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Wincanton Community Hub celebrates after receiving National Lottery funding to support the Military Community

Local not-for-profit organisation, Got Your Six UK CIC, is this week celebrating after being awarded just under £20,000 in National Lottery funding to support its work with the military community across Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire. Their Community Hub, based in Wincanton, Somerset, is open to the whole community, whilst the therapeutic services are military specific to support serving personnel, veterans, spouses, and their families.

Got Your Six UK is a Community Interest Company founded by Tara Coyles-Gould, a military spouse and therapist, whilst veterans Gareth Bottomley, and Andrew Price, complete the unpaid director line up. Got Your Six UK operates with two part-time paid staff who run the organisation day-to-day, and a team of serving personnel, veterans, and military spouses who give up their free time to support the project.

Got Your Six UK began in 2022 as a therapy service based out of The Veterans Hub Weymouth and Portland CIC – another vital organisation for those who have served. With a lack of support identified in south Somerset and north Dorset, a decision was made to become a full-time project.

In early 2024, the organisation took on an old bank which had been empty for many years. Working closely with the landlord, Got Your Six UK volunteers spent three months tirelessly transforming the building site into a calm and welcoming 'safe space' with two therapy rooms, a community lounge, kid's corner, snug, pre-loved bookshop and communal wellbeing garden. The original night safe, and bank vault remain as features and a reminder of the building's history, particularly as it was bombed during the war and a life was lost.

The new funding from The National Lottery Community Fund, which distributes money raised by National Lottery players for good causes and is the largest community funder in the UK, will see more of our military community supported with their mental health.

The Community Hub assists with reducing isolation and aiding integration and runs various clubs and groups to get people together, in particular military families who may be new to the area or living away from family.

Got Your Six UK will be using the grant money to ensure core costs such as rent and utilities are covered for at least the next six months, as well as subsidising much needed therapy for the military community. As a CIC, the organisation runs on funds it makes through services, selling merchandise, and its pre-loved bank vault bookshop, but still relies on the help from kind donations and grants to cover overheads, and widen the support available.

Waiting lists for appropriate therapy nationally are circa 12-24 months and Got Your Six UK has been bridging a gap locally for the last two years, allowing for immediate access to support for those experiencing service-related mental health issues. Got Your Six UK works closely with a number of charitable and statutory organisations and regiments to create a safety net for those in emotional distress, or down on their luck.

Tara Coyles-Gould, founder of Got Your Six UK says: "We're delighted that The National Lottery Community Fund has recognised our work in this way. Now, thanks to National Lottery players we will be able to guarantee our Community Hub stays open and is able to continue providing low-cost trauma-informed military specific therapy. This is important because those who serve are notorious for not speaking about their mental health, and sadly suicide statistics amongst the military community have shown this.

Feedback from our clients indicates military personnel find it difficult to discuss their service-related issues with civilian therapists or feel rushed and unable to build much-needed trust with a therapist when limited sessions are offered. This is why we are dedicated to offering open-ended therapy with therapists who have a background in the military community.

We also provide access to serving and veteran Peer Support Mentors who are able to offer more informal support and a chance to chat to someone with similar experiences.

Since Aug 2022, we've seen 63 clients, 52 of those presented with a mental health condition, and 34 presented with either current suicidal ideation, or previous attempts on their lives. During that time, our suicide intervention training has been deployed eleven times to prevent immediate harm.

Our aim is to ensure no one else from our armed forces community becomes another devastating statistic."

Veteran Lenny Beresford, a Got Your Six UK volunteer says: "Mental health support is very close to my heart since my wife passed away in 2022 aged just 36 and subsequently my own wellbeing took a battering. I recently left the Army after 22 years' service and with spare time on my hands I leapt at the opportunity to get involved with Got Your Six UK. Initially as a handy man & furniture mover during the refurb, but more recently I have become volunteer coordinator, front of house, and run the social evenings for the military community.

Everyday has been different; from veterans in their 90's to those still serving from all three Armed Forces who share

stories and can offer advice and reflection on similar experiences. Some stories bring sadness and the occasional tear, but everyone always leaves the same...smiling, knowing there is a place they can drop in anytime, the kettle is rarely cold, and someone is always ready to listen.”

A Got Your Six UK service user who wishes to remain anonymous dedicated 20 years' service to the British Army and reflects on his journey: “After my second suicide attempt on July 6, 2024, miraculously, I regained consciousness in an intensive care unit, and spent five days under careful medical supervision, slowly being nursed back to health. After my discharge from the hospital, I started working with Tara from Got Your Six UK; her support has been invaluable in helping me to reconnect with life and rediscover hope for the future. After my medical discharge from the Army, I felt isolated and purposeless, as though I had been cast aside by a community I once regarded as family. Tara's guidance has not only allowed me to regain a sense of connection but has also introduced me to others who share similar experiences. This newfound camaraderie has rekindled my sense of belonging.”

The Community Hub is open Tues 1000-1300, Weds-Fri 1000-1600 and Saturday 1000-1400, with evening and weekend events advertised on the website and social media pages. Military Specific Therapy and Art Therapy is available in both Wincanton and Weymouth, at The Veterans Hub, and can be accessed by visiting either of the Hubs or downloading a referral form from the website. Organisations and healthcare professionals can also refer clients (with consent) using the same forms.

The National Lottery Community Fund recently launched its strategy, '[It starts with community](#)', which will underpin its efforts to distribute at least £4 billion of National Lottery funding by 2030.

As part of this, the funder has four key missions, which are to support communities to come together, be environmentally sustainable, help children and young people thrive and enable people to live healthier lives.

National Lottery players raise over £30 million a week for good causes across the UK. Thanks to them, last year (2023/24) The National Lottery Community Fund awarded over half a billion pounds (£686.3 million) of life-changing funding to communities across the UK, supporting over 13,700 projects to turn their great ideas into reality.

To find out more visit www.TNLCommunityFund.org.uk

Ends

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Notes to Editors:

About The National Lottery Community Fund

We are the largest non-statutory community funder in the UK – community is at the heart of our purpose, vision and name. We support activities that create resilient communities that are more inclusive and environmentally sustainable and that will strengthen society and improve lives across the UK.

We're proud to award money raised by National Lottery players to communities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and to work closely with government to distribute vital grants and funding from key Government programmes and initiatives.

As well as responding to what communities tell us is important to them, our funding is focused on four key missions, supporting communities to:

1. Come together
2. Be environmentally sustainable
3. Help children and young people thrive
4. Enable people to live healthier lives.

Thanks to the support of National Lottery players, we distribute over £600 million a year through 13,000+ grants and plan to invest over £4 billion of funding into communities by 2030. We're privileged to be able to work with the smallest of local groups right up to UK-wide charities, enabling people and communities to bring their ambitions to life.

National Lottery players raise over £30 million each week for good causes throughout the UK. Since The National Lottery began in 1994, £49 billion has been raised and more than 690,000 individual grants have been made across the UK - the equivalent of around 240 National Lottery grants in every UK postcode district.

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