

MOD IMPROVES SUPPORT FOR OUR ARMED FORCES AND VETERANS WITH LAUNCH OF NEW SUPPORT GROUPS

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has launched a new regional network to help veterans, serving personnel and their families' access welfare support in their local area. The one year pilot scheme will see 13 new 'Veterans Advisory & Pensions Committees (VAPCs)' across the United Kingdom.

The VAPCs replace the previous 'War Pension Committees' but this is not simply a change of name. The new committees have been completely re-constituted and have a fresh focus and a much wider role. This includes:

- **Acting as advocates** for implementing improved cross-Government support, including the services outlined in the Service Personnel Command Paper and the Armed Forces 'Welfare Pathway'.
- **Raising awareness** within their regions of the support available to veterans and the Armed Forces community. This includes compensation and pension schemes for those injured, disabled or bereaved through Service, advice services and the work of the MOD's Veterans Welfare Service.
- **Assisting** serving personnel, their families and veterans in accessing the above services and other local support. This will include providing specific assistance and guidance to individuals in their areas and ensuring they are put in touch with the relevant organisations who can help. The committees will also provide an independent element to the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency's complaints process.

Chairmen and members have now been appointed to all 13 committees. All are volunteers and come from a cross-section of the local community, including health, social care, legal professionals and veterans groups.

Administration support and guidance for the VAPCs is provided by the MOD's Service Personnel and Veterans Agency. Jon Parkin, the Agency's Head of Veterans Services said:

"We know from talking to veterans that problems they face can often result from issues affecting a specific area of the country. The new VAPCs will have a vital, on the ground, local knowledge of these issues and will help ensure that Service personnel and veterans needing assistance get the help that's right for them, wherever they live."

Lt Col Ray Holland, a Chairman of one of the new Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committees said:

“The new committees will ensure that the needs of Veterans and their dependants are championed at every level from central government to the local community. We will assist in the implementation of the Military Covenant and work closely with local authorities, primary care trusts and Service charities in the delivery of services and benefits.

The committees comprise of members drawn from all walks of life providing a wide range of experience and knowledge, a number of whom have previously served in the Armed Forces.

Located on a regional basis, our local knowledge makes us well placed to serve the veteran community.”

Members of the Armed Forces or Veterans community wanting to contact their local committee should contact the Veterans Welfare Centre for their area (see below) or the Veterans-UK Helpline 0800 169 2277. Alternatively more information can be found on the VAPC web-site www.veterans-uk.info/vets_advisory.html

Veterans Welfare Centres

South East and London – 02392 702232
Wales and South West – 01452 540825
The Midlands and Eastern – 01562 825527
Scotland and Ireland – 0141 224 2709
North West, North East,
Yorks and Humber
& Isle of Man – 01253 333494

Ends

Notes to editors

1. Background to the VAPCs:
 - a. VAPCs replace the previous War Pensions Committees (WPCs). These were first established in 1921, in the wake of World War I, to assist the Ministry of Pensions. Members undertook the adjudication and administration of grants to disabled ex-Servicemen, the organisation of care for Widows and neglected children, and the monitoring of the Ministry of Pensions' administration of the War Disablement Pension scheme.

- b. The regional boundaries of the VAPCs mirror Local Government regions in England, there are 2 committees for Scotland, 1 each for Wales and Northern Ireland. The 13 committees cost around £40k per annum.
2. The **Service Personnel Command Paper** is the nation's commitment to cross-Government support to our Armed Forces, their families and veterans. More can be found at <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/Personnel/Welfare/>
3. The **Welfare Pathway** is an initiative to improve access to help, advice and benefits for members of the Armed Forces, veterans and their families. More can be found at <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/DefencePolicyAndBusiness/ArmedForcesWelfarePathwayLaunched.htm>
4. A *veteran* is anyone who has served in HM Armed Forces, regular or reserve including National Servicemen, former Polish forces under British command and Merchant Mariners who have seen duty in military operations (e.g. the Falklands Conflict). Veterans, along with their families and dependents make up the veterans community and all are entitled to VAPC services.
5. The *Service Personnel and Veterans Agency* is an Agency of the Ministry of Defence and provides essential support functions to the Armed Forces and veterans communities. These include Forces pay and HR, issue of all medals, casualty repatriation and compassionate services, pensions, injury/bereavement compensation and veterans welfare support.

For Further Information

Please contact Laurie Manton on 07795 970407 at the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency press office.