



VIC Newsletter

June
2026

VeteransHQ



VALOUR launched

VETERANS and Armed Forces families across the North West will benefit from improved access to coordinated support as part of the national rollout of VALOUR, a new £50 million UK wide support system.

Veterans in Communities, working in partnership with Armed Forces Community Support and Veterans HQ, are now operating as a VALOUR recognised centre, delivering support across Lancashire, Cheshire, Merseyside and Cumbria.

Amanda Walton, Chief Executive of VIC, based in Haslingden and working throughout Lancashire and areas of Greater Manchester, said: "Being recognised as part of VALOUR marks an important step in strengthening how support is accessed across the North West.

"By working in partnership and connecting existing services more effectively, we can make it easier for veterans and their families to find the support they need, ensuring there is no wrong door to accessing help."

VALOUR, delivered by the Office for Veterans' Affairs within the Ministry of Defence, MoD, has reached Initial Operating Capability and is now beginning to roll

out nationally.

The programme is designed to make it easier for veterans and their families to access the right support when they need it.

VIC will now be recruiting for a VALOUR Pathways Co-ordinator and a further senior role of Project Co-ordinator.

Veterans seeking support can now access it through:

- The new VALOUR online platform
- In person through VALOUR recognised centres
- Coordinated casework through MoD Veterans' Services.

Across the North West, the VALOUR recognised centres will provide accessible, locally delivered support, working in partnership with a wide range of statutory and voluntary organisations.

VALOUR does not replace existing services. Instead, it brings them together into a more connected system, making it easier to navigate support and ensuring there is no wrong door for veterans seeking help.

This approach builds on established delivery and partnerships across the region, strengthening coordination and improving



VIC's Chair of Trustees Ronnie Barker and Chief Executive Amanda Walton

access to support across health, housing and employment.

VALOUR will continue to develop and expand through 2026 and 2027, with further centres planned, enhanced digital services and increased regional engagement supported by VALOUR Field Officers.

This will ensure that veterans, reservists, transitioning personnel and their families can access consistent, coordinated and locally delivered support across the North West.

Marking D-Day

MEMBERS of VIC joined a special D-Day Anniversary Parade in Accrington, held on the same day as the town's Food Festival, which is organised by Amazing Accrington.

VIC joined members of the Royal British Legion, Army, Air and Sea Cadets, local dignitaries and local organisations and the parade was led by a WWII motorbike, which members of the Veterans Living History Museum rode across Europe just like Weir veteran Dispatch Rider the late Lewis Banham did in the Second World War

There was a solo piper and the parade finished in the Accrington Pals Memorial Garden, where there was a short service of commemoration.



Bob Ross

THANKS to a generous anonymous benefactor, Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell will be making a trip he always dreamed of – to Florida to attend an official Bob Ross Painting Class.

The latest class at the VIC Centre tackled a tricky painting and, although it was a hard class, everyone did really well.

Armed Forces Week



PRESTON

AT COUNTY Hall, Preston, the Lord Lieutenant Amanda Parker JP joined representatives from the Armed Forces, the Royal British Legion, Cadets, local authorities, charities and community groups who came together to pay their respects.

Lancashire Council's Armed Forces Champion, County Councillor Gary Kniveton, and the recently appointed Armed

Forces Covenant Project Manager Gregg Stevenson MBE spoke and Amanda Walton, CEO of VIC, discussed the impact and future of VALOUR and what it will achieve for veterans across the North West.

Also playing a key role was VIC Administrator Amy Thompson, who was representing the Royal British Legion and proudly carried the Union Standard.



BOLTON

Our own Standard Bearer Jacko Pearce was in attendance at the North West Ambulance Service HQ Flag Raising for Armed Forces Week in the presence of Deputy Lieutenant Richard Beatson.

Padiham on parade

VIC had a fabulous weekend at Padiham on Parade, which was held at the end of Armed Forces Week.

Operations Manager Phil Speddy said: "There was a really good parade and there were a lot of people: veterans, Air Cadets, Sea Cadets and more.

"It was a really great

weekend and there was something going on everywhere all over Padiham and something for every age group.

"There were loads of veterans around and we got to chat to a lot and tell them about what VIC does. Some didn't know about the charity and hopefully we will be seeing them in the centre. It was a really positive weekend."



RAWTENSTALL

The VIC team was also in attendance at Rawtenstall's flag raising at Rawtenstall Cenotaph. They were joined by Deputy Lieutenant Louise Cooper BEM and newly appointed Mayor of Rossendale Councillor Liz McInnes.





Thriving partnerships

THE national Thrive Together project, which in the Northwest is known as the Forces Wellbeing Collective, has come to an end.

In the Northwest, it was co-ordinated by Armed Forces Community HQ in Wigan, and covered five areas; Cumbria, Cheshire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Lancashire.

VIC's Community Capacity Builder John Pluckwell has been delivering the project in Lancashire since November 2025. The final data showed this area had successfully signed up almost half of the new members who have joined the partnership across the whole of the Northwest.

John said: "We have recruited 20 organisations into the

Collective, which equates to 49 per cent of all the new groups added. We are leading the way support wise, especially with the football clubs."

Some of the new organisations to sign up include: Buzz Drones, which offers veterans the chance to retrain to use drones for security and event coverage, Innerpeak Wellbeing CIC, a veteran-owned mental health, fitness and wellbeing service and School of You - dedicated to empowering people through access to quality holistic creative arts therapies, psycho-education and group therapeutic services.

In March a Lancashire networking event was organised by VIC at Lancashire Fire and Rescue's base in Chorley and a showcase was also held in

May to celebrate the successes of the work undertaken.

As a result of the showcase, the Military Veterans Service (part of Op COURAGE) an organisation that was struggling to find rooms to hold therapy sessions for veterans, was offered use of rooms in fire stations across Lancashire, free of charge. These rooms provide safe and trusted areas that veterans can access to receive the help and assistance so many need.

Another success for the local project involves HM Prison Kirkham where Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service is now going in to help with several outdoor projects.

A homeless veteran who presented to a partner organisation in Blackpool was able to

be found accommodation because of the network of contacts that have been made through the Forces Wellbeing Collective.

John added: "In Lancashire, we have not only supported the service community, but have saved veterans lives. The successes of the Forces Wellbeing Collective have shown that the work being undertaken in Lancashire is second to none.

"We are building a strong network of organisations that are willing, and able, to support the service community whenever possible. We are freely sharing ideas and best practice with organisations and providing VIC templates, risk assessments and guidance when required."



Quizzing at Clitheroe

THE Clitheroe outreach meeting had a great turnout for its weekly quiz morning at Trinity Church.

John Hawley, a former Major with the Royal Engineers, also

came along.

Meetings start at 10am every Tuesday with a brew and biscuits followed by notices.

Members are discussing where to go on their next visit.

Ron Flowers has

been the main quiz-

master but recently some members have delivered quizzes including Von with her questions on collective nouns where some people only got two correct out of 26 questions.

Generous donation

OUR Accrington Outreach members were delighted to welcome Steve from the Pennine Valley Freemasons who came along to our Friday session and generously donated £250 to VIC.

Members meet every Friday at Accrington Arndale from 10am to 3pm.



Outreach Worker Steve retires

BEGINNING his VIC journey as a service user in 2013, 13 years later Steve Butterworth has retired from his role as a valued Outreach Worker.

In a special ceremony at the VIC Centre in Haslingden, veteran supporters from all over Lancashire and Greater Manchester united to wish Steve a very happy retirement.

The Royal Navy cook, who served on HMS Sheffield in the Falkland Islands, has been a valued member of staff and worked extensively across our area of benefit, including in Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale, Bury and in Preston where the Sandbag Café is going from strength-to-strength.

Although retiring, he will never be a stranger and will continue to help Arts and Crafts Co-ordi-



Steve when he joined VIC in 2013

nator in the Creative Hub making etched and sublimation products.

As a volunteer he will also help to organise the VIC Christmas seasonal shop in Bury's Mill Gate Shopping Centre.

VIC trustee and former Operations Manager Bob Elliott outlined Steve's involvement in the charity to a packed Conference Room adding: "We owe a huge thank you to Steve. Thank you very much for all you have done for VIC. I hope you have a happy



retirement."

Chief Executive Officer Amanda Walton singled out some of the important projects he has been involved with including: Stories in Transition, which ensuring veterans' voices were heard, and many local projects to remember those who served.

After joking about his limited computer skills,

she added that while others were working on screens – Steve was out doing what really mattered.

Amanda explained: "Talking to people, helping veterans and making a genuine difference where it counts.

"His compassion, his quiet determination and his ability to connect

have made a lasting impact – not just on the organisation but on everyone he's worked with."

Steve, his son Adam and grandson Bradley are also undertaking a personal project. To build a large 3D printed model of HMS Sheffield; it should keep them busy for the next 12 months.





Packed trip to Festival of Remembrance

A PACKED VIC minibus will take veterans to the Festival of Remembrance at Manchester Airport on November 5

After posting on Facebook, all the 10 places were snapped up. Jacko Pearce will be carrying the VIC Standard.



Carp fishing thanks

ANOTHER spectacular Carp Fishing Social has been held in Oxford.

They are organised by Barry Horsnell, son of VIC Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren to thank VIC for the support the organisation has given him over many years.

Sadly, this is the last time that Darren will be

attending to support the event as he is retiring from the role, but he is very grateful to everyone who has helped.

He said: "I would like to say thank you to everyone who attends the fishing - to Arne Annan for providing Bear Grylls camping equipment and to Laura Saxon at Asda for the food and sauces.

"Thanks to Adrian Buck for attending every social and donated monetary prizes, to Shaun Arstall for donating his new caravan for weekends away and £500 angling direct vouchers and to Carl Freshwater who sold us a barbecue at cost."

The carp socials will be continuing.

Full production

OUR new sublimation room is finished and now in full production meeting orders for VIC products.

Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell is delighted with the new facility.

He is also going to be assisted by Steve Butterworth, who has retired from his role as Outreach Worker but is returning as a volunteer to assist Darren.

Anyone who wants to know more about the products or wants a specific item created, should contact 01706 833180.



ROSSENDALE

Activities at the VIC Centre, Bury Road, Haslingden, BB4 5PL, unless otherwise stated.

Outreach Service

MONDAY-FRIDAY

9am-4.30pm

For a home appointment call 01706 833180

MONDAY

Crafty Chatters

10am-12 noon

TUESDAY

Art Group

10am-3.30pm

Cost £6 places limited book on

01706 833180

THURSDAY

Greggs RV

1pm-3pm

THURSDAY

VIC Choir (weekly)

6.30-8.30pm

FRIDAY

Art Group

10am-3.30pm

Cost £6 places limited book on

01706 833180

SUNDAY

Drop-in

10.15am-12.30pm

SECOND SATURDAY IN THE MONTH

Rossendale Armed Forces and Veterans' Breakfast Club

10am-12.30pm

Haslingden Community Link Cafe, Bury Road, Haslingden BB4 5PG (book in advance)

EVERY MONTH

Painting in the Style of Bob Ross art classes

Contact Darren 01706 833180

Walking Groups/ Social Inclusion trips

see Facebook or website for details

Parson Lane, Clitheroe, BB7 2JY.

Sandbag Cafe

10am-12.30pm

St George's Church, off Lune Street, Preston PR1 2NP. *This is a joint session with Lancashire Armed Forces Association.*

BURNLEY AND PENDLE

Outreach Service

MONDAY

10am-noon

Breakfast Club at Burnley Miners' Social Club, Plumbe Street, Burnley, BB11 3AA.

Contact 01706 833180 for dates of outreach at: Burnley FC in the Community; Pendle Armed Forces Support Group, Holmefield House, Gisburn Road, Barrowford; Morrisons in Nelson and Asda in Colne.

HEYWOOD, MIDDLETON AND ROCHDALE

VIC Outreach

TUESDAY

The Mess Tin - cafe and drop-in

1pm-2.30pm

The Lighthouse Project, Middleton Shopping Centre, M24 1AB.

THURSDAY

Rochdale Veterans' Breakfast Club and VIC Outreach

9am Flying Horse Hotel, Packer Street, Rochdale, OL16 1NJ.

RIBBLE VALLEY & PRESTON

TUESDAYS

Redoubt Coffee Morning and Outreach

10am-noon

Trinity Methodist Church, Wesleyan Row,

VIC – 01706 833180

Chief Executive Amanda Walton

amandawalton@vic.org.uk

Operations Manager Phil Speddy

philspeddy@vic.org.uk

Administrator Amy Thompson

amythompson@vic.org.uk

Project Worker Ray Sharkey

raysharkey@vic.org.uk 07741 902 188

Community Capacity Builder

John Pluckwell

johnpluckwell@vic.org.uk

Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator

Darren Horsnell

darrenhorsnell@vic.org.uk

VIC Choir Bookings Barry Hyde

b.hyde@ntlworld.com

Veterans at risk of homelessness

or organisations working with them are encouraged to contact **OP FORTITUDE**

0800 952 0774 or visit riv.org.uk/opfortitude

Combat Stress Helpline

0800 138 1619

NHS Military Veterans Psychological

Therapies Service (NW)

0300 323 0707

The Royal British Legion

0808 802 8080 7 days a week 8am-8pm

SSAFA

email Lancashire@ssafa.org.uk

01772 260 462

Citizens Advice East Lancashire

0808 278 7975 freephone Mon-Fri 9am-5pm

The Samaritans

01282 694929

Mon to Fri 9am-9pm

Freephone 116 123

Op Courage

0300 373 3332 email

opcourageNORTH@cntw.nhs.uk

Veterans UK Free Helpline

0808 1914 218

East Lancashire Single Point of Access via

GP or self-referral

0800 0130 707

Veterans In Communities
Charity Number 1151194

HYNDBURN

Outreach / Drop-In/ Model Railway Club/ Art Group

FRIDAY 10am-3pm

VIC Hyndburn, Accrington Arndale Centre, BB5 1EX.

Accrington Stanley Breakfast Club/ Drop-In

LAST SATURDAY EVERY MONTH

10.30am-noon

Stanley Sports Hub, Thorneyholme Road, Accrington, BB5 6BD.

BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN

Veterans' football

MONDAY 8-9pm

Blackburn Rovers Indoor Centre, Ewood Park, Blackburn BB2 4JF. A cost applies.

Outreach Service

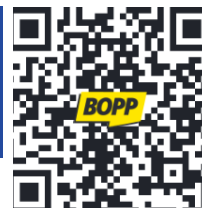
TUESDAY 10am-noon

Rovers Breakfast Hub, Legends Lounge, Darwen End, Blackburn Rovers FC, Ewood Park, Blackburn, BB2 4JF.

Contact Chris McGrail 07787 585109

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