



SUPPORTING SERVING AND FORMER
MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES,
EMERGENCY SERVICES AND FAMILIES



Evaluation Report

YEAR 1 OF NATIONAL LOTTERY FUNDING

SURF ACTION ‘CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE’

30/05/13 – 29/05/14



**AN EVALUATION OF THE FIRST YEAR OF SURF
ACTION’S FIVE YEAR ‘CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE’
PROJECT PART FUNDED BY THE ‘BIG LOTTERY FUND’**

Surf Action

Surf action is a charity (Registered number: 1140191) founded by a military veteran that uses surfing and the beach environment to deliver physical and mental well being to those who still serve or have served in the armed forces, civilian emergency services and families.



Surf Action was already providing veterans and other military groups with regular surf clinics and other high intensity watersports activities, all of which were designed to enhance the wellbeing of individuals and help reduce feelings of social isolation. The lottery funding was awarded to allow this provision to be extended, improved and enhanced over a 5 year period.

YEAR 1 PROJECT GOALS

(40 CLIENTS)

- Improving veterans' mental and physical wellbeing allowing them to engage more with the community by removing feelings and habits of isolation.
- Increasing veterans self confidence and self esteem and strengthening their family relationships by providing continuous support for veterans and their families wishing to escape the daily barriers.
- Improving veterans and their families' health and wellbeing by increasing their coping skills and knowledge of coping strategies.
- Improving the employment prospects of veterans and ex-service personnel by strengthening their knowledge of transferable skills needed in the civilian work place whilst also educating employers.

METHODOLOGY

- A comprehensive case history of each veteran was taken at initial engagement. Wives/partners were encouraged to attend these meetings
- A physical, psychological and social needs audit was carried out on each veteran and their family
- Veterans and their families were signposted to partner organisations and charities to best satisfy the requirements of their needs analysis
- Specific psychological support was provided through referral to the national network of therapists provided by 'PTSD Resolution', a charity which specialises in working with ex-service personnel
- A 12 section 'Wheel of Life' evaluation tool (based on the recognised 'Emotional Needs Audit' developed by J. Griffin & I. Tyrrell and adapted for use with veterans by Surf Action) was used to monitor the progress

of each veteran at regular intervals. The qualitative emotional needs considered were:

- A living environment that feels safe and secure
- At least one close friendship or relationship
- A connection to the wider community
- A sense of control over one's life
- Privacy and personal space
- To feel one is achieving in at least one area of life
- To give and receive healthy attention and to feel valued
- Someone to turn to for support when one needs it
- A sense that life has meaning and purpose
- Time for hobbies and fun
- A good quality of sleep
- A healthy diet and lifestyle

Veterans were asked to rate each of the 12 areas on a scale from 1 (very poor) to 10 (very good) and this was used to generate the quantitative data to complement the qualitative data. Any score of 3 or below was indicating a considerable stressor in the veteran's life.

- Weekly support and social interaction was provided by veteran engagement at the numerous surf clinics and associated activities run by Surf Action and by regular telephone contact
- Specific family activities were provided throughout the year to provide extra opportunities for veteran and family engagement
- Several 'PTSD awareness' sessions were provided by Surf Action to allow veterans and their partners to best understand the nature of PTSD and the various coping strategies which may be of help to sufferers.
- Relevant data was collected, analysed and stored by Surf Action (ICO registered number Z3463898)



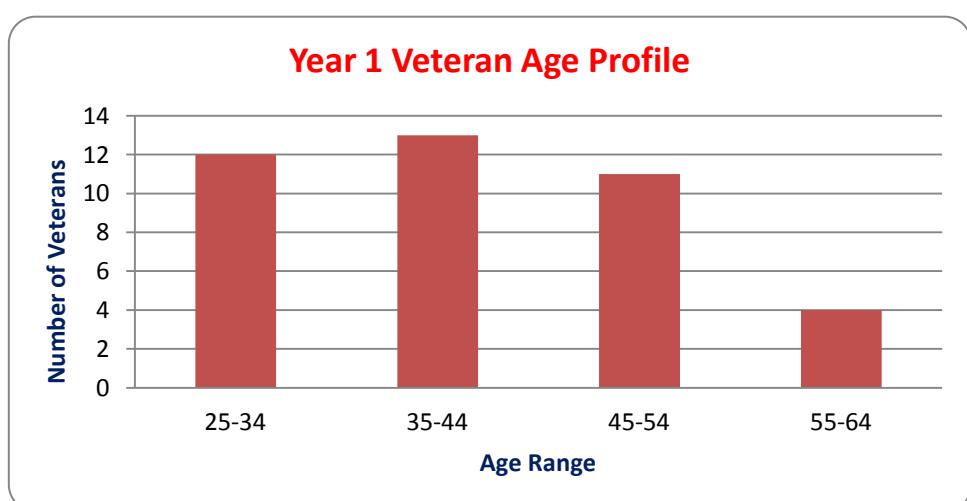
YEAR 1 VETERANS' PROFILE

ETHNIC BACKGROUND

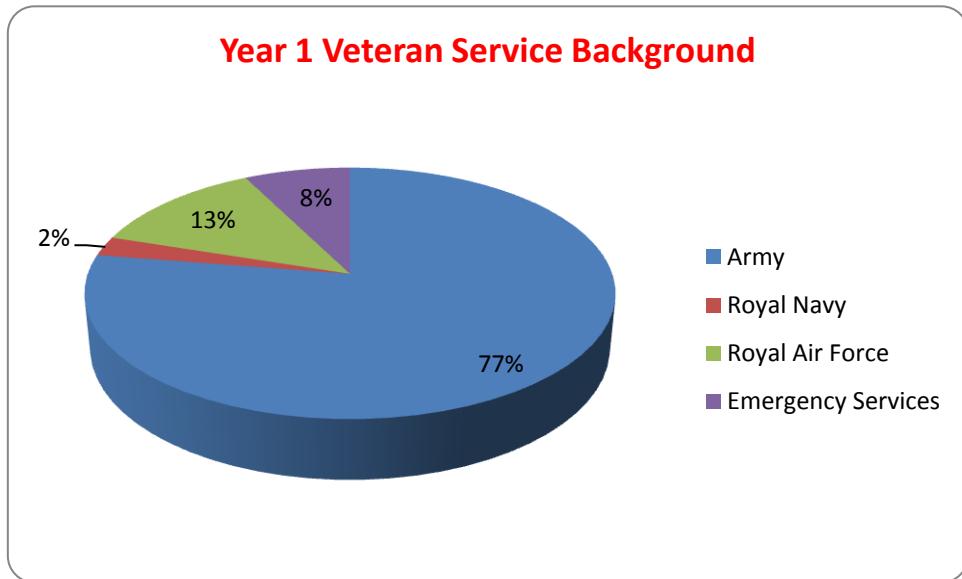
Due to the ethnic make-up of Cornwall, all the veterans were white. This is consistent with the demographic of the county as a whole, in which 98.7% of the population define themselves as White (ONS, 2008).

GENDER/AGE

All of the year 1 veterans were male. This is consistent with the large number of veterans who had experienced older conflicts such as the Falklands, Gulf and Bosnia which pre-dated female front-line service. The group mean male age in the first year has been 41 with the median age being in the 35-44 age-group. In later years we expect to see a younger age profile involving more recent conflicts and an associated rise in the number of females.



SERVICE BACKGROUND



RESULTS AND FINDINGS

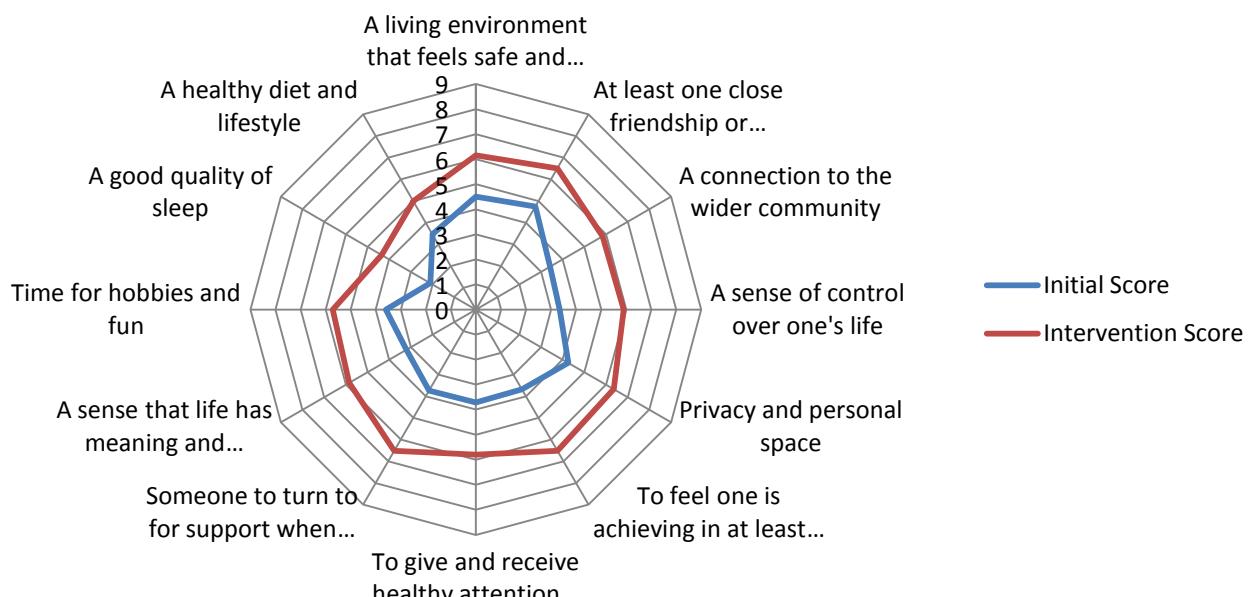
Table 1: Year 1 Veterans Emotional Needs Audit Group Mean Score

Emotional Need	Initial Score	Intervention Score	% Improvement
A living environment that feels safe and secure	4.50	6.15	37
At least one close friendship or relationship	4.75	6.50	37
A connection to the wider community	3.42	5.84	70
A sense of control over one's life	3.35	5.90	76
Privacy and personal space	4.26	6.35	49
To feel one is achieving in at least one area of life	3.68	6.51	77
To give and receive healthy attention and to feel valued	3.71	5.79	56
Someone to turn to for support when one needs it	3.74	6.52	74
A sense that life has meaning and purpose	3.21	5.85	82
Time for hobbies and fun	3.60	5.72	88
A good quality of sleep	2.10	4.35	107
A healthy diet and lifestyle	3.47	5.00	44

A ‘spidersweb’ diagram was chosen as the best way in which to picture the results.

- The closer the diagram gets to the centre indicates a lower standard of life in those areas with a fall to 3 or below indicating a considerable problem
- The further away the diagram gets from the centre indicates an improved quality of life in those areas

Diagram 1: Year 1 Veterans Emotional Needs Audit Group Mean Scores



The initial emotional audit scores were very low and indicative of a considerable number of stressful areas in the veterans' lives with the quality of sleep being a particular problem. This was not a surprise but there were very large variations amongst the veterans' individual scores so mean scores were a better tool with which to monitor overall progress. Because initial scores were so low it also meant that small increases in mean scores over the year would show as big percentage increases.

The diagram shows:

- There was a significant improvement in the veterans' mean emotional audit score in each of the 12 audit areas during the year.
- The shapes of the lines both show flattening in the 3 'top left' audit areas and it indicates that these areas are still more problematic than the others.
- The biggest improvement was in the quality of sleep amongst the veterans where the mean score doubled however it still remains a problem in the veterans' lives

CONCLUSIONS

- By providing a mix of physical and family activities, PTSD information sessions and facilitating access to therapy, Surf Action has made a demonstrable improvement in the quality of the veterans' lives.
- By actively encouraging families to attend surf clinics and by providing shared activities where families can have fun and connect in a more open and beneficial way, Surf Action has helped facilitate a positive change in both family relationships and connection.
- By providing a platform where veterans and their families can meet others with shared experiences, Surf Action is helping reduce the isolation which many veterans feel.
- By providing information sessions about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, its background, effects, coping mechanisms and treatments to the veterans, their families and volunteers, Surf Action is helping veterans and their families better deal with PTSD in their day-to-day lives with the associated benefits to family life and bonds.

- The Surf Action ‘Centre of Excellence’ project has made a good start but now needs to maintain the improvements already achieved and extend its methodology to other organisations and veterans.

LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE PLANS

1. The veteran population can be very mobile/transient and this can make staying in regular contact after initial engagement and monitoring the progress of some veterans very difficult. Surf Action is increasing its resources in this area.
2. The 12 areas of the Emotional Needs Audit used on the Surf Action ‘Wheel of Life’ required enhancing in order to best enable the monitoring of the veterans. The audit was increased to 24 areas of life (Griffin and Tyrrell as amended by Surf Action)
3. Consideration is also being given to using the Warwick and Edinburgh Universities Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWS), a positively worded measure developed by Warwick and Edinburgh Universities in 2006 in conjunction with NHS Scotland, measuring emotional and psychological wellbeing. This scale is particularly suited for use with children.
4. Surf Action has worked hard, in conjunction with the Big Lottery Fund, to create a strong and sustainable platform on which to base its current and future projects. This has included the charity re-defining its aims and objectives into a clear plan for the future with stronger business, management and support systems. The governance of the charity has been strengthened with specific business expertise being incorporated. Improved monitoring systems to capture real-time data and more robust financial and operational management and support systems have also been introduced.
5. The improvements outlined above have kept the charity on a sound financial basis and means that Surf Action can now look to grow in other parts of the UK, work more closely with Ministry of Defence establishments and a wider range of centres of excellence.

6. The development of a new and comprehensive website and a strong presence on social media is giving the charity a more visible online profile.

