



# Veterans and Family Hub Evaluation Report



# Contents

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1. The Big Picture .....	05
2. What is the Veterans and Family Hub? .....	08
3. What does it do? .....	12
4. Who does it help? .....	18
5. What difference does it make? .....	26
6. Is it cost effective? .....	33
7. What comes next?.....	37

About

## Rose Regeneration & Improving Lives Plymouth



Rose Regeneration is a rural and coastal evaluation business that works with charities, businesses and Governments across the UK. Jessica Sellick, a researcher/project manager has produced this report. Jessica has been working with the Veterans and Family Hub at Improving Lives Plymouth since 2016.



ILP is a long-established charity, working within the city of Plymouth and the surrounding area. The organisation has an excellent track record of delivering services and developing new ones to meet the needs of individuals and community and voluntary organisations.

ILP has been supporting veterans, serving personnel and their families since World War 1, through World War 2 and up to the present day, culminating in the Veterans and Family Hub. The Hub was launched in 2019 and is run by veterans and their families, for veterans and their families.



# Veterans and Family Hub



roseregeneration.co.uk

Improving Lives Plymouth (ILP) delivers a Veterans and Family Hub to support veterans, their family members and carers get back on, and stay on, their feet.

## Big Picture

# 8.4%

- In Plymouth, 8.4% of people previously served in the Armed Forces – more than double the number compared to the England average.
- The armed forces profile is changing, with more working age and female veterans.
- Plymouth has a higher proportion of carers providing 20 or more hours of unpaid care a week compared to regional and national averages.

## Hub

# 2019

Launched in 2019, it began as a lounge in Ernest English House for veterans to drop-in, be with other veterans, and access support.

Today the Hub has increased its physical footprint and expanded its activities and services. It offers information, advice, guidance and peer support/mentoring on a variety of issues (e.g. health, welfare, benefits, housing, carers, employment).

# 7/12/70/50+

Everything it does is co-designed with service users. It has **7 staff** and **12 regular volunteers** who are all veterans.

They are supported by **70 ILP staff** and **50+ volunteers** who are veterans themselves or 'veteran aware'.

## ILP

# 145

ILP is working with 145 organisations to shape better pathways for veterans and their families. Some are co-located at the Hub.

## Beneficiaries



## Social Return on Investment



HM Treasury ranks anything over £2.00 as delivering a 'good' level of social value.

## Service User Survey

- 96%** of respondents said they would definitely recommend the Hub.
- 90%** rated the support services available at the Hub as 'good' or 'excellent'.
- 93%** rated the activities available at the Hub as 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent'.
- 93%** said the Hub had a 'good' or 'excellent' impact on their mental health.
- 87%** said if the Hub did not exist it was 'unlikely' or 'highly unlikely' they would have found similar support elsewhere.

## Community Outreach

The Hub operates across both ILP sites and in community venues (e.g. youth centre, café, hotel, pub).

*I feel more positive about my future as a result of engaging with the Hub.*

Service User

## Benefit Cost Ratio

The project has a BCR of **£2.26/£1**

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) ranks BCR; with anything above '2' categorised as offering 'high' value-for-money.



*The people they support are part of it so it's always developing. The boundaries of the Hub are elastic. The staff and volunteers are the eyes and ears of the veteran community and people know they can come to the Hub.* Partner Organisation

*If you want to sort things out they will help you here... They are passionate, they care, and they really want to help you.*

Service User

# The Big Picture.



## The Big Picture

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A Veteran is defined as ‘anyone who has served for at least one day in His Majesty’s Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve) or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations’.

The [Armed Forces Covenant](#) defines the Armed Forces Community as:

- Regular personnel – any current serving members of the Naval Service, Army or Royal Air Force.
- Volunteer and Regular Reservists – Royal Navy Reserve, Royal Marine Reserve, Territorial Army and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, and the Royal Fleet Reserve, Army Reserve and Air Force Reserve, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Merchant Navy.
- Veterans – anyone who has served for at least one day in the Armed Forces either as a regular or a reservist.
- Families of regular personnel, reservist and veterans.
- Bereaved – the family members of service personnel and veterans who have died, whether that death is connected to their service or not.

When we talk about the family of serving personnel or veterans, it is generally taken to mean those who live with them (e.g. spouse/partner, children) and extended family members who provide support to them.

### How many veterans are there?

The [2021 Census](#) in England and Wales was the first to ask people if they had previously served in the UK armed forces. The question was added to better meet the needs of service providers and others who support veterans, in line with the Armed Forces Covenant.

- There were 1,853,112 people who had previously served in the UK armed forces in 2021. This comprises 3.8% of the population aged 16 years and over – and is almost 1 in 25 people aged 16 years and over.
- Over three-quarters of UK armed forces veterans had previously served in the regular armed forces (1.4 million, 76.3%), while 361,000 (19.5%) had served in the reserve armed forces. The remaining 79,000 (4.3%) had served in both the regular and the reserve armed forces.
- 1,745,078 households had at least one person who had previously served in the UK armed forces in 2021: equivalent to 7% of all households.
- 96% of these households had at least one veteran, 68,000 (3.9%) included two veterans, and the remaining 2,000 (0.1%) included three or more veterans.

The Ministry of Defence ([MOD](#)) publishes [projected population estimates](#) for UK armed forces veterans residing in Great Britain to 2028.

- By 2028 there will be approximately 1.6 million UK Armed Forces veterans residing in Great Britain.
- For every 80 veterans, it is projected that 35 will be over working age, 45 will be of retirement age, and 10 will be female.

## The Big Picture

### Where do they live?

- Within England, Census 2021 found the region with the highest proportion of veterans was the South West (5.6% of the population or 265,000 people).
- Plymouth has the highest proportion of veterans in the region (8.4% or 18,279 people) – and more than double the number compared to the England average.
- The vast majority of people in [Plymouth](#) who have previously served are the only person to have served in their household (15,964). The three wards with the largest number of residents who have previously served are: Ham (1,860), Budshead (1,859) and Plymstock Radford (1,659).

### Where do they live?

Regardless of length of service, everyone leaves the Armed Forces at some point. Structural and subjective factors impact on veterans' entry into civilian life – and how to be a civilian turns out to be more difficult than some anticipate.

Researchers looking at the transition experiences of military veterans have found those who were not entitled to resettlement support or who lack qualifications; and those who were required to serve their final months either deployed or distant from their chosen civilian life, are particularly vulnerable.

*“A good transition is one that enables ex-Service personnel to be sufficiently resilient to adapt successfully to civilian life, both now and in the future. This resilience includes financial, psychological, and emotional resilience, and encompasses the ex-Service person and their immediate families”, [Forces in Mind Trust, Transition Mapping Study](#) (page 5).*

In January 2024, the MOD announced a new partnership with Reed to step up support for personnel searching for civilian jobs as they leave the military.

### The changing face of the veterans population

The [profile](#) of the armed forces community is changing – with more veterans of working age and female veterans.

- Data from Census 2021 found 11.2% of those who had served in only the regular armed forces were women, compared with 24.6% of those that had served in only the reserve armed forces. Women made up 5.5% of those that had served in both regular and reserve UK armed forces. While the roles open to women have increased over time, MOD [statistics](#) on currently serving personnel also reflect a higher proportion of women in the reserve rather than regular UK armed forces.
- Data from the Census also reveals that among all veterans saying they had served in the reserve forces only, 35.9% were aged 65 years and over, compared with 57% of veterans that had only served in the regular UK armed forces. This may reflect how reservists can leave at any time unless mobilised.

Data from Census 2021 reveals that Plymouth has a higher proportion of carers (providing 20 or more hours of unpaid care a week) compared to the regional and national averages:

Provision of unpaid care % Population	Plymouth	South West	England
Provides no unpaid care	90.1	91.0	91.1
Provides 19 or less hours unpaid care a week	4.4	4.7	4.4
Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week	2.2	1.7	1.8
Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week	3.3	2.6	2.7

# What is the Veterans and Family Hub?





## What is the Veterans and Family Hub?

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*"The Hub builds on our work with veterans and also focuses on the needs of their families and carers, including young informal carers", ILP staff member.*

Improving Lives Plymouth (ILP) has been supporting veterans, serving personnel and their families since World War 1, through World War 2 and up to the present day, culminating in the Veterans and Family Hub.

At the start of World War 2 ILP developed the Lord Mayor service welfare scheme and appointed a representative to the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Families Association (SSAFA). In 1943 ILP was asked by the then Ministry of Labour to manage a reception hostel "Endsleigh", for men transferred to Plymouth on war work, and another hostel was subsequently opened at Portland square. Altogether nearly 3,000 men were given accommodation before the war ended. In 1949 the Lord Mayor asked ILP to organise Christmas hospitality for servicemen and servicewomen after the war.

ILP has continued to support veterans and service personnel since the second world war. For example, ILP ran a Veterans Care Navigation programme (delivered with the support of Veteran volunteers), providing a co-ordinated first point of entry for Armed Forces leavers into services that help them make a positive transition into civilian life. ILP also participated in a 3-year Aged Veterans carers project which helped Veterans over 65 years of age who were being cared for or were unpaid carers themselves, to access appropriate health and social care. ILP wanted to take the practice and learning from existing work to expand its support to veterans, serving personnel, their families and unpaid carers through the creation of a new Veterans and Families hub in the Centre of Plymouth.

In 2018 ILP held a series of co-design workshops with veterans to better understand the support they needed to get back on, and stay on, their feet. Participants in these sessions highlighted:

- The value of having a hub to connect them to other people, as well as somewhere to go to access services in one place.
- The importance of being bottom-up and using activities taking place there to inform wider work with the veteran community in the city.
- The need for a whole family focus rather than on an individual veteran.

## What is the Veterans and Family Hub?

At the workshops veterans and their families shared how they missed having a 'mess' or 'lounge' where they could go to be with other veterans.

*"Prior to the Hub there was not a lot of support for veterans in the city. I saw the Hub as a bit of a one stop shop with a huge amount of support available there and somewhere central for veterans to go. It's given the veteran community a focal point and somewhere they can physically go to see a friendly face", **partner organisation.***

The Veterans and Family Hub was launched in 2019. When it began the Hub was a lounge in Ernest English House for veterans to drop-in, have a hot drink, be with other veterans, and access services and support.

At the outset, the work of the Hub was focused around:

- Developing a programme of activities for veterans – including talks, workshops and support groups.
- The development of a personalised care pathway to help veterans access mental health and wellbeing support.
- Raising the profile of the Hub with the veteran community and wider stakeholders and partners in the city.
- Supporting veteran unpaid carers and veterans looking after someone through carers support need assessments, support groups, social activities and events.

The Hub quickly outgrew its initial space. While much of this initial work continues to be delivered at Ernest English House, delivery now takes place across ILP's sites and in other community venues (e.g. youth centre, café, hotel, pub). The Hub has also expanded its services and now offers social activities, peer support and mentoring, and information, advice and guidance (e.g. housing, money, carers support, wellbeing, employment). ILP works with a range of organisations across the city to shape better pathways for veterans and their families.

*"Veterans are more reluctant to access support – because of pride; because they try to overcome issues by getting on with things...Crucially, the relaxed and informal services and activities offered at the Hub means veterans are able to get involved on their own terms", **Hub volunteer.***

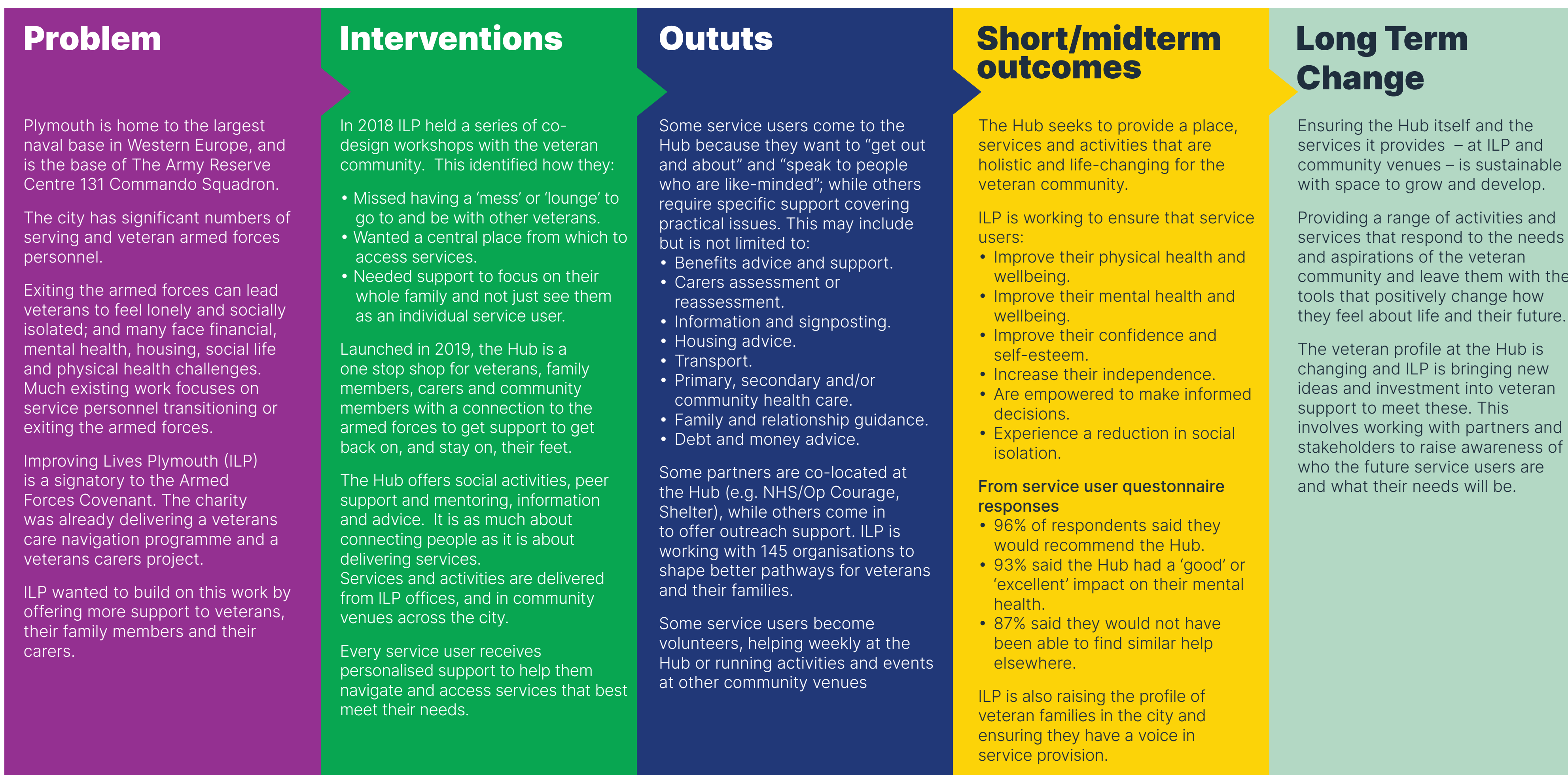
*"We enjoy meeting like-minded people, talking and getting out of the house...it's made a big difference. They're [Hub staff and volunteers] there for us when we need them – when we pick up the phone they always listen", **veteran service user.***



## What is the Veterans and Family Hub?

### The Theory of Change:

The diagram (opposite) sets out why the Hub is needed, the activities it is delivering, and the outputs, outcomes and longer-term change it wants to see happen. The diagram was developed with service users, volunteers, staff, partners and stakeholders.



# What does it do?



## What does it do?

*“Although ex-Armed Forces personnel and their families experience difficulties in common with civilian families, they also face unique challenges which can cause stress, anxiety, financial difficulties, ill-health and isolation”, **Hub volunteer.***

*“The needs [of veterans] can be the same [as the general population] but there is pride with military veterans...this can leave them reluctant to ask for help. People who are ex-military get to the absolute worst case when other people would have gone for help earlier...Armed forces seem to struggle on for longer and ILP meets them further down the path”, **partner organisation.***

### **When the Hub started**

The Armed Forces are an integral part of the history, heritage and fabric of Plymouth. ILP was already delivering a proportion of its services to ex-forces personnel – for example, they delivered a Veterans Care Navigation programme to support service leavers to make a positive transition into civilian life, and an Aged Veterans project to help older veterans access health and care support. ILP wanted to take the practice and learning from this work to create a new Veterans and Family Hub in the city.

ILP recruited a service manager from a military family background to develop the Hub alongside veterans and their families. When the Hub began it had a three-year business plan (2019-2022) and an annual action plan. These documents covered:

- The development of activity programmes – talks and workshops, support groups, and ongoing virtual sessions.
- The development of a personalised care pathway, including access to support workers experienced in mental health and addiction recovery, and other support around mental health and wellbeing.
- Hub promotion – to maintain printed materials about the Hub and to raise its profile on digital platforms.
- To offer a range of support for veteran carers and veterans looking after someone.



## What does it do?



“The Hub started with the veterans care navigation service and we had 2 members of staff and were more of an information and advice service....our ability to link to other organisations has blossomed with the Hub and groups and activities have become more prevalent over time”, **ILP staff member.**

“The whole family can get involved, not just individuals. We build up a holistic picture...and that may develop over time”, **ILP staff member.**

“Veterans can have complex and deep seated issues and their support needs to cover their family and friends”, **ILP staff member.**

Between 2020 and 2022 the Hub supported service users to stay safe and well during COVID-19. This included delivering support, services and activities online and when restrictions were lifted, recommencing face-to-face work.

“They are quite versatile and switched to online activities when COVID struck and we had to go into lockdowns, **partner organisation.**

“During lockdown they [Hub ILP] were the only ones who did anything for veterans”, **service user.**

When the Hub began it was focused on increasing the range of activities and support for veterans and their families, and becoming a ‘go to’ place for the veteran community. Within the wider work of ILP the Hub was initially viewed as something distinctive within ILP. Within the first year of its operation it was clear that the Hub needed additional space to grow and develop.

“After responding to the pandemic they’ve really grown...from a nice little drop-in place in 2019 to become the ‘first go to’ place for veterans in Plymouth”, **partner organisation.**

## What does it do?

### What the Hub does now

The Hub has evolved from being a drop-in lounge at Ernest English House to operating across both ILP sites and in community venues. Current activities include:

- Assessments of need and the development of individual support plans.
- Information, advice and signposting.
- One-to-one support for service users to navigate and choose services that best meet their needs.
- Dedicated support for carers (e.g. access to Statutory Carers Assessment, a Carers Passport, monthly group support and peer support for unpaid carers).
- Outreach support in other community settings.
- Working with partners and stakeholders to support service users.
- Community based social activities.

The Hub has evolved to offer supported volunteering, drawing on people who have served or are family members of serving personnel or veterans. As well as volunteering at the Hub itself they support social activities and peer support and mentoring. This means the Hub is run by veterans and their families and works with them and a range of other organisations to shape better pathways.

*"I'm ex-armed forces myself – in the armed forces your life is looked after and the military is a very structured environment where everything is there for you and then you go out into the big wide world...I can relate to their armed forces side [of the service users]. We have a mindset and vocabulary that civilians struggle to understand", **Hub volunteer.***

*"I initially went along to brew & banter...I was made redundant from my job and I offered to volunteer one day a week and then two-days a week. I think the Hub is a fantastic thing as they can go in and speak to people who are like-minded. We can all relate to services personnel", **Hub volunteer.***

*"This role [volunteer] has allowed me to give back to the services community", **Hub volunteer.***

*"Volunteering at the Hub has provided me with an outlet to meet and help like-minded people" **Hub volunteer.***

While every service user is an individual requiring personalised support, the diagram overleaf summarises the key steps that they follow in receiving help from the Hub. The diagram was produced with service users, volunteers and staff.



## What does it do?

### 1. Promoting the service

Raising Awareness of the Hub with organisations, the local community and individuals. Promotion across Improving Lives Plymouth services, through 'outreach sessions', staff promoting to partner agencies and word of mouth.

### 3. Person/family-centered Assessment:

Follow-up detailed assessment after referral form and reporting key issue(s)

- I. 'Holistic conversation to gain insights into issues, needs and interests - developing a fuller view of the veteran and/or family's life.
- II. Identify unpaid carers & access to statutory support.
- III. Assign caseworker/make initial referrals.
- IV. Casework planning.

### 5. Casework plan review 'No Closed Door':

Working with the veteran or family to review casework and 'what works'. Unless veteran/family requests closure of their casework contract is maintaining through:

- I. Newsletter.
- II. Promoting of other/ongoing activities (preventative work).
- III. Social events.
- IV. Providing Carers Passport and support group for unpaid carers.
- V. Ongoing drop-in/informal contact.
- VI. Volunteering opportunities.

### 2. Accessing the Hub:

Veteran/family making contact:

- I. Self-referral (online, phone, email).
- II. NHS/GP.
- III. Drop-in/taster sessions at the Hub.
- IV. Volunteer and other staff contact (via Hub outreach).

### 4. Engagement

Implementing actions following Assessment:

- I. Collaborative caseworker support - building a 'big picture' overview of issues.
- II. Acknowledgement of barriers and enablers to veteran/family engagement.
- III. Continuous review of actions, and awareness of emerging issues/needs/interests.
- IV. Caseworker supporting referrals into other services.



## What does it do?

*“The Hub has shifted...from aged veterans to veterans...to those transitioning and leaving...and extended their support to families and communities. It [the Hub] is providing a holistic service to veteran families”,, **partner organisation.***

The Hub has focused on ‘joining forces’ with partners and stakeholders. Some partners are co-located at ILP (e.g. NHS/Op COURAGE, Advice Plymouth, Shelter) while others come in to offer outreach support.

*“It’s [the Hub] in the centre of a spider’s web and from there veterans have access to other teams at ILP and access to other agencies and their services. And the Hub helps them to access help that they may not have been able to access themselves. Without the Hub they would have been searching on the internet and may have missed or not clicked on the right link. The Hub provides one place for veterans to go and to explain their difficulties and find solutions”, **Hub volunteer.***

The Hub has made the transition from a pilot project, which was seen as standalone, to its activities and support being embedded across ILP.

*“It’s not silo working...there is a recognition within ILP and partners that while the Hub offers some distinctive services, working with veterans and their families is an integral part of ILP”, **partner organisation.***

All of this means that service users are able to access the right services, at the right time, and in the right place.

### Responding to recent needs and looking to the future

*“COVID, Ukraine, cost-of-living...we’re always adapting to what the needs are – at ILP we’re always evolving and listening to the people we are serving”, **ILP staff member.***

*“People need more help as a result of cost of living... some people are not poor enough to access financial support and are worrying and struggling... a service pension doesn’t stretch that far”, **partner organisation.***

ILP continues to offer a physical place for veterans and their families to come to, at the Hub, and across ILP sites and community venues. Service users and partner organisations have highlighted the importance of this as many other agencies and organisations have reduced in-person provision.

*“The Hub provides face-to-face provision and others [name of military charities] might do a group but you can’t walk into their office and speak to someone”, **service user.***



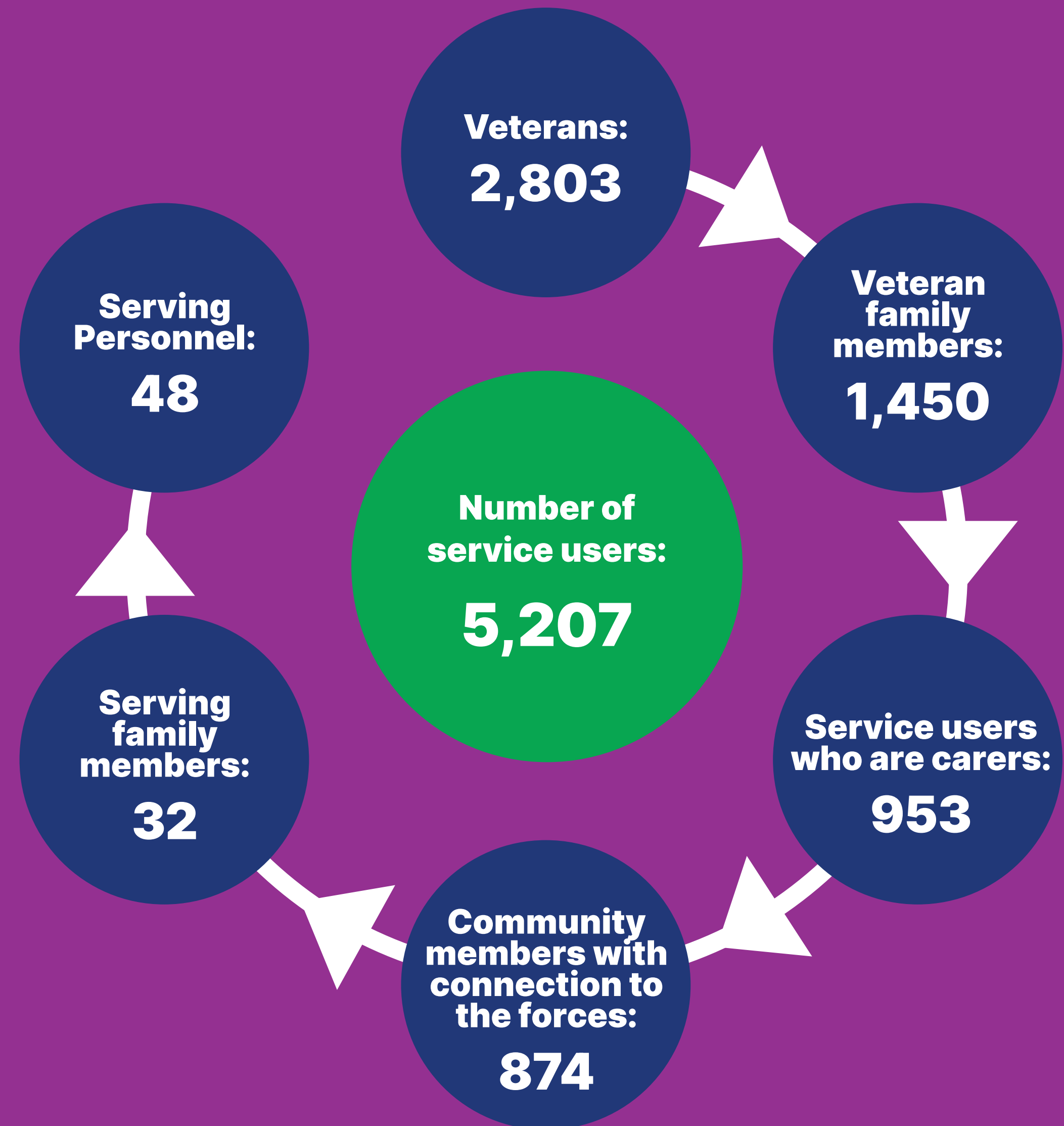
**Who  
does it help?**



## Who does it help?

"We've found military veterans not on anyone else's radar...their conversations with us are need and time intensive", **ILP staff member.**

"We've come across veterans who are in a vulnerable situation and it's about creating an environment where they feel able to ask for help. It's about the relationship and trust. The longer that we spend with them and understand their issues, the more we are able to offer them support that will help them", **ILP staff member.**

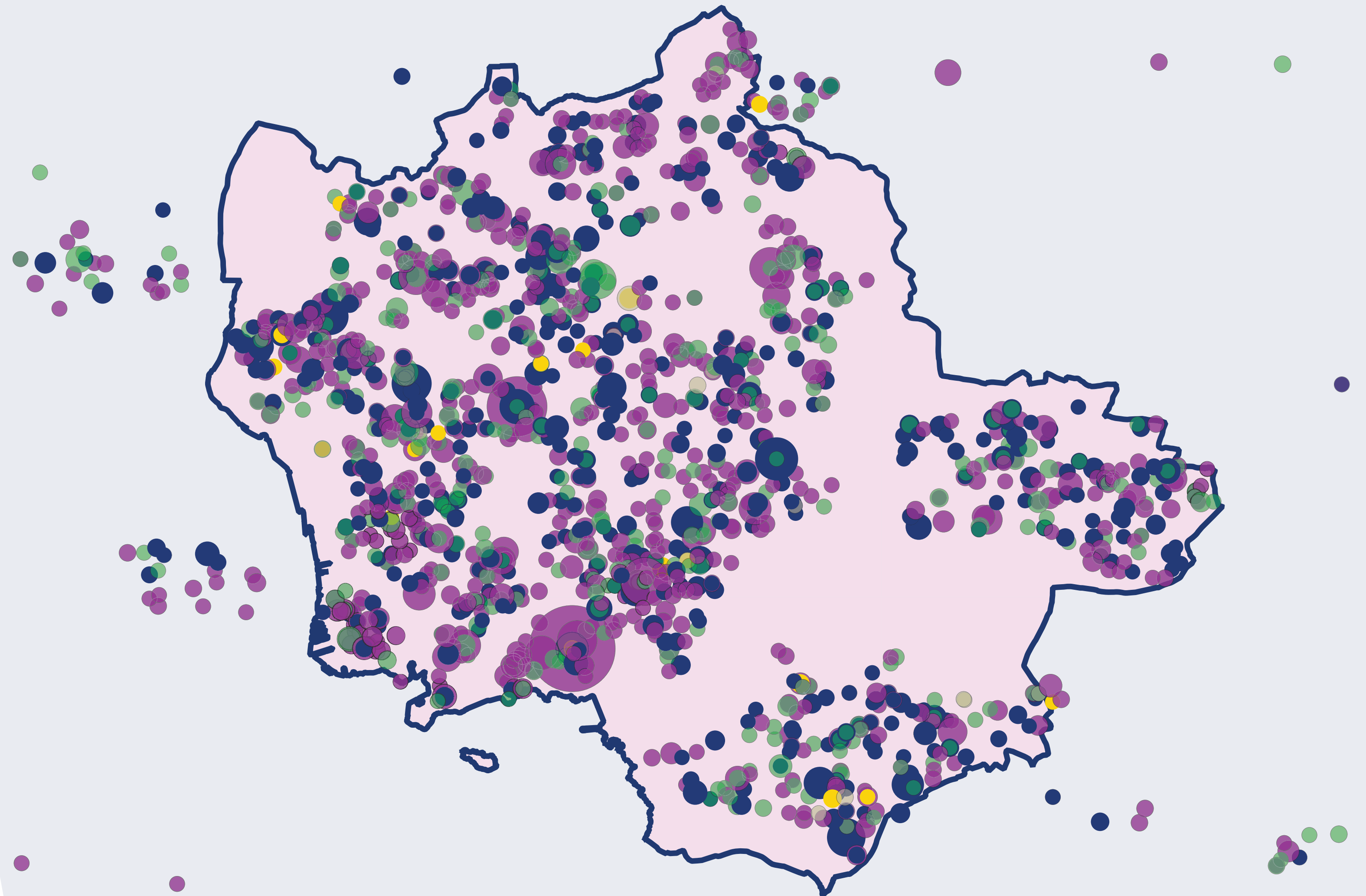


## Who does it help?

Veterans & Family Hub service users by location, number and type - ALL SERVICE USERS

Who the service users are, and where they live

The maps show where Hub users live (using their home postcode). These illustrate how service users accessing the Hub come from across the city and surrounding areas.

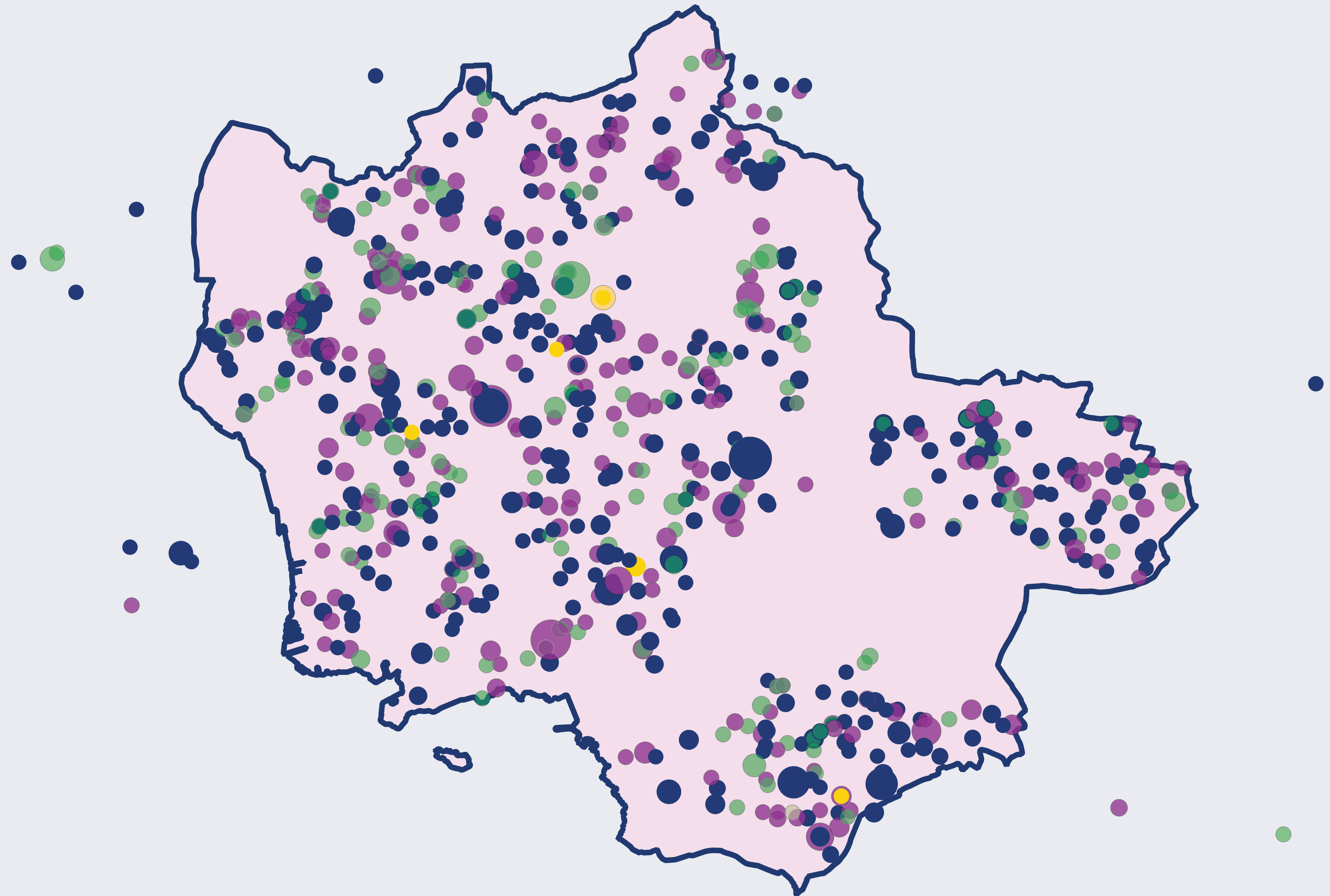


## Who does it help?

Veterans & Family Hub service users by location, number and type - CARERS ONLY

### Who the service users are, and where they live

The maps show where Hub users live (using their home postcode). These illustrate how service users accessing the Hub come from across the city and surrounding areas.



## Who does it help?

The table below summarises the support provided by the Hub. It illustrates how the team's work covers a wide variety of issues (such as benefits, carers support, housing, health and wellbeing).

Hub support	Number of service users
General information, advice and guidance	3,099
Benefits advice and support	1,289
Carers information and signposting	737
Carers assessment and/or reassessment	451
Charitable support (e.g. access to food, clothing, furniture)	698
Welfare check	345
Housing issues (e.g. homelessness, domestic abuse, repairs)	148
Transport (e.g. Blue Badge applications, home to hospital trips)	121
Utilities (e.g. gas, water, electricity)	105
Community health services (e.g. GP, social care, hospital discharge)	62
Family and relationship breakdown	42
Debt and money advice	41

The Hub has supported service users to claim £2,327,126 in benefits and entitlements since 2019. Over the same time period, the Hub has supported unpaid carers to receive Personal Budget payments worth £108,700.

What some of the service users have said about the support they have received:

*"If you want to sort things out they will help you here. And if they don't know something they are honest and will say so and find out for you. They [ILP staff] are passionate, they care, and they really want to help people", **veteran family member.***

*"The people who work here and come here are friendly and there's real banter and it's a family to me", **veteran.***

*"I've made friends here. As well as the Hub they've helped me find other groups that I go to...without their help I'd be lost", **veteran.***

*"I go to the Hub, I go to the sticky bun mornings, I go to football and I look forward to it all as it's something to get up and do", **veteran.***

*"The volunteers here are great. They're all ex-military so there's banter", **veteran.***

*"It's nice to get out and talk to someone outside of my family...they [ILP] were very good at supporting me when my husband was in hospital", **carer.***

*PTSD never leaves you and it catches up with you 12, 14 years later...the NHS is complex and I was getting really frustrated. The Hub is face-to-face and it has the human touch and that's important. Other services don't always listen to you", **veteran.***

## Who does it help?

### How the Hub works with other agencies and organisations to support service users

The Hub provides a focal point for ex-services community and is 'joining forces' with others.

*"I will often identify other areas of support and make suggestions on how we deal with these issues... mental health and money are common aspects...I will suggest referring this person for a mental health assessment, or to a specialist debt advisor...this is always done with the explicit permission of the service user. Where a referral is made to another agency, I will set a further action for myself to contact the service user again to check this support has been provided", ILP staff member.*

*"We know and do as much as we can here. But we also know when and where to pass them [service users] on to. It's really important to make people feel welcome here, and to be able to refer them to other charities and organisations", ILP staff member.*

Hub staff and volunteers access support for service users from 145 organisations outside of ILP. The table opposite highlights the range of organisations the Hub is referring into.

Hub referrals into other organisations	Number of service users
Plymouth City Council	155
Plymouth Foodbank	141
Devon and Cornwall Fire & Rescue Service	136
Defence Medical Welfare Service	125
SSAFA, the Armed Forces Charity	121
Royal British Legion	112
NHS mental health specialist services for ex-serving personnel	104
Veterans UK	75
Relate Plymouth & South Devon, relationship counselling	57
Age UK	56
Community Connections	39
Veterans Outdoors	34
Op Nova, Forces Employment Charity	22
Naval Children's Charity	15

## Who does it help?

Insights into the Hub and its activities from other organisations:

*“The peer-to-peer support is important and people are happy sitting together and talking to each other and don’t feel under any pressure. Without these groups they would be stuck at home, and they support the families of veterans too...we refer into ILP as we don’t have their military background and inroads. People like being able to walk in and speak to someone”, **older persons charity.***

*“The staff are always very helpful from the get-go and nothing is too much trouble. They are very inclusive and they help people who are struggling with money, debt, health...they provide individual support and peer support and group activities. The Hub is for veterans and their family members and it gives people the space to be able to say what is happening...they link people into other activities and charities and that is important too”, **mental health provider.***

*“They are very creative in how they support people – they know what to do and have just the thing for people who are struggling”, local, **local charity.***

*“The veterans see it as the Hub however professionals see it as ILP. The Hub is for everybody – and it provides support where mainstream providers don’t support them or where they don’t accept their application for help. ILP staff explore their circumstances and liaise with other service providers – they are a voice and an advocate”, **welfare charity.***





# What difference does it make?



## What difference does it make?

*“They [ILP] tackle the inherent issues that the armed forces community have”,  
partner organisation.*

*“The Hub is having a big impact on veteran’s lives now. They are a big part of Plymouth”,  
partner organisation.*

### People/individual service user benefits

To see and hear what service users think about the Hub please click on the following link: <https://youtu.be/vH-KMLkebsQ?si=0fNhFDa5DmvQr9G3>

Some service users came to the Hub because they wanted help “getting out and about” and “speaking to people who are like minded” [with a veteran background]; while others received specific support focused on areas such as welfare benefits, unpaid carers support, help with accommodation and housing and other practical support.

Service users participating in social activities and peer support described how the Hub offered them “something to look forward to” and helped them to widen their circle of support. Other service users described how the Hub has “added variety to my life” “it’s keeping me active”, and “given me places to go without always relying on my family”.

“I was looking for someone to help me with medal restoration as I wanted to bring new life to the medals my father had tucked away. The Hub had a carer whose son restores and mounts medals as a hobby. He had shown the team [at ILP] some of his amazing work. They checked and passed on my contact details. He [carer’s son] has offered to do the restoration and framing for free because he said he wanted to give something back to the Veterans and Family Hub”.

The Hub is also playing an important role in helping service user families and unpaid carers to maintain their stability and wellbeing: “My wife’s illnesses were worsening and becoming too much for me to cope with... I had a one to one discussion [at the Hub] about my caring role and our needs. The staff listened patiently and carefully and helped me see I needed help to carry on”.

Insights into the Hub and its activities from service users :

“I was completely lost when I came out of the services... I just didn’t know what to do and I got really depressed. I started isolating myself even more. I needed counselling to help me set a routine...If it weren’t for the Hub and the support they’ve given me I wouldn’t be here”.

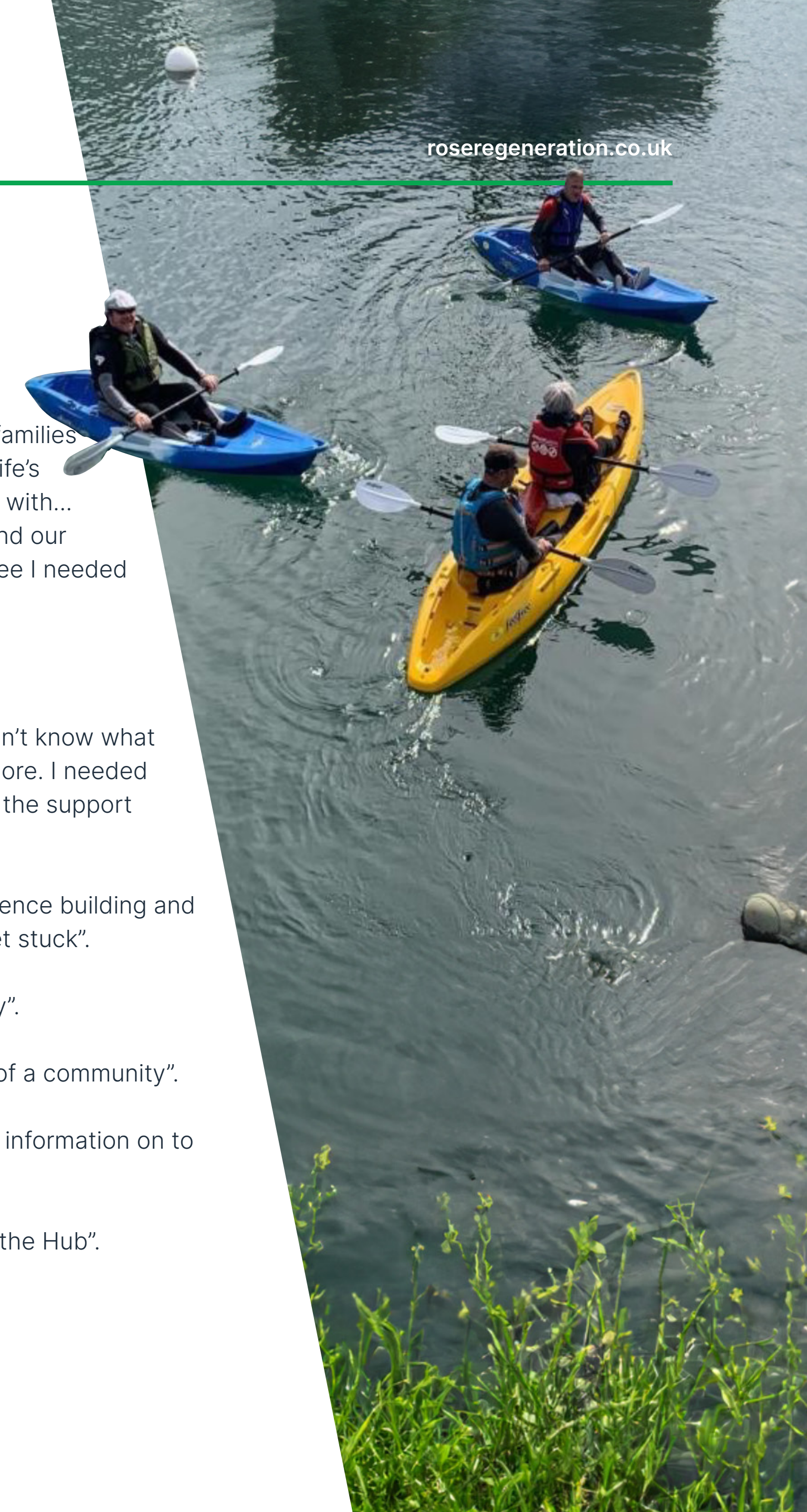
“I come for the regular tea and cake...I’ve done courses on confidence building and IT. The courses are good because you are not alone when you get stuck”.

“The camaraderie and being able to do things in a non-pushy way”.

“Being with people rather than just sitting with myself. I feel part of a community”.

“I’ve been very impressed with the service and have passed their information on to other veterans”.

“I feel more positive about my future as a result of engaging with the Hub”.



## What difference does it make?

Some examples of how the Hub has helped individual service users:

### Kathryn

#### What was life like for you before the Hub?

My relationship with my daughter's father [serving in the RAF] had broken down...I had to move out of the house and I was also caring for my father, an army veteran. I met [name of ILP staff member] at an outreach evening. Things were bringing me to my knees.

#### What support have you received?

They helped me with my housing by putting me in touch with Shelter... They made a referral to the RAF Benevolent Fund for money to pay for furniture in my new accommodation. They got me a Household Support Fund grant to help me manage my gas and electricity bills. They also did a Statutory Carers review.

#### What has changed for you as a result?

Moving into new accommodation and receiving these grants has provided me with some breathing space. It's reduced my stress and money worries. It's also really positively impacted on my daughter's quality of life. I also have a carer's passport now which identifies me as an unpaid carer when I accompany my father to his medical appointments.

#### What do you plan to do next?

I want to go along to family activities at the Hub.

### Emma

#### What was life like for you before the Hub?

Although I have a very loving family I have no family around me so was finding life difficult with my husband being deployed. I found myself very isolated and it started to affect my mental health.

#### What support have you received?

I joined the Creative Courses classes, I've done paddle boarding, and I've accessed some outdoor courses that I found out about through the Hub. My husband became extremely unwell on his deployment and the Hub supported me through that, including making an emergency referral through to the Defence Medical Welfare Service to get us some practical support.

#### What has changed for you as a result?

I feel so much more confident in social situations and I've built a great support network of female veterans. I'm happy to go to veterans events without having anxiety attacks before leaving the house. I know that I'm not on my own. The Hub is a family.

#### What do you plan to do next?

The last company I worked for went into administration – I want to find a new job.

## What difference does it make?

Once the service user is accessing the services and activities they need and/or the presenting and other issues have been addressed, ongoing light touch contact is provided.

*“Cases are not closed but our work with them completes and when there are no ongoing tasks the user’s case remains open unless they tell us they don’t want to be a service user. Reaching out and asking for help in the first place is a really big challenge and if something else happens and they want support but are a closed case they may not come forward again. After the case finishes many users go on to brew and banter, or they sign up to receive the newsletter, or they go on some of the trips. This all helps us to keep in touch with them”, **ILP staff member.***

*“My wife and I were in shock following my diagnosis of terminal cancer. The Defence Medical Welfare Service identified me as a military veteran during a visit to Derriford Hospital and they in turn referred me to the Veterans and Family Hub. [Following support from ILP staff] I have the reassurance of knowing that we have claimed the relevant benefits and entitlements given our circumstances. This allows me to focus on quality time with my family and friends. I plan to enjoy my limited time left with the reassurance that my wife will continue to be supported by the Veterans and Family Hub when I am no longer around. This gives me peace of mind”, **service user.***



## What difference does it make?

### Veteran survey 2023/24 findings:

**96%**

of respondents said they would definitely recommend the Hub.

**90%**

rated the support services available at the Hub as 'good' or 'excellent'.

**93%**

rated the activities available at the Hub as 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent'.

**93%**

answered that the Hub had a 'good' or 'excellent' impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

**87%**

of respondents said that if the Hub did not exist it was 'unlikely' or 'highly unlikely' that they would be able to find similar support elsewhere.

## What difference does it make?

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### Organisational & system benefits

Putting service users at the heart of everything they do continues to underpin and shape the operation of the Hub. The Hub, and ILP's broader work, is complementary to statutory services and not intended to duplicate or replace other services that service users may also require.

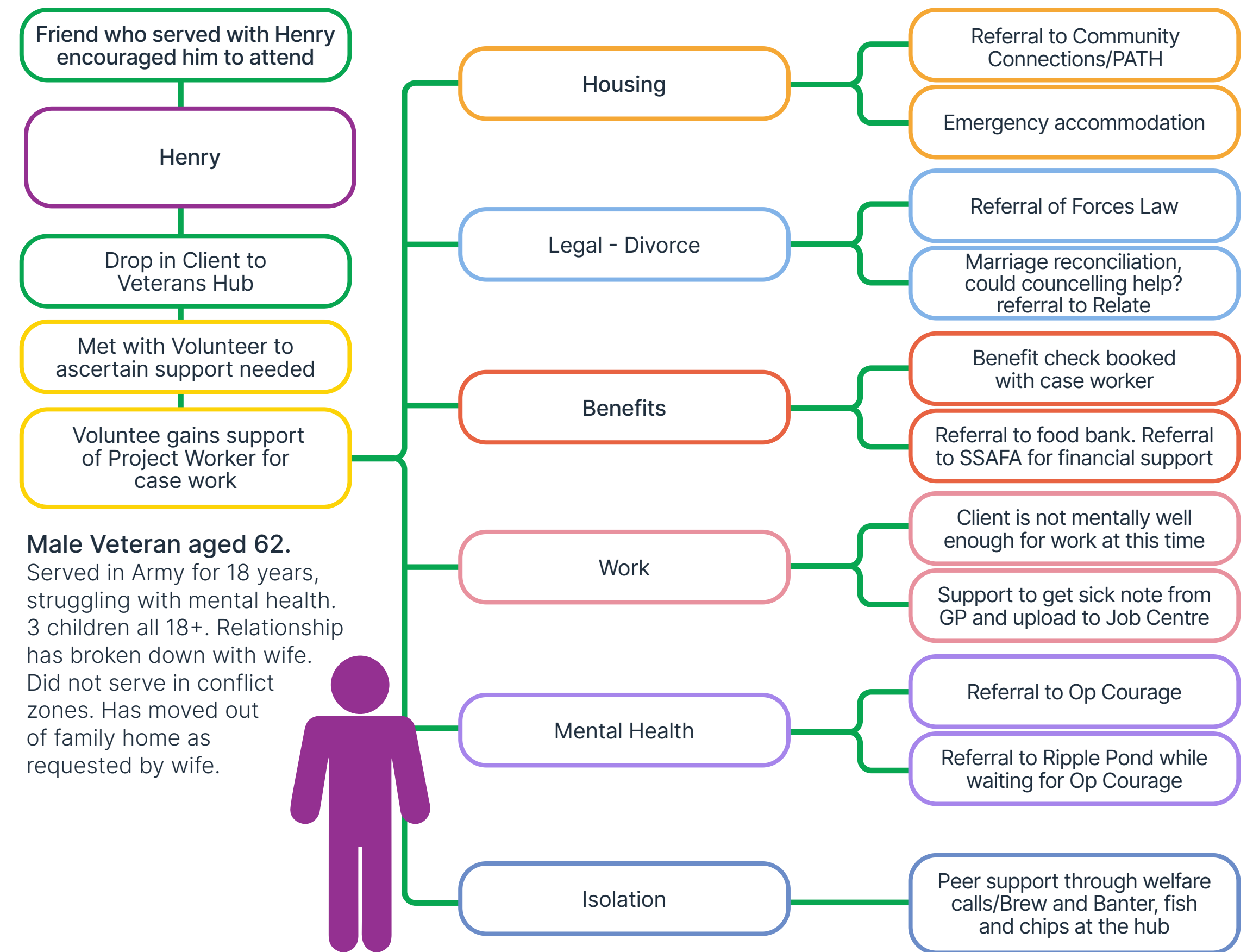
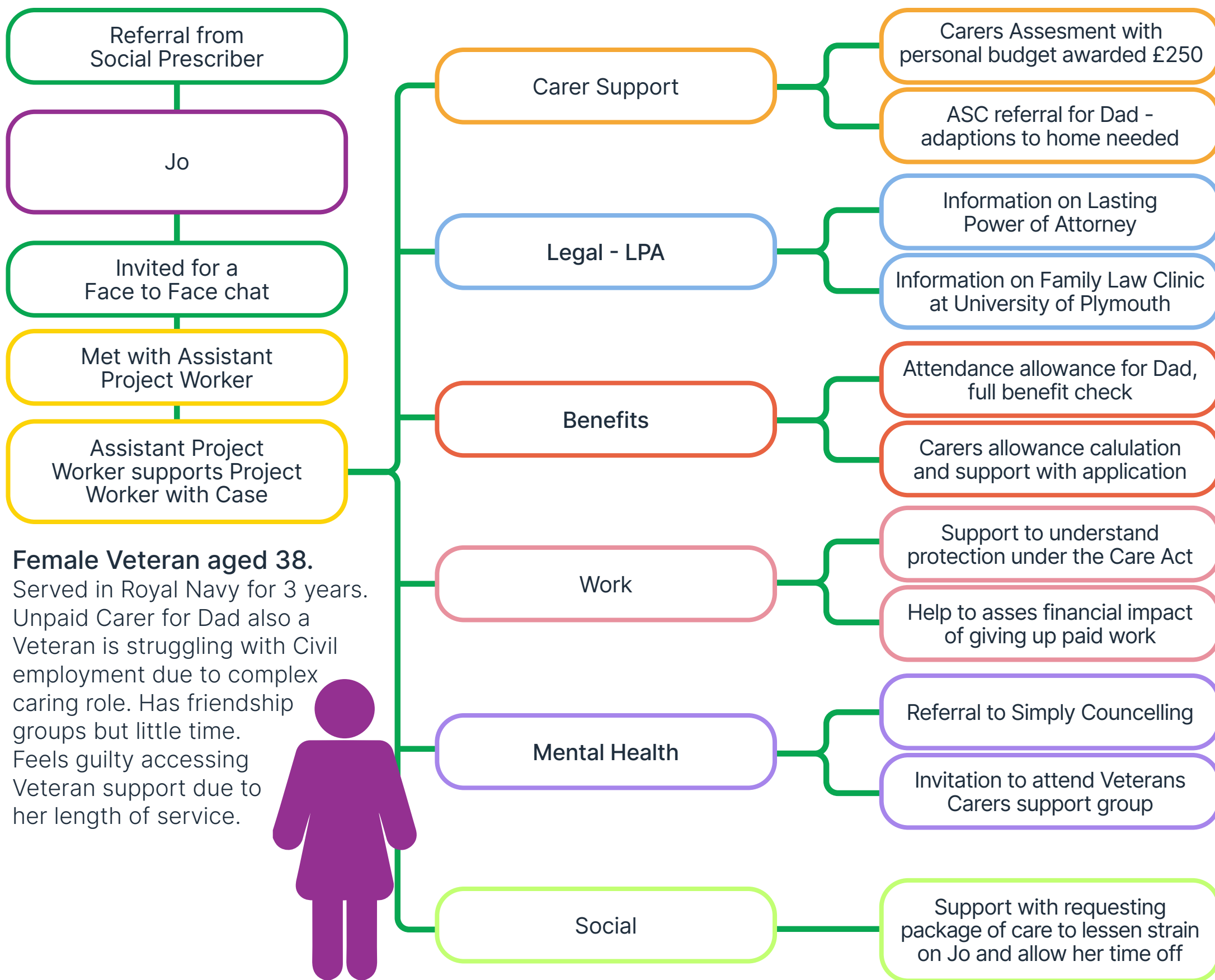
- Staff and volunteers take time to see the whole person – and understand their physical, social, emotional and practical needs.
- Staff and volunteers focus on what matters most to the service user – often addressing multiple needs and issues over time to improve lives, directly and indirectly.
- Through journey mapping, case studies, surveys and feedback forms, staff consider how service users begin, spend and end their time at the Hub.
- Trust is important and staff and volunteers take care not to jeopardise that – they connect service users to other providers whom they may otherwise have felt less trusting of. Staff work hard to get consent to explore wider support services available to service users.

- Staff and volunteers test new ideas for activities and support with service users – building on the 'fictional family' used when the concept for the Hub was originally developed.
- Staff and volunteers try to reduce complexity and bureaucracy for service users, particularly when helping people to navigate other services.
- Staff and volunteers share learning with service users and external organisations and are transparent in their decision making about what the Hub can and cannot do.

All of this work means the Hub is also delivering benefits to mainstream providers and services – by supporting service users in crisis, but more importantly, in preventing problems from reaching crisis by encouraging people to come forward and ask for help sooner.

To better understand how the Hub operates alongside other services, a sample of service user files and records were reviewed and individual journey maps produced. The two examples (overleaf) indicate how service users Jo and Henry were referred into the Hub, the issues or themes they presented with, and the work ILP undertook to liaise with other service providers (e.g. Adult Social Care, DWP, community and mental health services).

## What difference does it make?



## What difference does it make?

### Quantifying the social value delivered by the Hub

*“The Hub provides a physical space, and suite of services and activities that aim to be holistic and life-changing”, partner organisation.*

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a way of developing a value for outcomes arising from the Hub. Six outcomes have been identified for veterans benefitting from the project:

1. Veteran service users receive support to improve their home circumstances.
2. Veteran service users benefit from attending social groups and activities at the Hub.
3. Veteran service users experience a reduction in social isolation.
4. Veteran service users report an improvement in their mental health.
5. Veteran service users who are carers report an improvement in their wellbeing.
6. ILP works collaboratively and in partnership with other organisations to support service users.

These outcomes were then aligned to an accredited measurement tool called the Social Value Engine (SVE). A financial proxy for each of the 6 outcomes was sourced from the SVE.

Each of these 6 outcome areas and their financial proxies were then adjusted to take account of the following deflators:

- **Deadweight:** what would have happened anyway, without service users going to the Hub? We know from the questionnaire responses that 87% of the veterans would have struggled to find similar support elsewhere. 10% of respondents said they may have done something else to try and access support and 3% were undecided on what they would do.

- **Attribution:** what proportion of other organisations/agencies may have contributed to these veteran’s outcomes? From the questionnaire responses we know that 87% of veterans were accessing services from another organisation at the same time as ILP. This is as a result of the signposting and referrals made for them by the Hub.
- **Leakage:** what proportion of services users live outside of Plymouth? From looking at the postcodes of the respondents, approximately 10% live outside of the city.
- **Drop off:** what proportion of these outcomes will deteriorate over time? 40% of service users said they did not know if they would be able to sustain their outcomes in the longer-term. This is because a proportion of the older veterans responding to the survey have age-related vulnerabilities, frailties and conditions that will deteriorate over time.

These figures have then been divided by the cost of supporting veterans (£160,000 per annum). Dividing the net value of these outcomes at their present value [i.e., discounted following HM Treasury norms] shows that the Hub is delivering £8.12 of social value for every £1.00 invested in it. HM Treasury guidance on cost benefit analysis, which provides the foundations of SROI, identifies a ratio of 1:2 as acceptable and over 2 as good; therefore the Hub is providing a very high level of social value.

The Social Value Engine aligns the outcomes delivered by the Hub to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The project is delivering against 3 of the SDGs. Firstly, ‘Sustainable Communities’: providing access to safe, inclusive and accessible services [generating £1,089,583.89 of social value]. Secondly, ‘Good Health’: through promoting wellbeing at all ages [generating £1,049,827.71 of social value]. Thirdly, ‘Partnerships’: ILP is working with public, private and civil society partnerships to deliver support [generating £100,918.68 of social value].



**Is it cost  
effective?**



## Is it cost effective?

*“You have to fight for veterans and if Improving Lives doesn’t do it who else is going to do it. Others have tried and walked away as they found it too difficult”, **partner organisation.***

The original budget to set up the Hub was based on ILP estimating what it thought it needed to deliver the project. ILP drew on its experience of delivering other, similar work; and liaised with other organisations delivering work with veterans.

When the Hub began an initial budget was based on one staff role (a full-time coordinator) supported by volunteers, using one room in Ernest English House. In the first year of the Hub’s operation (2019-2020) ILP had one year of funding remaining from the Aged Veterans Fund (to support veteran carers) and secured additional grants from the The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and Plymouth City Council (care navigation). ILP also invested some of its own charitable financial resources to establish the Hub.

### What it costs to run the Hub + where the money comes from

The Hub costs a minimum of £160,000 per annum. This is based on a 0.5 FTE management time post, a full-time project coordinator, a 0.8 FTE advice worker, a full-time carer project worker, 0.6 FTE assistant project worker and 12 regular volunteers. Together they deliver a core service that comprises a Veterans Drop-In (Monday-Friday, 9.00am-5.00pm), Carers Support, General Information and Advice, Signposting and Peer Support, Warm & Welcome Space, and a menu of social activities (e.g. ‘Brew and Banter’ sessions).

The Hub has a developed network of 145 other public, voluntary and private sector organisations it regularly collaborates with. Subject to staff/volunteer capacity and fundraising activity, this extends the reach of the Hub in being able to broaden the range of veteran and family focused activities. The Hub

also works in partnership with other agencies to offer enhanced access to mental health, employment, family/relationship, housing and financial support.

*“They [ILP] see needs, identify them and want to satisfy them but these need to chime with funders and sometimes there’s no budget for the work they want to do with veterans and they work with partners to try and deliver that and still meet those needs”, **partner organisation.***

*“The complexity of the cases they have seen since the Hub opened is greater and ILP as a charity is in greater demand...staff have reached the right level of assistance but they need others to help and fund what they do too”, **partner organisation.***

*“The carers aspect of what they do is really important and what others rely on them to do but it’s down to funding agreements and it needs to become a more collaborative relationship with the funders”, **partner organisation.***

Since the Hub began it has become increasingly difficult to secure core and long-term funding. Funding for the Hub currently comes from the submission of successful applications and bids to charitable trusts (ranging from £5,000-£35,000 per annum) which currently contributes approximately 90% of the funding needed to operate the Hub, combined with local fundraising activities organised by staff, volunteers and service users (equates to 10% of the funding needed by the Hub).

Grant funders in 2023-2024 include both military charities (e.g. Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, the Armed Forces Covenant Trust, ABF The Soldiers' Charity, RAF Benevolent Fund), and other, wider grant giving bodies (e.g. Garfield Weston Foundation).

## Is it cost effective?

### Is it offering value-for-money?

A Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) analysis was undertaken to assess the value-for-money being delivered by the Hub. Taking a similar approach to the SROI, this involved ascribing a value for each of the 6 service user outcomes identified, reducing them for additionality, following the Government's [additionality guide](#) (2023), and dividing this by the Hub's input costs. HM Treasury's Green Book was then used to derive an

appropriate adjustment factor to prevent [optimism bias](#). This analysis reveals that the Hub has a BCR of £2.26/£1.

Two sensitivity tests were then carried out: (1) a test based on reducing the Hub's role in delivering wider social benefits. This analysis reveals the Hub has a BCR of £1.31/£1. (2) A test applying a higher optimism bias of 37%. This gives a BCR of £2.54/£1. These tests are set out in the table below.

Value for money assessment (£M)		Core scenario	Sensitivity test 1 No wider social benefits	Sensitivity test 2 Optimism Bias 37%
<b>Economic Benefits</b>				
Value ascribed to improving home circumstances		£5.44		£5.44
Value to an individual of attending social groups and activities		£5.44	£5.44	£5.44
Value of befriending adults/older people		£0.23	£0.23	£0.23
Value of overall improvement in mental health		£0.46	£0.46	£0.46
Value of working collaboratively / in partnership		£1.00	£1.00	£1.00
Value of improving wellbeing of a carer		£0.37	£0.37	£0.37
Additionality Factor 0.68 (vol orgssupported)				
<b>Total economic benefits</b>	<b>(A)</b>	<b>£8.80</b>	<b>£5.10</b>	<b>£8.80</b>
<b>Economic costs</b>				
Funding	(B)	£2.67	£2.67	£2.67
Optimism Bias	(C)	£0.72	£0.72	£0.80
<b>Total public sector</b>	<b>(D)=(B)+(C)</b>	<b>£3.39</b>	<b>£3.39</b>	<b>£3.47</b>
<b>Benefit Cost Ratio</b>	<b>(A) / (D)</b>	<b>£2.26</b>	<b>£1.31</b>	<b>£2.54</b>

## Is it cost effective?

The Government's classification, shown in the table below, suggests that the Hub is delivering high value- for-money under the core scenario, and medium to high value-for-money after the sensitivity tests have been applied.

VfM Category	Implied by...
Very High	BCR greater than or equal to 4
High	BCR greater than or equal to 2 and less than 4
Medium	BCR greater than or equal to 1.5 and less than 2
Acceptable	BCR greater than or equal to 1 and less than 1.5
Poor	BCR greater than or equal to 0 and Less than 1
Very	Poor BCR below 0

The analysis suggests the Hub is reaching those most in need of its support and is being delivered in an economical, efficient and effective way.



**What  
comes next?**



## What comes next?

*“It’s all about referrals and relationships. The Hub is the glue that welds a lot of things together”,*  
**partner organisation.**

*“The voluntary and community sector brings a richness...They [ILP] have locality knowledge and specific expertise, know their customers well, are person-centred...people don’t feel like they are being processed and there is no wait to be seen”,* **partner organisation.**

### Building on existing areas of work

Over the last 5-years the Hub has made the transition from a pilot project to a dedicated service. It has moved from being a standalone activity to its work becoming embedded across ILP. This has involved:

1. Evolving the delivery model from a single room to offer services and activities from both ILP offices and in community venues. This has increased the accessibility of the service.
2. Expanding the cohort of service users being supported from an initial focus on older veterans to include any veteran, veteran family member, serving personnel and dependents, unpaid carers or community member with a link to the forces. This has increased the reach and inclusivity of the service, particularly its focus on supporting people who are hard-to-reach and have complex needs. The service is supporting an increasing number of service users.
3. Identifying new, non-military organisations, including statutory and voluntary sector bodies to promote awareness of its offer and work. This has increased the visibility of the service. This has also led to increased partnership working and collaboration (e.g. with Primary Care Networks/social prescribing, Shelter/housing). The Hub brings together partners and a wide range of organisations who might not otherwise work together.

*“Through co-design we’ve created a service that veterans feel part of and are proud to be associated with”,* **ILP staff.**

### Meeting future needs, developing new areas of work

*“The Hub has the function of having somewhere for situational awareness for all organisations in and around Plymouth that may be able to support veterans and their families. No one was doing that before them [ILP]”,* **partner organisation.**

### Who is coming forward for help now, and who are the service users of the future?

The veteran profile at the Hub is changing, with increasing numbers of young people, people of working age, women and/or people from a serving military family coming forward. ILP is collating insights about the support future cohorts of service users will need to get back on/stay on their feet going forward. This includes working with partner organisations and broader stakeholders who have information and insights about serving and those transitioning from service along with their dependents.

### What support do/will they need and where do ILP’s services and activities fit?

Part of the Hub’s appeal to current service users is the mix of formal and informal activities it provides. Similarly, partners highlight how the Hub is ‘elastic’ the ‘eyes and ears’ of the veteran community. The Hub is working with current and potential service users to better understand what it needs to continue, what needs to be developed for the future, and what needs to be discontinued or should not be started. As the number of service users coming forward continues to increase the Hub will need to be even clearer on the boundaries of the support it can provide.

### Where do the benefits of ILP’s work accrue?

Partners highlight how the Hub has filled gaps in veteran provision and support. It provides a ‘one stop shop’ or ‘gateway’ where service users can come in-person to discuss their issues and needs. From a service user perspective this physical presence has increased in importance as other service providers

## What comes next?

have reduced or closed face-to-face provision.

Through the Hub ILP has increased its collaboration and partnership working with other organisations. Service users describe the long-term change to their health and wellbeing, family relationships, money and budgeting, confidence and skills as a result of their engagement with the Hub. Clearly ILP's work with the veteran community delivers benefits to the system (e.g. moving a service user into secure housing, helping them to be maintain or improve their physical and/or mental health). Crystallising these benefits, measuring them and communicating the value of this work to external bodies at a policy/strategic level is becoming increasingly important and builds on ILP's existing advocacy and influencing role.

### **What funding and resources does ILP need to deliver this work?**

The Hub was initially funded by a small number of military charities. Since then ILP has applied for, and secured, funding from a wider group of funders. Over the last 2-years finding core and long-term funding for the Hub has become increasingly difficult. Increasing the communication about the value of the Hub's work may lead to greater investment in ILP. Increasing numbers of younger people now engaging with the Hub are looking to access support digitally as well as in-person. This means the Hub will need to develop a clearer 'digital offer' in the future and require resources to deliver on this.

*"I think they are absolutely brilliant and a gelled and cohesive team and they care and that is why they are so successful. The people they support are part of it so it's always growing and developing. The boundaries of the Hub are elastic. The staff, volunteers and people they support are the eyes and ears of the veteran community and people know they can come to*





# Veterans and Family Hub Evaluation Report



Rose Regeneration Limited  
9 Beaumont Fee Lincoln LN1 1UH  
E: [enquiries@roseregeneration.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@roseregeneration.co.uk)  
[roseregeneration.co.uk](http://roseregeneration.co.uk)