



13.05.2021



## **Innovative creative project to combat loneliness in military service**

An unusual project to combat the impact of loneliness on military staff and officers is underway at RAF Benson in Oxfordshire supported by The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. Physical theatre company Justice in Motion helps alleviate the symptoms with a gift of dance.

RAF Benson said: "This project is unlike anything we've been involved in before and it has sparked conversations across our community. With personnel and families talking candidly about their own experiences and Justice in Motion's interpretation of these into something visual, there have been more discussions about isolation and loneliness. As the unique video gifts are shared, we hope they will encourage people to speak more openly about mental health and reach out to the various support options we have available."

Loneliness has been increasing and recorded in very high levels recently. Last year Justice in Motion worked with Oxford University humanities researcher Dr Bronwyn Tarr on Moving Together, using the shared activity of dancing together to 'beat the blues'. Dr Tarr has been studying the bonding effects of synchronised movement in groups and its impact on feeling connected.

Talking about loneliness is therapeutic and Moving Together involves recording conversations about what loneliness, and its opposite, feels like. These conversations inspire short choreography and music sequences, which, set in real life locations are filmed, and sent to the interviewees as video gifts. The dancers also teach parts of the choreography to the wider community so that they can take part in a flashmob together.

The resulting connection felt between participants is highly beneficial to mental health and wellbeing.

“It encapsulates everything I’ve been feeling for the last six years. I will show it to everybody because everybody’s heard me talk about it. A picture paints a thousand words - that clip paints more than a thousand words and says everything I’ve been trying to say. I’d like to see it shown nationwide on television, especially to the younger generation who still think they can’t talk about it.” Peter (participant)

“As a painfully shy 9 year old, this project has helped Lucy to identify her feelings more easily and to find different ways to explain them to others; the shape, the colour, the texture, the sound. It’s been incredible to watch her transform and open up to the team and she loved her video gift. Being able to see and hear the feelings expressed through the different video gifts has been amazing. I think they help everybody to understand how important connections are to people and that it’s okay to feel and express things in your own way” mother of Lucy (participant)

Films of the flashmob and of the dancers performing a combined choreography on the base will be shown to the entire community at the end of the project. Last year’s Moving Together project involved clients of The Archway Foundation whose members suffer chronic loneliness. The culmination of the project took place during the IF Oxford Festival of Science and Ideas in October. All the project videos and a short film are available to watch on the Justice in Motion website

<https://www.justiceinmotion.co.uk/shows/moving-together>

ENDS

For information, interviews, photographs contact

Justice in Motion: [gill.jaggers@gmail.com](mailto:gill.jaggers@gmail.com) mobile - 07961922301

RAF Benson: [nikki.hamilton862@mod.gov.uk](mailto:nikki.hamilton862@mod.gov.uk)

skype - 0300 158 3630 mobile - 07851329794

**Notes for Editors**

Images from the project at RAF Benson can be found on Flickr:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/justiceinmotion/albums/72157719165064318>

Video Gifts can also be viewed on:

[YouTube](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Website](#)

## **About Justice in Motion**

Justice in Motion is a professional theatre company that is passionate about art and social justice. Using movement and physical theatre they create powerful thought-provoking work. With academic, charity and business partners they tell the stories of real life and give a voice to silent sufferers.

[www.justiceinmotion.co.uk](http://www.justiceinmotion.co.uk)

### **Performers**

Krystal Campbell

Junior Cunningham

Miles Kearley

Anja Meinhardt

### **Film/Video**

Ben Johnston

### **Music**

Quentin Lachapele

### **Artistic Direction**

Anja Meinhardt

## **About RAF Benson**

RAF Benson is a Support Helicopter Main Operating Base in South Oxfordshire. It is home to many units including the Puma Force and the Puma and Chinook Operational Conversion Unit as well as the Joint Helicopter Support Squadron, the Medium Support Helicopter Aircrew Training Facility and the Puma Depth Support Hub. RAF Benson

continues to be committed to operations in the UK and overseas and remain at readiness to deploy worldwide to support humanitarian and disaster relief operations as well as combat operations. Around 1700 people work on the base and it is also home to hundreds of military families.