



HOME OF THE
CHELSEA PENSIONERS

OUTREACH

Building a Centre of
Excellence in Veteran Care

A VISION FOR OUTREACH



“As a veteran of campaigns in Northern Ireland, The Balkans, The Gulf, and latterly two prolonged and very demanding wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, I have seen many comrades leave the Services carrying injuries both mental and physical that will be with them in some form for life. When interviewed by the Commissioners for the post of Governor I therefore stated that if I got the job I would not only do my utmost to ensure that the 300 or so Pensioners continue to be cared for to the highest standards, and to preserve our glorious buildings for them and for the Nation, but that I would seek to leverage the influence and reputation of the Royal Hospital Chelsea to provide more direct support to veterans, particularly the elderly, living outside our Chelsea home. This important programme will deliver on the aspiration to provide Outreach services to tens of thousands of veterans from all three Services who live outside the Royal Hospital.”

General Sir Adrian Bradshaw
KCB OBE DL - Governor



A LONG HISTORY OF OUTREACH

Origins

King Charles II ordered the building of a retirement home for old soldiers in 1682, and the Royal Hospital's history of outreach is almost as old.

At a time when the Nation was constantly engaged in war, wounded and discharged soldiers were billeted to Chelsea and across London, or furloughed to neighbouring counties, while they waited to be admitted to the Royal Hospital. These 'Out-Pensioners' were paid pensions by the Royal Hospital from the 1680s up until 1955.

After 1955, the administration of pensions was no longer the responsibility of the Royal Hospital's Commissioners and only 'In-Pensioners' - those living at the Royal Hospital Chelsea - received their support. Veterans living in wider society have had to rely on the Veteran's Agency, the NHS, the Department for Work & Pensions and local authorities. However, although the Royal Hospital's focus narrowed to residents of the historic site, our mandate for care was, and remains, wider.

The next chapter

The Royal Hospital Chelsea is now seeking to reconnect with a new generation of 'Out-Pensioners'. We intend to establish social links and activities with many of the older veterans, from all three Services, who may not have had the opportunity or have preferred not to become Pensioners but who nevertheless would welcome the opportunity to spend time with each other and with Chelsea Pensioners. Together, enjoying social life, activities and care programmes, they will also benefit from the special care, comradeship and sense of community fostered here at the Royal Hospital Chelsea.

Our Outreach project seeks initially to invite older veterans from the local area and within an easy train or bus ride of the Royal Hospital to come and enjoy time with Pensioners in the new facilities provided in the refurbished Soane Stable Block. They will take part in hobbies and activities in our new Activities Centre (Prince Philip Building) and enjoy the heritage of the British Army in the National Army Museum

and the historical and architectural delights of the Royal Hospital Chelsea. In doing so not only will we provide them with the benefits to mental health and wellbeing known to be derived from social interaction, but we will also be able to connect them to charities and other bodies to help them with needs that might become evident during their time and interaction with us. The Royal Hospital Outreach team will provide help and advice, as well as the contact details of numerous other organisations who can provide support to veterans, especially through the very close links we are building with our military charity partners.

THE CONTEXT

Our comprehensive active ageing programme here at the Royal Hospital Chelsea encourages Chelsea Pensioners to support each other, just as they did in the British Army. This includes spending time together socially, accompanying each other on visits and activities, going with fellow Pensioners to external medical appointments, and visiting comrades in hospital. Veterans together, with their shared experience of the Service ethos and of the rigours of

military campaigns, can be of enormous help to each other, leveraging the bonds between veterans that go beyond the spoken word. This can be of significant benefit to their mental health and wellbeing, particularly in dealing with the effects of PTSD. Chelsea Pensioners also work together to support the routine and services of the Royal Hospital and contribute to the community to which they belong.

The Royal Hospital is immensely grateful for the annual Ministry of Defence funding that meets about half of the cost of providing services to our resident Chelsea Pensioners and maintaining our buildings. But now, by providing our unique brand of comradeship, care and sense of community, we want to help not only the 300 or so fortunate and deserving In-Pensioners living here, but also many from amongst the two million or so veterans from all three Armed Services who live beyond our gates.

“Sometimes, veterans have endured such extremes to keep us safe, that they may have difficulty recognising when or if they need personal care”

VETERANS FAMILIES UNITED

THE NEED FOR CONNECTION AND SUPPORT

Comradeship helps armies to succeed in battle. The shared ethos and sense of belonging of soldiers, sailors and aviators contributes to the 'Moral Component' of the fighting power of our Armed Services, fuelling and sustaining their will to engage in combat.

When they leave the Army, soldiers no longer live, work and serve alongside their comrades. This can leave a void, particularly for those who have been wounded physically or mentally, that is not always recognised or understood. Acute feelings of isolation can follow.

Society's growing concern about loneliness and its impact is widely documented. Regrettably, it has become widespread among older people in the civilian population. Older veterans are at increased risk of loneliness due to declining health, retirement, and instability of social ties, along with a stigma around seeking help, related to aspects of the perceived military culture of 'self-reliance'.

Loneliness carries a risk to health which is comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.¹



18% of veterans over 65 are unpaid caregivers.

In addition, 18% of veterans over the age of 65 also undertake unpaid caregiving responsibilities, compared to only 14% of their civilian counterparts. Research shows the effect caring for someone else can have on the mental health of the carer: 15% of veteran

carers aged between 75-84 years said that they struggled to cope with care responsibilities. Many ex-Service personnel are also likely to receive regular care themselves. We aim to reach both groups through our Outreach Programmes.

OUR VISION FOR DELIVERING VETERAN OUTREACH

Chelsea Outreach

The Chelsea Outreach programme will operate from new facilities here at the Royal Hospital Chelsea, including the purpose-built Activities Centre and adjacent Outreach, Heritage and Visitor Centre. We will offer supported activity groups, talks, demonstrations and refreshments for veterans who visit us for a morning, afternoon or the whole day. The Royal Hospital's extensive grounds and gardens will provide the health and wellbeing benefits of urban green spaces. The programme will provide comradeship and a sense of community to veterans of the three Armed Services, in particular to those over the age of 65, who are in need of the company of other veterans who have lived the Service ethos and experienced the unique challenges of military campaigning and war.

Digital Outreach

The Digital Outreach programme will continue providing an expanded virtual 'community of comradeship' for older veterans, providing digital meetings and pairing non-resident ex-Service personnel with Chelsea Pensioners. This will extend an important lifeline to those who are socially isolated. This will build on the digital breakfast meetings we trialled successfully during the coronavirus pandemic.

Carers Outreach

The Carers Outreach programme will provide help and advice for carers of veterans and to veterans who are carers. Initially the programme will focus on identifying the needs of carers and connecting them with charities and local authorities to develop referral pathways for those most in need. As the Outreach Programme progresses it is our aspiration to develop facilities here at the Royal Hospital in which veterans could be looked after for short periods by Outreach staff, or staff from a charity partner, in order to give respite to their own carers who desperately need it.



Nationwide Outreach

This programme seeks to connect older veterans who are living too far from London to be able practicably to join our programmes on site. Our ambition is to link up with veterans where they live, working closely with military charities, other organisations and local authorities to engage veterans who may be isolated and harder to reach. We aim also to share our model of care with other organisations who care for veterans and work collaboratively with them to enhance a national network of support for older veterans from across the three Services.

Further development

In later stages of development, we see **Chelsea Outreach** and **Carers Outreach** utilising a new building to be built in the Old Workshop Yard, adjacent to the Soane Stable Block, for which planning permission has already been obtained. Here we might provide a range of services to **Chelsea Pensioners** and **external veterans**, including respite care for carers, post-medical operation recovery care, mental health and other health support services provided in partnership with charity and other expert bodies, and specialist support in partnership with the NHS.

¹ Holt-Lunstadt et al., 2010, Social relationships and mortality risk: a meta-analytic review, www.pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20668659/

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

The Royal Hospital Outreach Programme is launching under the strategic direction of the Commissioners, appointed by Her Majesty the Queen to oversee the management and direction of the Royal Hospital. This Outreach Strategy is delivered by the Royal Hospital Chelsea Executive Board under the leadership of our Chief Executive Gary Lashko. Working for the Director of Health and Wellbeing, Col (Dr) Jeremy Tuck, a dedicated Head of Veteran Outreach will deliver the Royal Hospital Chelsea Outreach Programmes both on and off site.

Key aspects of this role will be to:

- Identify and establish links with non-resident veterans who would most benefit from participation in our Outreach programmes.
- Collaborate with military charities and other military and civilian care providers.
- Create and run the four Royal Hospital Chelsea Outreach Programmes.

The Head of Veteran Outreach will recruit staff as and when required, and will also draw upon Pensioner volunteers. In addition, the programme will be supported by volunteers from the established Royal Hospital volunteer team, and newly recruited specialist Royal Hospital Outreach Volunteers whose numbers we hope will include a number of younger veterans. An induction and training programme is currently being worked up for our Outreach Volunteers.



REACHING ALL THREE SERVICES

For the first time in our long history the Royal Hospital Chelsea will begin actively to support, through our Veteran Outreach Programmes, those who have served not only in the Army but also in the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. We have discussed this expansion of our remit at top levels with Service charities and our aspirations have been warmly welcomed. We much look forward to working with a range of military charities in delivering our Outreach programmes.



HELP US REALISE OUR AMBITION

Our founder's vision - to provide for veterans who had so loyally served him and deserved the best possible care - remains as fresh today as it ever was. We believe that the comradeship and support programmes we are now developing to serve the wider veteran community express that vision with renewed vigour in the 21st Century.

To develop this new and exciting area of work, we seek support from partners and our community of Friends and supporters who are passionate about extending our remit across the three Armed Services.

Funding is being sought to identify and connect with the beneficiaries who will most benefit from the programmes and to set up our initial, pilot projects. The delivery of support will go hand-in-hand with evaluation to ensure our work is achieving the desired impact. Longer term, we are exploring endowing the Royal Hospital Outreach project to ensure the long-term financing of projects is assured. This is likely to go hand-in-hand with a separation of our Outreach arm from the core Royal Hospital Chelsea operation to become an independent registered charity in order to ensure appropriate separation of finances.



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