

Rich Age: 46 Service 4 years Parachute Regiment

I was working in Education. A PE Teacher when in 2013 my life changed. Arrested, bailed and in 2015 sent to prison for 15 months for a mistake I will regret for the rest of my life. Previous to teaching, I volunteered for the arduous Parachute Regiment training alongside regular servicemen for a number of years. This is where I truly crafted my personality. The army build discipline, respect, and positivity in adversity, resilience, organisation, compassion and loyalty. Never a truer expression can be made other than camaraderie, a family and band of brothers.

In prison I kept busy volunteering as a Veteran in Custody Representative offering peer support to ex-servicemen. I was the group's secretary. As a group we had monthly meetings often inviting SSAFA, Combat Stress, Royal British Legion and Help 4 Heroes. Through this networking, support I decided to make my own enquires for help on release. VIC was a good initiative that brings together veterans in prison, we were provided with lots of information and promises. After release, these promises did not manifest into a great deal of support, or what was on offer was not as immediate as indicated or easy to find.

In February 2017 I was released from prison. I contacted the local Royal British Legion and our local Armed Forces Covenant Partnership who put me in touch with Remembering Veterans Criminal Justice Project, Warwickshire Area. From here, I made contact with Veterans Contact Point – Armed Forces Centre in Nuneaton, Warwickshire.

I am currently receiving assistance finding employment, accessing funding for education and peer support whilst on probation. For me, this has been invaluable. As a proud member of the Armed Forces I wish to give something back, to help others. I have been volunteering as a peer support worker. It is early days but the future is beginning to look bright all thanks to these local support organisations that put veterans needs first.

I would recommend other Veterans who are struggling to make contact with the array of support organisations to make contact with Remember Veterans or the Veterans Contact Point in Nuneaton. I feel supported and welcome for the first time in many years, Veterans know and understand each other, which makes it easy to talk about issues and barriers to resettlement and integration back into civilian life. I am not being judged but supported which is great!