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Inspiring People: Developing Potential

A former Royal Marine, helping wounded veterans return to work, has received a grant of up to £68,000 from military charity Help for Heroes.

ExFor+ C.I.C. has been developed by Simon Adams, 34, a former Royal Marine Commando from Dorset who was medically discharged from service in 2011. Simon's personal experiences have led him to set up an organisation (Community Interest Company) to support others experiencing difficulties transitioning from service and returning to civilian life and employment.

Simon wanted to join the Armed Forces since he was 8 years old. He attended a number of Potential Officers Courses, eventually joining the Royal Marines as a Marine in 2006 and passed for duty in 2007.

Simon was injured in a pre-deployment training accident in 2008, which eventually led to his medical discharge in 2011. Simon's injuries were not only physical but also mental-health related.

He suffered mild to moderate traumatic brain injury, spinal fractures to the vertebrae and disc compressions, scarring and muscle damage.

He returned to his Royal Marines base approximately two weeks after the incident, but knew that things were not quite right. He struggled with his memory, concentration, understanding/comprehension and speech. He also suffered nightmares and had flashbacks. These affected aspects of his day to day life and continue to still do so.

Simon began to struggle to be engaging with friends and family on a social basis, as he was not always able to control his verbal or emotional responses and would end up being verbally aggressive, as well as potentially violent at times. He thought he was prepared mentally for his exit, however, he did not realise how hard he would find losing the one thing he had worked so hard for, having planned to do a full 22 years' service.

Simon, who is part of the Help for Heroes fellowship, has since supported some 400 individuals in returning to long term and sustainable employment within his community, whilst working on the government's Work Programme provided by Prospects. He has now set up ExFor+ C.I.C, a not for profit organisation designed to provide employment opportunities to as many service leavers as possible from their point of medical discharge.

Past employer, Prospects, is continuing to support Simon through initial support funding for ExFor+ C.I.C, back office services and future subcontracting opportunities.

The funds from Help for Heroes, being delivered over a 12 month period, will enable Simon to undertake employment focused support to the veteran community initially within the South West of England, with an aim to provide local communities with positive social and economic impact.

**Simon said:**

*"We will provide effective, sustainable and long term employment focused support through access to training, information and guidance. It goes without saying I am incredibly grateful to Help for Heroes for giving me the opportunity to get ExFor+ up and running. The organisation will enable me to help many injured or sick veterans who have served their country and are ready and skilled to continue making a positive difference in civilian life. I would simply not be able to reach these individuals without the support from Help for Heroes."*

**Claire Barnes, Head of Grants at Help for Heroes, added:**

*"H4H is all about getting the very best support to the wounded Servicemen and women and their families whose lives are changed by their injuries and illness. We are delighted to be able to work with other organisations and the Service's own charities to ensure that the wounded and their relatives get the speedy support and opportunities they so richly deserve."*

**ExFor+ C.I.C. Mission Statement:**

*"We will provide effective, sustainable and longterm employment focused support, utilising a personalised and holistic approach to re-habilitation and training. To enable; injured, multi-skilled and talented ex-forces and other related uniformed public services personnel, their families and those who live within their communities. To re-enter civilian life and employment more effectively by providing; information and guidance as well as signposting, enabling accelerated access to relevant charitable services."*

### **ExFor+ C.I.C. Vision Statement:**

ExFor+ C.I.C. aim to become a transitional employer to individuals leaving service, harnessing the innate skills and personal experiences of those that have served their country. To deliver social and economic changes or growth, by engaging them in immediate employment with ExFor+ C.I.C. that will be supporting national government contractors. This will be possible from the point of discharge or before allowing them a supportive employer, time to decompress and adjust from their time in service whilst transitioning to civilian life. Reducing the associated transitional difficulties during this often difficult and traumatic period of time. Supporting them with their own personal development by way of education, training and providing them with suitable, longterm and sustainable employment opportunities available to them, from outside services or authorities.