

# Evaluation Report

## Armed Forces Dance Co-ordinator Project Length: September 2017 to March 2018

Written by Chloe Brown  
Date: 21/3/18



*Photo credit: Dave Street*



## **CONTENTS**

1. Summary
2. Identifying the need
3. Aims and Outcomes
4. Facts and Figures
5. Training
6. Projects
7. Partnerships
8. Independent Living Zone
9. Conclusion

## 1. Summary

The role of the Armed Forces Dance Co-ordinator over the course of this six month research project was to deepen and strengthen our current relationships with the veteran organisations in the the city and the individual veterans/carers/dependents of veterans that attend our regular Tea Dance with a Twist! events at Plymouth Guildhall.

Further to our original application; increasing contact with veteran organisations and individual veterans/carers and dependents of veterans will allow the Armed Forces Dance Co-ordinator to sign-post people/organisations to other dance opportunities across the city, as well as encouraging veteran organisations and the individual veterans, dependents and carers to co-design bespoke dance projects that meet the needs of those that we connect with.

Overall, the role of the Armed Forces Dance Co-ordinator enabled the possibility to explore increasing the engagement of Legion beneficiaries in dance (observing and participating), as a way to improve their physical and emotional well-being.

## 2. Identifying the Need

In the Ministry of Defence Annual Population survey in 2016 (published October 2017) states that:

- There is 2.2 million veterans in England.
- In the South West region of England there are 328,000 veterans.
- Within Devon there are 83,000, which is 8.7% of the population.
- Within Plymouth there are 20,000 veterans.

Although contact with veteran organisations has been initiated previously through the promotion and delivery of the Tea Dance with a Twist! events from November 2016 and August 2017. Our project coordinator for Tea Dance with a Twist! was in email communication with 36 representatives of 28 veteran organisations and met with 2 representatives of 2 different organisations, which is 7% of those contacted..

Following this, we have identified from our perspective that there is a need for these links to be deepened and strengthened in order for us to be able to increase the confidence and knowledge of the veteran organisation representatives regarding how dance can support the physical, mental, emotional health and well-being as well as decrease social isolation issues of their members.

Individuals who attend the Tea Dance with a Twist! events colloquially highlight their desire to engage with dance more (observing and participating) when chatting to the volunteers and dance team or providing written feedback after each tea dance. One comment states:

- "It brings people together, avoids loneliness and isolation. I would normally have a nap on a saturday afternoon. I didn't expect to have this much fun. Would love more regular dances."

This proposed project would enable us to follow up these conversations and provide signposting and bespoke opportunities for the veterans, carers and dependants that we are already connected to.

### 3. Aims and Outcomes

After our feedback from veterans/dependents and carers at Tea Dance with a Twist! events, our main aims for the events over the course of this project was to:

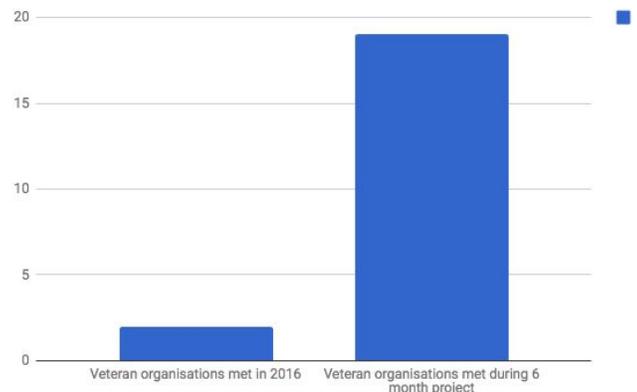
- To have met with at least 40% of the veteran organisations at least once during this project.
- Review our list of veteran organisations and ensure that we are in contact with all of the veteran organisations (including the new organisation - Veteran Advocacy Service in Plymouth).
- Interest and support for Tea Dance with a Twist! and other dance opportunities by the veteran organisations will demonstrably increase with them confirming that they are promoting our Tea Dance with a Twist! events and asking us for more information about dance in Plymouth. This will be measured via an online questionnaire as well as face-to-face feedback.
- The individuals that we connect with at Tea Dance with a Twist! will volunteer to become Armed Forces Dance Ambassadors.
- The individuals that we connect with at Tea Dance with a Twist! will become more engaged with dance across the city (observing and participating).
- We will have co-designed at least one bespoke dance project for members of the Armed Forces communities.

We also wanted to aim to secure partners and/or sponsors to ensure that the projects that arise can continue beyond our projected 6 months to be a regular event for veterans/dependents and carers.

## 4. Facts and Figures

As previously stated from 2016 to 2017 we were in communication with 36 representatives of 28 veteran organisations and have met with 2 (7%).

Since this project began the Armed Forces Dance Co-ordinator has made contact with 38 veteran organisations and met with 19 (50%). This has resulted in an increase of 43% and has exceeded the original aim of meeting with 40% of veteran organisations.



Consequently, through the contact made an increase in the number of veterans, dependents and carers attending Tea Dance with a Twist! events from October 2017, with our March 2018 Tea Dance recording 14 veterans attending which is 34 veterans, dependents and carers attending in total.

For the March 2018 Tea Dance with a Twist! event 44% of the overall attendees were veterans, dependents and carers. Below is a chart from showing number of attending veterans, dependents and carers from February 2017 to March 2018 for Tea Dance with a Twist!

Date of Tea Dance	No. of Participants Overall	No. of Veterans	No. of Dependents and Carers of Veterans	% of Veterans/ Dependents and Carers
18th February 2017	99	12	1	13%
11th March 2017	107	12	1	12%
8th April 2017	76	14	2	22%
24th June 2017	64	7	10	27%
15th July 2017	56	7	6	23%
12th August 2017	92	10	23	36%
14th October 2017	91	6	16	24%
11th November 2017	126	6	10	13%
9th December 2017	67	6	7	19%
17th February 2018	108	9	24	31%
17th March 2018	78	14	20	44%
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>120</b>	

Due to this increase in the number of veterans/dependents and carers attending, one member of the RAF Veterans group has since volunteered to help and support the Tea Dance with a Twist! event in March. They stated:

*"I have been registered with the RFEA (Regular Forces Employment Agency) for a couple of months and the amount of information I am getting is amazingly helpful both in my search for a new job and events taking place across Plymouth and the South West. This includes events such as "Tea Dance with a Twist", which I attended in March, which has provided me with new skills towards work life.*

*I cannot stress enough the importance of events and programs such as these. I did meet a lovely lady who was very recently widowed who has 2 sons both serving in the Royal Air Force and live away from Plymouth. It highlighted to me very poignantly, just how lonely life can be once a mainstay in your life is gone.*

*I will continue my support for this program as well as any others that involve Veterans and hope to meet more fellow Veterans and new friends along the way."*

Another veteran has provided support to ensure the continuation of the Tea Dance with a Twist! events beyond March 2018.

Overall, over the course of this 6 month research project, the Armed Forces Dance Co-ordinator has engaged with **180** veterans/dependents and carers directly through various meetings, dance sessions that have been delivered, Tea Dances with a Twist! and networking events.

## 5. Training

The Armed Forces Dance Co-ordinator and other member of Plymouth dance including coordinating producer and volunteer coordinator have attend Veteran Awareness Training through SEAP Advocacy service on 23rd November 2017 and 7th December 2017.

The training was delivered by Marie Macpherson; a veteran and advocate for SEAP Advocacy. This interactive training provided those who serve our veteran community in depth understanding around the needs and culture of veterans, carers and dependants.

Veteran Awareness Training provided contacts for various organisations including the Veteran's Trauma Network, Veterans Gateway, Plymouth Access to Housing and Improving Lives Plymouth, who offer financial, housing and work advice for veterans.

Through attending this training, the Armed Forces Dance Coordinator and various members of Plymouth Dance are able to signpost and offer support for individual veterans, dependents and carers who need advice surrounding physical, mental, emotional and financial well being.

From this training, the opportunity to network arose. This led to several meetings and contacts with Improving Lives Plymouth - Veterans Gateway. Bill Jennings; Veteran Support Worker, has aided promotion of Tea Dance with a Twist as well as supported to developed a number of the proposed projects listed above. Anne- Marie Watts; Veteran Carers Support Coordinator provided an information stand at the Tea Dance with a Twist! event on 17th March.

The Armed Forces Dance Coordinator will also be attending a two day Mental Health for Armed Forces course on 25th and 26th April 2018 through Livewell.

## 6. Projects

Through conversations with Veteran Support Organisations stated below, as well as individual veteran/dependents and carers, three bespoke projects have been co-designed and/or trialled:

Wren's Association  
Active Devon  
Federation of Plymouth and District Ex Service Association  
Hasler Company  
Help for Heroes  
Royal British Legion  
Active Plus  
Veteran Memory Cafe - Crownhill  
Plymouth City Council  
Public Health England  
Plymouth Drake Foundation  
Veterans Care Navigation  
Improving Lives Plymouth  
RAF Association  
Plymouth Argyle Community Trust  
Engage Church  
North Prospect Community Learning  
Plymouth Military Advocacy Service

One project that has developed through these meetings is Dance Companions, a project that was previously piloted in 2016.

This project enables veterans, dependents and/or carers to gain free tickets to see a theatre/dance performance at their local theatre (Theatre Royal Plymouth). Through conversations with individuals, it has been discovered that veterans, dependents and carers do not want to attend performance alone. This scheme will allow the Armed Forces Dance Coordinator to train volunteers to become a dance companion and attend performances with veterans, dependents and carers.

Another project that has been co-designed through the demands of individual veterans, dependents and carers is the Dance Demonstration Team. The concept of having dance workshops and/or Tea Dance with a Twist! events being delivered in various locations and organisations when requested.

This project has been trialled with a workshop being delivered in Hartley Care Home on 13th February from 2pm to 4pm in partnership with Active Plus as part of their Aged Veterans course. Feedback was recorded by Active Plus in the form of a questionnaire:

**(6 people filled out the questionnaire, 15 participated in the dance workshop)**

**As a result of today's session I have:**

	<b>Not Today.</b>	<b>A bit more than usual. A bit more than usual.</b>	<b>Definitely.</b>
<b>Talked to people and made new friends.</b>	1	0	5
<b>Learned something new.</b>	1	1	4
<b>Learned or shared information about my community with others.</b>	1	1	4
<b>Laughed out loud.</b>	1	3	2
<b>Gained Confidence.</b>	2	2	2
<b>Enjoyed myself.</b>	1	2	3

**Please tell us what you thought about today:**

*"Very well led".*

*"Very useful, got me moving and really enjoyed the session".*

*"Feeling happy and I achieved some dance".*

*"Good variation of activities for our residents and kept us interested".*

# plymouthdance

Since the dance workshop in Hartley Care Home, other organisations have requested outreach dance workshops:

- Marjon Memory Cafe on 18th April
- Furzehatt Care Home as part of Aged Veteran Course on 18th April
- HMS Drake Health and Wellbeing Event on 24th April
- Hartley Park Care Home on 2nd May
- Tea Dance as part of 'Plymouth at War' The Hidden Heritage of the Greatest Maritime City on 26th to 28th May
- Thrive Network meeting in September 2018 (date TBC)

The Armed Forces Dance Coordinator has been approached by Help For Heroes to trial run seated dance classes for carers and dependents of veterans every friday in Endeavour House Recovery Centre in March/April.



*Photo Credit: Dave Street, Active Plus*

The third proposed project is a relocation service which would enable military families who are involved in dance moving to or from Plymouth to or from various locations within the UK to maintain consistency in their lives. By the Armed Forces Dance Coordinator communicating with various relocation organisation as well as the relevant dance/activity groups, this means once the family has left one location and moved to the other they can still be involved in the dance/ activity groups they once were.

## 6. Partnerships

During the six month project, the Armed Forces Dance Coordinator has begun to establish two partnerships with two different organisations:

- Plymouth Argyle Community Trust
- Active Plus

Plymouth Community Trust are also working to support veterans, dependent and carers throughout the city. Through the two meetings with Joshua Grant; The Health and Disability Officer for Plymouth Argyle, who has now left this position; the concept of working together to improve health and wellbeing amongst veterans, dependents and carers has been established.

The possibility of setting up a joint veteran's activities morning which would include various sports such as seated handball and dance workshops in various styles was discussed. This event would occur monthly in a central location.



*Photo credit: Dave Street, Active Plus*

Active Plus are a organisation made up of veterans, who run unique programmes to other veterans, dependents and carers around the concept of team building, building confidence, communication skills as well as skills which could support future job prospects. Through the two meetings with Dave Street; the lead instructor of Active Plus the concept of working together to improve health and wellbeing amongst

veterans, dependents and carers has been established.

Promotion of Tea Dance with a Twist! events has been done by Plymouth Argyle Community Trust as well as a representative attending a Tea dance on 17th February, to promote their programme that supports veterans, dependents and carers. Through this contact, They were able to make contact with residents and carers from Furzehatt Care Home, where the next Aged Veterans Course is being held in April.

The Armed Forces Dance Coordinator has also led a dance workshop as part of their Aged Veterans Programmes stated previously, with the prospect of this continuing amongst the other programmes.



*Photo credit: Dave Street*

## 7. Independent Living Zone

The Mezzanine area at each of the Tea Dance with a Twist! events has been designed as an Independent Living Zone with displays and stands promoting products, services and face to face advice and information support has been available from voluntary and corporate sectors. We have had a number of businesses and unique local veteran support organisations involved from Frontline Veterans, Improving Lives Plymouth - Veterans Navigation, Plymouth Argyle Community Trust and Active Plus.

These events are used as a gateway to help signpost over 50's, veterans, dependents and carers who are not already engaged to local services or other more regular activities. Some of the activities we have promoted so far are:

Falls Prevention Dance classes, KazJ Fit Dance Fitness, Functional Fitness class and Balance and Coordination classes.

Being able to signpost veterans, carers and dependents to other organisations and service providers in the city in order to improve physical, mental health and social engagement of veterans, dependents and carers in Plymouth.

*Photo Credit: Kaitlyn Howlett*

## **8. Conclusion**

As a result of the success and raised profile of the project, as well as the comprehensive data collected, we were able to consider applying for funding to continue the role of the Armed Forces Dance Coordinator and start the bespoke projects stated previously.

It is hoped that direct communication and contact with veterans, dependents and carers will continue to increase in turn the number of Legion beneficiaries engaging in dance (observing and participating) will increase as a way to improve their physical and emotional well-being.