



A day in the life of the Veterans Contact Point

The Veterans Contact Point is managed by Warwickshire Probation Trust and is supported by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) ESF OnTrak project and its peer mentor programme through the ESF Innovation Transnationality and Mainstreaming AIM Partnership.

The Veterans Contact Point (VCP) opened its door on 4 July 2011 and quickly established itself as an important resource for the veteran community in Coventry and Warwickshire.

The initiative is funded through the NOMS ESF Co-financing programme and has been developed through the work of Len Hardy who is a project co-ordinator working on the OnTrak project.

Len, an ex-serviceman himself, has developed an expertise in supporting those ex-service men and women who have come into contact with the criminal justice system. 'Many of the ex-service men I see have not had the best of times since leaving the military and most say that they have not looked for help until they have got themselves into trouble.'

The VCP has volunteer peer mentors who provide vital support to one another and to the veterans who visit. The following describes an average day in the life of the VCP.

Morning

The day starts with a meeting to plan future work with a volunteer Welfare Caseworker from the Royal British Legion. At 10:00am the doors are open for business and the duty staff prepare for whatever the day may bring.

Jason is a volunteer peer support worker, a former soldier who saw service in Bosnia. Jason's empathy is borne out of his own experiences and treatment for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). He greets their first customer of the day and completes an enquiry form before passing him over to Len, Warwickshire Probation Trust's Veterans Champion, for a more detailed assessment of need and military service checks.

The day continues with numerous visitors, including a visit from Om Churung, head of the Warwickshire Branch of The British Ghurkha Veterans Welfare Association. After discussions with Len, a cooperation agreement is reached and a Ghurkha welfare service is included at the VCP.



Len Hardy with Om Churung

Afternoon

The rest of the day is taken up with telephone calls and marketing with leaflet drops and personal visits by the volunteer peer mentors, Jason and Paddy.

Paddy is an ex Royal Navy seaman who joined the Royal Navy in 1975. Paddy was helped to access support to improve his employability and qualifications. Paddy, like Jason has been diagnosed with PTSD. He says “until I showed up in the court system I didn’t get any kind of help.”



Paddy – ‘The Royal British Legion helped me now it’s my turn to help others.’

At the end of the day the VCP closes its doors. It’s been a day of questions, queries and interviews; telephone calls of support and marketing and a new partnership with the Gurkha community. What will tomorrow bring?

More information : <http://www.veteranscontactpoint.co.uk/>