

Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten Programme Evaluation:

Enabling immediate support for vulnerable veterans
with reduced social contact



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Foreword



I am privileged to introduce this evaluation report relating to one of the very important programmes the Trust ran in response to the Covid -19 pandemic: The Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten Programme.

The need to proactively support those most likely to be adversely impacted by the restrictions imposed on us all was the driving factor in the design, set up and running of this programme, and I am hugely proud of the whole Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust team who all worked at pace and with determination to distribute this grant funding.

The results are impressive, as this report shows, but for all of us the need to do what we could to support veterans who had to isolate or who were unable to access services was paramount. My thanks go to all the team and to our three Strategic Partners for their support, expertise, and compassion during this period.

I would also like to thank Rachel Smith, our Policy and Impact Analyst, for producing this report; and all the organisations we were able to fund, who delivered this emergency funding support to vulnerable veterans so they were not forgotten during the worst of the pandemic.

Thank you all, but the work does not stop now.

**Melloney Poole, Chief Executive
Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust**

Executive summary

The Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten programme awarded 120 grants to organisations across the UK, totalling £2,394,698.

In the March 2020 Budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer awarded £10 million to the Veterans' Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund. Of this £10 million award, £3 million of this funding was to be an emergency funding programme available immediately, focusing on alleviating suffering and loneliness for isolated veterans caused by restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Funding was available for up to £20,000 per organisation, for a six-month project.

Organisations fitting the following criteria were invited to apply.

- **Age UK charities across the UK.**
- **Members of ASDIC.**
- **Cobseo members who were eligible for the funding.**

Age UK was established in 2009 (when Age Concern England and Help the Aged joined forces) and they officially became Age UK in 2010. However, the charity has shared history that goes back to the 1940s and therefore has generations of experience in providing services and support to meet the needs of older people across the UK.

As the over-60s are the 'fastest growing group in society', the aim of Age UK is to inspire, enable and support older people. With over 130 charities in the Age UK network (which encompass Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age NI) there is a growing support

mechanism across the UK that is able to work together to assist older people. Age UK has led significant programmes of work for veterans in recent years, both nationally and regionally, including projects funded by the Aged Veterans' Fund, administered by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

The Association of Ex-Service Drop-In Centres (or ASDIC) became a registered charity in its own right in August 2020. Its purpose is to link up ex-Service drop-in centres across the UK for mutual benefit, and to allow greater accessibility for veterans. The aims of ASDIC are to enhance the power of individual drop-in centres by sharing collective knowledge and experience and displaying best practice and initiative.

ASDIC is organised in a regional structure, with 20 regions across the UK including the Devolved Administrations. Each nation has its own regional co-ordinator, and a regional director. Through this structure, the co-ordinators and directors can offer advice, support and guidance to each member.

Cobseo is the Confederation of Service Charities and acts as a single point of contact, representing the Armed Forces charity sector with entities such as local government, the Devolved Administrations, the private sector and of course the Armed Forces community themselves. Cobseo's aims are to promote and further the interest of the Armed Forces community by the exchange of information, identification of any issues, acting as a point of contact and representing the needs and opinions of its members.

Membership of Cobseo is open to registered charities only, who are either a primary focus for, or also act in the interests of, the Armed Forces community.

¹The Map of Need:

<https://covenantfund.org.uk/the-map-of-need>

Who benefited from the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten funding?

51% of the grant award total was given to Age UK charities across the UK, with Cobseo members being awarded 26% of the funding and ASDIC members 23%.

Geographically, the largest proportion of the funding (18% of the total award) was awarded to organisations that provide support to veterans in the north west of England. The Map of Need¹ identifies areas where large numbers of veterans have sought financial assistance in this area. This corresponds to areas of proportionally high veteran populations in pockets, i.e. large cities such as Liverpool, Manchester or Preston.

The primary project activity for the programme was Home deliveries of essential items (56% of the total programme award), followed by Social contact through telephone or digital platforms (29%). This shows the importance placed by grant holders in ensuring that vulnerable or shielding veterans were able to get the home essentials they required during the first lockdown, when so many services were restricted and advice was given to people to stay at home. Emphasis was placed on getting a fast, effective mechanism to support these people in immediate need – although it should be noted that grant holders described the social interaction benefits of making these deliveries as being valued, perhaps as much the practical help.

Analysis of the beneficiary data shows that 53% of the grant funding supported veterans over the age of 65 years, with a further 20% of the funding going to organisations supporting veterans aged 40-65 years, and 17% of the funding going to early Service leavers. This suggests that the needs of older veterans (nearly half those supported) were the primary focus for organisations applying for funding through this emergency programme.

Additional needs identified for younger veterans, which were exacerbated by the Covid pandemic, were identified by other projects funded by the programme and included disability, homelessness, employment and alcohol/substance abuse. These are discussed later in this report.

The need for alternative methods of social contact during lockdown played a huge part in the mechanism for many projects; and the ways in which projects came up with delivery proved to be innovative and effective. Digital skills training featured very highly on priorities; once veterans were upskilled, the support they received from organisations could be effectively provided virtually, as well as maintaining contact with the wider world to boost wellbeing and alleviate loneliness.



Key Themes



Veterans Staying Connected



Veterans Learning New Skills



Veterans Supporting Veterans



Veterans In Partnership

A review of the grants identified the following core themes.

- **Veterans Staying Connected.**
- **Veterans Learning New Skills.**
- **Veterans Supporting Veterans.**
- **Veterans In Partnership.**

These four key themes emerged as the grant holders talked about their projects in depth and the added value that was brought to them as they progressed.

Veterans Staying Connected and Veterans Learning New Skills were intrinsically linked, as the projects demonstrated that many veterans were introduced to IT for the first time.

The Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten grants enabled IT equipment to be purchased, along with special adaptations to meet particular veteran needs, such as screen readers for the visually impaired. The grant funding also paid for staff resources, so they were able to train veterans to use the equipment. This allowed the veterans the opportunity to engage with the online world, sometimes for the first time in their lives. The funding allowed veterans to engage with digital platforms for both social and healthcare reasons, enabling activities to continue during

lockdown/shielding. Veterans were also able to meet with their much-loved families and friends digitally, ensuring that connection wasn't broken, even during the long weeks of isolation from each other.

Veterans Learning New Skills also enabled veterans to take up new hobbies, and in some cases learn new skills that they were able to use to assist others who needed support during the pandemic.

One of the strongly emerging themes was Veterans Supporting Veterans, which in many cases was not an initial aim at the outset of the project. As veteran volunteers saw other veterans or people in the local community struggling with the effects of the pandemic, they would volunteer to support or assist these people in crisis. Small projects grew larger out of a desire to help others in need in a variety of ways. These ranged from collecting groceries/medication, to cooking meals and supporting each other via online forums.

One organisation started off small with an online forum for veterans to support each other through lockdown, helping with isolation, mental health struggles and boredom. It was from this forum that the funded project was borne, with veterans supporting and

encouraging each other through a variety of hobby-based activities.

Veterans In Partnership was also a strong theme throughout the case study evidence. In many cases, having the grant funding from the Trust was an enabler to allow them to seek partnerships with others in order to assist more beneficiaries. Without the Trust funding, they would not have been able to spare the resources to seek partnership opportunities or have the availability to fulfil them.

An example is when an organisation partnered with a supported housing association to be able to provide hot meals to vulnerable veterans. Without the grant funding support, there would not have been the resources to make this happen.

Strategic grants

A grant of £50,000 was made to Age UK to work in partnership with SSAFA, so that specialist Armed Forces knowledge and support could be shared with the Age UK branches as they directly targeted help for older veterans during the pandemic. Additionally, following the closure of Age UK Suffolk, funding for Age UK charities bordering the county was administered by Age UK centrally, to ensure that some of the needs of veterans in the county could be addressed.

23% of the grant funding was awarded to ASDIC members, including £300,000 which was awarded directly to ASDIC. This award was for ASDIC to assist their member organisations who had received

All successful grants were asked to work with their Local Covenant Partnership, their local SSAFA branch and local emergency planning and resilience forums, to ensure that their project remained appropriate and needed by the local veteran population, and did not duplicate anything that was already being provided in the area. Partnership with these bodies also meant that referrals for specific and emergency needs could be effectively undertaken.

One organisation worked effectively with their Local Covenant Partnership and local authority to produce lists of retailers who were able to deliver goods and services to vulnerable veterans. These lists were updated regularly and were used by all organisations working in partnership, to provide a seamless and updated service to the veterans in need.

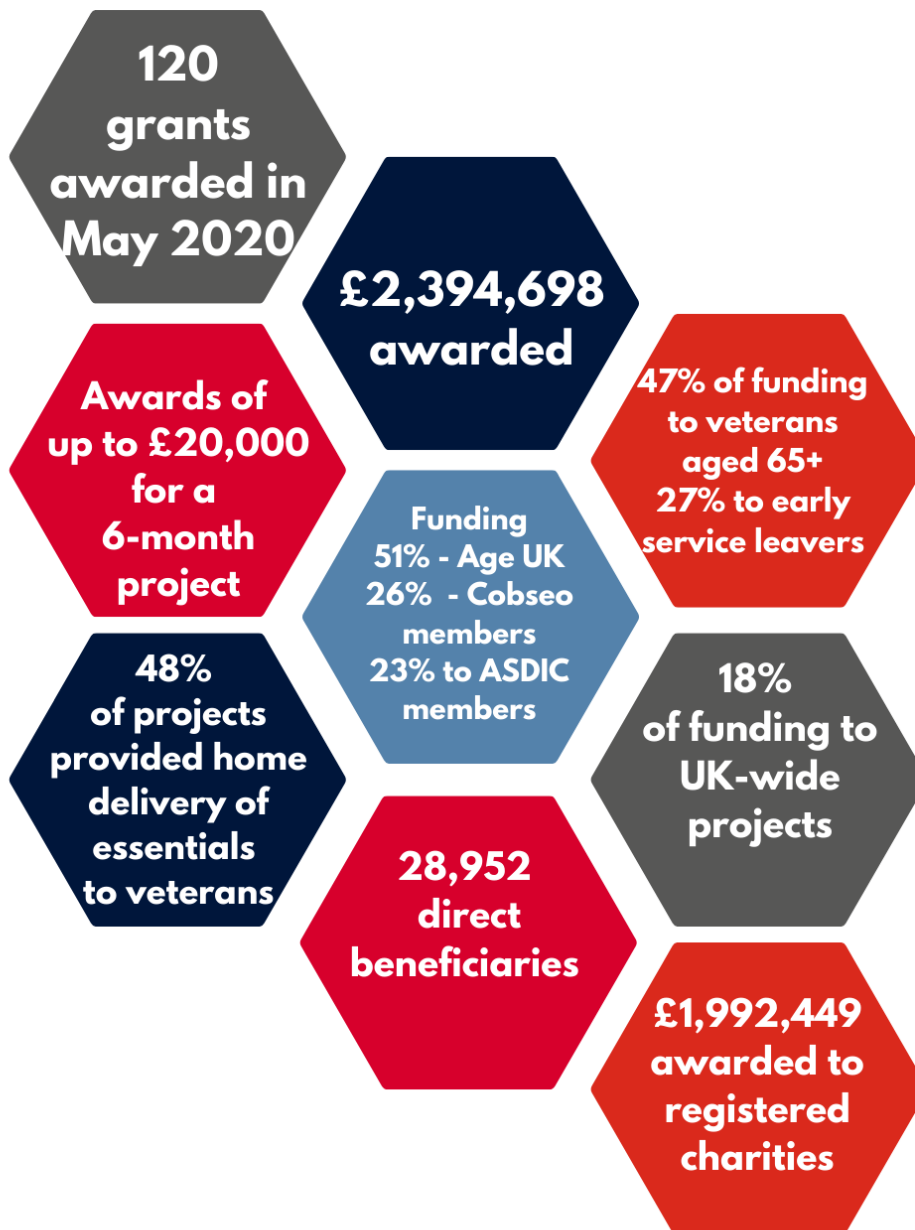
grants through the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten programme, both with the applications and delivery, but also to help them with their ongoing work with the most vulnerable beneficiaries for whom physical attendance at drop-ins and breakfast clubs was, and might continue to be, difficult or impossible.

This grant initially helped fund a team of regional network co-ordinators, who were able to assist grant holders in their area, providing assurance and mentoring skills to enable them to get the best possible outcome from their grant and the funding will enable this support to be in place for two further years.

Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten



at a glance...



Introduction

In the March 2020 budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer awarded additional funding of £10 million to the Veterans' Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund. Up to £3 million of this funding was made available immediately as an emergency grant programme, which was delivered by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

The aim of the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten programme was to provide immediate support for vulnerable veterans with reduced social contact, via grants to members of ASDIC, Age UK charities across the UK, and eligible and invited Cobseo members.

Groups could apply for up to £20,000 for a six-month project focused on supporting veterans who are isolated and unable to access services or have limited social contact during the period of self-isolation and restrictions relating to the pandemic.

The application process and subsequent awarding of grants was completed by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust in a very short period of time.

As shown in Fig 1 below, the funding programme was opened in April 2020, following the Chancellor's announcement and the commencement of national lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic at the end of March 2020.

The closing date for applications to be received by the Trust was 30 April 2020; 120 grants were awarded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trustees in May 2020.

By the middle of June 2020, at least half of the 120 grant holders had received their first payment, ensuring that the money went to those who needed it the most, in the shortest possible time.

The programme awarded 120 grants totalling £2,394,698 to organisations across the UK.

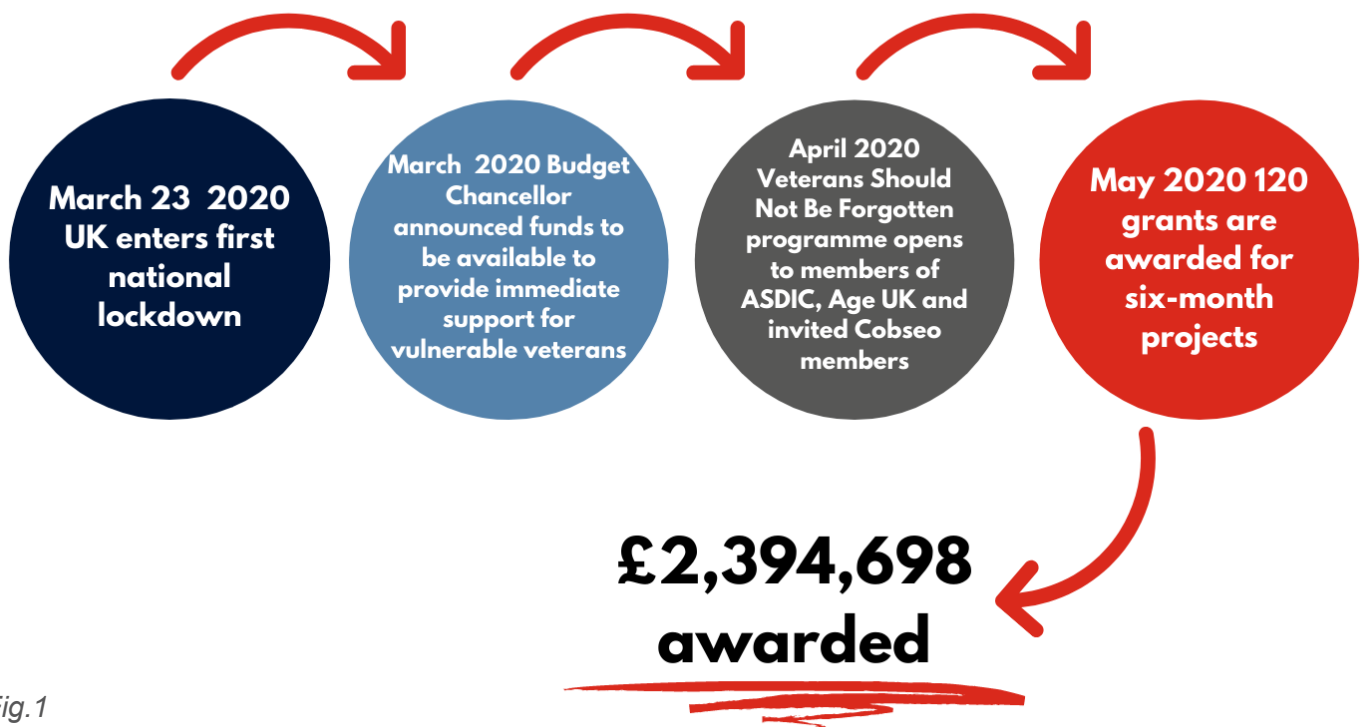


Fig.1

The Association of ex-Service Drop-In Centres (ASDIC) represents veterans' drop-in centres around the UK. These drop-in centres offer a wealth of welfare and mental health support, and allow veterans to get together in comradeship, fostering a sense of wellbeing. The centres are open to anyone from the ex-military community and their extended families.

The role of ASDIC is to assist each drop-in centre in enhancing the service they can provide and make them more accessible. The UK is divided into 20 ASDIC 'regions' and is overseen by a regional co-ordinator, who liaises with each group and assists it with any issue or signposting it to other services if required. Groups share knowledge and best practice via their regional co-ordinator.

ASDIC is a movement led mostly by veterans for veterans – from any Services or any rank, and there are members across the UK. Its primary focus is to allow veterans to literally drop in for a cup of tea or coffee. At a drop-in centre, they will also find everything from friendship to serious professional advice and guidance, all in one place.

Cobseo is the Confederation of Service Charities, and its aim is to represent the interests of the whole veteran and the serving Armed Forces community. This is achieved through the sharing of information, identification of common concerns, and acting as a point of reference for any external agencies. This includes local government, the Royal Household, the private sector and the Devolved Administrations. The networking and support that Cobseo provides to its members allows charities to co-operate and collaborate with each other, to provide the best possible service to their beneficiaries.

Full membership of Cobseo is open to registered charities whose primary aim is to promote and serve the interests of the Armed Forces community. Associate membership is also available to charities who support the Armed Forces community, but where it is not their primary operation. Membership is of great value to charities, who are able to assist one another with their particular expertise and share learning and best practice.

Members are able to attend training and networking events and avail themselves of the expertise of others. The Cobseo leadership team report to the Executive Committee, who are made up of a Chair and 17 representatives from Cobseo-affiliated associations, which perform a vital role in sharing the concerns of the Armed Forces community to government and policymakers, via committees that Cobseo sit on.

Age UK provides services at a national and a local level, to enable and support older people to live well and independently where possible. There are 130 Age UK charities across the UK, which include Age NI, Age Cymru and Age Scotland charities, providing a seamless service to older people who were suffering as a result of the pandemic.

The network of Age UK charities aim to support older people in a variety of ways, including home help, telephone befriending, essential maintenance, wellbeing support (including exercise classes) and support with shopping/medicine collection.

Through its network of partnerships with other organisations, Age UK aimed to identify and deliver targeted support to older veterans throughout the pandemic. Veterans were referred by other organisations to the Age UK network, and assistance offered. This included other veteran charities, local authorities, and in some cases, direct responses via concerned relatives/children on social media.

A strategic grant of £50,000 was awarded to Age UK, in partnership with SSAFA, to target and directly support older veterans in need during the coronavirus pandemic. One grant was withdrawn due to the closure of the Age UK Suffolk charity. The £20,000 that was awarded was distributed to Age UK to disburse to Age UK charities in the counties bordering Suffolk, to identify and provide support to veterans in this area.

The partnership between Age UK and SSAFA meant that veterans could be swiftly supported on a local level, as they were already in contact with and working with the veterans that required support. Additionally, Cobseo and ASDIC were well placed to identify and contact organisations within their remit that would be eligible to apply for the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten funding.

Through their respective networks - Cobseo being the representative organisation of Service charities throughout the UK, and ASDIC with its regional model of representatives assisting veterans drop-in centres all over the UK - they were able to get the message across swiftly and effectively to ensure that organisations were able to apply for funding quickly and easily, thus reaching the veterans that needed it the most.

The Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten programme was announced shortly after the March 2020 Budget, after the Chancellor of the Exchequer awarded additional funding for veterans' mental health. The Government provided a £10 million uplift in 2020/21 to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, with the

aim of delivering charitable projects that support veterans with mental health needs. The funding was to demonstrate the Government's ongoing commitment to ensuring that veterans can access the services and support they deserve.

However, they wished for some of the funding to be made available to provide immediate support for vulnerable veterans with reduced social contact.

Eligibility was, therefore, limited to:

- i) **members of ASDIC**
- ii) **local and national Age UKs**
- iii) **eligible and invited Cobseo members.**

To be eligible, Cobseo members needed to demonstrate that they delivered local support projects to beneficiaries who saw an increase in demand for services, or to be a small organisation who was working to move current services provided, online. Larger Cobseo member organisations, who were not eligible for funding, were encouraged to contact smaller members that they worked with and who they knew were eligible and encourage them to apply.

Grants were available up to £20,000 for a six-month project, which focused on supporting veterans who were isolated and unable to access services, who or

had limited social contact during the period of self-isolation and restrictions relating to the pandemic.

The programme was designed to award grants in May 2020, and for the funded activities to start quickly afterwards. The aim was to support veterans that were possibly already known by organisations, and that were already provided a service by them that they knew and trusted. The programme also funded activities that were ready to support older or vulnerable veterans.

The programme guidance suggested that funds could be spent on the following things.

- **Staff time for a fixed-term project, including time-managing volunteers that may be involved.**
- **Purchasing items that provided practical support.**
- **Purchasing items that were needed to provide support, such as additional telephones or laptops.**
- **Reasonable costs for storing and transporting items, including wear and tear on private vehicles.**
- **Reasonable overheads to an organisation for delivering this project.**



Who were the grants awarded to?

A map showing where the 120 grants were awarded.



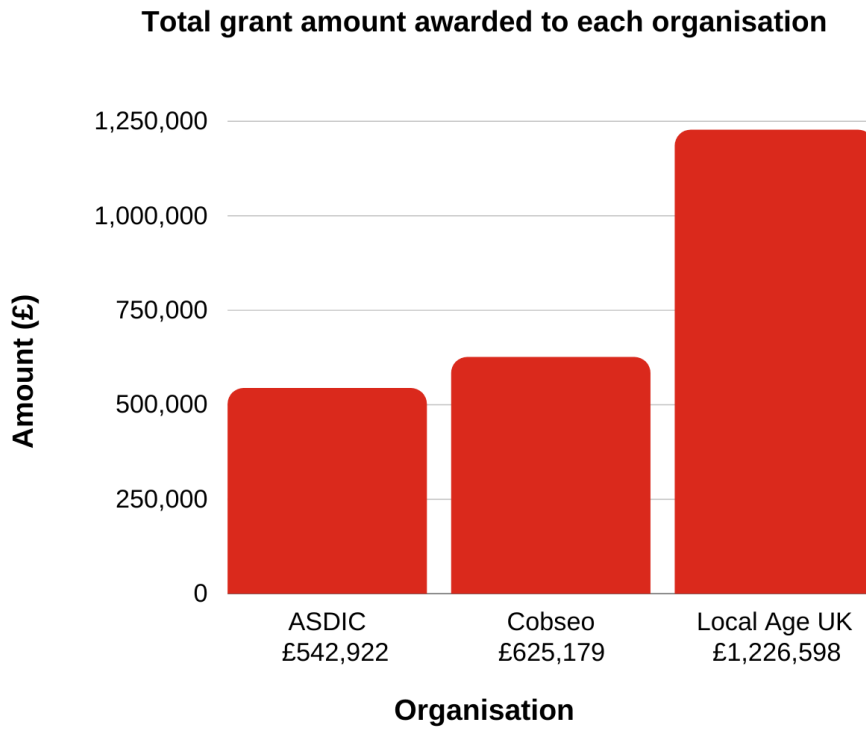


Fig.2

Total awarded £2,394,698²

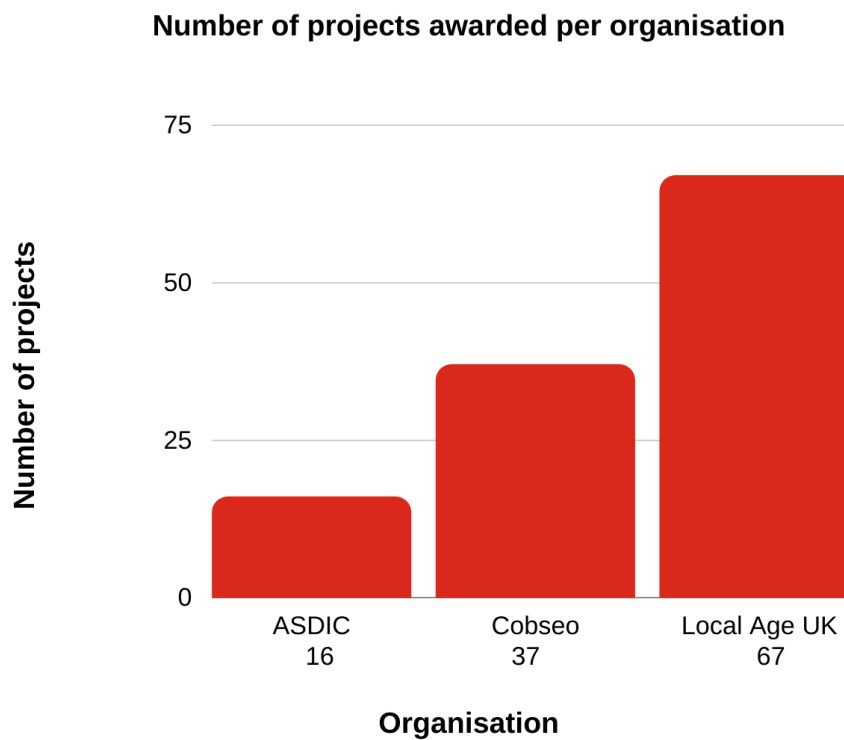


Fig.3

120 projects awarded²

²Fig. 2 and 3 include the three strategic grants made by the Trust.

As shown in Fig. 2, the largest proportion of the funding was awarded to Age UK charities across the UK. This accounted for 51% of the total grant awards. Grants were made to Age UK charities in each county, including the Devolved Administrations, so awards were made to Age UK in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Two awards were made in Northern Ireland, to Londonderry and Belfast, four in Scotland based regionally around the country, and three awards were made to Wales in Dyfed, Gwynedd, and Powys.

31% of the grant funding was awarded to Cobseo members. Cobseo members were invited to apply for the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten if they met the criteria for the funding: that they were small organisations able to provide direct support for vulnerable veterans in their local area. Support was available from Cobseo to assist eligible members with their grant funding bid.

Grant Award by Organisation Type

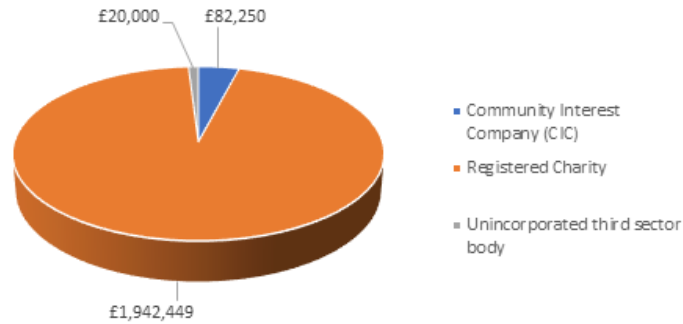


Fig.4³

Grant awarded by geographical area

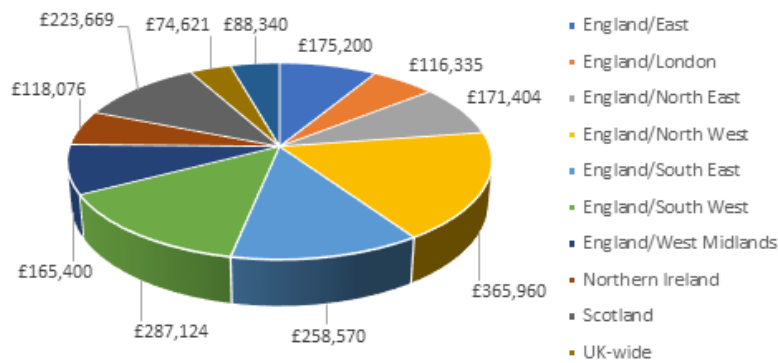


Fig.5³

Grant Amount by Beneficiary Type

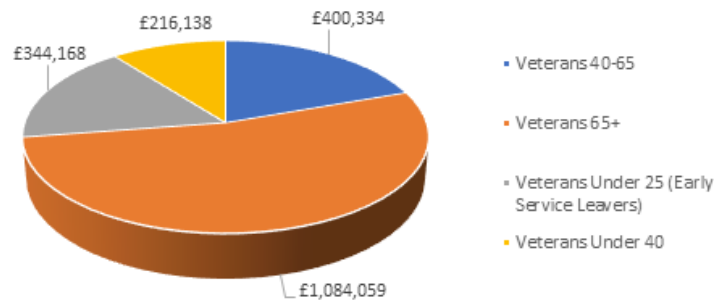


Fig.6³

Grant amount by Project Activity

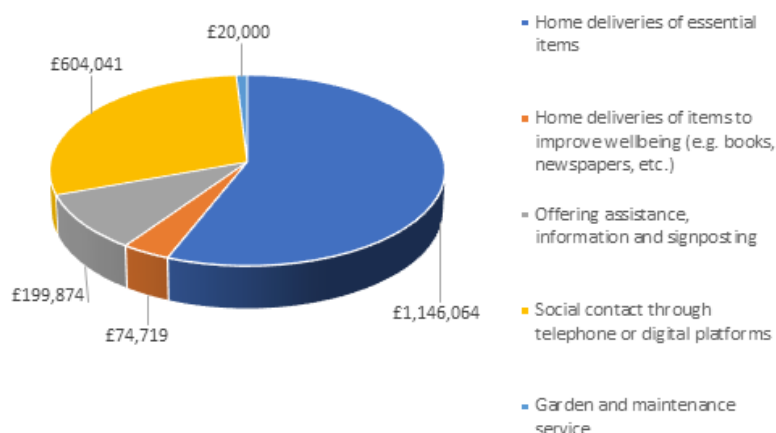


Fig.7³

Numbers of beneficiaries reached per project type

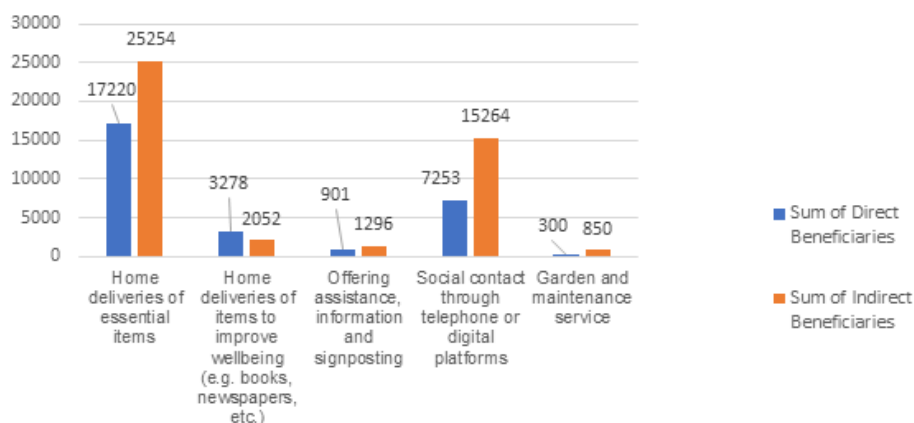


Fig.8³

In the online application form, projects were asked to choose which categories fitted their project description. From these categories, a primary project category was chosen by the Trust that best described the project. This methodology is the basis for the primary category chosen for each project, and it forms the qualitative data on categories for this evaluation.

The project category descriptions were as follows.

- **Home deliveries of essential items.**
- **Home deliveries of items to improve wellbeing.**
- **Social contact through telephone or digital platforms.**
- **Garden and maintenance services.**

As shown in Fig 7, nearly half the projects (53%) chose Home deliveries of essential items as the

primary description category of their project. Together with the fact that 56% of the veteran beneficiaries were over the age of 65 (Fig 6), this suggests that the project played a substantial part in assisting veterans who were shielding or vulnerable because of the pandemic, by providing essential food and medicines to their homes.

Age UK was awarded 51% of the funding for the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten programme (Fig 2), so again, it can be suggested that the bulk of the funding went towards providing essential delivery services to veterans who were unable to leave their homes during lockdown.

29% of the funding went towards supporting projects that had Social contact through telephone or digital platforms as its primary description category (Fig 7). As discussed in the qualitative research section of

³Fig. 4-8 exclude the two strategic grants made.

this report, the funding allowed projects to purchase IT equipment and enable staff to train veterans in its use or provide telephone services to veterans such as a befriending scheme, which helped to alleviate the loneliness and isolation felt by veterans during the pandemic.

The IT equipment allowed veterans to gain the social contact they needed via digital means during lockdown, but also allowed other services to continue, like medical interventions such as mental health or substance abuse support, or remote physiotherapy sessions. The IT equipment also allowed staff to communicate with their beneficiaries easily and move services to digital channels to allow them to continue within the confines of Covid restrictions.

Projects inputted the number of beneficiaries they had supported and this was recorded by the Trust's grant management system. This project-generated data is the source used in this evaluation.

The largest numbers of both direct and indirect reported beneficiaries were those who received home deliveries of essential items.

By direct beneficiaries we mean those who actually received the service.

Indirect beneficiaries would be the beneficiaries' contacts who also benefited from the service in an indirect way, such as friends and family. They may also be receiving the support as they live with the beneficiary or be reassured that their loved one is receiving the attention they need.

For example, a family who lived in another area referred their older veteran relatives to Age UK as they were unable to leave their area and deliver their shopping/medicine during the pandemic. They would be an indirect beneficiary as their loved one is being cared for by the Age UK charity.

As shown in Fig 8, the provision of a home delivery service for essentials reached in total 17,220 direct and 25,254 indirect beneficiaries. A total of 42,474 beneficiaries during the six months of the project duration.

Again, the provision of social contact through telephone or digital platforms was the next highest in terms of beneficiaries reached. Here, 7,253 direct beneficiaries were reached throughout all the projects.

However, double the number of indirect beneficiaries were reached, with 15,264 being reported.

A daughter living in South-East Wales contacted us with concerns about her parents living in West Wales. Her elderly father had served in the British Army and her mother had been in the Women's Land Army. They had both received shielding letters.

One of our volunteers stepped in for the next four weeks to collect and deliver medication which gave the GP surgery the time needed to locate a driver. For several weeks, this couple were supported by our volunteers with food shopping collection and deliveries.

Project Manager, Age Cymru

This number potentially shows the scope and reach of the projects that the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten programme funded, as veterans were now able to reach services, families, friends and loved ones via digital means during the pandemic.

The qualitative research shows that through the provision of IT services, specialist equipment if required and training for veterans who needed it, veterans were able to keep in touch with their families, carers, or professional support services (such as counselling or medical appointments).

In some instances, provision of IT equipment enabled connectivity with friends and family they had not been able to speak to in some time, due to other barriers. As previously mentioned (and shown in Fig.6), 53% of the veterans supported by this programme were over the age of 65 years. Veterans aged 40-65 years made up 20% of the total, and early Service leavers (veterans under the age of 25) made up 17% of the total.

Projects funded by the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten programme that support younger veterans include those who help those with disabilities, employment issues, mental health issues, substance misuse and homelessness; the issues of which would have been exacerbated severely during the

pandemic as veterans would have been unable to access the support they need to make a recovery.

In our qualitative study, Launchpad reported that due to lockdown, face-to-face contact with professionals was stopped almost immediately, which hampered the recovery of many younger veterans as they were unable to access the vital support they required from services.

With Launchpad providing face-to-face staff support and digital connectivity as a result of the grant funding, the veterans were able to get 'back on track'. The funding meant they could continue to access the support they required online, and through digital means they could stay in contact with friends, family and, of course, communicate with their fellow residents for mutual support, understanding and friendship.

“The staff have been so supportive especially around my mental health. There is always someone there for me when I need it.”

“My health, confidence and wellbeing is so much better at Launchpad.”

“The staff have been so very supportive, looking after me when I have needed that extra help.

Residents, Launchpad

At 97, our D-Day veteran has embraced computers and uses some of the specialised software purchased with the grant to magnify his screen content to 200%.

This has enabled him to use email and keep connected with friends and family. He has been able to use the internet to track down a long-lost friend in the USA – now they're in regular email contact. Peter derives immense personal satisfaction using new technology, it's empowering to master a new skill at 97, and it also adds greater variety to his day.

Project Officer, Care for Veterans

Geographical analysis

The largest proportion of the funding (18% of the total award), as shown in Fig. 5, was awarded to organisations who provided support in the north west England.

Out of 22 awards made, 13 were made to Age UK charities in this area, with the remaining 9 being awarded to other registered Armed Forces charities in the area. With 53% of beneficiaries being over the age of 65, this would correlate with the majority of the funding being awarded to an organisation that can specifically support their needs.

We can also use the Map of Need to look at how veterans are concentrated throughout the UK, and specific demographics regarding numbers of veterans receiving a pension, hardship and rates of access to mental health provision via the NHS.

From the Map of Need we can see what veterans are searching for in terms of assistance, and also look at how much assistance was given in any geographical area, when compared to numbers of veterans residing there.

The Map of Need data⁴ (from 2017) in the north west England shows that veterans seeking help are mostly clustered in large towns and cities such as Liverpool, Birkenhead, Southport, Manchester, Blackpool and Bolton. The Map of Need data shows (with 99% confidence), that where these clusters of veterans are situated, there is also significant hardship. The maps show where the recipients of financial assistance are, and that requests for financial assistance are spread equally across all three Services (Army, Navy, Air Force) in these previously identified clusters.

Access to mental health provision is also significantly lower in the north west of England. The Map of Need data showing veterans' rate of access to mental health treatment in this area is among the lowest in the UK.

This data suggests that specialist assistance for veterans is much needed and has been identified in these areas; and the organisations and charities that specialise in veteran assistance were compelled to apply for grant funding for the Veterans Should Not be Forgotten programme due to the significant levels of need in this geographical area.

The Map of Need was commissioned by the Northern Hub for Veterans and Families Research at Northumbria University. Using a Covenant Fund grant award, they were able to conduct research to provide an overview of veterans' and their families' welfare needs across the UK. The Map of Need provides evidence-based findings via data obtained from a range of sources. These sources include search data from the Veterans Gateway, health data, other public data sources and information from Armed Forces charities.

The next largest amount of funding was concentrated in the south west of England, with 14% of the funding being delivered to veterans in this area. However, the Map of Need data for south west England⁵ shows that 22% of military veterans (those who receive an Armed Forces pension) reside in the here and are most heavily concentrated in 'traditional' Armed Forces areas such as Plymouth and Salisbury.

The area's financial hardship is much less marked when you compare them to the tables for north west England; with small, concentrated areas where veterans are seeking financial assistance and support in Plymouth and the Wiltshire/Salisbury area.

However, similarly, rates of access to mental health support in the South West are the lowest in the UK, which can be seen in Fig. 9. Interestingly, the south

⁴ Map of Need Data for the North West: https://covenantfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Regional_Report_2019_North-West.pdf

⁵ Map of Need Data for the South West: https://covenantfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Regional_Report_2019_South-West.pdf

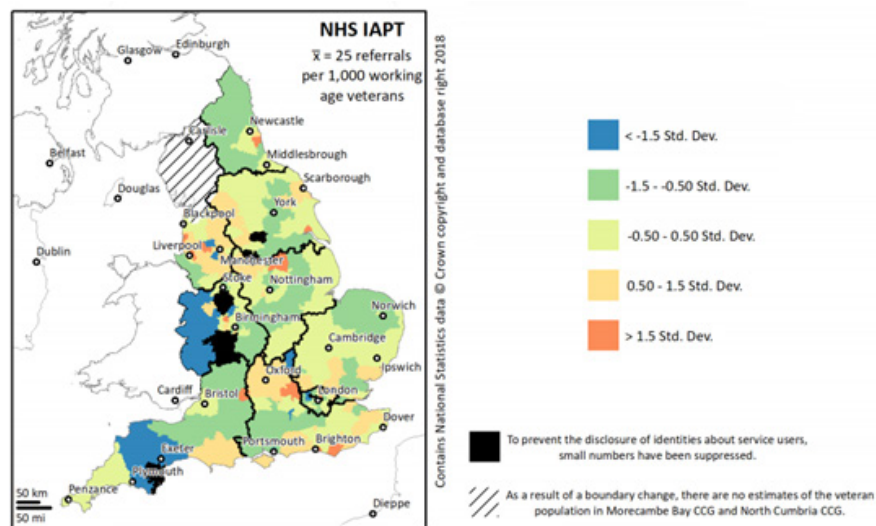
west and north west of England are the only two areas in the UK identified as less than 1.5 standard deviations below the mean. The mean referral rate in the UK according to Fig 9 is 25 per 1,000 working age veterans. This means that referrals in both the North West and the South West are much less than the average, and the lowest number of referrals made in the UK.

This data suggests that veterans are less financially deprived in the South West than they are compared to the North West; however, the numbers of

veterans in the South West are much larger, hence the requirement for larger amounts of support from organisations/charities that support veterans and their families.

The two areas also have a marked reduced access rate to mental health support, which also suggests that support from charities that provide mental health support assistance is vitally important to the veteran communities in these two geographic areas.

Deviations from the mean veterans' rate of access to mental health treatment (2017/18)



The figure above shows the distribution of the veterans' rates of access to mental health treatment in the financial year 2017/18. The orange indicates areas where veterans accessing services is greater than 1.5 standard deviations above the mean prevalence rate of access, and the blue where it is less than 1.5 standard deviations below the mean. The central classification of -0.50 - 0.50 indicates the geographical areas where the number of veterans accessing the services is roughly the same as the average (mean) prevalence.

Fig.9

Qualitative research

Methodology

In producing this report, our Policy and Impact Analyst studied data reports from the Trust grant making system to find quantitative data trends running through the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten programme and explored more in-depth data by conducting qualitative research.

A sample of grants were identified that had completed their online end of grant report and had submitted their 2,000-word self-impact and evaluation report to the Trust.

The aim of this qualitative research was to identify themes that were common to some or all of the grants. As well as analysing the case studies, all grants were analysed to determine if any of these themes fitted with the description of their project and its results. A detailed breakdown of these appears later in this report.

The Trust undertook qualitative analysis by conducting interviews with grant holders and formulating case study reports.

A selection of five case studies were chosen, ensuring a representative cross-section.

Case studies were identified on basis of:

- **geographical location**
- **grant size**
- **beneficiary type**
- **numbers of beneficiaries (e.g. large-scale v small or 'grass roots' projects).**

Organisations were interviewed for case studies via video conferencing or by telephone.

The five organisations that participated in the qualitative research were:

Name	Project title	Grant amount	Geographical location
Age Cymru Dyfed	Reaching Out	£18,450	Wales
Care for Veterans	Keep Calm and Keep Connected	£19,345	England/south east
Launchpad	Covid-19 Support for Homeless Veterans	£16,521	UK-Wide
Shots in the Community Foundation	Veterans Supporting Veterans	£20,000	England/south west
Veterans Support Association	VSA Hobby Packs	£5,000	England / London

Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten case studies

Where are our grant holders?



Case studies

Age Cymru Dyfed *Reaching Out*

Awarded £18,450

The Reaching Out project was awarded £18,450 as part of the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten programme in May 2020. Its aim was to meet the individual needs of older veterans who needed immediate assistance during the Covid pandemic.

Help ranged from providing food and medicine deliveries to those who were shielding, to the provision of a new telephone befriending service for those suffering from loneliness and isolation as a result of the pandemic. The organisation also provided a much-needed gardening service for those who were unable to tend to their garden or mow their lawn. The flexibility of the project meant that assistance could be provided wherever it was needed to meet the immediate needs of the veteran.

the UK as lockdown meant they were not able to visit nor provide care for their older relative.

The approach was very simple. The initial contact with an individual veteran was very light-touch and informal, but from that initial contact (usually a telephone call), differing needs emerged. These ranged from having someone cut down an overgrown garden or arranging delivery of shopping and medicine, to arranging with a family member to have them visit their older relative in a socially distanced and safe manner. The team also dealt with scam calls, arranged fire alarm check visits and helped to signpost veterans who needed advice on financial matters or benefits.



Age Cymru Dyfed were able to identify veterans who needed assistance through their partnership work with other charities and organisations. However, once the project was under way, referrals arrived via a variety of sources, including social media. The charity also took referrals from concerned relatives living elsewhere in

Through the power of social networks and social media, Age Cymru Dyfed was able to recruit and train a network of volunteers, who were able to go into the community and assist veterans who needed immediate help. The initial Facebook post requesting volunteers reached approximately 4,000 people.

People from all around West Wales volunteered and were quickly recruited to help. The 'first response' service delivered food parcels and collected vital medicines from chemists and GP surgeries for those who were shielding and unable to leave their homes during the first lockdown.

As the project progressed, the organisation found they were able to help in other ways. The volunteers were concerned about the effect that the pandemic was having on veterans' mental health, as the opportunities for social interaction were becoming very limited due to lockdown.

Age Cymru Dyfed initiated 'befriending calls' to 103 veterans in need, with each person receiving a wellbeing call at least once a fortnight, and more often if circumstances dictated. The 12 receptionists from all of the Age Cymru offices volunteered to help make the calls, as well as other volunteers from all over the region. Even if a veteran was not in need of a befriending service, the organisation would call at least monthly to ensure their wellbeing. From these calls Age Cymru Dyfed was able to signpost veterans to other services or provide extra help and support if needed.

The organisation was also able to provide digital skills training to older veterans within the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten project, enabling them to connect to their friends and family in the outside world during the pandemic. Peter McIlroy, project manager at Age Cymru Dyfed, had recruited 'digital champions' and these volunteers in turn were able to provide much-needed IT training to older veterans, so they could learn how to use social media, video calling and other media-based activities. Veterans were engaged with YouTube, Spotify, and the streaming of podcasts proved particularly popular. The organisation also set up social groups, so veterans could connect with each other, or in activities that interested them.

Age Cymru Dyfed were able to signpost veterans to community social groups and not just their own. They were able to provide a social morning which still runs to this day; however, they need to meet the befriending criteria to join. They were also able to send lists of social groups out, such as 50+ Forum Reconnect groups and Volunteering Wales knitting and quiz groups, which some members were able to join separately.

Care for Veterans *Keep Calm and Keep Connected*

Awarded £19,345

Care for Veterans received £19,345 from the Veterans Should Not be Forgotten programme in May 2020 to repurpose an unused sensory room into an IT suite. The old sensory equipment was donated to charity and the room was transformed into a computer suite with the latest equipment, to allow residents with a range of disabilities to be able to use the technology effectively.

The 60-bed Care for Veterans facility provides specialist care to veterans with either a brain injury or degenerative neurological condition. As part of their rehabilitation, socialisation between veterans is actively encouraged, so when the pandemic hit,

the residents suddenly found themselves extremely isolated. Not only could they not socialise with each other, they were unable to have their regular therapy sessions, nor friends or family to visit.

The care teams quickly ascertained that a specialist IT provision was extremely lacking in the facility – they had a couple of tablets and some veterans had old style mobile phones, but no computers. With a Wi-Fi system also feeling the strain, thanks to the flexibility of the funding, they were able to purchase specialist IT equipment, install a dedicated Wi-Fi system and upgrade the electrics to meet the needs of the new IT suite with ease.

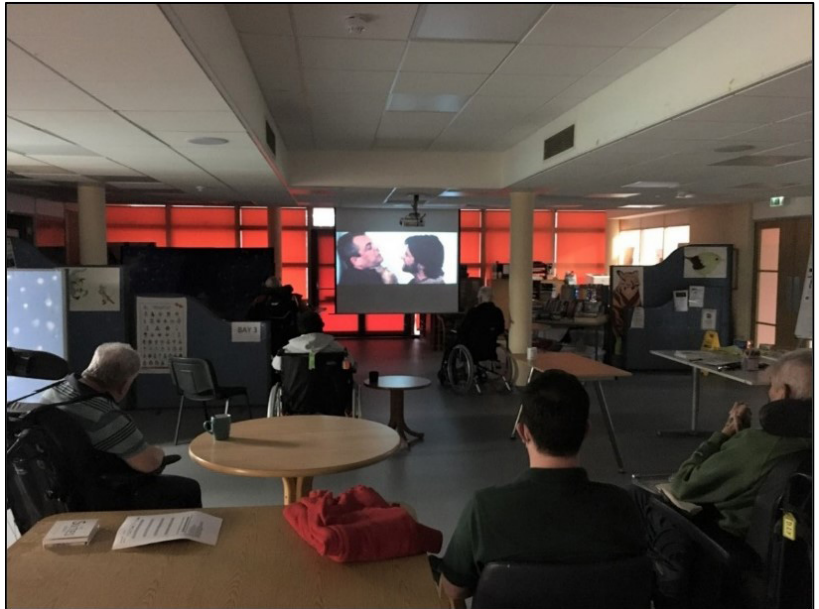
The need to keep the veterans safe meant the care and therapy teams were always coming up with new ideas to keep all residents motivated and for them to continue with their rehabilitation in bold and innovative ways.

The grant enabled them to purchase an electric screen for the communal area; this has allowed residents to continue their much loved Movie Club in their 'bubbles' as they are able to socially distance. Ceiling speakers have also been installed to allow residents to hear well.

The screen is also able to play live streamed events. Sadly, the facility unexpectedly lost one of their residents, Peter, recently; however, the veterans were all able to pay their respects as the funeral service was live streamed via Zoom and displayed on the screen. Peter was one of the most prolific users of the IT suite, at 97. With a specialist screen reader purchased with funds from the grant, he was able to reconnect with an old friend in the USA and used the facilities most days.

A Smart Blu-ray player was purchased so that veterans were able to watch videos together while adhering to social distancing regulations. Being able to play videos also meant that therapy could continue in a virtual world. Wheelchair fitness videos were streamed via YouTube, and the therapists were able to record videos to be streamed to their residents, so they would not lose the progress they had made with rehabilitation.

Craig Burley, one of the Rehabilitation Technicians at Care for Veterans summed it up: "You either do it or



they lose it. If rehabilitation stops for six months, you see the residents decline rapidly".

Being digitally connected with the rest of the world empowered some of the residents to learn new IT skills in order to stay in touch with family and friends. As 'the beating heart of the project', five veterans per day were able to book the IT suite for private family Zoom calls.

One of the residents, Gerald, was able to stay in touch with his family including his son who is living in California. His son would get up at 6:30am California time to participate in the calls, which has greatly enriched Gerald's life and kept him motivated through lockdown. Not only has he learnt vital new skills, but he also has all his children in the room at the same time, something that has not happened for years!

Following purchase of special accessibility equipment, Army veteran Steve has now been able to get online and has been getting to grips with Facebook. His family gave a shout out to connect him with old Army buddies that he had not seen in years. He now video-calls his old friends regularly.

The new equipment has allowed the residents of the facility to cope with the rigours of lockdown and the pandemic, but with it, it has brought unexpected benefits in the provision of new skills to the residents, the reconnection with old friends and the joy of being able to speak to your family all together, wherever they are in the world.



Launchpad *Covid-19 Support for Homeless Veterans*

Awarded £16,521



Launchpad received a grant of £16,521 from the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten Programme to support 97 homeless and unemployed veterans through the Covid-19 pandemic.

The organisation provides supported living accommodation and associated additional support for veterans to help them rebuild their lives after military service. Many of these veterans require specialist support due to homelessness, mental health issues or addictions. Lockdown proved a very challenging time for the organisation as much of that assistance was based on face-to-face interaction with staff and professional health/employment professionals who work in partnership with Launchpad, and of course social activities. Consequently, the veterans were feeling lonely and isolated and were at risk.

As the pandemic hit, external professional support swiftly moved to virtual means, such as video calling or telephone, or was non-existent, which disadvantaged many veterans at Launchpad. As a result, mental health deterioration and reliance on addictive substances increased for a number of residents.

It was vitally important for Launchpad's residents that there were members of staff on site to maintain a physical presence during the day and to be able to

support the veterans at all times, through lockdown. The Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten Grant funded this important staff time, as well as the purchase of 20 tablet computers to be able to lend to residents.

The residents were provided with IT training by the staff, and this meant they were able to keep in touch with family and friends during lockdown, as well as being able to access that vital professional help.

The staff found that the nature of social activities arranged for residents was completely re-shaped due to Covid. Formation of virtual social clubs and interest groups was very much veteran-led but supported by the Launchpad staff. A virtual model-making and a chess club was formed, which involved a huge deal of planning and communication between residents to make it a success. Cooking to classical music was arranged for those residents who were shielding, which was a huge success.

Once lockdown was lifted and residents were able to socialise outside in bubbles; angling, football, cycling and walking clubs were quickly formed, enabling residents to be outdoors and socialise with each other, to get exercise and boost their mental and physical wellbeing.

Phil Thompson, Manager at Avondale House in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, summed up the importance of the grant funding given to Launchpad: “Unfortunately, lockdown took its toll on our residents and sadly one veteran tried to take his own life. However, the passion and determination shown by our staff during the pandemic meant that he turned a corner, and he has now been able to move on confidently from Launchpad and is employed and living in his own accommodation.”

Launchpad has had some huge successes. One resident felt so grateful for the excellent support given to him by Launchpad, that he has now been able to move on and is in the process of establishing his own business. Another has rekindled a very positive relationship with his family.

Reflecting on the past year, Phil surmises: “The positives of the house have really outweighed the negatives. Despite the pandemic, we have had many success stories over the course of the year, and this has really helped residents to communicate better.

We recently had a mobile vaccine clinic booked, and out of 30 residents, 26 turned up and received their first jab. This level of communication and co-operation would never have happened pre-pandemic.”



Shots in the Community Veterans Supporting Veterans

Awarded £20,000



Aldershot FC Shots in the Community Foundation received £20,000 in May 2020 for their Veterans Supporting Veterans project. Project manager Des Dunne said the initiative “started small and just grew and grew”, and as demand from those in need due to the pandemic started increasing, the project itself swiftly adapted to support them.

The Veterans Supporting Veterans project was originally set up as a small, focused veteran-led project, run for and by ex-Army veterans. In its infancy, Aldershot Town FC Trust co-designed the project, together with a small group of veterans, discussing what could be done to help other veterans in need. Funding became available from the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten programme and a bid was swiftly put together by Des and his team and was successful.

However, as lockdown progressed, the project quickly gained momentum, with veterans realising there were other vulnerable members of the community that needed assistance.

The veterans hired a minibus from Rushmoor Voluntary Services, and with this resource were able to provide much-needed assistance to vulnerable members of the community who were shielding. With the provision of the minibus, they provided a food shopping service, took people to hospital appointments and provided gardening and maintenance support for those in need.

The project also partnered with Mike Jackson House, who provide supported accommodation for veterans in the Aldershot area. Using their kitchen facilities, a veteran team bought groceries and cooked meals for vulnerable people in the area, including veterans living in Stoll semi-supported housing. The veteran volunteers worked together with the managers of the supported accommodation in order to plan, prepare and cook all the meals.

Another facet of the project was the way veterans were able to get together to teach each other key skills such as gardening or cookery. One of the lead veteran volunteers at the project, Dave Gollop, transitioned out of the Army into supported accommodation, and subsequently was able to train in horticulture and

cookery. He is now able to utilise these skills to be able to support others in the community.

The veteran volunteers were joined by members of the Nepalese community during the summer of 2020, and the two groups were able to support each other during the pandemic. The Nepalese community assisted with the gardening, started a craft group, and the group started meeting socially for BBQs and other social gatherings in their own social distancing bubbles. It was this social contact that was essential for many of the veterans and helped to mitigate the issues of social isolation and loneliness that the pandemic brought.

The project also kept in touch, via e-mail, telephone or social networks, with those who were shielding or self-isolating. As well as making arrangements to collect shopping/medicine, running errands or undertaking gardening/maintenance, it was an important way to 'check in' with people, which helped with their mental health and wellbeing during lockdown.

At the end of the project, the overwhelming key theme for the veterans was 'staying connected' with each other and the wider community; so the plans for Aldershot Town FC Trust are to build on the concept and explore the development of further technology to assist their veterans in doing just that.

Veterans' Support Association ***VSA Hobby Packs***

Awarded £5,000

The Veterans' Support Association received a grant of £5,000 as part of the Veterans Should Not be Forgotten programme. In the six months that the project ran, the organisation spent the funds on projects or hobby packs for veterans to complete at home during lockdown. The project was a huge success as it kept veterans engaged and focused during the months that followed, as the country endured its first lockdown.

Six years ago, Veterans' Support Association founder and Armed Forces veteran John Joyce received assistance from Help for Heroes when he suffered a mental health decline. The help that he received

and the interaction with other veterans made him "feel like he was part of something unique" and being with other people who had served made him feel far more emotional stability.

"Civilian life and I just didn't get on" quotes John. "We were two trains on different tracks, going to the same destination". However, in groups created for and by veterans, he noted that he felt a "sense of belonging".

John set up the Veterans Support Association on the model that he learned during his time at Tedworth House (run by Help for Heroes). That it should be run as a drop-in centre. He soon applied for registered charity status and membership of ASDIC.



When the pandemic hit, funding became available to ASDIC members as part of the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten programme. The Veterans Support Association were made aware of this funding and were encouraged by ASDIC to apply. However, at the time they didn't have a specific project in mind. After lockdown hit in March 2020, the group set up a closed Facebook group for veterans, with the aim that they would all be able to 'check in' on each other and, more importantly, said John, "ensure that they got up every morning and found a reason to do so".

John would send a message each morning with the words "Good morning brothers and sisters", and each day he would receive 200 replies from group members. It soon became apparent from group posts that this safe space was a lifeline to many veterans who were struggling with loneliness and isolation as a result of the pandemic.

As part of this interaction online, John and the other members started discussing hobbies – and then the idea came to him to apply for Trust funding to 'send things to members' – things that could be posted; perhaps a jigsaw, or a colouring book.

"We wanted to give people something to do when they had nothing," quoted John.

The only request that John and his team had when sending out the 'hobby pack' to their members was that they posted their progress online on the Facebook page. This way the veterans could share their achievements, be social and also promote the project's activity to other users. The Facebook page was soon alive with veterans sharing their hobbies with others – whether it be leathermaking, photography, or model making, which was extremely popular.

"Sometimes the posts just exploded," said John. "One guy would post a picture of his model and ask the others for the best glue to use, or something, and suddenly there would be hundreds of comments."

John reflects on the six months of the project: "We spent £800 per month, that works out at about £20 per veteran that asked us for help. It's not a huge amount of money to keep a life intact and perhaps save a family."

Analysis of case studies

From the qualitative analysis of the case studies, we were able to identify four key themes through the work being done by the projects.

- **Veterans Staying Connected**
- **Veterans Learning New Skills**
- **Veterans Supporting Veterans**
- **Veterans in Partnership**



"Again many thanks for checking up with me and I realise now what a fantastic job of work you and your colleagues are involved in!"

Project Manager, Age Cymru

Veterans Staying Connected was one of the key themes to many of the grants in this emergency programme. Faced with lockdown and "stay at home" orders - and with no idea how long restrictions would last for - organisations were concerned as to how their beneficiaries would cope being isolated from their friends, families and wider services; and possibly from any form of assistance if they were required to shield (which was recommended for all over 70s during the first lockdown).

A quarter of all the grant funding awarded in this programme was to assist veterans with communication, either through digital means or by telephone. However, organisations were also acutely aware that in order to provide the best means for veterans to stay connected with the outside world, they would need to learn and navigate the internet.

Organisations therefore had to find new and innovative ways of ensuring that their beneficiaries could stay

in touch with the outside world, which could include specialist equipment or training.

This proved an additional challenge, particularly for older beneficiaries who were not connected to the internet or might not be particularly confident or experienced in using IT. The data from our quantitative research shows that the majority (53%) of veterans supported by this programme were over the age of 65, which could possibly pose a challenge for organisations trying to get veterans connected, online and communicating digitally with the outside world, possibly for the first time.

For those veterans who were not digitally engaged, telephone befrienders provided a lifeline at Age Cymru Dyfed. Volunteers ensured that all 103 veterans were provided with a call at least once a fortnight. From those calls, other needs emerged, which the organisation were able to help with, from collecting food and medicines, to providing a gardening service.

Launchpad provides supported accommodation and additional specialist support for veterans to help them rebuild their lives after military service. Lockdown brought challenges to the organisation as the professional support that many of the veterans relied on suddenly moved its provision to virtual means. As the veterans had no access to technology to be able to access that support, they were at risk of deterioration, and felt lonely and isolated.

The provision of tablet computers and associated IT training support from Launchpad staff meant that veterans were able to keep in touch with Launchpad staff, each other, their family and friends, and crucially, access the specialist support from other external agencies that was aiding their recovery.

The Care for Veterans Keep Calm and Keep Connected project transformed an unused sensory room into a purpose-built IT suite suitable for use by residents with a variety of disabilities. Like the veterans at Launchpad, having access to specialist support is key to many of the residents' rehabilitation programmes. Having access to an IT provision meant they could carry on their therapies virtually, with therapists streaming their sessions live to residents, or broadcasting wheelchair fitness classes.

Using the specialist equipment, residents were also able to keep in touch with family and friends despite social distancing and/or shielding guidelines, with

“Always there to help during the crisis.”

“The staff have been so very supportive, looking after me when I have needed that extra help. They always make sure that I’m OK every day, which I’m very grateful for.”

Residents, Launchpad

many residents booking the IT suite for private family Zoom calls.

Residents were able to keep in touch with family, wherever they are in the world. As Care for Veterans were able to purchase specialist equipment, age nor disability was no barrier to connectivity. A 97-year-old resident was one of the most prolific users of the IT suite, as he was able to connect with an old friend in the USA using a specialist screen reader purchased as part of the project.

Being part of an online community and staying connected with likeminded individuals was a lifeline to veterans participating in the Veterans Support Association project.

Once lockdown hit in March 2020, the organisation set up a closed Facebook group as a way to ensure that members were able to ‘check in’ on each other and reach out to anyone who was suffering. This group proved to be a lifeline to over 200 veterans, who found themselves suffering from loneliness and isolation as a result of the pandemic.

“Connecting our residents with family and friends has been the beating heart of this project”

Project Officer, Care for Veterans

“Several of my Veteran friends have mentioned joining this group and speak highly of it.

I have had some dark days in the past and there is nothing more comforting to chat to another veteran in those situations. They have been in your shoes and understand you”

Veteran, Veterans' Support Association



Veterans Learning New Skills

The theme of ***Veterans learning new skills*** through lockdown also played a prominent role throughout the series of case studies. Projects were able to run a variety of activities which involved veterans exiting their comfort zones and getting involved in new things and learning new key skills.

This was highlighted as part of our quantitative study, as 29% of all projects funded by the Trust for this programme were concentrated on veterans communicating via digital means, or by telephone.

Some projects were aware that veterans (particularly those in the over-65 cohort, which made up 53% of all beneficiaries) were not particularly conversant with digital technology. Some had never used a PC or the internet before. However, projects came up with new and innovative ways of getting veterans to learn these vital new skills, and in many cases, it led to unexpected positive benefits for the veteran, their friends/family and the wider community.

This was evidenced in the Shots in the Community project, where the project funding facilitated veterans being able to get together to teach each other key skills such as gardening or cookery.

As a result of their new-found knowledge, they were then able to volunteer to put these skills to good use. The project partnered with a local supported housing association which supplied kitchen facilities; and the veterans cooked meals for vulnerable and homeless people in the area.

As the veterans became more aware of the need that was evidently there in their local community, they also quickly volunteered to provide meals for those in need, or gardening services to those who were unable to get out. This in turn boosted their own wellbeing as they were able to provide support and a service to others.

“The project quickly turned into wider community support when demand from those in need increased. Elderly, disabled, vulnerable and homeless people came to the attention of the supporting veterans.”

Project Manager, Shots in the Community

Learning new skills was vital to the wellbeing of the veterans in both the Veterans Support Association and Care for Veterans projects. The Veterans Support Association beneficiaries were provided a lifeline by the provision of hobby kits, which were sent by post, and an online community in which to discuss and talk about their new skills.

Veterans were sent Airfix models, and some had not undertaken any kind of craft since they were much younger.

The selection of online posts shared with the Trust showed that many of the veterans were suffering extreme loneliness as a result of lockdown, and the provision of the models and the online community helped to alleviate this loneliness and inspire improved wellbeing.

Care for Veterans provided a specialist IT suite to their veterans within their care home setting. Staff were able to purchase specialist equipment and provide bespoke training to the veterans, taking into consideration their differing needs. This meant that veterans were able to build on their IT skills independently, and through this new skill, keep in touch with friends, family and care professionals, who were able to provide therapy through online means.

“It has been great to get back into modelling again. I have enjoyed the pictures and comments from all on this site and feel I have made some more friends. I will definitely be carrying on and posting pictures.”

Veteran, Veterans' Support Association

Gerald's son lives in California and gets up early to join the call at 6.30 am California time. This family gathering greatly enriches Gerald's quality of life; it's the first time, in many years, that he's had all his children in one place at the same time!

Project Officer, Care for Veterans

The IT training provided and the skills that the veterans learned meant that some were able to experience quality time with their family, and even have experiences that would not be possible without the training and the new equipment.

Gerald is an Army veteran who has family across the world. He was able to 'meet' with all his family, including his four children, on a Zoom call, despite one of his children being in the USA. The new IT skills that Gerald has learned as part of the Keep Calm and Keep Connected project has deeply enriched his wellbeing in so many ways.

In a similar tone, Launchpad provided 20 tablets to residents in their supported housing and provided support and face-to-face training for each veteran who was loaned a tablet. Many of the residents had never used a tablet computer before, and indeed many relied on old style mobile phones to communicate with the outside world.

Importantly, the tablets enabled veterans to stay in touch with family and friends, including other residents, and this, combined with the daily contact from staff, helped to reduce their isolation and loneliness.

With your funding, 97 veterans have been able to continue their recovery despite Covid-19 and lockdowns.

Project Manager, Launchpad

The Launchpad staff team provided careful support and training to the residents to ensure they were able to participate fully in everything that they wished to. Once the veterans had developed their IT skills and were able to use the equipment proficiently, they were able to participate in their ongoing therapy from care professionals, ensuring that their road to recovery was not delayed.

However, as a boost to mental health and wellbeing, the veterans were able to use the equipment and their new-found skills, to socialise with both family, friends and other residents. Virtual social clubs such as chess, model-making and cookery would not have been possible without this vital skill.

Age Cymru Dyfed provided digital skills training to older veterans in need, who had not previously had access to online provision.

This training meant that older veterans were able to access social media, video calling and the internet. Training to use YouTube, Spotify and video streaming services ensured that veterans had the necessary skills to be able to access the digital world, be provided with entertainment and be able to communicate with friends and family digitally.

We identified an 88-year-old Army veteran with 32 years military service living on his own, becoming quite socially isolated and have provided digital tuition support. He now connects through IT with the rest of the world (including former wartime childhood contacts in Italy, USA and with the local Bangladeshi community).

This veteran now has a weekly befriending check call and also regular contact with the coordinator of our West Wales Veterans Archive as he is keen to tell his story and have it published on the WWVA in the National Library of Wales.

Project Manager, Age Cymru Dyfed



Veterans Supporting Veterans

The initiative started small and just grew and grew, and as demand from those in need due to the pandemic started increasing, the project itself swiftly adapted to support them.

Des Dunne, Shots in the Community

Another key theme running through the case studies was the opportunity for **veterans to support fellow veterans**, facilitated by the grant funding provided by the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten programme.

Often the idea of veterans helping others was borne out of an opportunity that presented itself during the project, not as an original project idea. This theme usually overlapped with the idea of veterans learning new skills; as a result of this new-found knowledge, they were able to help and support others.

Shots in the Community started out as a small initiative to help veterans in need during a time of crisis, and to support a small group of veterans that had already been identified by the project team, to get them through the issues that the impending pandemic and subsequent lockdown faced.

However, as the project progressed, it was evident that there were more veterans out there in need of support, and the project funding enabled them to provide it.

A minibus hire funded by the project enabled the delivery of food and medicine to the most vulnerable who were shielding, plus transportation to hospital or other medical appointments for those unable to drive, or for whom public transport was not an option.

The veterans were able to take turns driving the minibus, assisting the people most in need at the time that they needed it. As a result of the project, a supported housing association was able to offer its kitchen facilities to the veterans, and they in turn were able to cook meals and provide them to vulnerable veterans in other supported housing, or those they knew were homeless and on the streets.

The support they offered also provided a socialising outlet (within social distancing regulations), as they were joined by Gurkha veterans and the Nepalese community. This led to new friendships being formed and the subsequent alleviation of isolation and loneliness for many.

As a result of having digital connectivity through the provision of the tablet computers funded by the Trust project, Launchpad residents were able to socialise virtually and support each other through lockdown and the pandemic.

The common purpose experienced by each resident gave them something in common, and they were able to draw support and shared experience from each other. Common interests such as cookery, chess or Airfix modelling rose to social groups being formed online. As restrictions were lifted during the summer of 2020, outdoor groups such as walking and cycling clubs were formed. These clubs led to friendships and, subsequently, supportive veteran communities being formed.

Launchpad has made me feel more secure. I've got a roof over my head, my own flat. The other residents understand, we've all been through it, and we all have something in common.

Resident, Launchpad

Veterans In Partnership

"This is very much appreciated indeed - your work too is also hugely appreciated in full!"

**Cllr Allan Speake,
Carmarthenshire County Council,
working in partnership with
Age Cymru Dyfed**

Veteran projects funded under the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten programme evidenced **partnership working** as part of their project, whether this was referenced in the original project bid, or whether a relationship was able to be formed as a result of the grant funding.

Through their existing relationship with West Wales Veteran Archive (funded by the Positive Pathways programme), Age Cymru Dyfed were able to quickly draw up a list of potentially vulnerable veterans who may need assistance through the coming weeks.

Through local social media and social networks, Age Cymru Dyfed were also able to quickly obtain volunteers from the local community who would offer to do shopping and collect medicine for vulnerable or shielding veterans. The request for help reached 4,000 people, and a 'first response' army of volunteers were quickly recruited.

The organisation also worked with the local authority to provide a list of local shops and services that provided delivery services to vulnerable veterans, working together to ensure that this list was as up-to-date as possible. This also included local councillors, who were included in the lists, and were invited to steering groups and meetings to make the initiative as effective as possible.

Shots in the Community were able to partner with Mike Jackson House, a supported accommodation provider in the area for veterans. Through this partnership, they were able to provide, cook and deliver food for vulnerable veterans, including those in local Stoll supported housing, and veterans supported by Stoll who are currently on the streets.

The partnership between the group of veteran volunteers and the board of the Shots in the Community Foundation has also gone from strength to strength, with the two groups working together to try and find additional ways in the future of supporting veterans in the local community, namely through the power of health, wellbeing, connectivity and digital delivery.

"Community based projects like this are a real lifeline for mental and physical well-being for both veterans and members of the wider community who are vulnerable or in need of support. The Shots in the Community Foundation wish to extend this successful project further across a range of vital community issues"

**Shots in the Community Foundation,
Aldershot FC**

Conclusion

- The Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten programme delivered swift, agile financial support to organisations who were best placed to deliver it throughout the UK.
- The Trust worked hard to ensure the money was delivered in a very short time frame, to provide immediate support to vulnerable veterans. Grants were awarded in an eight-week time frame, with projects awarded in May 2020 for a six-month period.
- Partnerships between the Trust and four major organisations meant the grant application and management process was supported throughout.
- Relief of immediate distress and loneliness was provided by organisations delivering essential items, such as food or medicine, to vulnerable, older veterans.
- Younger veterans (those aged 40-65 and those aged under 25) were also categories at greater risk, so there were projects who were best placed to support these younger people effectively.
- Digital delivery was a major contributor to the success of many projects, and the innovative way in which organisations managed to get their veterans online had many benefits.
- In many cases, veterans were able to learn new skills as a result of the grant funding (not just IT-based) and to put these skills to use to help others.
- Volunteering formed a major part of many projects, with veterans volunteering to assist the wider community in many cases.
- Partnership working within projects was an unexpected benefit to many organisations, with the grant funding allowing the resource to be able to partner with another organisation to provide mutual benefit.

Annex 1.6

Grants awarded under the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten programme

2020/21 May 2020

119 grants totalling £2,044,698

Organisation	Project Title	Grant Amount
Age Cymru Dyfed	"Reaching Out"	£18,450
Age Cymru Gwynedd a Mon	Veterans Keep In Touch Project	£15,000
Age Cymru Powys	Not forgotten in Powys	£14,890
Age NI	Check in and Chat (Londonderry)	£19,938
Age NI	Check-in-and-Chat (Greater Belfast)	£19,938
Age Scotland	Veterans Call Circles V2 Northeast Scotland	£15,258
Age Scotland	Veterans Call Circles V2 Southeast Scotland	£15,258
Age Scotland	Veterans Call Circles V2 Northwest Scotland	£15,258
Age Scotland	Veterans Call Circle V2 Southwest Scotland	£15,258
Age UK Bedfordshire	Bedfordshire Veterans COVID Survival Project	£19,218
Age UK Birmingham	Birmingham Veterans Wellbeing Support Service	£20,000
Age UK Bradford and District	Supporting Veterans in Bradford District	£19,688
Age UK Bristol	Veterans should not be forgotten	£20,000
Age UK Calderdale and Kirklees	Reaching Kirklees Veterans During Covid19	£ 9,625
Age UK Carlisle and Eden	Carlisle and Eden Veteran Support	£10,003
Age UK Cheshire East	Cheshire East COVID-19 Veterans Support	£11,403
Age UK Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly	Cornwall's Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten	£19,400
Age UK Coventry & Warwickshire	Supporting Coventry & Warwickshire Veterans	£20,000
Age UK Devon	Better Later Lives for Veterans	£20,000
Age UK Doncaster	Doncaster Stands By Our Veterans	£20,000
Age UK East London	Tower Hamlets - digital and telephone support for isolated Veterans	£19,446
Age UK East London	Hackney - essential advice and information for Veterans during the Covid-19 pandemic	£18,318
Age UK East London	Newham/Waltham Forest - Food and Welfare for Veterans	£19,887
Age UK East Sussex	Community Emergency Response Team Hastings (CERT-HR)	£20,000
Age UK East Sussex	Community Emergency Response Team Brighton (CERT-BL)	£20,000
Age UK East Sussex	Community Emergency Response Team Eastbourne (CERT-E)	£20,000
Age UK Enfield	Veterans in Enfield Support Project (VESP)	£ 9,568

Organisation	Project Title	Grant Amount
Age UK Gateshead	Age UK Gateshead's COVID Corps	£14,102
Age UK Gloucestershire	Veterans Connections: Gloucestershire	£20,000
Age UK Herefordshire & Worcestershire	Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten	£19,559
Age UK Herne Bay & Whitstable	Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten	£20,000
Age UK Hythe and Lyminge	Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten	£20,000
Age UK Lancashire	Good Day Calls for Veterans	£20,000
Age UK Leeds	Joining Forces: Supporting older veterans	£20,000
Age UK Leicester Shire and Rutland	Joining Forces - Not Forgotten Project	£18,677
Age UK Lincoln & South Lincolnshire	Vitals for Veterans	£20,000
Age UK Maidstone	Veterans should not be forgotten	£16,430
Age UK Mid Mersey	Mersey veterans Together (v2)	£20,000
Age UK North Tyneside	Lockdown 2020 - Supporting our Veterans	£19,950
Age UK North West Kent	Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten	£20,000
Age UK North Yorkshire and Darlington	Veteran Support North Yorkshire & Darlington	£19,735
Age UK Northumberland	Northumberland Veterans Supported	£20,000
Age UK Nottinghamshire	Veterans at Home Project	£20,000
Age UK Oldham	Caring for Veterans in Oldham	£20,000
Age UK Plymouth	Keeping Well Keeping Connected	£11,618
Age UK Portsmouth	"Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten"	£20,000
Age UK Sandwell	Sandwell Veterans Wellbeing Support Service	£20,000
Age UK Scarborough & District	Veterans - Above and Beyond	£18,400
Age UK Sevenoaks and Tonbridge	Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten	£20,000
Age UK Sheffield	Sheffield, We'll Meet Again	£20,000
Age UK Shropshire Telford & Wrekin	Covid-19 Veterans Emergency Support Project	£20,000
Age UK Solihull	Veterans not forgotten in Solihull	£14,280
Age UK South Lakeland	Veterans should not be forgotten	£18,291
Age UK Staffordshire	Veterans Should not be Forgotten	£19,989
Age UK Stockport	Connect 2020	£11,700
Age UK Surrey	Call of Friendship and Support	£ 8,383
Age UK Teesside	Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten	£15,267
Age UK Thanet Ltd	Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten	£14,164
Age UK Wakefield District	Emergency Support for Wakefield's Veterans	£18,747
Age UK Wandsworth	Veterans Advice Plus	£18,116
Age UK West Cumbria	Age UKWC Veterans Connected	£16,032
Age UK West Sussex, Brighton & Hove	Covid-19 Response	£20,000
Age UK Wiltshire	Age UK Wiltshire Serves You!	£18,800

Organisation	Project Title	Grant Amount
Age UK Wirral	'Veterans Garden Service & Maintenance' (Veterans GSM)	£20,000
Age UK Wolverhampton	Wolverhampton Veterans Winning Through	£20,000
Alzheimer's Support	Keeping Wiltshire Connected	£20,000
Armed Forces Community Support Hub	Charlie, Charlie One Call	£10,000
Blind Veterans UK	COVID-19 Support service for Sussex	£20,000
Bolton Armed forces centre 4 veterans CIO	Veteran Aid in the Community	£ 9,000
Brooke House Project	Ely Centre -Veterans Are Not Forgotten .	£19,560
Brooke House Project	Growing Together in Extraordinary Times	£ 9,790
CAIS	Combat Isolation	£20,000
Caledon social and economic development CIC	Caledon Covid response	£18,850
Care for Veterans	Keep Calm and Keep Connected	£19,345
Communities Fiji Britain	Access Stoke – Supporting Fijian Veterans	£11,631
Community Veterans Support	Keeping Veterans Safe	£19,000
Erskine	Erskine: Supporting Socially Isolated Veterans	£19,155
Fares4Free	Fares4Free Emergency Covid19 Response	£20,000
Finchale Group	Finchale's Helping Hands	£18,906
FirstLight Trust	Cover-19 Impact: Money Management and Emotional Support	£20,000
Forces in the Community	Helping hands	£12,500
Glasgow's Helping Heroes (SSAFA: the Armed Forces charity)	Glasgow's Helping Heroes Emergency Response	£20,000
Groundwork Manchester Salford Stockport Tameside Trafford	Covid 19 – Operation Re-Org Fightback	£20,000
Hull 4 Heroes	Hull4Heroes Safe as Houses	£19,650
Hull Veterans Support Centre	HVSC First Steps	£16,520
Improving Lives Plymouth	ILP COVID-19 Veterans Support Project	£20,000
Launchpad	Covid-19 support for homeless veterans	£16,521
Littlehampton AFVBC	Littlehampton Isolated Veterans Support Project (LIVeS Project)	£20,000
Lothians Veterans Centre	Helping veterans in difficult times	£19,302
MID ULSTER VICTIMS' EMPOWERMENT	Ensuring our veterans and their families are not forgotten during the Corona Virus pandemic	£20,000
Millburn Community Association	Our Veterans, Our Virtual Community	£10,000
Rotherham Military Community Veterans Centre (MCVC)	Veterans Outreach Connection Project	£ 4,000
Royal British Legion Industries	Emergency support for Aylesford veterans	£16,678

Organisation	Project Title	Grant Amount
Shots in the Community Foundation	Veterans Supporting Veterans	£20,000
Single Homeless Action Initiative in Durham	Shaid/St Peters Court	£20,000
St John & Red Cross Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS)	Veteran Welfare Support – Glasgow and Edinburgh	£19,320
St John & Red Cross Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS)	Veteran Welfare Support – Lanarkshire and Fife	£19,320
Step Together	Veterans Resilience Project Wiltshire	£11,747
Step Together	Veterans Resilience Project Leicestershire	£13,954
Step Together	Veterans Resilience Project Lanarkshire	£18,040
The Bolton Guild of Help	Bolton & Bury Veterans Aid	£19,950
The Bridge for Heroes	Operation Mirror – Local Veteran Welfare Support	£20,000
The British Nuclear Test Veterans Association	Project Fallout	£18,100
The Matthew Project	Outside the Wire – Coronavirus Response	£15,867
The Not Forgotten Association	Online entertainment for the isolated.	£20,000
The Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation	Covid-19 Support for Stoll Residents	£20,000
The VC Gallery	Project Lifeline	£20,000
The Veterans Contact Point	CSW AFCC Veterans Virtual Community Portal	£19,500
The Warrior Programme	Warrior Live	£20,000
Veterans In Action	Veterans Helping Veterans	£20,000
Veterans in Communities	Connect, Engage, Belong	£16,445
Veterans in Crisis CIC	Operation Engage	£19,950
Veterans Outreach Support	Click & Connect: Communication, Comfort, Care.	£20,000
Veterans Support Association	V.S.A hobby packs.	£ 5,000
Walking With The Wounded	Addressing social isolation Scotland residences	£ 8,500
Walking With The Wounded	Addressing social isolation Aldershot residences	£ 6,000
Walking With The Wounded	Addressing social isolation Alabaré Homes	£ 6,000
	Total awarded	£2,044,698

⁶Annex. 1 excludes the award made to Age UK Suffolk which was awarded and then withdrawn as the charity closed.

References and Credits

<https://www.freepik.com/photos/technology> stock photos on page 24/25

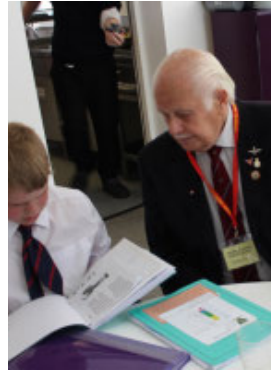
The Map of Need: <https://covenantfund.org.uk/the-map-of-need-kn/>

About us

The Armed Forces Covenant Trust manages the grant programmes funded by the Covenant Fund.

We also run wider funding programmes that support the Armed Forces community.

You can find out more about our work at www.covenantfund.org.uk



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