

“Creating this unique community in the heart of Plymouth will send out a clear message that we are proud of our veterans and the sacrifices they’ve made for us.”

Mike Taylor, Director,
Plymouth Access to Housing



“I am really proud to support this exciting project, which will ensure that 40 veterans will not just fade away but live in a new and vibrant community where their dignity and well-being will grow.”

Ian Sherrieff, Chair, Prime Minister’s
Rural Dementia Task and Finish Group



OUR BUILDING

With the help of our supporters, we will create bespoke, high-quality sheltered living accommodation for veterans in need.

Conveniently located in Plymouth’s city centre, just a few minutes’ walk from the University campus, this will provide a safe, comfortable home where veterans can flourish. With medical students living in adjoined but separate accommodation, the veterans can enjoy their own space and privacy while also having the opportunity to benefit from the company of a younger ‘buddy’.



“Central to Project Equinox’s vision for the Veterans Centre is the academic rigour Plymouth University will bring to the ongoing evaluation of this unique intergenerational project. Valuable learning from objective analysis will be shared widely to help ensure long-term benefits for older and younger people in a variety of scenarios.”

Professor Terence Lewis, Chair of Project Equinox
Chair of Plymouth Peninsula Medical School Board



Architect’s impressions of the Good Companions Veterans Centre,
Mayflower Street, Plymouth city centre



OUR SUPPORTERS

The exciting plans for the GCVC have attracted widespread support from veterans, students, the Armed Forces and charities.

“When my wife died five years ago I was on my own and lonely. Fortunately, I was accepted as an ‘in pensioner’ at the Royal Hospital Chelsea and this has made a huge difference to my quality of life. I’m very lucky and it’s wonderful to be with kindred spirits. I just wish Plymouth’s Good Companions Veterans’ Centre had existed back then so that there was something in my own city. The Centre is so badly needed and I’d have given it serious consideration.”

Brian Cumming MBE,
Chelsea Pensioner and former
Plymouth resident

“Help for Heroes supports this great initiative which will help to ease loneliness for our veterans. The communal facilities and social integration with medical students will especially benefit wounded, injured and sick veterans for whom physical and emotional isolation is a considerable challenge.”

David Richmond, Director of
Recovery, Help for Heroes

“The ambitious, impressive and exciting vision of Project Equinox to create a thriving and healthy community of veterans and young people living together in a unique way that will add value to all of their lives is something very different. The commitment, drive and energy shown by Plymouth University and its faculties to bringing that vision to fruition is to be commended and admired and will I am sure bring great benefit to the veterans of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines in the South West.”

Robert Robson, Chief Executive,
The Royal Navy and Royal Marines
Charity



To find out more, please visit www.plymouth.ac.uk/donate
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JOINING
FORCES
WITH
PLYMOUTH
UNIVERSITY



The Good Companions Veterans Centre

A pioneering project bringing together veterans of the Armed Forces and students of Plymouth University Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry for the benefit of both

“This project is long overdue. At last, veterans will have somewhere to ‘call their own’. It’s rather wonderful!”

Gwynne Parsell, RAF, World War II



“The GCVC seems to offer everything I’m lacking in my current existence – the company of others, young and old, communal spirit and camaraderie. I would relish the opportunity to take up residence in the Veterans’ Home – it’s a wonderful idea, and as a veteran in my own right, it would be my privilege and pleasure.”

Margery Draper,
Plymouth-based former WREN



“Friendship is one of the best things in life and age should be no barrier.”

Eric Greenleaf, Royal Marines 1934 – 60



WHY IS THE GOOD COMPANIONS VETERANS CENTRE NEEDED?

Surprisingly, and sadly, given its proud military history and high concentration of serving and retired military personnel, Plymouth has no dedicated veterans’ focus or facility. Many pensioner veterans live alone, making them vulnerable to isolation, loneliness and related health problems, but there is nowhere for them – or the wider veteran community – to ‘call their own’ or provide a fitting sense of dignity, pride and respect.

As a leading University, Plymouth is committed to making an enduring positive impact on our students and the communities we serve. A strong supporter of the Armed Forces Covenant, we want to redefine the way communities care for the veteran population by creating an innovative model underpinned by a sustainable business plan, rigorous evaluation and new approach to social inclusion and cohesion.

WHAT IS THE VISION?

Plymouth University is joining forces with Project Equinox* to establish the pioneering Good Companions Veterans Centre (GCVC), a beacon of excellence in the South West providing comfort and companionship for ex–Service men and women whose lives might otherwise be blighted by loneliness and isolation.

A national first, the Centre will set a new standard of care for veterans, enhancing their well–being while also enriching the experience of students of the Plymouth University Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry and Faculty of Health and Human Sciences.

With an ambition to open in 2016, the flagship project will provide:

- a dignified, affordable ‘home for rest of their life’ for 40 single veterans (tri–Service), where they can thrive among kindred spirits and enjoy a military ambience;
- adjoined but separate living accommodation for 42 Year 2+ Plymouth University Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry students with a manageable ‘social responsibility’ towards the veterans through weekly one–to–one buddying, monthly entertainment evenings and excursions;
- a Healthcare Clinic, where resident veterans and those from the wider veteran community will be assessed and treated by supervised healthcare profession students of the University, including those from physiotherapy, optometry, podiatry and dietetics;
- a Veterans’ Hall available to the whole veteran community for meetings and events, including high–profile gatherings,
- a vibrant café open to veterans, students and the wider community.

WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL IT MAKE?

The GCVC will be far more than bricks and mortar. The first of its kind, this dedicated facility will set a new benchmark for how society recognises our veterans and provide an unparalleled level of care and social inclusion, as well as helping to ensure that the medical and healthcare profession students involved learn to see the whole person, not just any condition or illness.

The Centre will

- bring veterans out of isolation and into a community of kindred spirits where they can thrive, benefitting from due recognition, camaraderie and increased independence;
- improve health and well–being for both resident and non–resident veterans, relieving pressure on over–stretched services. An estimated 400 veterans annually stand to gain from healthcare provided on site;
- provide a much–needed focal point for the Armed Forces community through the Veterans’ Hall, meeting the city and region’s need for a high–profile, dedicated facility for meetings and events;
- enhance the skills and enrich the experience of tomorrow’s medics and healthcare professionals, many of whom would otherwise have little or no contact with older people despite 75 per cent of their future clients and patients being in this age group, and
- generate important learning from a unique initiative that will be shared widely with other cities with high numbers of veterans and students.



“The involvement of 42 students from the Plymouth University Peninsula School of Medicine as co-residents of the GCVC, each with their own intergenerational ‘buddying’ role, will bring Project Equinox and Plymouth University into a partnership that will have a positive and enduring impact on those it serves.”

Professor Wendy Purcell,
Vice-Chancellor and President,
Plymouth University



Plymouth veterans Dave McDonald (left) and Eric Greenleaf



Plymouth University Peninsula School of Medicine students

CASE STUDIES



Eric Greenleaf,
Royal Marines 1934 – 60

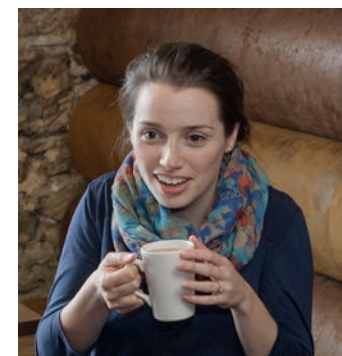
Born on Plymouth’s Barbican in 1920, Eric joined the Royal Marines Band at just 14. He served on *HMS Cumberland*, first in the South Atlantic, witnessing the demise of the *Graf Spee*, and then in 17 Arctic convoys between Scotland and Murmansk, enduring attacks by enemy aircraft, surface raiders and submarines as well as the bitter fury of North Atlantic winter storms.

Later, Eric served in the Far East until Japan capitulated in September 1945, and then in the Korean War from 1950–53. He retired from the Navy in 1960.

A widower, Eric now lives in sheltered accommodation just yards from where he grew up on the Barbican. He is best pals with fellow resident and former Royal Navy chef, Dave McDonald, the only other military veteran living there.

Says Eric: “Our time in the Forces means we really understand each other. Although we’re different ages, we’ve shared some similar experiences and that makes a difference.

“But not everyone is as lucky as us and I think the idea of the Good Companions Veterans Centre is one of the best I’ve ever heard. A mini ‘Chelsea Hospital’ is what Plymouth needs to nurture its veterans and the involvement of the medical students would be fantastic. Friendship is one of the best things in life and age should be no barrier.”



Ailsa Wright, Year 4 student,
BMBS Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery

Originally from Northampton, Second Lieutenant Ailsa is studying at Plymouth University Peninsula School of Medicine on a British Army Medical Cadetship.

Says Ailsa: “The Good Companions Veterans Centre is a great example of the School’s innovative approach, which promotes lateral thinking and holistic healthcare from the outset of our studies.

“The Centre will give students a fantastic opportunity to gain understanding of a group of people they wouldn’t ordinarily meet, and to build bonds with them. They’ll get to know the veterans as people, gain insight into their backgrounds and see that they were young once, too!

“This experience will be invaluable for future practice. It will help ensure doctors are more aware of the difficulties older people face and better equipped to provide the best possible care. It’s about so much more than career development though – I’m sure many of these friendships will last well beyond the student years.”



Architect’s impression of the Good Companions Veterans Centre, centre ground, looking eastwards along Mayflower Street

*Project Equinox is a charitable incorporated organisation established with the support of Plymouth University



Plymouth veterans of the RAF, Army, Royal Navy and Royal Marines