

*"Plymouth is proud to be a garrison city. I welcome the opportunity for our students to engage with, and support, our veterans. Everyone has something to learn in this process."*

**Rob Sneyd,**  
Dean PU PSMD



*"Equinox is such a brilliant and innovative project. For the elderly it will help to combat mental and physical deterioration. For students, it provides an opportunity to gain invaluable experience in working with an age group that will make up the majority of their patients once they are qualified."*

**Angela Rippon**



## OUR BUILDING

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

Conveniently located in a prime location in Plymouth's city centre, on a site kindly donated by James Brent, Chairman, Akkeron Group 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 Equinox 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, Previous Consultant Cardiac Surgeon.**  
Medical Director of Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust and Chair of Peninsula Medical School Board

## OUR SUPPORTERS

The exciting plans for the Equinox Centre 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 The Equinox 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

*"I am really proud to support this exciting project, which will ensure that 43 veterans will not just fade away but live in a new and vibrant community where their dignity and well-being will grow."*

**Ian Sherriff, Chair, Prime Minister's Rural Dementia Task and Finish Group**

*"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

**PLYMOUTH UNIVERSITY**  
**PENINSULA**  
SCHOOLS OF MEDICINE & DENTISTRY

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## The Equinox Centre

A pioneering inter-generational community project bringing together undergraduates at the start of their adult careers, with the elderly, in the manner of an extended family, for the benefit of both

**[www.projectequinox.co.uk](http://www.projectequinox.co.uk)**





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

Eric Greenleaf, Royal Marines 1934 – 60



A very high proportion of all patients seen by junior doctors will be 70 years or over and for many medical students being part of an extended family has not been possible. Project Equinox will address this issue.



“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



Equinox is a project that lends itself to a university, a housing association and the charitable sector working together to produce high quality sheltered flats, and students’ accommodation, at an affordable rent. An important element will be communal facilities that go above and beyond basic accommodation, to make a real difference to the mental and physical wellbeing of both groups of residents. In this case the project is a pilot that will socially connect single elderly veterans of the Armed Forces to medical students, in adjoining but separate homes, in a bespoke development, set in a flourishing part of Plymouth City Centre.

## HOW WILL IT WORK?

Supported by Plymouth University and in particular its Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry (PU PSMD) Equinox will work in partnership with Places for People (‘PfP’ is one of the largest property management, development, regeneration and leisure companies in the UK, comprising 16 companies, with assets in excess of £3.3 billion, managing more than 143,000 homes) who, as experts in the provision of accommodation, and sheltered accommodation, will part fund the capital costs, own, manage and operate most of the Equinox Centre, in accordance with Equinox’s charitable constitution. Medical students will enjoy high quality affordable accommodation at competitive rates. Veterans will enjoy high quality sheltered accommodation on a means tested basis, whereby either local market rent or Local Authority subsidy will apply, according to individual circumstances. As this has more than just an accommodation component Equinox is required to part

fund, through donations a percentage of the capital costs. Equinox will also work in partnership with Livewell Southwest who will operate the Veterans Healthcare Clinic through the professional management of Plymouth University’s healthcare students.

## WHAT IS THE VISION?

A **Veterans’ Home** for 43 resident veterans: With a military ambience, comfort, security and camaraderie which will dignify their twilight years.

Adjoined but entirely separate self-contained en-suite accommodation a **Medical Students’ Residence** will accommodate 48 medical students who will have a ‘social relationship’ with their neighbouring veterans.

A **Veterans’ Hall**, available to the wider veteran community, for beneficial use, such as Association meetings, a regular Veterans’ Memory Café, and minor events.

A **Veterans’ Healthcare Clinic** will provide a regular service to the wider veteran community through assessment, and then treatment as necessary by supervised healthcare students of Plymouth University, in such fields as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, podiatry, dietetics, adult nursing, and dental assessments (with subsequent treatment available at the Dental School).

A vibrant **Public Café** will provide a convenient social venue for veterans, students, and the local community alike

Residents will partake in weekly one-to-one student and veteran ‘buddying’, group get-togethers, and students will organise monthly entertainment evenings, and weekend day excursions. This non-medical relationship will be about helping to transform lives through social relationships and friendships, providing therapeutic advantage, alleviating loneliness and isolation, and enhancing well-being.

All residents will enjoy joint use of a gym, a fitness circuit, and a garden.

## WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL IT MAKE?

The Equinox Centre 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.

## WHY VETERANS?

Recent conflicts have rightly brought much national focus upon the serving wounded and injured, and their immediate post conflict care, and rehabilitation. In contrast Equinox is about today’s and tomorrow’s elderly veterans, from across all of the Armed Services, providing a focal point that reflects and recognises the contribution and sacrifices that the proud garrison city of Plymouth, and the Region’s veterans, have made in the past.

## WHY MEDICAL STUDENTS?

Plymouth University has a young and thriving Medical School with an excellent national reputation and a strong emphasis on community engagement. Equinox builds upon this and provides an ideal way in which our future doctors can gain a professional understanding of and empathy with the elderly. The lengthy nature of their 5 year course also enables a greater consistency of project membership.

## WHY PLYMOUTH?

Historically one of the more depressed urban areas in the country, Plymouth City Centre is developing rapidly and creatively. Equinox will contribute to the enrichment of the city, which, due to its historic Armed Forces legacy, has a higher than average proportion of veterans, many of whom are living alone.



Plymouth veterans Dave McDonald (left) and Eric Greenleaf

## WHY EVALUATE?

Equinox will need to carefully evaluate its success in a non-intrusive, sensitive manner. Covering factors such as cost benefits, interaction, perceptions, measurable changes, self-reported quality of life, and the extent to which healthcare needs of veterans are addressed, evaluation will demonstrate value for donated money, and is expected to lead the way towards emulation of the benefits of inter-generational schemes at a national level.

## WHERE NEXT?

Assuming demonstrable success it is entirely feasible that Equinox and Places for People could choose to replicate this scheme nationally, in other university cities, and perhaps also with generic students and elderly civilian residents.



“The Project Equinox and University of Plymouth partnership, that brings together medical students as co-residents with our veterans in the Equinox Centre, will bring long-term benefits and a positive impact on all those it serves.”

**Professor Judith Petts,**  
**Vice-Chancellor,**  
**Plymouth University**



Medical School Students at work

## 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 Equinox 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.”



**Captain Alisa Wright RAMC graduated from the Peninsula School of Medicine on a British Army Medical Cadetship in 2015.**

Says Ailsa: “The Equinox 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.”



Medical School Students at work



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