Wednesday at singing were like stepping stones through mum and dad's week, but dad stopped asking when our next trip would be.

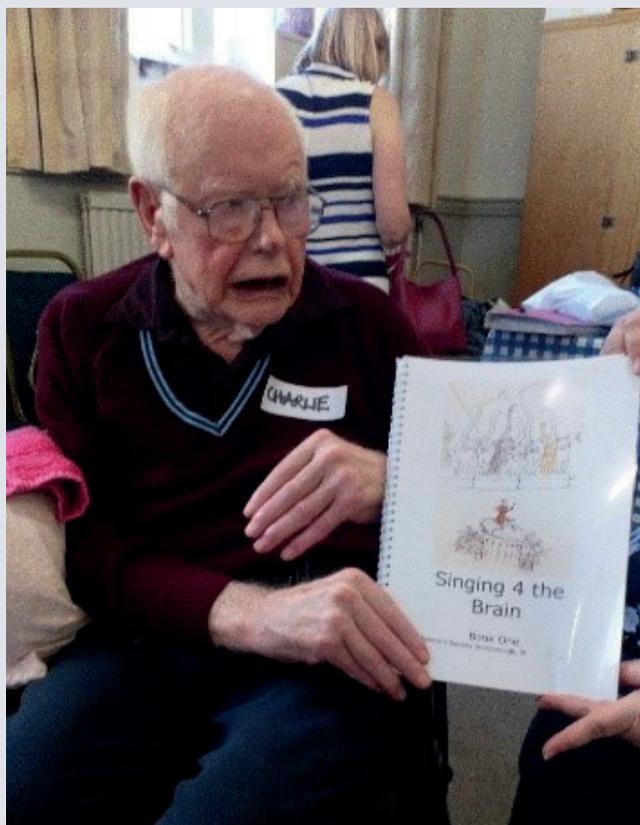
It was suggested that a wheelchair could help to enable dad to get to *Singing for the Brain* and church. However, this would need to be done through Scarborough *Dial a Ride*, which would require the wheelchair to have specific features to enable it to be taken on the bus.

Initial contact was made to the Ex-Forces project helpline after seeing an advert in the Scarborough Alzheimer's Society newsletter. Arrangements had been made through dad GP's for a wheelchair assessment through Wheelchair Services but nothing had happened.

We later learnt that Wheelchair Services no longer assessed care-home residents and so a request was put through the Ex-Forces project for a wheelchair. This enabled me to go to a local business to purchase the wheelchair necessary for the Dial a Ride bus.

Getting his new wheelchair is like being given a passport to the outside world again. Dad can attend church on a Sunday and his *Singing for the Brain* group on a Wednesday. He is less isolated and able to take part in the things he loves.

Now I feel over the moon when I tell him we are going!



Mental wellbeing

Participating in activities and opportunities of the project had a positive impact on mental wellbeing for veterans, carers and even volunteers. Increased self-confidence and self-esteem gained through learning new skills and a renewed sense of purpose from opportunities to share skills and volunteer in other ways contributed to improved mental wellbeing. In particular sharing of skills, knowledge and experience in intergenerational settings led to veterans feeling valued and appreciated within their communities.



Cookery class run by Veterans Artisan Bakery base at The Beacon, Catterick

John, a Starbeck Men's Shed participant, said *'Passing proper techniques on to others at 82; it's amazing... I need to be kept busy.'*

Case study two

Carers Resource support emotional wellbeing of veteran's wife and carer

I was supporting my husband at home, along with my daughter who helps me. He has Lewy body dementia which is quite progressed but was only diagnosed very recently. He is a veteran and we are both in our eighties. I am exhausted, emotionally frail and often weepy. I love my husband but our relationship has changed and lots falls to me to sort out. I was on the brink of crisis, feeling guilty about possibly putting my husband in a care home which I didn't want to do.

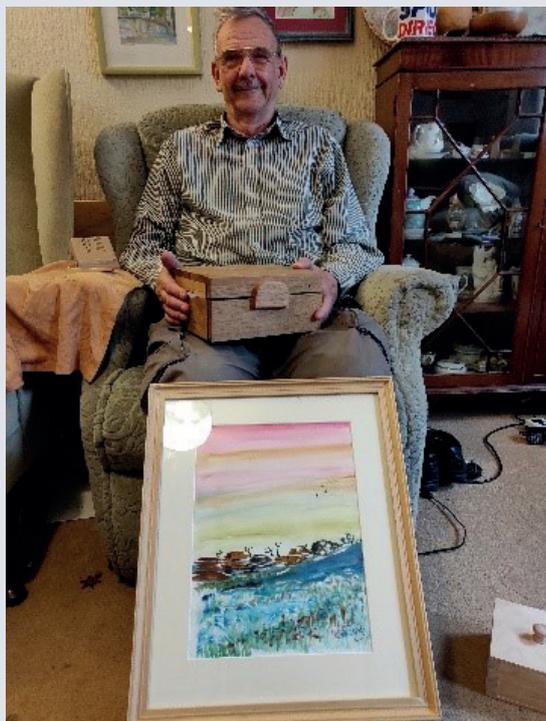
I got involved because I just dropped into the Carers Centre when I was feeling that I could not cope at all. I met a support worker there and she offered me support as a carer and emotional support which I thought would be valuable. I did not want other support from partners.

I have had the space to talk and think more objectively and time to consider a plan. I am planning a social care assessment, some regular respite time weekly, had my benefits checked and my council tax reduced. I received advice/information, emotional support, a carer's assessment and support plan. I feel more in control and more able to continue and know where to get help now. I feel that my caring will continue for longer, in the way me and my husband want it to. I am clearer about my rights and the support I can expect and know where to get it. I have found the emotional support and space for me invaluable.

My caring struggles continue as my husband's condition is progressive, but I have plans in place to make this journey a clearer, more focussed journey for both of us. I feel more in control and understand the condition more now, so can better meet his needs and reduce friction.

Case study three

Veteran enjoys active life after connecting with the community through EFSNY groups and days trips and with support from St Michael's Hospice befriending service.



Allan trained at RAF Cosford and spent time in his career at MOD St Athan in Wales, and RAF Lichfield before being posted to Cyprus where he was working on aircraft. He met his wife Ann and married in 1973 and left the RAF.

Allan's wife was registered disabled and her long-term degenerative illness meant Allan had spent a great deal of that time caring for her and consequently felt isolated from former friends and colleagues. *'It was a big contrast for me – I'd spent 15 years always living and mixing with lots of people,'* he explained. After his wife's death, he moved to Harrogate and found out about the support offered by St Michael's Hospice for those dealing with bereavement and referred himself to the charity's specialist bereavement support service *Just 'B'*.

Allan's involvement with the Community First Yorkshire day trips and events has enabled him to meet new people and to visit places which he may not have previously. One of the day trips, the Woodworking Taster Session, evolved into the Starbeck Shed which has enabled him to combat ongoing loneliness and isolation. Allan moved to Starbeck in 2015 and did not know many people within the local community.

By becoming a member of the shed at Claro Enterprises in Starbeck, he now feels that he is part of the local community and has a core group of people which he can see locally on a weekly basis. For Allan this is *'far better than sitting at home doing nothing'*.

At the beginning of the project, Allan was simply appreciative of the level of support which was available to him. However, as the project has progressed, so Allan's life has begun to change considerably. Through the Starbeck Shed, Allan has become a regular volunteer at Claro Enterprises, going there a number of times a week to support their beneficiaries in their various activities. Through this and the activities at the shed he feels far more part of the community in Starbeck, has met many more local people and has been drawn into other activities. As a volunteer at Claro he has been able to access further courses such as IT and Family History Skills in addition to the skills and new interests he is acquiring through the workshop itself. He is now part of the Starbeck Shed management group, using his newly acquired IT skills to develop his treasurer's role and is valuing the additional support from the other members of the group. Since Allan's involvement in the Starbeck Shed, his life has become fuller, more positive and now has a purpose. His only complaint is that he is finding it difficult to fit all his activities in, as he has no spare time.

Initially speaking of the befriending service Allan said, *'To anyone who's offered this service, I'd say go for it! It definitely helps you if you're feeling lonely or need some confidence. It's reassuring having someone checking in with you and coming just to see me, rather than me having to go out and find company.'* However, this focus has shifted to looking outside of his immediate environment and he now is recommending to others that they need to join in with activities on offer. Allan added *'This project has given me a richer lifestyle and enabled me to do things'*.

Physical health



Beneficiaries on the dance floor at the Tea Dance



Veterans doing new-age curling at North Yorkshire Sport



Wellbeing group for Ex-Gurkhas

'I really enjoyed the boccia and having a coffee with the group afterwards, especially the banter!' Veteran who took part in Primetime with North Yorkshire Sport.

Remaining active in older age is vital in maintaining independence, preventing falls and staying healthy. North Yorkshire Sport ran Primetime for veterans, which aimed to improve health and wellbeing and reduce loneliness through ability-appropriate sport. This included activities such as boccia and new-age curling. Veterans also took part in tea dances, men's shed activities and gardening through other partners' portfolios, all of which provided opportunities to take part in gentle exercise and become more active. In addition to the benefits of being more active, one project, Gallows Close, demonstrates the multifaceted and interconnected outcomes of being involved in a community garden project.

Case study four

Gallows Close

Gallows Close is a community gardening project set up in Scarborough by Groundwork and run by the Gallows Close Centre. The project lead worked closely with local people, volunteers, organisations, young people to transform an under-used space into a fantastic working community garden space for all ages.

Veterans contributed to the design and plans for the garden and went on to bring it to life, helping to plant and sow seeds.

Sharing the benefits of the project, the Project Lead at Gallows Close Centre said *'The ex-service people have built some lovely friendships and meet regularly in the community café on Fridays. We sit and chat, check they are all happy and their wellbeing is all good. Before this some were very isolated and had little or no interaction outside their homes.'*

Gallows Close brought about a wide range of benefits for those involved. In addition to gaining friendships, feeling connected to the local community and being more active, the project also gave a sense of purpose and for some led, to more formal work or volunteering opportunities.

'One ex-services beneficiary gained employment from learning new skills in the garden, another went on to volunteer for Age UK and nearly all the ex-service beneficiaries have joined our team of volunteers to help around the centre, at community events and our young people's bicycle recycle project.'



Water feature at Gallows Close



Produce from the garden at Gallows

Independence at home

Over the course of the project people were supported with advice and practical help to enable them to stay safe and warm at home. This preventative approach, often providing simple but effective solutions means that veterans were empowered to continue to live well at home. Consistent with the portfolio approach, veterans were supported in numerous ways including installation of handrails, gas and fire safety checks, portable wheelchairs, heating advice and gardening services.



Robert with the cooker organised through the project by White Rose Home Improvement Agency (HIA)

Robert explains, *'The new cooker you provided for me has made such a positive difference to my life - I really appreciate the support of the Ex-Forces Support Project.'*



Handrails installed by White Rose HIA outside Kenneth and Barbara's home made it easier to get out and about.

Case study five

White Rose Home Improvement Agency support veteran to stay warm and safe at home

My kitchen was quite cold because of a draughty window. I was also a bit concerned about an oil smell in the kitchen from the boiler and had difficulty accessing both. I heard about the project via a visit from a White Rose Home Improvement Agency wellbeing officer.

The project was able to insulate the window and loft, check the oil tank and subsequently change the filters. Also a wet shower room was installed via accessing a Disabled Facilities Grant and a carbon monoxide detector fitted.

The house is now warmer which will hopefully result in lower heating bills. As the boiler is more efficient I am no longer worried about it. I now have peace of mind and feel much safer which has made a positive difference to our wellbeing, and a warmer home is better for my health. I am much happier now there are no draughts coming through the window, especially after the recent storms.

I was very impressed with the lady who phoned me from Ex-Forces Support and gave me information on art and singing classes and day trips. I intend to join these. I would recommend this service to everyone. It is excellent.

Finances

It is common for older people to be unaware of the benefits they are entitled to and for funds to therefore go unclaimed, even though some experience financial hardship. Several partners provided tailored benefits advice to address this, increasing the financial resilience of veterans. In addition, financial health was improved by advice on utility suppliers, pensions and debt. Paying bills and switching energy suppliers can be a source of anxiety for many. Support provided made this less daunting and removed the barriers to people to getting the best tariffs and deals. Through the project, veterans saved on energy bills and are likely to continue to save each year as people re-connect with the advice when their utility supplier contracts are due for renewal.



Through White Rose HIA, John and his wife had a new boiler installed, reducing their energy bills.



With help from Yorkshire Housing, Chris was able to purchase a comfortable armchair through the project.

Bob, a veteran who had a home visit from the Yorkshire Energy Doctor said *'I was helped to change my energy supplier with which I'm delighted; it has not only saved me money but got me better customer service.'*

Case study six

Veteran's energy bills are significantly reduced following advice from the Yorkshire Energy Doctor



Walter had received information on the Ex-Forces project via the Old Selebians and his son encouraged him to get in touch with the project just to see what support might be available. He had originally needed help with his garden and this was provided by Groundwork. The gardener then left him a 'Combat the Cold' flyer and he decided to look into that element of the project as well.

Walter had been with British Gas for many years so the Yorkshire Energy Doctor did a review of his tariff and found that he could save £159 a year by changing to a new online tariff with British Gas. They also raised the issue of a water meter. Walter was paying unmetered water charges and his annual bill was high. Yorkshire Energy Doctor organised for a water meter to be fitted free of charge and this is now in place, saving him an estimated £395 per year.

Walter said *'I have been offered a water meter before but never took it forward, it seems like I should have done. I'm really pleased with what you have done for me, every time I speak to anyone I tell them about it.'*

Partnership working

Although not a direct outcome for those participating in the project, the opportunity to work collaboratively as a consortium of organisations supporting veterans has led to improved partnership working. The consequence of this is that people are better connected and more aware of the services available to them. We worked together to reach as many veterans as possible, carrying out joint marketing and promotion events and cross-referrals between projects. Additionally, external services were incorporated into the project's Directory of Support to meet aged veterans' needs which were outside the project remit. These included military services (e.g. Royal British Legion, Blind Veterans UK) as well as generic services (e.g. North Yorkshire County Council Living Well Team).

The Yorkshire Energy Doctor, a partner providing energy advice as part of the project said *'We may have visited someone to help with their utility bills but we were then able to connect them up with other elements of the project such as day trips or the gardening service which benefits them in so many other ways.'*



Age UK Scarborough and Carers Resource staff at the Armed Forces Day 2019

Case study seven

White Rose Home Improvement Agency and Community First Yorkshire join forces to provide an emergency response.



Peter and his wife were due to join a day trip and during the usual 'reminder' ring round the day before to check everything was still OK, Peter's wife explained that they would not be attending as they had both been in a serious car accident resulting in leg injuries requiring hospital admissions. She had just been discharged and she was expecting Peter to follow the next day. However, she was extremely distressed as the health professionals had insisted that they both keep their legs elevated at home but they only had one footstool so this would prove impossible. Because of the flexibility of the project Community First Yorkshire was able to work with White Rose HIA to fast track processes, purchase a footstool for Peter and have it delivered the same day.

White Rose HIA then followed up to check on the couple's wellbeing once they had both returned home. Not only did the project support Peter's physical health and have a positive impact on the couple's mental health as their worry had been taken away, it also provided them with access to other portfolios (e.g. energy advice)

Peter said 'I needed a foot stool to elevate my legs due to the injuries I sustained in an accident...the same day I was referred [into the project] a foot stool was delivered to my home. It has helped greatly with my recovery...I have also had help to improve the energy efficiency and heating in my property.'

Our legacy

The EFSNY project continues to have an impact in North Yorkshire and we hope, beyond. During the course of the project we learnt a huge amount about the keys to success in supporting veterans. By sharing our insights, we hope that other similar projects may benefit from what we learnt.

What we learnt

Collaboration

From the very start of this project, teamwork was its heart. We knew that to provide a range of activities and 'something for everyone' working collaboratively with partners was key. At the core of an effective partnership is communication. We learnt that by sharing information well and often we were able to bring together a range of organisations into one cohesive team. Although Community First Yorkshire led the project, we adopted a true partnership approach, avoiding imposing restrictions and hefty monitoring requirements on partners. Instead we worked to have shared objectives and had early conversations where potential issues arose. We also supported the building of relationships between partners by holding quarterly partnership meetings. This provided the opportunity to network, exchange information and gain knowledge shared by external presenters. In addition, the project had a single and shared brand, used by all partners in their marketing and other communications. A single brand helped the project to develop its own identity which was easy for veterans to recognise, and also contributed to partners' ownership of the project. This collaborative working style was what enabled the numerous cross-referrals between partners and joint marketing enabling us to reach and support so many people.

Person-centred working

Working alongside people, listening to what they need and having the flexibility to respond to this was important to engaging veterans. The self-reliant nature of many older veterans means that any other approach simply would not have worked; many were too humble to think they deserved the support offered through the project. We learnt that we needed to take an approach that enabled people to be in the driving seat, spending time getting to know what's important to them and then empowering people to connect with the support that best fitted their circumstances. We found that a quick response time following a referral aided this, giving people the opportunity to be heard more or less straight away. An additional facilitator of person-centred working was that the Gurkha project worker was themselves a Gurkha veteran. This provided an immediate connection and shared understanding for many ex-Gurkhas and their families accessing the project.

Person-centred working has also been vital to the sustainability of social groups brought together during the project. Encouraging and supporting people to co-create and self-lead social groups means that they are not reliant on ongoing external support and continue to thrive now that the project has come to an end.

Case study eight

Community First Yorkshire and local baker work alongside veterans to shape a cookery course

Ros Taylor is a therapeutic baker at the Veterans Artisan Bakery base at The Beacon, Catterick Garrison. She knows how the power of cooking can help build friendships and wanted to offer a 'Cooking for Life' skills course to veterans that would not only improve their life skills and help them to be more self-sufficient, but would also bring people together in the informal atmosphere of a kitchen.

Ros needed help to reach out to veterans and so she got in touch with Community First Yorkshire. Through the EFSNY project, Community First Yorkshire were able to make contact with older veterans living locally and also provide funding for the course so that it was free for veterans to attend.

Before the course could be set up, Community First Yorkshire's Project Officer, Colleen Allwood, met with the Age UK North Yorkshire & Darlington veterans group to discuss what they thought would work and what participants might like to get from attending a cookery course. Colleen explained: *'Having the chance to sit down and chat to veterans gave us a real insight into what was needed. It was a revelation to realise the benefits that a cooking course could have for veterans and, following our meeting, we were able to help Ros get this project started.'*

Colleen shared everything she'd found out from meeting the veterans with Ros to help her develop a course that was tailored to veterans' needs. Ros then organised a four-week cooking course for six participants, which Community First Yorkshire promoted through their social media channels and through posters and local advertising. Due to popular demand, Ros then arranged a second course for a further six people.

Ros says: *'Working with Colleen and Community First Yorkshire has been a rewarding experience. Community First Yorkshire recruited participants for the course and were professional in their approach to sharing appropriate information that would enable me to support the learners effectively. Colleen ensured all learners knew about and could access the venue. We arranged a pre-course visit for a course participant with mobility issues so that they could check access and the facilities available. Also, Community First Yorkshire arranged weekly transport where necessary so everyone could get to the course on time. Having initially not expected to be present during the cookery sessions, Colleen readily agreed to stay on site at The Beacon while the sessions were running so the additional help was available to support participants in event of minor injury or emergency. This also provided continuity for the veterans in what was initially an unfamiliar environment. Given the opportunity The Veterans Artisan Bakery would be delighted to work with Community First Yorkshire in future.'*



Supporting participation

We know that often older people are too proud to ask for help or don't want to be any trouble, this is also the case for veterans. We found that a two-pronged approach was needed to encourage both veterans who recognised themselves as such and those who do not, for example those who completed National Service but had no further military service afterwards. For those who identify as ex-forces, the military association in the project title helped to draw in people who wouldn't usually ask for help. It engaged people in a way that helped to build trust by communicating that the project was for 'people like them' and that there would be other veterans participating.

For those that do not recognise themselves as a veteran, EFSNY worked collaboratively to connect with people eligible for the project using local outreach. We worked with local organisations such as care homes and the Fire and Rescue Service, held market stalls and shared marketing materials with GP surgeries and garden centres. Once identified, project workers spent time with people to help them to see their justified eligibility and encourage participation. Project workers also pre-empted barriers to participation and worked to remove them, for example, arranging transport or home visits where needed. Going this extra mile enabled many veterans to access the project that would not have otherwise.

Widening eligibility criteria

Although the project aimed to support veterans over the age of 65, we found that many younger veterans aged 40-65 approached us for support. Of the 41,000 veterans living in North Yorkshire, it is estimated that approximately 12,500⁵ of these are of working age, suggesting a need for future projects to consider lowering the age criteria. Additionally, we were not able to formally support others such as family members and carers, widows and widowers and land girls. The estimated 847 relatives and carers that benefitted indirectly from the project demonstrates the significant value for money that the project provided, but also further highlights the need to widen eligibility criteria. Not only would this enable more people to be supported but we also learnt from older age veterans within the project that inclusion of family members, carers, younger veterans and local community members, is seen as important in raising the profile of older veterans in local communities.

Sustainability of service

The EFSNY project continues to have an impact on older veterans living in North Yorkshire. The person-centred approach to ensure sustainability of groups means that many of these activities have continued and veterans are now reconnected with local social networks indefinitely. The men's sheds, veteran's coffee mornings and lunch groups still come together regularly. Inevitably, this has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, but we know that despite this veterans are continuing to keep in touch with each other. Furthermore, some of the projects have secured funding to continue to offer tailored support for local older veterans.

⁵ Working Age UK Veteran Estimates by location, and comparisons with England and Wales Population Estimates, Census 2011

Case study nine

Veterans in Harrogate set up and continue to grow a men's shed with support from Community First Yorkshire.

In Spring 2018, Community First Yorkshire's Ex-Forces Support North Yorkshire project ran a woodworking taster session for ex-forces veterans. Those who attended enjoyed the day at Claro Enterprise in Harrogate so much that they decided that they would like a regular woodworking activity to develop and improve their woodworking skills. This in turn would help them expand their interests and increase their social interactions to combat loneliness and isolation.



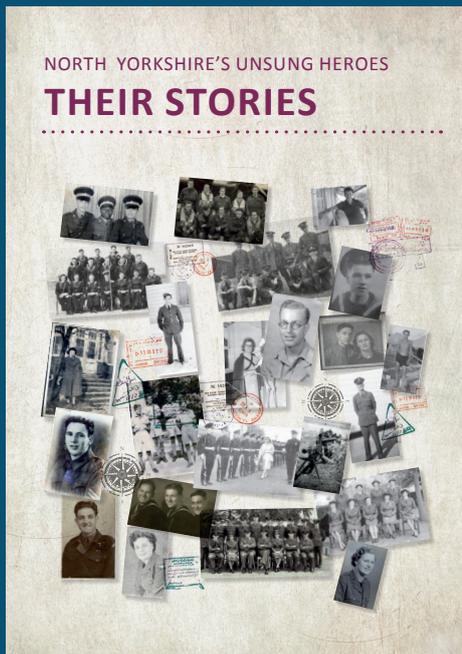
Having had a lot of experience in setting up men's sheds in other parts of the county, Community First Yorkshire brought all the interested parties together to discuss how the Harrogate men's shed could become a reality. Community First Yorkshire approached Claro Enterprises – who had already thought about hosting a shed – to see if one could be set up in their workshop when it wasn't in use. Claro Enterprise happily agreed to a shed meeting every alternate week. A Harrogate men's shed steering group was set up, consisting of both veterans and volunteers from Claro Enterprises, and taps into the skills that

already exist within the group. The group received funding for eight months through the Ex-Forces Support North Yorkshire project and during this time Community First Yorkshire's community support team provided advice and support regarding governance structures, governance documents and additional funding streams. North Yorkshire County Council's Stronger Communities Inspire Fund has provided additional funding following an application by the project team on the shed's behalf.

The shed has flourished since it started mid-2018. The group became self-coordinating at the end of February 2019 with no further involvement required from Community First Yorkshire.

Meetings are held every week and a she-shed is in development. Financially, the group is more secure due to a successful finding bid to the Two Riding Community Foundation, with additional financial security through membership fees and commissioned and saleable items.





We have also produced a directory of resources for use by local organisations to help to connect veterans with the right support for them. This means that in the long-term our colleagues in the voluntary, community and statutory sectors have an easily accessible resource promoting understanding of how best to support older veterans.

Finally, as part of the legacy for the project, Community First Yorkshire commissioned Dr Tracy Craggs from the Oral History Society to interview 21 WW2 veterans and 20 veterans with other military or national service experience. This culminated in a book 'North Yorkshire's Unsung Heroes: Their Stories'. Unsung Heroes captures tales of life during services and provides an insight into the social and personal history of those who have served our country.

We are proud of the impact we have had as a strong partnership during the project. We know that we have made an important difference to the mental and physical wellbeing of over 1000 older veterans in North Yorkshire and that this number will continue to increase as more veterans are reached through our legacy.



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