

## Mark's Story

I joined the Army in 1983, and served for 22 years leaving as a Staff Sergeant in December 2005. My resettlement was done in computing after completing my course I was head hunted by Fujitsu Siemens MOD Operations and I worked for them for 10 months.

I committed an offence and went into custody in 2006, being moved around from jail to jail. Inside prison there are plenty of signs for VIC (Veterans in Custody), I was a rep in a couple of prisons, but the response and assistance given by the prison system was more a tick in the box as to "yes we run VIC's" than any positive help, at one prison I was told there was a man who would come in and see us on a regular basis, this never happened.

My final jail was HMP Isle of White; there they ran a monthly meeting for veterans. There was one officer who chairs the meeting from the prison service side. The veterans would organise events for Remembrance and other things, all these would have to be run past the prison and on occasions we would be told we couldn't do it, again a reflection on how the prison service view veterans, you are a prisoner and really that's that. This however is about all that happens; the local British Legion was asked to attend some of the meetings but they never did. My personal experience of help for ex-forces in jail is zero, you can say that you are ex-forces but I have found this to go against you as and I quote: "may have other skills gained from the Army".

There may be help for ex-servicemen with difficulties i.e. PTSD, but the standard of care within prison is very low, and I don't know of any prison that would offer any real practical help. If you have been inside you will know what I mean. I am not saying it is the same in every prison but this is what I have found throughout my own time in custody.

I was released to an Approved Premises run by National Probation Staff in Warwickshire, who put me in contact with The Veterans Contact Point in Nuneaton and subsequently the Remember Veterans Project. I have received more positive help, advice and general information from them than any other agency that I have dealt with so far, they see me as the ex-serviceman I am and not solely as an ex-offender. If you are an ex-serviceman and have experienced similar issues to my own, I would recommend you contact them even if it is just for the old style military banter/comradeship, you never know they may be able to help or advise you with any matter or problem you may have.