



# Year One Project Report

Armed Forces Gambling Support Network (AFGSN)



BEACON COUNSELLING TRUST

Reg. Charity No. 1140011

Provided By:

**Beacon Counselling Trust**  
**May 2025**

# Foreword



**Neil Platt**  
*Clinical Director, BCT*



**Professor David Best**  
*Director for Centre for Addiction  
Recovery Research (CARR),  
Leeds Trinity University*

“Gambling harms remain largely hidden with the armed forces and the veterans’ community. This is as a result of fear of implication, military discharge, shame and stigma and a lack of awareness and preventative approaches within the serving personnel framework. In addition, there is little or no screening or assessment from services that support and engage with the armed forces community.

Research available warrants the deployment of a strategic and uniform approach that embraces and emphasises partnerships and collaboration with the Armed Forces Gambling Support Network (AFGSN) with the key objective of addressing gambling harms with the armed forces and increasing access to treatment and support at the earliest opportunity.

The AFGSN have a mission to address the ‘hidden harm’ with the armed forces community through raising awareness amongst its target group and key professionals and

support sectors, by creating a recognised and respected education and training offer and the inclusion of multiple pathways to support for those experiencing gambling harms, including those impacted by the gambling of someone else.

The AFGSN engagement with such organisations, encouraging early intervention, education and screening within the armed forces community is consistent with its ‘recovery before treatment’ model. This encourages evidenced-based intervention and support, and systems that prevent harm through an established branded training offer that has lived experience and practitioners from within the armed forces community. The AFGSN is championing an armed forces programme offer to address gambling harms as a public health issue whilst combining prevention and early intervention, treatment, and support with this vulnerable group.





Battling The Odds Workshop, 156 RLC Supply Regt, September 2024

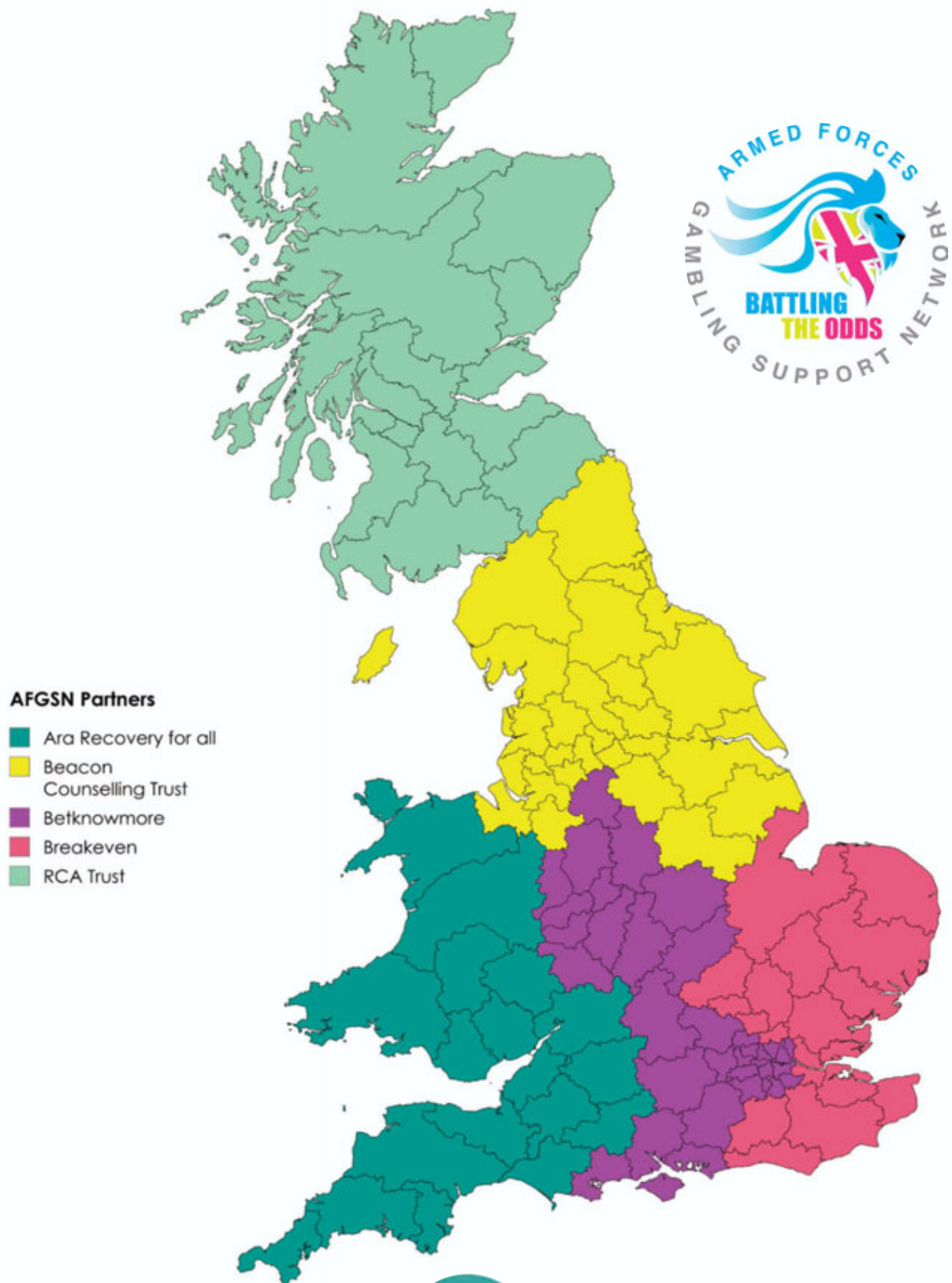
## Introduction

The origins of an Armed Forces specific programme came in the form of the educational programme 'Battling the Odds' developed with support from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust in 2023 which created a gambling harms military themed training programme within the Bet You Can Help flagship training offer.

The programme received further funding support in February 2024 when Beacon Counselling Trust (BCT) launched the development of the Armed

Forces Gambling Support Network (AFGSN) supported and funded by Evoke PLC to deliver work over a three-year period within the armed forces community concerning gambling and gambling related harms. The core function of the AFGSN seeks to prevent and address gambling related harmstargeting the armed forces community whilst promoting awareness, screening, identification, and early access to support. The programme and its partnership delivered its core objectives covering a national footprint.

# The AFGSN Footprint





The **AFGSN** collaboration is brought together and consists of agencies from across the National Gambling Support Network (NGSN) and includes the following partners Beacon Counselling Trust (Lead Organisation), Ara Recovery for All, RCA Trust, BetKnowMore and Breakeven, respectively. A core number of the programme team are themselves veterans with several practitioners having ‘Lived Experience’ of gambling related harms.

Gambling Related Harms has been identified through research findings as one of the most significant issues facing the UK Armed Forces. Gambling has a higher prevalence in the armed forces than the wider society with veterans identified as being ten times more at risk of gambling related harms adversely impacting them and those around them than the UK population (Dymond et al 2021).

Further evidence through a study conducted by The RAF Benevolent Fund in 2021 found that 2-5% of serving RAF personnel believe gambling is an issue for them. This evidence reflects the vulnerability in serving personnel to external coercive influences in relation to gambling.

The objective of this programme is to reduce the risk and incidence of gambling related harms amongst the armed forces community, including ‘affected others’ by creating an enduring support service for armed forces serving personnel, including reservists, family members, veterans, and cadet forces.

A fundamental aspect of the programme seeks to increase the awareness of the risks and harms associated with gambling amongst members of the armed forces and veterans’ community, and those services and agencies who support this vulnerable group to facilitate prevention opportunities, early identification and pathways into treatment and support through the National Gambling Support Network (NGSN), and other relevant services within the gambling support sector.

The AFGSN promotes the participation of the ‘Battling the Odds’ gambling related harms training programme through ‘Bet You Can Help’ as part of its engagement across the armed forces community, targeting serving armed forces personnel and reservists, cadets and adult cadet instructors, veterans and agencies, projects and services who support the armed forces community.

# Strategic Objectives

- 1** To increase the awareness of the risks and harm associated with gambling amongst members of the armed forces community.
- 2** To support the identification of early signs of gambling harm, and to signpost support pathways into treatment and support and self-help tools.
- 3** To remove any perceived stigma – and organisational obstacles / barriers in seeking advice, tools and support concerning gambling harm.
- 4** To facilitate support, access to treatment and post treatment support in an Armed Forces ‘friendly’ environment.
- 5** To ensure the impact of harms associated with gambling is known and understood by organisations supporting service personnel and veterans with other challenges such as homelessness, mental health, drugs and alcohol use, and the criminal justice system through a holistic approach.
- 6** To create a recognisable ‘brand’ and create a holistic unified approach to the service, making it easier to understand, access and engage with.
- 7** To provide the Armed Forces Community with an enduring and overarching network of gambling support services – via the Armed Forces Gambling Support Network (AFGSN) and the National Gambling Support Network (NGSN).
- 8** To target our efforts regionally – Beacon Counselling Trust will strategically support the wider AFGSN partnership nationally.

# Project Overview



*Dale Barracks 2 Battalion Yorkshire Regt Health Fair*

The **‘Battling the Odds’** project aims to reduce the number of individuals within the armed forces community impacted by gambling harms and increase the number accessing varying levels of support by raising awareness, providing early intervention and education to those in the armed forces community. The ‘Battling the Odds’ project will adopt a public health approach to tackle gambling related harms within the armed forces community whilst also being in line with the National Strategy to Reduce Gambling Harms.

To do this the project will raise awareness of these harms through the delivery of the ‘Bet You Can Help’ programme within the armed

forces community. This is a two-tiered training programme which applies an every contact counts methodology to equip the armed forces community with the skills, attitudes, knowledge, and confidence to better identify gambling harms within the armed forces community and provide early interventions to prevent the escalation of harm.

Learners will also be given the tools and information to refer or signpost those in need of support to appropriate, specialist services. The first tier of the programme is the ‘Bet You Can Help’ Now!’ format, which is a one-hour introductory session that provides an overview of gambling related harms.

# The 'Battling the Odds' project has three main elements:

1

Delivery of the 'Bet You Can Help' gambling related harms training programme, featuring a module created specifically to address gambling harms within the armed forces community.

2

Development of a seamless referral pathway from multiple touchpoints within the armed forces community to the appropriate level of specialist support for anyone at risk of or experiencing gambling related harms.

3

Raising awareness and preventing gambling related harms through direct engagement with the armed forces community to reduce stigma of the issue, and screen those within the community to identify any harms and provide appropriate levels of support.

**The programme offers participants structured gambling related harms training that includes a Level 2 Award in Tackling Gambling Related Harms, which is Ofqual Regulated and accredited by the Royal Society of Public Health (RSPH).**

## Our Target Audience:

- Serving Armed Forces personnel including regular and reserve forces (Army, Navy & Air Force).
- Young people through the Army Cadet Force, Sea Cadets, and Airforce Cadets.
- Volunteer cadet instructors.
- The Armed Forces Community who may be impacted through gambling harms as 'affected others' including family members, partners, friends, and colleagues.
- The Armed Forces and Veterans Community.
- Statutory and voluntary sector organisations that help and support the armed forces and veterans community.





# Project Governance

As the programme lead BCT manages and oversees the project through a robust governance framework that encompasses clear processes, functions, reporting structures and rules adhered to by partner agencies.

This framework sets clear boundaries of acceptable conduct and practices, for all partner organisations, that support clear controls and decision-making processes.

The framework has been achieved through the development of comprehensive Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) and clear Terms of Reference (ToR) that is complimented with clear financial and key performance indicator (KPI) trackers and reflects what is expected from each partner organisation. These systems support all AFGSN organisations to provide quality driven, transparent, and clear support and information mechanisms, relating to all programme deliverables. The elements of the governance framework consist of the following:

- Memorandums of Understanding in place between lead partner BCT and all AFGSN partner agencies.
- Engagement and recording tracking systems to monitor programme targets, KPI's and financial reporting in operation.
- Regular quarterly scheduled senior management team performance meetings with agenda items linked to strategic oversight and programme development.
- Regular monthly AFGSN programme delivery team meetings with programme agenda items linked to stakeholder engagement, target monitoring, agency updates and project development and promotion.
- Emphasis on treatment and support is a fundamental and integral element of the project utilising the specialisms with the NGSN. Lived experience is also central to the ethics and operational values of the programme.

# Project Outputs

## Approved Purpose

The Armed Forces Gambling Support Network (AFGSN) was commissioned to engage with and deliver its programme initiatives to the armed forces and veterans' community between February 2024 and March 2025 with the following objectives as part of its key performance indicators:

- Deliver the Battling the Odds specifically Bet You Can Help Gambling Related Harms Training programme to **2000** individual participants.
- Engage with **4250** individuals through Making Every Contact Count (MECC) opportunity providing advice, information, universal harm reduction guidance and the promotion of the support available through the AFGSN and the National Gambling Support Network (NGSN).
- In total the combined numbers the project was commissioned to reach through prevention, education, and harm minimisation activity, across the AFGSN partnership, was **6250** (1250 per AFGSN agency).

**2343**

PARTICIPATED IN  
BATTLING THE ODDS

**8833**

MAKING EVERY  
CONTACT COUNT

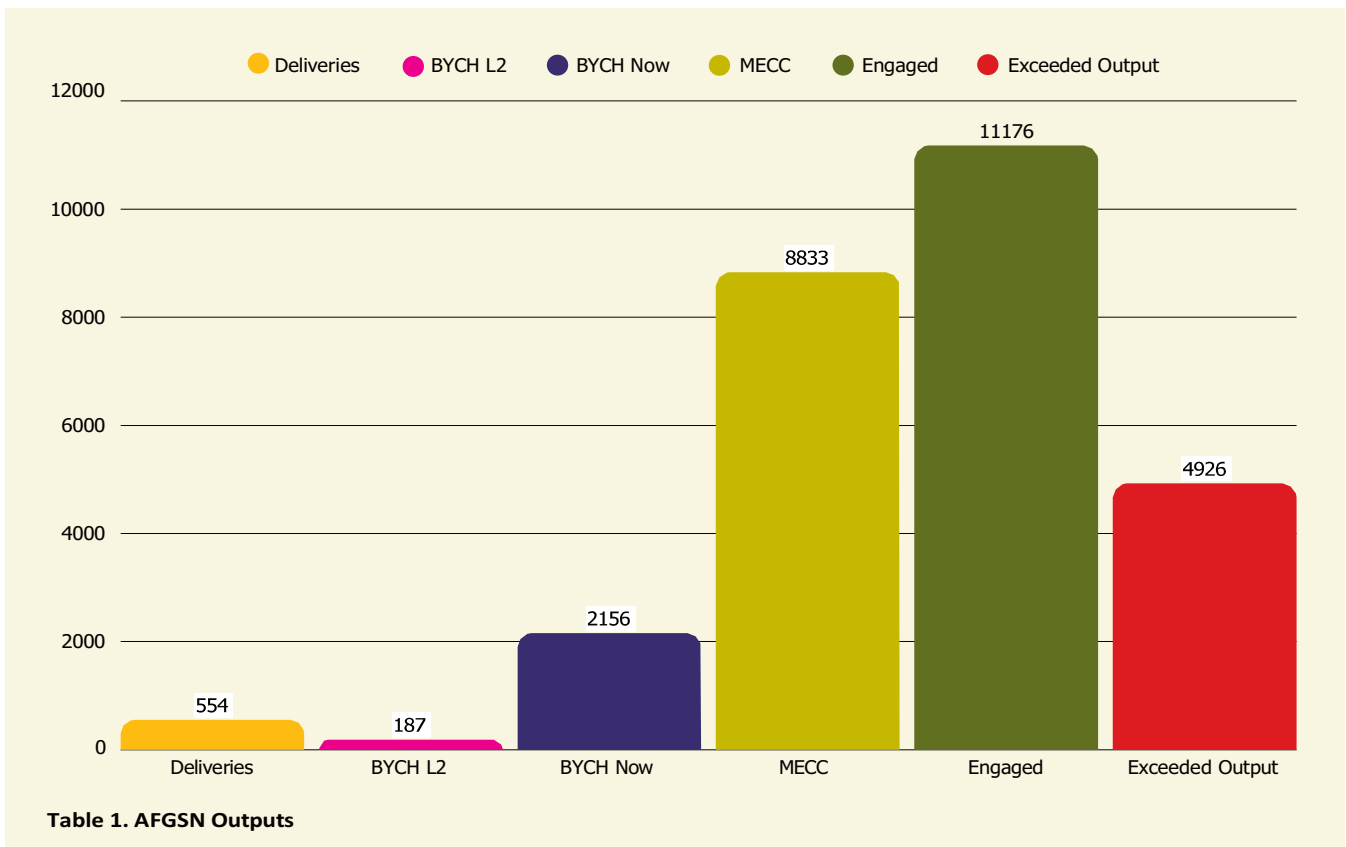
**11176**

TOTAL NUMBER  
OF INDIVIDUALS REACHED

## Outputs Achieved

In the first year of its inception the AFGSN partnership recorded **554** deliveries across the UK. These deliveries and outputs achieved are broken down as follows. The total number of attendees participating in the Bet You Can Help gambling harms training programme arrived at **2343** (RSPH Level 2 Awards n=187 and BYCH Now n=2156). The number of individuals engaged via MECC activities reached **8833**. These combined figures contribute to an overall figure of **11176** individual participants engaged which exceeded our Year One target outputs by **4926** (see table 1).

# Key Outcomes and Indicators



**11176**  
INDIVIDUALS ENGAGED  
ACROSS THE UK.



**554**  
AFGSN  
ACTIVITIES RECORDED.



THE UNSEEN ENEMY  
FILM WAS PRODUCED.



**AFGSN**  
WAS POSITIVELY  
ESTABLISHED IN THE UK.



INCREASED AWARENESS  
OF GAMBLING HARMS  
AND ITS IMPACT WITHIN  
THE ARMED FORCES  
COMMUNITY.



AFGSN includes  
4 BRONZE, AND 1 SILVER  
ARMED FORCES COVENANT  
ERS RECIPIENTS.

# Additional Outcomes

## The Unseen Enemy

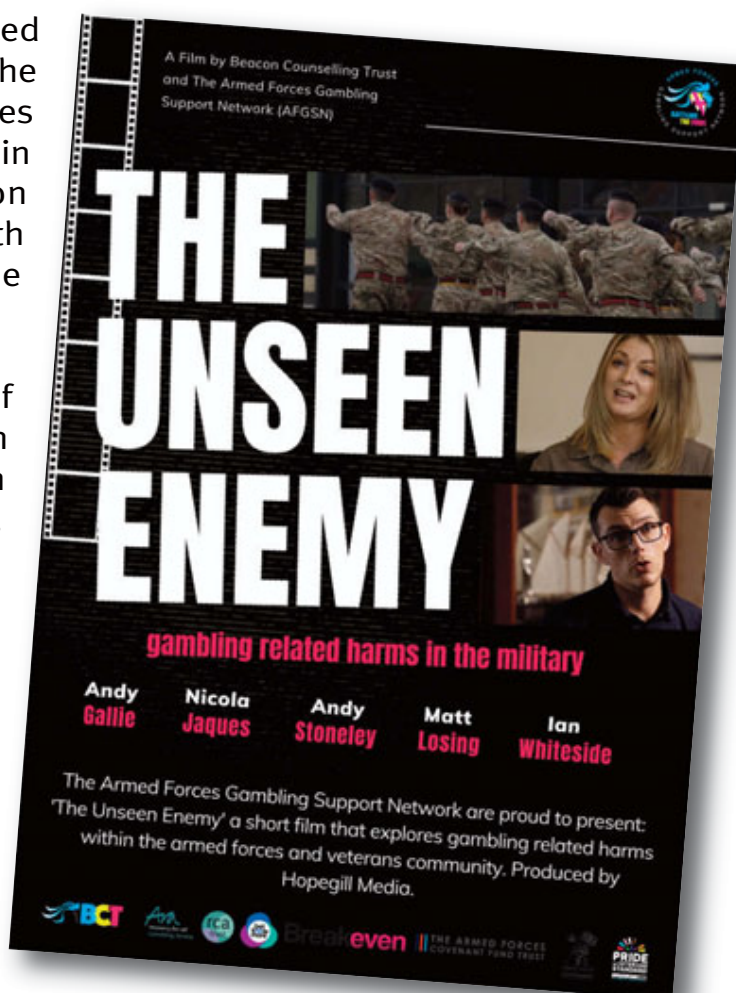
The AFGSN achieved several additional outcomes and key successes during year one that have bolstered the impact and effectiveness the project has made concerning its target audience. This includes firmly establishing itself as a recognised supporter of the armed forces and veterans' community, with all five AFGSN partners attaining Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme status at Bronze and Silver Award level.

In addition, the AFGSN team produced an issue based exploratory film The Unseen Enemy that emphasises gambling harm and its impact within the armed forces, drawing on evidence and research findings with significant contribution from those with Lived Experience.

The project programmed a series of screening presentations launching in Liverpool in February 2025 with subsequent events held in London, Cardiff, Plymouth, and Glasgow.

Alongside these screenings the project has facilitated online and face-to-face bespoke screenings to stakeholders with film presentations and audience participation discussion sessions that have been very well received.

**Overall, more than 2000 people have seen The Unseen Enemy including 600+ viewings on YouTube.**







*Beacon Counselling Trust -  
Silver Armed Forces Covenant  
Award Recipients 2024*



# Project Development

Unexpected but a key development milestone is the project has benefitted from a range from strategic relationships being created including Defence Medical Services, SSAFA, the Royal British Legion, Help for Heroes etc to specific messaging towards the target group through well respected armed forces publications such as the Solider Magazine and British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS). These positive relationships have been integral in supporting the AFGSN brand and signposting tri-service units and armed forces organisations and third sector agencies to the specialist support services provision concerning gambling harms provided by the AFGSN.

Further relationships have been fostered nationally through positive engagement with Local Authority

Armed Forces Champions, and regionally through MOD Regional Employment and Engagement Directors (REED) and the Armed Forces Covenant, as well as the Veterans, People, Places and Pathways Programme (VPPP) 'Thrive Together' programme that will continue to help the AFGSN establish more robust and interconnected support systems, driving future sustainability.

A positive outcome of each AFGSN partner pledging and then advancing through the Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme has further built our rapport across each region shaping networking opportunities.

Effective engagement examples are highlighted further within this report.

# Effective Engagement

# 1



## BETKNOWMORE LONDON AND THE HOME COUNTIES THE ARMED FORCES NETWORK

**Betknowmore UK (BKM)** have joined the London Armed Forces Network (LAFN) which is now part of the Thrive Together programme in London, run by the Poppy Factory and Dr Phil Moore, Deputy Medical Director, NHS England. There are currently 84 organisational members of the London Armed Forces Network comprising of charities, NHS trusts, research organisations and relevant government departments. Thrive Together has replaced the Veterans Places, Pathways and People (VPPP) portfolio which has enabled the Poppy Factory to work more closely with other charities and statutory bodies. The Poppy Factory's approach to developing the London Strategic Plan has been collaborative from the start. Stakeholders were invited to join a steering group to contribute to, and oversee the development and delivery of the plan, with representatives from the NHS, Ministry of Defence, Office for Veterans' Affairs, and key charity partners working across London.

The London Thrive Together Strategic Plan is built around 4 pillars of work.

LAFN is the first of the 4 pillars with the aim of growing it to be bigger and a more effective network of all organisations supporting Veterans and family members, becoming a knowledge hub of all support available across London, and establishing communities of practice to share learning.

Gambling Harms is an area that was initially relatively unknown to any of the members of the LAFN and by BKM joining it has led to increased awareness. We presented to the LAFN in September 2024 at the Union Jack Club in Waterloo which subsequently led to seven organisations directly contacting us for further discussions and subsequently completing Level 1 Bet You Can Help Now; Battling the Odds training sessions and to our first Level 2 face to face accredited training day which took place on 11th February 2025. Many introductions and fruitful stakeholder relationships are now being built within the London armed forces community, which would have been much harder without the LAFN.

There are currently plans to increase the remit of the LAFN to include conferences and specific workshops. BKM, as a key stakeholder, has been asked to take a leading role in helping with the organisational design in the relevant healthcare and dependency workshops for 2025.

**Below are some testimonials relating to the Level 1 and Level 2 'Bet you Can Help' Battling the Odds Training:**

**"Thank you, Feona, for the training, I have been talking about it ever since to anyone who will listen! I would be interested in the level 2 training. Thank you!"**

**"Just to let you know that in the afternoon break I went and added the gambling question to our assessment form that we use, so that is a prompt and reminder to staff to ask about gambling, to keep in staff/s minds when they are undertaking assessments and reviews."**

**Stoll Housing**

**"The session today was excellent, thank you so much to both you and Andrew. I am sure we would be interested in the stigma and self-exclusion guide so please send it over. Where would the level 2 training be located? I am sure I will get lots of volunteers so I will perhaps put a couple of people forward as 'champions' in this field."**

**Defence Medical Welfare Services**



**Feona Veys from BKM promoting the AFGSN across the London Armed Forces Network.**



# Effective Engagement 2



## BETKNOWMORE LONDON AND THE HOME COUNTIES STRATEGIC COMMAND LONDON

**Betknowmore (BKM)**, covering London and the Home Counties, attend the monthly Veterans drop-in at Guys & St Thomas's Hospital, which is well attended both by veterans and by service providers across London. The drop-ins give BKM the opportunity to meet and discuss gambling harms with those in the armed forces community that would benefit from clinical, and peer-aid help and those that provide services to veterans and existing personnel. At the September 2024 drop in Feona Veys, Armed Forces Lead at BKM, talked to Dr Smith, MOD Dr at London Barracks (Wellington, Knightsbridge, and Woolwich) part of Strategic Command. Dr Smith was really interested in our work commenting:

“Feona, It was great to meet you this morning at the Armed Forces drop-in clinic. As discussed, our medical staff would really appreciate the opportunity to do a training session discussing how to recognise and manage personnel with gambling issues. This is definitely a gap in our assessment of military personnel.” In January 2025 Feona Veys and Andy

Gallie attended Wellington Barracks to conduct the Level 1 ‘Battling the Odds’ training to the medical staff who cover all three London Barracks: Wellington, Knightsbridge, and Woolwich. The group included Doctors, Nurses, Psychologists and Physiotherapists who all deal with the 1615 soldiers stationed at the three London Barracks plus any family members also stationed there.

Really good discussions were had about gambling harms within the serving personnel and how it was not something that had been recognised until recently as something that needed more understanding.

After the training it was agreed by the Doctors that they will ask for a formal review of their mental health assessment process to ensure that a question about gambling is included and whilst we were there an email was sent to the chain of command to start discussions immediately.





BKM were also invited to attend the Health and Wellbeing events held in January 2025 at each London Barrack giving BKM not only the chance to meet and talk to the 1615 soldiers but also to have discussions with Welfare Officers about training the wider personnel. The medical team were happy to introduce us to other medical teams stationed around the UK as they could see the value in the learning.



***Feona Veys and Andy Gallie delivering 'Battling the Odds' at Wellington Barracks January 2025***

**“Thank you so much. The whole team got so much out of the training session on the 29th January. I will forward your email on to everyone. When we have dates for health fairs, we will get back to you and also if there is interest for a bespoke training day. I will discuss this with our regional health and well-being officer who is better at coordinating the numbers.”**

Wellington Barracks

# Effective Engagement 3

## Breakeven **BREAKEVEN - EAST AND SOUTH ENGLAND** **ENGAGING SERVICE PERSONNEL**



**Andy Stoneley at RAF Honington  
July 2024**

At the end of the first year as a partner of the Armed Forces Gambling Support Network, Breakeven are proud to have engaged with over 2000 members of the armed forces community. A key highlight for Breakeven in the first year has been delivering the 'Battling the Odds' specific 'Bet You Can Help Now' (BYCH) Level 1 training to the Medical Centre at 16 Air Assault Brigade and 1 Aviation Brigade where practitioners received incredible feedback and those in charge of staff wellbeing at the Brigade are very keen to engage with the programme going forward.

As we move into 2025, Breakeven aim to commence the delivery of the RSPH accredited Level 2 programme and increase the BYCH Now Level 1 deliveries following the great engagement and feedback received through our training and delivery during the first year, most notably at Wattisham and RAF Honington. We are managing to break down the stigma, change the mindset and culture, of many Tri-service personnel, both serving and Veterans, giving them the confidence to ask for support. The impact and feedback we are receiving is simply first class.

**“Very informative. I hope  
discussions will lead  
to more”**

**FSgt Justin Collings,  
RAF Honington**



Gambling harms within the armed forces serving cohort has been a concern raised by many, however, no plans or support has been officially in place to commence gambling harm awareness and training for the Armed Forces, until now. Through workshops and health promotions events Breakeven have had great numbers, which is only leading us to more planned training, engagement and ultimately, raising the awareness around gambling harm within the armed forces community.

It has been a great year where Breakeven has been making great progress, impact and ultimately, making the difference with the serving personnel across our armed forces, especially when it comes to raising the concerns around gambling harm.

The project is successful and well received, where we are seeing service personnel come forward for support, following the engagement and training delivered. It makes me feel both so proud and emotional, to part of this process.

Andy Stoneley is the Breakeven Armed Forces Education and Training Lead and also a veteran serving 23 years with the British Army. Andy believes the AFGSN is massive breakthrough into making the difference and supporting the armed forces community, especially as someone who has Lived Experience of gambling harm, whilst serving. Andy emphasises that he can only wish this help, and support was available whilst he was serving, something he has reflected on in an upcoming edition of the Soldier Magazine due for publication in April 2025.

# cash



**WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN**  
Ex-soldier has advice after a gambling addiction hit him hard

**MORE** needs to be done in the military to tackle the "unseen enemy" of gambling harm, according to a veteran whose own career was ruined by addiction.

With the Forces community statistically more vulnerable to the problem than civilian society, Andy Stoneley (ex-RLC, below) is lending his voice to a campaign calling for greater awareness and early intervention.

Having joined the Army in 1998, he began using slot machines before moving on to casinos and bookmakers – a compulsion that would eventually see the former soldier serve time at Colchester's Military Corrective Training Centre.

After borrowing cash from colleagues to fund his habit, he was found guilty of dishonesty and obtaining money by fraudulent means, sentenced to more than 12 months detention and reduced in rank from warrant officer to corporal.

"I lost my liberty, my salary and my purpose as well as feeling a sense of embarrassment," he said of the experience.

"That was my rock bottom, but after 383 days of, effectively, cold turkey, along with therapy, the cycle was broken.

"I have no temptation to gamble anymore.

"I never want to let myself or my family down again."

Stoneley left the Army in 2022 and now works for the charity that supported him during his recovery – Breakeven – one of several organisations making up the Armed Forces

**IS YOUR MATE A PROBLEM GAMBLER?**

Aside from the financial impact, there are many signs of addiction, including

- Poor self-worth
- Lack of self-care, for example skipping phys, not eating properly or neglecting personal hygiene
- Loss of time – gambling is extremely time consuming
- Being unable to keep up with debts
- Relationship problems – for every gambler, there are thought to be between six and ten 'affected others', including partners or family members
- At the extreme end, gambling can lead to homelessness and suicidal thoughts

**GET YOURSELF HELP**

SPEAK to a friend or trusted colleague or your welfare team.

Alternatively, you can access free and confidential advice via [support@beaconcounsellingtrust.co.uk](mailto:support@beaconcounsellingtrust.co.uk)

Or contact Andy Stoneley directly on [andrew@breakeven.org.uk](mailto:andrew@breakeven.org.uk)

Turn to page 56 for further sources of support.

To watch *The Unseen Enemy* on YouTube subscribe to the Beacon Counselling Trust via [@BCTNorthWest](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqJmVtPw1m1m1m1m1m1m1m1m)

**Gambling Support Network.**

He and other veterans also feature in a new video, *The Unseen Enemy*, produced by the Beacon Counselling Trust as part of its *Battling the Odds* programme, which aims to reduce stigma and make specialist support more accessible.

"It doesn't matter what rank you are – problem gambling can affect anyone," continued Stoneley.

"I was hit hard but I'm living proof that you can turn any negative into a positive.

"There's life after addiction – if you speak to someone and get help you can overcome it.

"Everyone deserves a second chance."

16 April 2025 | SOLDIER

## April editions 'Soldier' magazine article

**"Excellent feedback from all who attended."**  
Major Andy Godden,  
Wattisham Station  
Medical Centre

# Effective Engagement 4



## RCA TRUST - SCOTLAND SUPPORTING THE VETERAN'S COMMUNITY

**RCA Trust** operate across Scotland in urban areas and across its rural communities. Whilst delivering a 'Battling the Odds' workshop the facilitator, Jamie Higgins an army veteran who served 3 separate tours of Afghanistan and 2 in Iraq, was approached by an individual who had been sitting in the room at the time. The individual in question was a veteran himself who had previously spent 10 years within the Royal Marines prior to his discharge. He went on to explain he had been losing money playing online slots, he explained that he had taken out 'small' payday loans and was spending all his wages within days of receiving them. He was worried about his Mum finding out about his issues with gambling and he had never heard of Battling the Odds previously. He asked for some contact details for the RCA Trust and said he would get in touch. Jamie recognising this, knew this veteran's approach as help seeking, asked if he could assist him in booking an appointment with RCA Trust immediately to book an assessment. The referral was made, and this individual was assessed by one of the team there and then. The individual thanked Jamie for his help and went on his way. Several weeks later an RCA Trust colleague informed Jamie that the veteran had started therapeutic sessions and was

attending all appointments and progressing well.

This action demonstrates how effective 'Making Every Contact Count' is in the rapid support into access to treatment through community based and targeted interventions which is a key component of the AFGSN provision.

Prior to the AFGSN programme RCA Trust had two identified veterans in therapeutic treatment. In contrast following the first eight months of Jamie taking up post active treatment, episodes have grown to 34 enquiries about the service, with 17 veterans taking up the agreed treatment plan with their allocated therapist. As a veteran Jamie embraces his role as an AFGSN Education and Training Lead and is extremely proud knowing that the workshops he facilitates directly support fellow veterans and those affected by gambling harms.

Jamie engages in other vulnerable groups including veterans within the Criminal Justice System.

Engagement with HMP Kilmarnock and the Battling the Odds workshops has been delivered to the veteran inmate's cohort within the prison environment.





*RCA Trust delivering Battling the Odds with Scots Battalions*

The education centre was extremely happy with RCA Trust, who managed to adapt the sessions due to time constraints within the prison regime, and so meeting the needs of prisoners. RCA delivered its first session to 20 veteran prisoners, which was well received by the group who opened up about any past experiences with gambling. The feedback was positive. A key theme that kept coming up was the possibility of a therapist coming in to explain the process the RCA Trust treatment pathway and the support concerning gambling harms.

To date RCA Trust have engaged 45 veterans with HMP Kilmarnock with further requests and invitations received from HMP Barlinnie, and HMP Greenock. RCA Trust aspire to roll out its offer to all prisons within Scotland which would allow access to a potential 280 veterans, as well as the opportunity to train prison staff.

RCA Trust have received positive feedback from veteran participants, some highlighted below:

**“The course is easy to follow and has taught me things about gambling I didn’t even realise.”**

Battling the Odds  
Participant

**“Please can we have a counsellor? Or person with lived experience to give a little talk on their harmful gambling?”**

Battling the Odds  
Participant



*Jamie Higgins from RCA Trust engaging vulnerable veterans within Scotland*



*RCA Trust working in partnership to support the armed forces community*



Above are just a few examples RCA Trust have had back from participants following Jamie’s deliveries. This work also resulted in 2 prisoners referred into RCA Trust for treatment and support, and one ‘affected other’ reaching out as a direct positive impact of the AFGSN engagement with vulnerable groups.

# Effective Engagement 5



## ARA RECOVERY FOR ALL - SOUTH WEST AND WALES ROYAL TANK REGIMENT

**In October 2024 Ara Recovery for All delivered to the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) an accredited Level 2 full day gambling harms training programme with the Royal Tank Regiment held in the Tidworth Garrison lecture theatre. The course was delivered by AFGSN practitioners Matt Losing and Andy Gaille respectively. The Royal Tank Regiment Unit Welfare Sergeant provided his observations and reflections regarding the programme and its impact.**

“As the Regiments Unit Welfare Sergeant I’m always looking for courses and events that can allow me to support the regiment and the days training did just that and with the added value of passing the course resulting in a recognised Level 2 qualification in Tackling Gambling Related Harms.

Right from the start Matt and Andy appropriately and bravely shared their personal stories that really hit home and captivated the attendees providing background and reasoning behind the importance of the day. Throughout the day both facilitators used personal experiences to bring further knowledge and key advice.

The timing of time training was just right for me as no more than a few weeks later I had one of my soldiers in my regiment visit our welfare department for a talk and shared that he was struggling with an addiction to gambling. I was able to help and understand the individual and provide immediate and vital support and assistance. After talking to the individual for a while it was evident that he had tried some support previously that they felt hadn’t worked for them, causing them to relapse and continue gambling.

I was able to reach out to Matt for further advise and later refer the soldier to Matt who kindly met with him in person and has subsequently supported him in engaging with Ara through 1:1 therapy, evening workshops and now establishing a support group at regimental level with Matts support.

“Without this level of tailored support, I'd be concerned that the individual would be looking at serious implications both in his personal and professional to this day.”

**Sgt R Yockney, Welfare Senior NCO,  
Royal Tank Regiment Support Hub**



“Gambling was something I was struggling with for some time; it was starting to impact my life in ways I couldn’t ignore. I finally reached out to my regiment’s Welfare Officer, who listened without judgment and helped me take the first step towards support. Through them, I was introduced to Matt at Ara, who guided me through an assessment and helped me access 1:1 therapy. Since then, I’ve attended weekly Recovery Management workshops, which

have given me the tools to stay on track. With Matt’s support and the backing of the Royal Tank Regiment Welfare team, I’ve now set up a gambling support group at our welfare hub in Tidworth. What started as a personal struggle has turned into my longest period of abstinence and presented an opportunity to work on my own recovery and help support others in group settings, I’m grateful to everyone who has helped me along the way.”

**Lcpl B Smy, Royal Tank Regiment**



# Effective Engagement 6



BEACON COUNSELLING TRUST

**BEACON COUNSELLING TRUST  
NORTH OF ENGLAND  
MOD LYNEHAM**

Andy Gallie is the Beacon Counselling Trust (BCT) Armed Forces Education and Training Lead. After attending a health and wellbeing event at MOD Lyneham, an initial discussion was held to deliver the 'Battling the Odds' training to a small number of personnel, with the intention of building upon this. On witnessing the positive impact that the training has, it was immediately agreed to deliver to the entire battalion, and the lecture theatre was utilised to ensure that we were able to engage everyone.

On completion of the training, an approach was made by a serving private who was seeking help for his own gambling harms. He had recently won and subsequently lost over £130,000 whilst being deployed and had continued to lose a house deposit and all savings. He explained that the training had made him aware that he could not do this alone and that he was not alone expressing "remaining abstinent through feelings of guilt and shame alone, is only going to last so long."

A referral to a member of the AFGSN was made that day enabling him to access specialist support and he continues to work on his recovery, with a desire to use

his voice and story within the Army to help others.

Since the training, there has been regular contact with 8 training battalion who are responsible for the training and welfare for up to 2,000 trainees at any one time. This training will raise awareness, but more importantly, due to the average age of those personnel in training, the AFGSN offer will not only aid to prevent gambling harm in the first instance but also support harm minimisation efforts going forward by helping other serving personnel to avoid following a similar path. A fundamental aspect of this provision and on-going partnership seeks to implement early intervention at the earliest opportunity to those at risk of or experiencing gambling related harms.

The BCT received direct correspondence following the workshop that endorses the programme and the value placed on it by those who participate in the 'Bet You Can Help' Battling the Odds workshop.

Feedback provided via email a week following the Level 2 delivery demonstrates the effectiveness the training has on preventing and reducing gambling related harms within our armed forces.



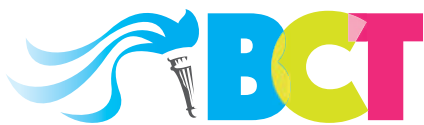


**“I don’t mind admitting, I was sceptical of the need at first as gambling has never registered on my radar as a problem. The training has changed my perception. I will be sure to promote the training within Lyneham, and within future roles. I cannot believe it was free, and had it not been, I would still be ill informed and unaware of the dangers. Simply, thank you”**

Capt WT Gazi  
IEng MIET CMgr MCMI REME



# Effective Engagement 6



BEACON COUNSELLING TRUST

BEACON COUNSELLING TRUST  
NORTH OF ENGLAND  
**ROYAL BRITISH LEGION**

The strength of the AFGSN programme has been to strategically target specific stakeholders as part of an engagement approach when promoting our prevention offer. The Royal British Legion (RBL) were identified as a key organisation that BCT wished to engage with and provide our free offer of gambling harms training programme through the Battling the Odds workshop.

A series of meetings and pitch presentations were held with RBL regional coordinators to organise training aimed specifically at RBL mental health navigators, case workers and welfare support staff. The pitch presentations and meetings outlined with the RBL learning and development team the benefits of their workforce developing their awareness of gambling related harms and how this impacts the armed forces and veterans' community. Emphasis was placed on the training supporting RBL practitioners to develop their practice by enhancing their knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding concerning the risk factors and wider determinates of gambling and gambling related harms.

It was agreed that the BCT team would facilitate 15 virtual 90-minute 'Battling the Odds' workshops via Teams between September 2024 and March 2025 to enable flexibility in their practitioner's work schedules but allow them the opportunity to book onto a workshop at their convenience. Each of the 15 online workshops registered up to 12 RBL delegates per session, maximising this training offer to engage potentially 150 staff.

Culminating these planned workshops BCT managed to engage and deliver the training to 129 individuals across the RBL workforce.

BCT received direct feedback from the RBL learning and development management following the completion of the 'Battling the Odds' workshops, which was well received by participants endorsing the effectiveness of the training which exceeded their expectations prior to attendance. The feedback provided demonstrates how the training increased participants understanding of how gambling harms may impact RBL service users.

Feedback provided by RBL staff members attending the 'Battling the Odds' workshops revealed that 85% of respondents reported the training increased their confidence in administering a brief intervention concerning gambling harms following their attendance and 90% would recommend the training to a colleague. See comments on what participants found most useful provided below:



**"The instructors relaying their personal lived experiences."**

**"The training was brilliant and thank you for finding this resource for us."**

**"The understanding in all aspects of gambling and their effects."**

**"Both the trainer and Andy Gallie (who also attended) had lived experience and, as such - shared their first-hand knowledge about the subject and the impact gambling had had on their lives. They were both very open, honest, and passionate about their desire to help others with this addiction and what we could look out for and offer in the way of support to our beneficiaries."**

**"That the trainers had personal experience of the subject."**

**"The Lived Experience from the trainers."**

**"That the trainer and guest had lived experience to talk about their experiences."**

**"Just knowing what support is available for people with gambling issues so I know where to signpost them. I also found the insight into gambling and how harmful it can be very informative."**

**"Very informative and eye opening."**

**"I strongly recommend this for any case officers and staff working in Welfare working directly with customers."**

**"The information that banks can now block gambling."**





# Peer Support

wordsworth  
GRASMERE

## ARMED FORCES SUPPORT GROUP (AFSG)



*AFSG, Wordsworth Experience, August 2024*

The AFGSN are pleased to work in partnership with 'Wordsworth Grasmere, formulating a nature connectedness resilience programme that incorporates the works of the romantic poets particular William Wordsworth. This unique and exclusive programme is a collaborative project with Words that enables participants to engage with nature, self-exploration, peer support and practice on-going recovery and personal resilience.

The programme is aimed at providing a unique and engaging residential experience for our armed forces support group community set in the beautiful Lake District. The programme and setting promote a supportive community ethos

immersed in a calming restorative natural environment encouraging participants to be present with an emphasis on wellbeing and selfcare. The programme is interactive and stimulates personal development through the structured support and enhanced recovery capital of service users who have received support through the Armed Forces Gambling Support Network.

To date the AFGSN have facilitated one residential programme back in August 2024 that engaged 10 veteran participants following a successful pilot programme the previous year with more than 20 veterans. There are three 'Wordsworth Experience' veterans programmes scheduled for 2025.

# Participation

## STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGED

The AFGSN has engaged with the following agencies, organisations, and groups between February 2024 - March 2025.

1. 13 Air Assault Welfare Team
2. 156 Royal Logistics Corps Liverpool
3. 16 Air Assault Brigade
4. 2 Battalion REME
5. 2 Battalion The Royal Yorkshire Regiment
6. 2 Scots Battalion
7. 26 Engineer Regiment
8. 3 UK Div Welfare Support
9. 32 Artillery Regiment Larkhill
10. 36 Engineer Regiment
11. 42 Commando J Company CQMS
12. 47 Artillery Regiment Larkhill
13. 5 Battalion REME
14. MOD Lyneham
15. 6 Scots Battalion
16. 609 Squadron RAF Auxiliary
17. 7 Scots Battalion
18. ACVC Hub Govan
19. Adfam
20. Aldershot Garrison
21. Always a Rifleman
22. Andy's Man Club
23. Anglesey Council
24. Ark Egwood CIC
25. Armed Forces Launchpad
26. Armed Forces Support Group
27. Army Families Federation
28. Army RLC Buckley Barracks
29. Army Welfare Alliance Meeting
30. Army Welfare Service
31. AWS SW Alliance
32. RAF Corsham
33. AWS Tidworth
34. British Broadcasting Corporation
35. Bedford CC
36. Bedford Civil and Military Partnership Board
37. BE-INN
38. Beyond the Wire
39. British Forces Broadcasting Service
40. Blackpool Council
41. BLESMA
42. Blind Veterans UK
43. Bolton Armed Forces Veterans Hub
44. Bolton Guild of Hope
45. Bovington Garrison
46. Bovington Welfare Staff Bridge for Heroes
47. Bristol Hub for Gambling Harms Research
48. British Army Chefs
49. British Forces Resettlement Services
50. Bromley Council
51. Build Force Building Heroes
52. Bulford Camp - DCMH
53. Bury Veterans Hub
54. Cadent Gas Veterans Committee
55. Cardiff & Vale AFLO
56. Central & North West London NHS Trust
57. Chelsea Pensioners
58. Chichester Council
59. China Fleet Country Club
60. COBSEO
61. Combat Stress
62. Company of Makers
63. Council for Cadet Rifle Shooting
64. Crawley Council
65. Dai4 Films
66. DCMH Mental Health Burford Camp
67. Defence Centre for Mental Health
68. Defence Medical Welfare Services
69. Defence Mental Health & Wellbeing Network
70. Defence School of Healthcare Training
71. Department of Work & Pensions
72. Dundee City Council
73. East Ayrshire Recovery Hub
74. East Lancashire Hospital
75. Entrain Space
76. Erskine Education Centre
77. Essex Veterans Working Group
78. Healthwatch Essex
79. ETIC NAAFI Network
80. Everton in the Community
81. Families Forces Jobs
82. Fear Free
83. Female Veterans Transformation Programme
84. Female Voice Conference



## CONTINUED

85. Fighting Chance
86. Fighting With Pride
87. Forces Connect
88. Forces Transition
89. Forward Trust
90. Gamblers Anonymous North West
91. GEEC Squad
92. Glasgow City Council
93. Glasgow Housing
94. Government Veterans Advisory Board
95. Great Ormond Street Hospital
96. Greater Manchester Combined Authority AFC Leads
97. Groundwork GM
98. Growth Animals Marketing
99. Guardians for Heroes
100. Gurkha Regiment
101. Gurkha Welfare Trust
102. Guy's & St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust Armed Forces Team
103. Guys & St Thomas's Hospital Veterans H4H Veterans
104. Healthier Heroes
105. Healthsec Solutions Ltd
106. Help for Heroes
107. Hereford Veterans
108. Herefordshire Council
109. HIVE
110. HM Prison & Probation Service North & South - West Kent
111. HMP Altcourse
112. HMP Bristol
113. HMP Channings Wood VISCOs
114. HMP Kilmarnock
115. HMS Collingwood
116. HMS Drake
117. HMS Nelson
118. HMS Prince of Wales
119. HMS Raleigh
120. HMS Sultan
121. Hounslow Council
122. Infrastar
123. Instant Impact
124. Inverclyde Veterans
125. Invicta Park Barracks
126. Irwin Mitchell Solicitors
127. Jennings Civil Engineering JLR Veterans Group
128. Key Changes Kilbirnie Support Hub
129. Kilmarnock Veterans Hub
130. King's Centre for Military Health Research
131. Lanarkshire Veterans Hub
132. Lancashire Armed Forces Covenant Network
133. Land Warfare Battle Group
134. Light Aid Leavers to Leaders Academy
135. Liverpool John Moores University
136. Lochgoilhead Veterans
137. Lowland Cadet Force
138. Lancashire & South Cumbria NHS Trust
139. Manchester Armed Forces Steering Group
140. Marine Society & Sea Cadets
141. Maximus UK
142. Mid Sussex Council
143. Midlands Council
144. Milton Keynes Council
145. Milton Keynes Veterans
146. Mind in Somerset
147. Mission Community Mission
148. Motorsport
149. Mitie care and custody SW
150. MOD Corsham
151. MOD Policing
152. MOD Strategic Command
153. MOD Woodbridge
154. Money Plan
155. National Armed Forces and Emergency Services Community Directory
156. Naval Childrens Charity
157. NBCS Foundation
158. Newton Primary School
159. NHS Armed Forces Patient & Public Voice Group
160. NHS England PPV
161. NHS Mid & South Essex ICB Veterans
162. NHS Solent Trust & Hampshire Military - Mental Health Alliance
163. NHS Somerset Safeguarding Teams
164. NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board
165. NHS Veteran Aware Chavassee Conference
166. NHS Veterans Advisory Board
167. NHS Wales Veterans
168. North Somerset Council
169. North West Reserve Forces & Cadets Association
170. Northumbria University Hub for Veterans & Family Research
171. Office for Veteran's Affairs
172. Op Belonging
173. Op Courage
174. Op Fortitude
175. Op Nova
176. Oxleas NHS Trust Park Run
177. Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust

178. Pertemps
179. Personnel Recovery Centre Edinburgh
180. Pinnacle Family Services
181. Pinnacle Group
182. Poole & Dorset Veterans Hub
183. Positive Transition
184. PTSD Resolution
185. PTSD999
186. RAF Benevolent Fund
187. RAF High Wycombe
188. RAF Honington
189. RAF Shrewsbury
190. RAF Spadeadam
191. RAF St Mawgan
192. RAF Valley
193. RAF Wattisham
194. Rangers FC Veterans
195. Reaction Engines
196. REME Charity
197. Riverside Group
198. Riverside Housing R
199. NAS Yeovilton
200. Royal Air Force Association
201. Royal British Legion
202. Royal Dragoon Guards
203. Royal Marines Association
204. Royal Marines Charity
205. Royal Naval Benevolent Trust
206. Royal Navy Air Station
207. Yeovilton Command Team
208. Royal Navy and Royal Marine Welfare
209. Royal Navy Association
210. Royal Navy Learning & Development
211. Royal Star & Garter
212. Rugby for Heroes
213. SACRO
214. Sail Line
215. Scottish Veterans Residences Glasgow
216. Scotty's Little Soldiers
217. Scran & Scoff Club Veterans
218. Seeds of Hope
219. Serve & Protect Credit Union
220. SMART
221. Smart Recovery
222. Somerset Armed Forces Covenant Partnership
223. Somerset Community Foundation
224. Spinal Injuries Association
225. SSAFA
226. St Pancras Veterans
227. Step Together
228. Stoll Housing
229. Suicide Bereavement UK
230. Sunderland University
231. Support Our Military Veterans
232. Support Wounded Veterans
233. Swansea University
234. Swindon Town FC
235. Take Off
236. The Block Armed Forces Foundation
237. The Bridge for Heroes
238. The Drive Project
239. The Family Law Co
240. The Gurkha Welfare Trust
241. The Hurley Group
242. The National Armed Forces & Emergency Services Community Directory
243. The Parachute Regimental Association
244. The Poppy Factory
245. The Queen's Gurkha Engineers
246. The Ripple Pond
247. The Riverside Group
248. The Royal Chelsea Hospital
249. The Veterans Hub
250. The Veterans Welfare Service Tidworth Garrison
251. Togetherall
252. Tom Harrison House
253. Transition Plus
254. Trenchard Lines
255. Upavon Army HQ
256. UK Afghan Veterans
257. UK Defence Nursing
258. UK Government Veterans Advisory & Pensions Committee
259. University of West London
260. Veteran UK
261. Veterans & Families Institute for Military Social Research
262. Veterans Community Network
263. Veterans First
264. Veterans Foundation
265. Veterans Growth
266. Veteran's Hearing
267. Veterans in Crisis
268. Veterans in the Community
269. Veterans into Logistics
270. Veterans Regroup
271. Veterans Welfare Group
272. VIA Greenwich
273. Walking with the Wounded
274. Warminster Barracks
275. Warrington Armed Forces Support Network
276. Weymouth Veterans
277. White Ensign Association
278. Wigan Veterans HQ
279. Wirral Met College
280. Wolverhampton Council
281. Woody's Lodge

# Stakeholder Feedback

**Examples through stakeholder testimonials received of some of the work the AFGSN has provided are reflected in the feedback during Year One engagement highlighted below:**

“Many thanks for the course and the literature. I really enjoyed in and very insightful. Food for thought and some additional tools to use.”

**Guys and St Thomas’s Veterans Outreach**

“Thank you for today, which was informative, relevant, and engaging. I am in some chats already about adding prompts in the relevant section of our assessment paperwork/lines of enquiry – that reflect the suggested questions your presentation highlighted. I also hope that we will have takers for the day long training too.” **Op Courage**

“Thank you so much for the training yesterday. It has been very well received. I have no doubts that as Case Managers we will be asking more questions and more on the lookout for the signs that a beneficiary may be struggling with this area.” **Help for Heroes**

“I attended the London Armed Forces Network Conference and would love some more information and to discuss the training with you if you have some time? My role looks at what is happening on the ground in regional areas and across the devolved nations, and I would love to look at how we can support access to the training and potentially upskill some colleagues within the OVA if this is something that would be possible.” **Office for Veteran Affairs**

“I just wanted to say thank you, post training debrief with my team was immensely positive and they shared some of their learnings with me and how they would apply them, they were invigorated.”

**Royal Air Forces Association**

“May I please relay the sentiments from many of our participants including practitioners, therapists and volunteers, who told me how much they enjoyed and valued the Battling the Odds training.”

Dougie

**Dunsmore-Dawson, Tom Harrison House**

“I don’t mind admitting, I was sceptical of the need at first as gambling has never registered on my radar as a problem. The training has changed my perception. I will be sure to promote the training within Lyneham, and within future roles. I cannot believe it was free, and had it not been, I would still be ill informed and unaware of the dangers.

Simply, thank you.”

**Capt WT Gazi IEng MIET CMgr MCMI REME**

“Hi Brian, all good here – hope all is well with you too! As you know I apply a no news is good news policy! But I did go and quickly check the learning evaluations and as suspected anything that has been submitted is positive. Here’s some free text notes from January you might like to see.”

“Very informative and eye opening”

“I really enjoyed this course, and I’d like to see more like it”

“10 out of 10”

**Vicky Brown, Head of Learning and Development, Royal British Legion**

# Conclusion

The programme has had a successful and productive first year, exceeding significantly across its planned outputs and establishing itself proactively for our target audience considerably more than anticipated in our inaugural year. A forthcoming and key development in the programme is making more people aware of gambling harms within the military has been recognised by the British Forces Broadcasting Service who are working with the AFGSN to feature gambling issues via its various programmes and platforms throughout 2025. The AFGSN is proud of the achievements and input it has made in its first year concerning addressing gambling harms within the armed forces and veterans' community and celebrates its success in reaching more than 11,000 beneficiaries.

The range of stakeholders involved the AFGSN work includes organisations such as: Op Courage, Army Welfare Service, Defence Medical Services, Swansea University, Help for Heroes, Royal Hospital Chelsea, SSAFA, the Royal British Legion, Blind Veterans UK, Tom Harrison House, HMS Prince of Wales,

the Northwest Reserves and Cadet Association, Blesma, Healthier Heroes, Fighting with Pride, Local Authorities Armed Forces Champions, Regional Armed Forces Covenant Networks, Veterans Launchpad, RAF Wyton, RAF Spadeadam, RAF Valley, RAF Honington, Veterans First, Veterans Welfare group, 2, 6 & 7 Scots Battalions, Combat Stress, The Poppy Factory, MOD Lyneham, HMS Raleigh, Nelson, Sultan & Collingwood, Dale Barracks, Office for Veterans Affairs, 156 RLC Supply Regiment, Catterick Garrison, Tidworth Garrison, many individual regimental units, veterans association groups and many third sector organisations who support the armed forces and veterans community.

The AFGSN and its strategic aspirations are optimistic as we go into our second year that we will continue to strive forward in making a positive impact in reaching more numbers and preventing gambling harms with the armed forces community whilst increasing access to specialist treatment and support pathways for those at risk of or experience gambling related harms.



# Continuation



Wirral Met College 'Bet you can Help' Workshop, February 2024

A forthcoming and key development in the programme in making more people aware of gambling harms within the military has been recognised by the British Forces Broadcasting Service who are working with the AFGSN to feature gambling issues via its various programmes and platforms throughout 2025.

To continue to develop the AFGSN offer, the project will be making an application to become a member of the Confederation of Service Charities (COBSEO), and all agencies will seek to upgrade their Armed Forces Covenant ERS Award level.

Further advancement of the AFGSN project will see a newly designed website created to

promote our offer and assist stakeholders in finding their regional provider and accessing their most relevant local service provision.

Another exciting AFGSN development, scheduled for September 2025, is the facilitation of a national conference specifically themed to the armed forces community. This conference is in the early stages of development and will be delivered in collaboration with the North West Reserve Forces and Cadet Association. The event will bring together a wide range of stakeholders who seek to explore and address gambling related harms within the armed forces and veterans' community.

# Thank You!



*The AFGSN Partnership Team, Peer-Aid Development Workshop, February 2024*



To find out more about the project or to express an interest in the 'Battling the Odds' gambling related harms training programme please email:

[armedforces@beaconcounsellingtrust.co.uk](mailto:armedforces@beaconcounsellingtrust.co.uk)



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