

## **Weymouth & Portland Veteran's Hub**

Our Dorset based not for profit CIC is a community project set up in late 2017 to provide a safe location for veterans and their families to come together to socialise, adapt to civi-street and discuss any difficulties they may face in a non-clinical informal setting. In July 2018 following the suicides of a number of veterans in our area of operations we took the project full-time. We felt powerless and frustrated and decided to do something more permanent and meaningful. Since then the project has grown and grown.

The main focus of the Veterans Hub is the community cafe, open 6 days a week providing vital peer to peer support. The cafe is also open to the public helping ex forces and their families integrate in to their local community. The community cafe is the front face of the veteran's hub, inviting locals and visitors to come in, meet new people, find out about the lives of ex forces personnel, raise awareness and most importantly to talk about anything mental or physical health.

We are now supporting 150+ veterans and their family members from across Dorset while being a genuine asset to the local community.

Last spring, we took over a large plot of land to the rear of our community café and have turned it into a multi-use therapeutic area for veterans. This area is split in to 3 zones, comprising of an indoor gym, raised allotments and a relaxation/sensory garden with attached therapeutic/quiet room. The whole area has been designed to be of maximum benefit to veterans and is aimed at all age groups and abilities with a strong emphasis on access for those with mobility difficulties. The therapeutic area is currently used to provide sports massage, Substance Misuse support, Indian head massage and reiki, hairdressing sessions, one to one peer support and therapeutic dog training sessions.

Moving forward the Veterans Hub hope to build on its success and keep helping those in need through more therapeutic work, expanding the kitchen area and improving the outside seated area.