**Who is this aimed at?**

The pioneering Veterans for Wildlife (V4W), Footprints of Hope Wellness Programme will provide Veterans in crisis with person-centered initial and continuous support in order for them to take control of their problems, improve their psychological and physical wellbeing and combat isolation, allowing them to lead a happy and fulfilling civilian life. Six veterans will be chosen to participate in the programme through careful assessment and their progress will be monitored to establish the impact of the programme.

**What is it all about?**

The Footprints of Hope project is a fully immersive and ongoing programme combining mentoring, TRiM (Traumatic Incident Management), stress management, Yoga Nidra (YN) and, crucially, Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT). Participating veterans will be taught targeted approaches to cope with negative emotions and their consequences for the individual.

The two-week residential retreat in South Africa will include sessions on understanding and coping with trauma as well as coping with stress in everyday life, adjustment and self-care. The Animal Assisted Activities will include theory and application of the Human-Animal Connection and Animal Assisted Interaction and Activities in the treatment of trauma. The daily tasks will include experiential sessions – working side by side with the rhinos to create a catharsis and start a healing therapeutic process.

**Where and when?**

The Footprints of Hope Project will take place at the end of 2018 and will consist of three phases. Phase 1 will be the initial build up programme of the chosen candidates in the UK. Phase 2 will be a two-week residential wellness retreat at Care for Wild Rhino Sanctuary in South Africa where the candidates will engage in volunteer work and animal assisted activities as part of their therapeutic process. Phase 3 will ensure continuous support and engagement of the Veterans for Wildlife Community in the UK.

**Why is it a good programme?**

The integrated use of an experienced ex-military mentor and access to wild animals in a rehabilitation setting as part of the programme is what makes the Footprints of Hope project truly unique. All of which will combine to ensure a successful long-term outcome for participants.

**Benefit for the veterans**

The participants will experience improved psychological and physical wellbeing that will help to maintain their independence, and they will learn key skills and confidence, increasing their ability to explore and maintain new interest, educational / employment opportunities and social interactions. Participants will be able to take accountability of their feelings through self-help therapies and in the process foster post-traumatic growth.

The programme, assessment and interventions will adhere to good clinical etiquette and practice. All participants will have to give written consent to participate in the programme after they have been deemed suitable to partake. The participants will be given information about the assessment, programme and interventions in order to make an informed choice. Confidentiality is essential but not absolute and exceptions will be made should an applicant pose a risk to themselves or any other individual. All professionals who will be involved in the programme will act within their scope of practice regarding assessment, diagnosis, intervention and treatment. There will be regular discussion and supervision in order to ensure that all practices are ethical.