



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



West Country charity helps veteran rebuild shattered lives through surfing



Combat veterans who have suffered everything from homelessness to alcoholism have told how a West Country charity has helped them to rebuild their lives – through surfing.

The charity Surf Action takes groups of veterans including amputees and those suffering from the effects of post traumatic stress disorder surfing every week with sessions across the region.

At present, the charity runs weekly surf sessions in Newquay, Bude and Gwithian and it is now gearing up to expand into Devon and Dorset in 2015.

“We work with a broad spectrum of veterans. They may have physical injuries that you can see or psychological ones you can’t from different experiences that they have either seen or been involved in their military service,” said operations manager Mark Wesson.

The charity, which is based in Penzance ran pilot surfing sessions in Bournemouth and Weymouth last year and it is now planning to launch programmes in the two towns next summer.

It is also planning to expand into Plymouth and North Devon because of their links to the military.

“It’s a business model that can be rolled out in different areas,” added Mr Wesson.

“We have been to Plymouth three times and we’ve done fundraising with Derriford Hospital and we’ve worked with the Royal British Legion there.”

The charity has also been in talks with Plymouth MP Oliver Colvile about the possibility of establishing a residential centre in the city so that Surf Action can run more of its week-long residential courses.

Surf Action, which receives funding from the Big Lottery, has helped more than 440 veterans since it launched and works with other organizations including the NHS, the Royal British Legion and Combat Stress.

It has also provided surf courses for serving soldiers including 1 Royal Horse Artillery on their return from Afghanistan, 3 Yorks, Royal Marines Assault Squadron, Hasler Company and RAF training staff from Central Command.

Families are also included in the surfing sessions, with surfing offering the chance for parents to spend quality time with their children.

“Children suffer from deployment issues or one parent family issues when they go away. If their mum or dad comes back with psychological injuries or physical injuries it’s important to knit the family together. It allows them to understand what’s going on and to re-bond with mum and dad. It’s also important for spouses to understand the things that their husband or wife has gone through,” said Mr Wesson.

Overseeing the surf sessions at Newquay are coaches Mark Eley, 54, and Betsy Townsend (pictured), 18, who both believe in the power of surfing to change negative feelings. “As soon as they get in the water they seem more relaxed and when they have a good surf they come out happy. There’s something about being in the water that makes people relax” said Ms Townsend.

“I’m not looking at their past, I’m looking at their future and saying ‘this is what we can do together.’ It’s opening doors as opposed to being focused on the negative stuff,” said Mr Eley.

By [Western Morning News](#) | Posted: November 09, 2014

By Liz Parks

Read more: <http://www.westernmorningnews.co.uk/Westcountry-charity-helps-veteran-rebuild/story-24455409-detail/story.html#ixzz3QUyKfLV2>



Surf Action, Unit 11, Long Rock Industrial Estate, Penzance, Cornwall, TR20 8HX
T: 01736 365645 | Email: info@surfaction.co.uk
www.surfaction.co.uk | Registered Charity No. 1140191

