



LIFE BEYOND THE MILITARY –  
OUTDOORS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

March 2017

HighGround, 95 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 2DX  
Charity registered in England and Wales: 1151225. Company limited by guarantee: 823 6843.



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## THE NEED

Approximately 14,000 members of the Armed Forces leave every year. It is well recognised across a wealth of research that employment is a critical component of successful transition to civilian life and more importantly that those [individuals] who choose a job as part of a career path, are more likely to be motivated and feel they are progressing. *Forces in Mind Trust, (2013) Understanding the transition process for Service personnel returning to civilian life.*

Those who join HM Forces are predominantly outdoor people and the land-based sector offers an ever-increasing variety of opportunities for Service Leavers, Reservists and Veterans to use their unique transferable skills learned in the military to pursue jobs, careers and vocational opportunities in the land-based sector in the UK and beyond.

One of the principal challenges to face Service Leavers and Veterans is to be able to identify their transferable skills and then market themselves effectively to employers. In addition there are those for whom the transition to civilian life is not smooth and additional help, guidance and information is required.

## VISION

Our vision is to be the leading organisation for the provision of land-based opportunities for all ex-military personnel and Reservists.

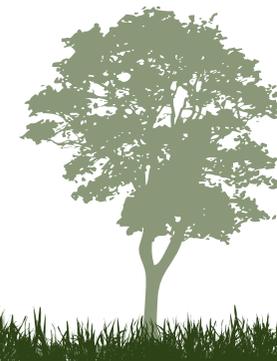
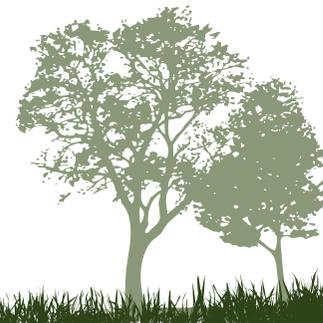
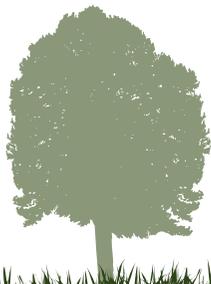
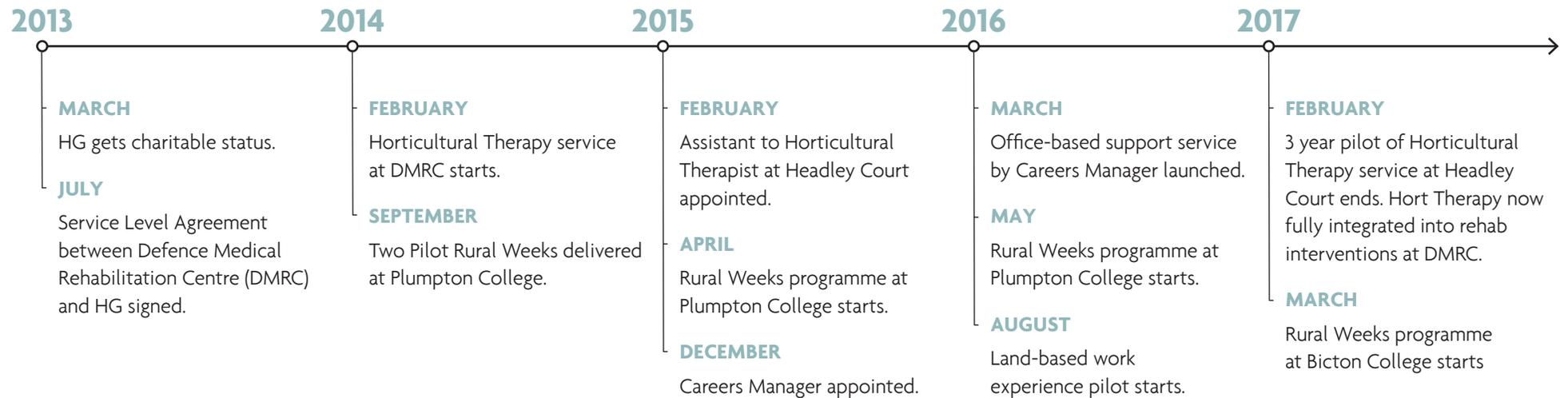
The organisation is positioned as a forward-facing destination where beneficiaries can be assured of understanding, assistance and long-term support and advice to help sustain their successful transition to civilian life.

In particular HighGround will:

- ▶ Provide a Horticultural Therapy service at Headley Court for Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) patients as part of the Defence Recovery Capability and will move to the new Defence National Rehabilitation Centre at Stanford Hall in 2018 when Headley Court closes.
- ▶ Develop Rural Weeks for Service Leavers, Reservists and Veterans to provide access to expert advice about land-based jobs, careers and vocational opportunities.
- ▶ Provide ongoing formal and informal support for HighGround beneficiaries (HighGrounders) as they continue their journey through transition into civilian life.
- ▶ Collect an evidence base to increase awareness of transition challenges, needs and outcomes which will inform the development of appropriate services.
- ▶ Partnership working is at the core of HighGround's vision and the Charity is developing relationships with further education, work experience, training and employment providers in the land-based sector and is working closely with other Service charities to develop resources for this unique client group.



## TIMELINE



## DELIVERY

Land-based employment, self-employment and vocational opportunities service including Rural Weeks.

### WHAT IS THE LAND-BASED SECTOR?

This is a generic term which covers outdoor industries including Land Management; Environmental (outdoor) Design, Production and Leisure; and Animal Care with a special focus on food production.

### WHY ARE EX MILITARY PEOPLE SO WELL SUITED TO THE LAND-BASED SECTOR?

Military life teaches motivation, problem-solving, teamwork, resilience and adaptability in sometimes rough and often unfamiliar environments.

HighGround helps Service Leavers, Reservists and Veterans to work out what military skills and experience they have, how they will map into the land-based sector and how to access the many opportunities it offers for employment and self-employment.

We have pioneered Rural Weeks, 5 fully residential days at an agricultural college for 8 Service Leavers, Reservists and Veterans to learn about what the land-based sector looks like from subject matters experts; what training and qualifications they will need and how to access them. Rural Weeks are run by our Careers Manager in conjunction with the delivering agricultural college.

Since we piloted Rural Weeks at Plumpton College in Sussex in 2014, we have delivered 11 in total and in 2017 our Rural Weeks programme will be delivered at Bicton College in Devon.

Outcomes following a Rural Week include identifying relevant training and qualifications, starting some volunteering or work experience or in the case of those who are still serving, gaining knowledge and information to assist the decision-making process when they begin their resettlement.



## DELIVERY

Our referral agencies include:



STEP TOGETHER



We welcome self-referrals.

For those who don't need a Rural Week but are still looking for advice and introductions, we provide an ongoing service from our office in Westminster.

## DELIVERY

### Horticultural Therapy

Can be defined as The use of plants by a trained professional as a medium through which certain clinically defined goals can be met. (THRIVE conference 1999).

In 2014 HighGround started a 3 year pilot at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) Headley Court to test Horticultural Therapy as an intervention to be used in the rehabilitation of injured service personnel.

It was proven to be highly effective with referring Occupational Therapists reporting in an independent service evaluation by Dr Zoe Morrison of Aberdeen University that they now consider Horticultural Therapy to be an important part of patient care. As an additional modality for treatment, confidence builder, promotion of relaxation and mindfulness and for non-clinical (outdoor) skills development, Horticultural Therapy has now been fully integrated into the range of rehabilitation options available for Headley Court's patients.

The pilot was funded by The Soldiers' Charity, Westminster Foundation, Clive and Sylvia Richards Charity, the Leathersellers' Company and other generous funders and in 2016 our Horticultural Therapist delivered 1,524 30 minute sessions of Hort Therapy to 470 of DMRC's patients.

It will cost £354,000 to run the service for the next 3 years. HighGround currently receives no statutory funding and has launched a fundraising campaign to keep the service going.

There are three patient groups at DMRC:

- ▶ Complex Trauma (amputees)
- ▶ Neuro (head injuries)
- ▶ Force Generation (joints and spines).

Everyone who attends Horticultural Therapy must be referred by their Occupational Therapist. Reason for Referrals include:

- ▶ Improve standing tolerance and endurance
- ▶ Increase fine motor skills and cognitive processing
- ▶ Improve confidence and self-esteem
- ▶ Encourage social interaction
- ▶ Promote transferable skills.

### Dr Sue Stuart-Smith, Psychiatrist and Psychotherapist says:

*“The garden at Headley Court, which I have visited, provides a valuable resource as a peaceful space that is distinct from the hospital environment. It also gives the servicemen and women something positive in the form of gardening skills which they can take home afterwards and this can help with the process of reconnecting with families through gardening at home. Gardening is an inclusive activity and combats isolation through feelings of connecting to nature as well as sharing with others the pleasure in the produce and the beauty of the garden.”*

### Headley Court patients commented:

*“Horticultural Therapy has helped my standing tolerance and walking on different surfaces, giving time away from a clinical environment. Therapy by stealth – you enjoy it so much you don't notice the pain.”*

*“I have vastly improved physically and emotionally. I'd overlooked my emotional needs to concentrate on the physical. Horticultural Therapy has helped me with functional skills such as bending and picking things up from different heights. You find yourself talking to other patients as a bit of self-therapy too, it's good to offer others an ear to just listen.”*





## FUNDING

It will cost HighGround £354,000 to deliver the Horticultural Therapy service to DMRC's patients at Headley Court and from September 2018 Stanford Hall, the new Defence National Rehabilitation Centre created by the late Duke of Westminster.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of Annington which enables us to locate the Charity in Westminster and our core costs in 2017 are £38,300.

In 2017 we aim to deliver 8 Rural Weeks and gratefully acknowledge the support of Help4Heroes and the RAF Benevolent Fund.

Each Rural Week costs HighGround £12,352 to deliver and we are currently seeking funding to enable us to deliver the full programme.

## GOVERNANCE

HighGround welcomed 2 new Trustees to the Board in March, Georgina Brown and Ian Elliott who was unanimously elected as Chairman of the Board. They joined Tim Eastwood, Tony Groom (Treasurer) and Anna Baker Cresswell. There is also a Development Board drawn from a wide range of experts in all topics relevant to the land-based career support provided by HighGround which meet regularly.

Accountants and auditors: Haysmacintyre  
Legal advisors: Bates Wells Braithwaite LLP

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