



My Name is Kevin Hackett, I served in the Royal Navy from 1978 until 1991, leaving as a Leading Weapons Engineering Mechanic (Ordnance) D178592U. Serving on two type 42 destroyers, HMS Glasgow and HMS Birmingham. I also served on the ice patrol ship HMS Endurance and the coastal survey ship HMS Bulldog.

I am employed by Change Step as a Veterans Low Intervention peer mentor, to support the 3 Veterans NHS Wales (VNHSW) therapists based in North Wales. I mainly cover the North East Wales area.

My role is to support veterans who suffer with poor mental ill health issues due to the service in the forces, from referral through to completion of their therapy, and beyond. I look at their social needs, such as housing, debt, social isolation and employment. I also support the veterans with low intervention therapy, looking at issues surrounding anxiety, motivation and insomnia.

I am heavily involved in the veterans' community attending many events in my voluntary role as the Standard bearer and N Wales representative for the Type 42 Association. I am the vice chair of the HMS Birmingham Association and Wrexham Branch of the Royal Naval Association, as well as a SSAFA case worker. I admin on several social media veterans' sites.

I received notification of my nomination and selection as one of this years' finalists on Thursday the 9th of May, and to say I was shocked is an understatement. The fact that some has taken the time to put my name forward for such an accolade, is humbling. I do what I do because I love working with veterans from all arms of the services, and to be recognised for doing this is as I say, humbling.

Achievements to date,

Whilst working within the Change Step / Veterans NHS Wales role, I supported a gentleman who found it difficult to leave his home and was on the verge of withdrawing for his final year of a degree in Chinese medicine. Working with the gent to support his issues surrounding his anxiety in public places, we managed to turn this around, he has gone on to gain his degree, but I think his best achievement and the most rewarding for myself was on the 1st of January 2019, I received a text from him in Times Square, New York, having just seen the new year in. This was followed by a further text 2 days later to tell me he had just got married. These 2 text messages filled me with an overwhelming sense of joy and achievement, that my involvement, however little had resulted in him and his new wife finding such happiness and freedom, and that they had taken the time to share this with me.

As the voluntary representative for the Royal Navy Type 42 association in North Wales, I became aware of a family from Old Colwyn, who had been trying for 33 years to have their son, brother and nephew, Cook David Osborne RN, remembered on the war memorial in his home town of Old Colwyn, but to no avail. David was killed in action onboard HMS Sheffield on the 4th of May 1982, during the Falklands war, and remains on patrol with his ship and comrades. On hearing his family's story, I led and co-ordinated a campaign to have the decision not to allow his name to be added to the memorial overturned. I was supported in this by veterans from the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Airforce, who signed an on-line petition that made it in to the national press. I am delighted to say that the action resulted in the decision being overturned. The veterans' community came together not only to overturn the decision but also to raise the funds to pay for the plaque bearing his name to be manufactured and added to the memorial. They then came together again to hold a commemoration parade and unveiling of the plaque, led by David's mother and sisters. Mrs Osborne who was 82 years old at the time, had stated she thought she would go to her grave without seeing her son remembered. The family now have a place, they can go to on David's birthday and on the anniversary of his loss and any other time they wish to remember him.

About Change Step

Change Step offers effective support for veterans, their families and carers in Wales – enabling them to access vital support services and tackle serious stress and related issues.

Our team of peer mentors use their own experiences to help fellow veterans and their loved ones confront challenges in their lives and manage their journeys of recovery.

Since we launched in 2014, we've helped **more than 1,900 veterans and their families**.

Research shows **every pound spent on Change Step results in around £7 in social benefits** – including better wellbeing, reduced loneliness and more settled home life for veterans, and savings to health services.

Our network of peer mentors have delivered **more than 41,000 hours of effective engagement with veterans** in communities throughout Wales.

Veterans we have supported have given **more than 10,000 years of service** to the UK Armed Forces.