



# Grow your Hub

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# GUIDE

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Supporting our veterans  
and ex-service personnel



This guide has been produced to help people who are looking to provide support for our local veterans and ex-service personnel through local groups, hubs or drop-ins, or are looking to grow or enhance what they are already providing. It has been put together by the local authorities within Forces Connect South East and funded through the Ministry of Defence's Armed Forces Covenant Fund.

There is a whole range of support services available for our veterans/ex-service personnel to access. Many of these services are the same as for any other resident, however there are other services available that are specific to veterans. Some of these are provided by service charities such as The Royal British Legion and ssafa the Armed Forces charity, others are provided by community groups or like-minded veterans.

The guide focusses on a specific type of support for veterans provided locally, often through groups set up by veterans for veterans. These provide a place for veterans to go on a regular basis, offering support, advice, hospitality and friendship in a safe and secure, non-threatening environment. This local provision can be called a veterans hub, drop-in, shed or breakfast club. There are slight differences between them as is set out in this booklet, but all provide local support for our veterans.



## What is the difference between a Veterans Hub, a Drop-in, a Shed and a Breakfast Club?

Veterans' hubs or drop-ins provide a warm and welcoming place where any member of the Armed Forces community (serving and ex-service) and their family may go to for help, advice and comradeship. They offer refreshments as well as general welfare support such as health and wellbeing, financial and employment advice, often provided through a service charity, as well as signposting to other agencies such as the local council, Job Centre and Citizens Advice. These meetings take place on a regular basis under one roof, at the same time normally each month and in an informal and welcoming environment. They range in size from small focussed groups to larger ones with a range of attendees.

Another place where veterans may go for support are Sheds (sometimes referred to as Men's Sheds). These are a place for people, including veterans, of any age to visit to pursue practical skills in a friendly environment – they encourage friendship and local connections, bringing veterans and civilians together to share skills and knowledge in a safe, non-threatening and caring environment. Activities in Sheds vary greatly, but can include woodworking, metalworking, repairing and restoring, electronics, model building or even car building, and some also are able to signpost to additional sources of support. Further information on Sheds can be found on the following website <https://menssheds.org.uk/>.

A further local provision for veterans are Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast Clubs. These are breakfast clubs for veterans who like to meet up socially on a regular basis. There are no joining fees – veterans just turn up and pay for their own breakfast. They differ from hubs and drop-ins as they tend not to offer additional support from external agencies, although some do. Further information about breakfast clubs can be found on the following website <https://www.afvbc.net/about-afvbc/>

## Are specific services for veterans needed?

Yes – a survey of local veterans in the south east showed that nearly three quarters agreed that one day they may need the services of a local veterans hub, however over half were not aware of whether they had a local hub or indeed what they offered.

## Hubs and drop-ins

This guide sets out a range of help and advice as well as contacts and further information for those who are interested in supporting local veterans through a hub or drop-in, or are looking to grow their current offer to veterans. This guide is supported by an on-line manual which is accessible via the website. For further information please visit [www.surreycc.gov.uk/forcesconnectse](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/forcesconnectse).

## Supporting local veterans

You can set up a veterans group with almost nothing. If you simply want to enjoy the company of ex-servicemen and women who you already know you could simply meet in someone's home and enjoy the banter and a brew - if that proves sufficient for you then that's great! Furthermore if you want to get "hands on" and volunteer to support veterans but do not want the responsibility to run your own hub there are plenty of opportunities to do so. You can join your local ssafa, Royal British Legion branch or another local group which supports veterans.





## Setting up a Veterans Hub/Drop-In

If you decide to set up your own veterans group you will probably have a good idea of what you want to provide and where it will be. You are likely to have discussed this with other people including ex-service personnel who can help you. Across the UK there are people already providing veterans services through hubs and drop-ins so it would be worth visiting a few of them to help focus your ideas. The Association of ex-Service Drop-In Centres (ASDIC) website [www.adsic.org.uk](http://www.adsic.org.uk) provides a national directory of existing hubs and drop-ins - ask advice and see how they can support you your ideas. This will help you clarify your goal and lead you to the next step.

## Things to consider

### Is there a local need?

To be considering a hub or drop-in, it is likely that you have already identified a local need. There are a range of people and organisations that it would be worth talking to. Most councils have appointed one of their elected councillors as their Armed Forces Champion who should be able to provide you with help and advice, and they will also have an idea of local need as well as what is already available. The Armed Forces Champion is usually supported by one of the council officers (Covenant Lead Officer) who would be another person worth contacting. Other organisations to contact include ssafa the Armed Forces charity, The Royal British Legion and your local Centre for Voluntary Services.

### What do you want to achieve?

Are you looking to set up just a social group, or would you like to link to other organisations that are able to provide additional support? Think about how much time you are able to give and who else you can work with to help achieve your goal. If you have never created a group before you will find it exciting and frustrating at times and it is easy to rush into things and try to do too much. A good option is to work with others so you are not alone - you will also need other people's support and feedback. Talk to your family,

friends and other veterans groups including service charities about your ideas. Once you have done this you will have a clearer idea about what you would like to do and how to go about achieving this.

### **Where would you like to meet and how often?**

The location is important and when you are looking for a venue you will need to think about whether it has disabled access and whether it is easily accessible by car, on foot or public transport. Possible venues include football clubs, community centres, council buildings, libraries, fire stations, Job Centres, church centres, Royal British Legion Clubs, Sheds etc. It would be worth talking to your local council's Armed Forces Champion to see if they can offer any advice about a suitable location. Once you have found a venue, you will need to think about how you plan to lay it out. Based on experience of those who have already set up a hub, we have put together an example of a layout that works well. This can be found within the 'Grow your hub' manual available via [www.surreycc.gov.uk/forcesconnectse](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/forcesconnectse).

### **How will you let local veterans and others know about your hub?**

To publicise your hub, word of mouth works brilliantly locally but you may also want to spread what you are doing further afield through your council and its Armed Forces Champion, GP receptions, Police, local notice boards, ssafa, Citizens Advice, food banks, St John Ambulance, Red Cross, local military units, Reserve Centres etc. It may be that some of these agencies will want to come along and support your hub so try to develop a relationship with them. When you are ready it may be worth considering setting up a twitter account, facebook page or other social media to quickly and easily get messages out to your followers and supporters. You may also know someone that could help you set up a webpage – but this could come further down the line when you are more established. If it is helpful, we have pulled together some information and logos to help you promote your hub which can be found in the 'Grow your hub' manual.

### **What do you want your hub to be called?**

When you are thinking about the name of your hub or drop-in, you

will want it to reflect what you do so it is obvious to people what is being offered. It is also helpful to make it unique and memorable so people don't forget you and it will also make it easier for people to find you if, in the future, you have a presence on social media or on the web.

### **What services would you like to offer?**

As well as comradeship and friendship, you will probably want to think about who else you could invite along to provide some additional support to the local veterans. When talking to the agencies set out above to promote your hub, it would be worth asking them if they would like to come along and provide some support at your hub. You could have a different offer at each meeting which would mean agencies could commit to coming along every few months rather than every month. Do what works best for you and your supporters. It would be worth noting that if you would like to get your hub or drop-in registered on the national Association of ex-Service Drop-In Centres (ASDIC), you will need to have at least two additional services, aside from comradeship, provided at your hub. For further information, please visit their website [www.adsic.org.uk](http://www.adsic.org.uk).

It would also be worth promoting schemes such as the Defence Discount Scheme [www.defencediscountservice.co.uk](http://www.defencediscountservice.co.uk) and Heroes Welcome <https://heroeswelcome.co.uk>. These schemes provide various discounts for members and former members of the armed forces community.

## **Practicalities of running a hub**

Now you have decided on what you are doing, where you are doing it and who else is involved and supporting you, you need to think about how you are going to take it forward. We have set out below some of the areas you will need to consider. We have included the basics below that each hub or drop-in should consider. If you would like to make your hub more formal and run it more along the lines of a charity, please refer to the 'Grow your hub' manual which is available via [www.surreycc.gov.uk/forcesconnectse](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/forcesconnectse). Here you will find an array of further links, templates and additional information.

### **Money matters – managing money and raising funds**

Firstly, you will need to set up a bank account in the name of your hub which is separate from your own. This will help keep track of your groups' money and make sure it does not get mixed up with your own money. A bank account in the name of your hub will also be needed if you want to apply for grants or if you are collecting donations.

You will also want to think about ways to raise funds for your hub. This will help cover costs for things such as rent, hospitality, publicity and insurance. It is best to work out how much money you need before you start raising the funds so you don't spend time raising money you don't need. We have pulled together a rough guide to costs, which can be found in the 'Grow your hub' manual. Further information on possible sources of funding can be found at <https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/funding/fundraising/individual-giving/local-and-community-fundraising>

### **Management Group and Mission Statement**

When a new group is formed, someone or a group of people, lead the group and meet on a regular basis to discuss things such as how the group is going, raising funds and planning events. It would be a good idea to have a conversation with your council's elected councillor Armed Forces Champion to see if they would like to join you on this group.

When you have agreed what you would like to achieve, you should write this down along with who is involved. This will help to bring others on board so they understand what you are planning to do – you will also need this for your public liability insurance (see next page).

### **Keeping records**

As well as keeping a record of your finances, it would also be helpful to keep a record of the numbers of people that come along and attend your meetings. In the 'Grow your hub' manual you will find a template that highlights some of the areas you may wish to record, including who attends and the key issues raised. This data



will also be helpful to show the demand of your services locally which, in turn, could help bring additional supporters on board.

### **Training for you and your volunteers**

Training may range from the setting up of a pop-up banner through to serving tea and cakes and providing first aid as well as being able to recognise what to do to assist a person suffering with poor mental health.

We have put together some online training which is available for you and your volunteers. This is accessible via [www.surreycc.gov.uk/veteranshubtraining](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/veteranshubtraining). Please have a look through and see which ones will be useful to you. Other training to consider would be first aid and mental health first aid which will be provided face to face. There will be local providers such as the British Red Cross or St John Ambulance that can provide first aid training – please check around and see what is available locally.

### **Providing a safe environment**

When running a hub or drop-in, you have a duty of care to ensure that you provide a safe and secure environment for both the volunteers supporting you and the veterans attending. This means, for example, if you have water spilt on the floor, make sure that you mop it up to avoid anyone slipping on it. The law says that organisations who employ over five members of staff need to have a written Health and Safety Policy, so it is unlikely that you will have to legally provide one, but we have provided a template in the 'Grow your hub' manual if you would like to develop one. There is some basic health and safety training available via [www.surreycc.gov.uk/veteranshubtraining](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/veteranshubtraining) which would be beneficial for you to undertake. You will also find other useful online training on the website, including food safety and safeguarding. It would be a good idea if you ask all those attending to sign in so you know who is in the building should you need to evacuate. You should make sure that you are familiar with the fire exits and where the facilities are within the building.

### **Public Liability Insurance**

Activities in a veterans hub are very low risk and are unlikely to put volunteers or the public in any danger. However, it is still

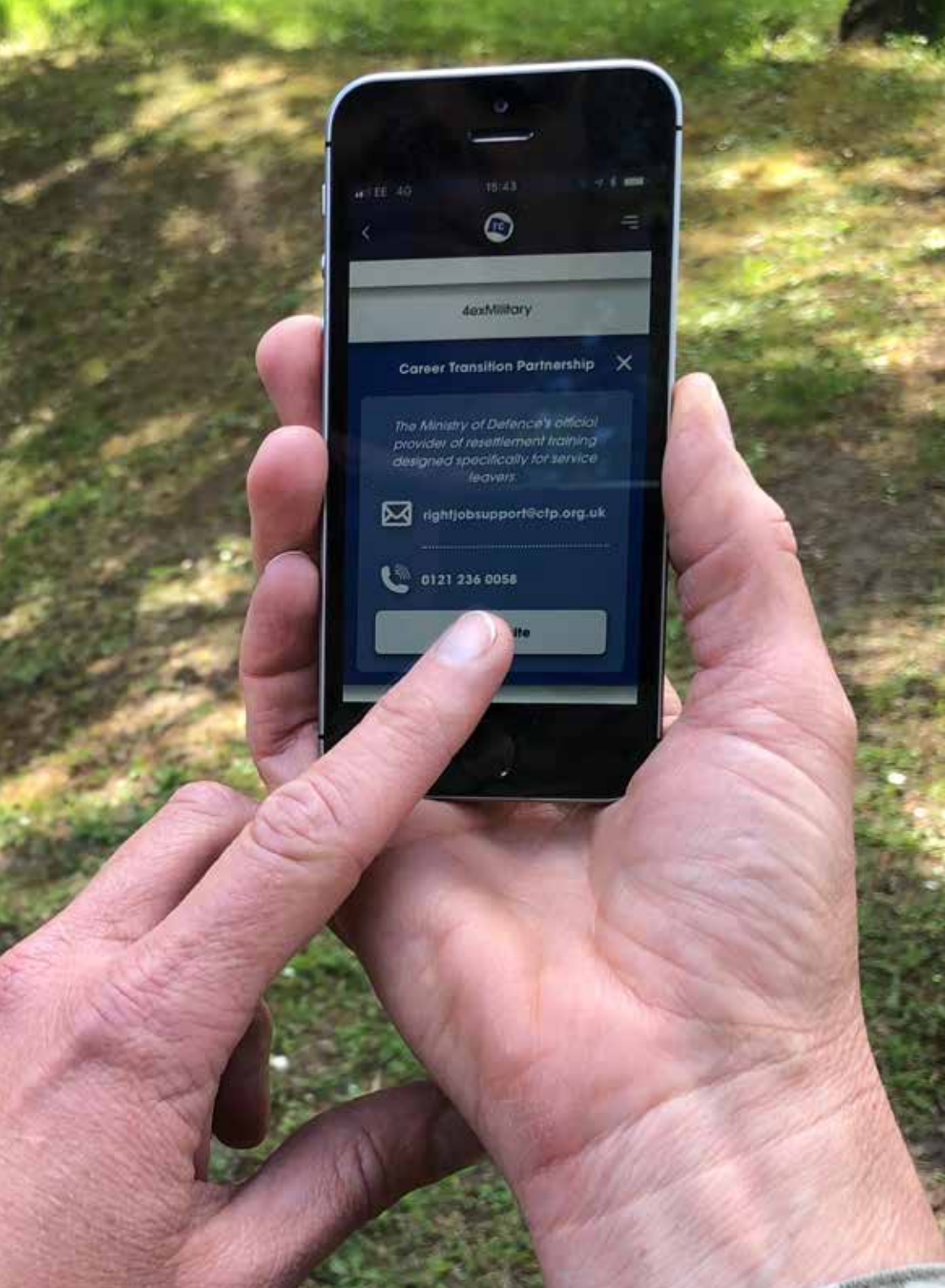
important to check that your group has the insurance cover it needs in order to carry out your activities with confidence. Public liability insurance will cover you for any damage caused to property and for personal injury to third parties. In order to obtain this cover groups do not need a formal constitution – the insurance company will usually just require some information about the activities that you intend to carry out and numbers involved. If you have any specific kit then you may wish to consider getting a quote to cover these items as well. It might be worth thinking about their value compared to the excess you may need to pay if you claimed.

If your home insurance policy includes public liability, it is likely that this will just cover you against claims relating to the occupation of your property and will not extend to any activities in the wider community. If any equipment is owned by you and stored in your house then it should be covered as part of your household contents insurance, but it is unlikely to be covered if it is used away from your home, but it may be worth checking with your insurance company just in case.

## **Support for you**

Please remember – you are not working alone and whilst you are intending to help other people, it is important to remember your own health and wellbeing as well.

1. Please make use of the support provided by your volunteers – do not try and do everything yourself.
2. Consider connecting with other hubs and drop-ins to discover what works and what does not. Having a personal contact you can call to discuss a problem can provide reassurance.
3. Undertake relevant training – no training is ever wasted and it can provide support and assistance as well as reducing stress.
4. Build your own safety net – let your friends and family know what you are doing and how you are feeling – talk to your GP if you are finding it hard to cope. Make sure you take time out for yourself.



## Further help and support available

There is a lot of help and support available to you and your hub – we have summarised some of this below, but please also check out the Forces Connect South East website at [www.surreycc.gov.uk/forcesconnectse](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/forcesconnectse):

- **ASDIC: The Association of ex-Service Drop-In Centres (ASDIC)** links veterans' hubs and drop-ins together across the country. It would be worth checking out other provision local to you for advice and to avoid duplication <https://www.asdic.org.uk/>
- **Signposting support** – the 'Forces Connect' mobile app has been developed to enable easy access to services available to the Armed Forces community. The app covers crisis support; employment, education and training; family support; care and benefits; health and wellbeing; housing and homelessness and is available free of charge to download on apple and android devices.
- **Veterans' Gateway** - this service has been established to provide a one-stop shop for veterans and groups supporting them. There is a single phone number for all enquiries 0808 802 1212 as well as a website [www.veteransgateway.org.uk](http://www.veteransgateway.org.uk).
- **Council for Voluntary Service (CVS)** - provides support to the voluntary, community and faith sector and is a great place to ask for advice on issues such as volunteers, governance and funding. Your local contact can be found via the NAVCA website <https://navca.org.uk/find-a-member-1>
- **COBSEO** - The Confederation of British Service Organisations (COBSEO) is the leading accreditor of service charities – if you are working with a 'service charity' it would be worthwhile checking whether they are a member of COBSEO. Please visit the website for more information [www.cobseo.org.uk](http://www.cobseo.org.uk).



This guide and the associated 'Grow your hub' manual has been produced by Forces Connect South East and is funded by the Ministry of Defence's Armed Forces Covenant Fund with the aim to provide resources to help establish and enhance sustainable, local veterans' hubs and drop-in centres providing consistent welfare advice.

Forces Connect South East (FCSE) is a partnership led by Surrey County Council with the County Councils of Hampshire, Kent, East Sussex and West Sussex and the Councils of Brighton & Hove and Medway, as well as the NHS Armed Forces Networks, 11 Infantry Brigade, South East Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association, ssa, the Armed Forces charity and The Royal British Legion. As part of this work, funding is available for setting up and sustaining hubs and drop-ins in Surrey, Hampshire, Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex, Brighton & Hove and Medway until June 2020.

## Contact us

For more information please visit  
[www.surreycc.gov.uk/forcesconnectse](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/forcesconnectse)  
or email [fcse@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:fcse@surreycc.gov.uk)  
**#VeteransHubsSE**

**Thank you for all you are doing to help make life better for our military veterans, ex-service personnel, and their families.**

