



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Issue 9

Winter 2008

Veterans **WORLD**

The regular newsletter for all those who serve the ex-Service community



Derek Twigg (centre) with recipients of the Veterans Badge

UPHOLDING THE COVENANT

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Derek Twigg, Under Secretary of State for Defence and Minister for Veterans, explains how the MOD is honouring the Military Covenant for present and past Service personnel.

As Veterans Minister, the well-being of serving personnel and veterans is a top priority for me and the Government. The Royal British Legion's recent "Honour the Covenant" campaign is timely and it helps encourage a public debate about the obligations owed by the Nation to those who have given so much. It is important that the whole of society plays a part.

The Government is fully committed to meeting our responsibilities. But of course there is more that can be done. I want to explain what we are doing now and the further work we are taking forward.

Let me touch briefly first on what we are doing for our brave men and women in Service. We hear daily of the selfless hard work and acts of heroism which British Armed Forces personnel continue to make, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan. To support them we have made improvements in Service pay, accommodation, health and welfare provisions and also force protection and personal equipment. I have seen for myself the expert medical treatment and care we now provide to injured personnel, whether at the frontline in Camp Bastion in Afghanistan or for returning casualties at Selly Oak and Headley Court in the UK.

For veterans themselves we are tackling issues of direct concern: veterans' healthcare, inquests, the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and the War Pension Scheme. You can find summaries on these four issues in this magazine's centre page, but I want to touch on two of these issues myself now.

Firstly, I want to ensure you are aware of the major recent improvements we have made to veterans' healthcare. Back in November, the Health Secretary Alan

Johnson and I announced the expansion of NHS priority treatment to all veterans, whose injuries or ill-health are suspected of being due to their service. We also announced a new model of community mental health services which will give veterans access to clinicians with expertise in veterans' mental health care. The new model will be piloted at six sites across the UK for two years, with the eventual aim of a nationwide rollout.

Secondly, let me also set the record straight on the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme. The Scheme's introduction in April 2005 provides valuable financial support to injured Service and ex-Service personnel by providing, for the first time, tax-free lump sum payments, as well as generous Guaranteed Income Payments (GiP) for life.

For the most seriously injured the GiP can amount to several hundreds of thousands of pounds during a lifetime. I recognise that no financial scheme can ever adequately compensate for the physical and mental loss sustained by our injured personnel but it is not capped like the civil scheme and we keep it continually under review.

The high-profile case of Lance Bombardier Ben Parkinson, who suffered horrendous injuries whilst serving in Afghanistan, alerted us to limitations in the Scheme's rules for multiple injuries payments. So in October, we announced that those personnel who suffer the most serious multiple injuries will be entitled to claim the full lump sum payment for each of their injuries, up to a maximum total of £285,000.

In summary, we must ensure that the Covenant is upheld, particularly at this time when we are asking our people to do

so much. Our Forces are the best, and they deserve the best.

It is important that the whole of society plays a part.

I firmly believe we are doing more than ever to support our armed forces personnel and veterans. As Veterans Minister I am determined to see that support maintained and improved. This is not just a matter for the Ministry of Defence but for Government and the nation as a whole. The partnership between the ex-Service organisations and Government is one that should be valued and strengthened.

Continued on centre pages

Why are you getting Veterans WORLD?

Veterans WORLD is distributed to organisations that assist the public in a professional capacity. Its aim is to raise awareness of the extra help and advice available to veterans from the hundreds of organisations across the country. There will be information in Veterans WORLD directly relevant to your work.

Who is a veteran?

Veterans are former members of HM Armed Forces (Navy, Army or RAF - regular or reserve). Indeed the term applies to all UK ex-Servicemen and women. There are an estimated 5.5 million in the UK and with their wives, husbands, partners or children, they comprise the 10.5 million strong Veterans Community. Veterans need not have served overseas or in conflict. Veteran's status also applies to a number of special groups such as those who served in Polish detachments under British command in WWII and Merchant Mariners who saw duty in military operations.

ONLINE RESOURCE FOR SERVICE LEAVERS

The MOD has introduced an online version of the Service Leavers Pack so that veterans can access the information from across the globe.

The Service Leavers Pack is distributed to all personnel leaving the Services and is issued by the Service Personnel & Veterans Agency (SPVA). The pack provides concise and timely information on terminal benefits, resettlement, Reserve Liability, Service charities and other welfare support available to them.

"This is a huge step forward. Service Leavers can now access up to date, relevant information from wherever they are in the world whether they are on Operations or have left the Services".

Lt Col Kate Martin, SPVA



The Service Leavers Pack online version can be found at: www.spva.mod.uk Then click onto the Service Leavers Pack link.

INHERITANCE TAX

Did you know that some veterans may be eligible for inheritance tax exemption if they die as a result of injuries or disease received during service...?

When someone dies, Inheritance Tax must normally be paid on their estate (everything they owned, at the time of death), if their estate is worth more than a certain amount (at present £300,000). The main exception is if they leave their estate to their husband or wife.

However, if a serving or former member of the HM Armed Forces dies from (or death can be shown to have been hastened by) an injury sustained or disease contracted on active service of a warlike nature, an application may be submitted to consider whether or not the estate should be exempt from inheritance tax.

All successful applications are subject to the set criteria, as much information as

possible must be provided and include: full service details, copy of death certificate and medical records.

Do remember

A veteran being in receipt of a war pension is not guaranteed exemption, even if death is a result of the conditions for which the pension is paid.



Applications must be made in writing and sent to Service Personnel & Veterans Agency, Joint Casualty & Compassionate Centre (Deceased Estates), Room 43, Building 182, Royal Air Force Innsworth, Gloucester, GL3 1HW. For further enquiries, call Wendy Gower on 01452 712612 ext 5680.

PATHWAYS ADVISORY SERVICE

A project that could help veterans return to work.

The Pathways Advisory Service (PAS) is a pilot project run by Jobcentre Plus at a limited number of sites around the country - Paisley, Gateshead, Bridgend, Somerset and Accrington - where a Jobcentre Plus Personal Adviser works within a GP surgery. The adviser's role is to offer return to work advice to patients and act as a gateway to further provision on offer through Jobcentre Plus. The main role is to help patients who are currently in receipt of incapacity benefit and who are thinking about returning to work at some point in the future. The service is entirely voluntary.

The potential customers for this service are those already claiming Incapacity Benefit or those coming to an end of their Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) entitlement. The role of the Adviser is to engage with the GP

and practice staff to increase awareness of the links between health promotion and work. The Adviser will offer a wide range of options of provision depending upon an individual's circumstances. This will include provision under Pathways to Work, general Jobcentre Plus provision, or provision offered by external organisations. Advice from general benefit questions to debt counselling can also be given.

The PAS has successfully helped a number of patients from across all walks of life return to work or enter training to help them return to work.



For further information call Antony Billingham on 0114 2098243 or email antony.billinghurst@dpw.gsi.gov.uk

Contact Details

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Service Personnel & Veterans Agency
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MAKING THE MOVE - FROM THE SERVICES TO CIVILIAN LIFE

Spring 2008 will see the opening of Mike Jackson House, a new housing project in Aldershot for single Armed Forces leavers.



The project will benefit Service leavers from around the country

Situated within the boundaries of Aldershot Garrison, its opening represents a vital and much-needed expansion of housing, support and training for single Armed Forces leavers. It will not only provide temporary accommodation, but will also help equip its residents with the skills to return to civilian life, ensuring they do not face homelessness.

The project is a result of a partnership between English Churches Housing Group (ECHG), the Ministry of Defence, Rushmoor Borough Council, Hampshire County Council, the Government's Communities and Local Government department and the Housing Corporation.

The project will benefit Service leavers from around the country and will provide accommodation for twenty-five residents (including two for wheelchair users). The project will also offer IT training and life skills training facilities, such as cooking lessons. It also has communal facilities and a gym. *The project is named after General Sir Mike Jackson, Chief of the General Staff from 2003 until 2006.*



For more information call ECHG's housing advice service, SPACES, at Catterick Garrison who deal with referrals to the project, on 01748 833797 or visit www.spaces.org.uk

THE MENTAL CAPACITY ACT AND THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC GUARDIAN

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 came into effect in England and Wales on 1 October 2007.

Office of the Public Guardian

The Act has introduced changes to the way in which decisions are made for people lacking the mental ability to make certain decisions for themselves. This could be because of mental health problems, brain injury, dementia, a learning disability, alcohol or drug misuse or any other illness or disability. The decisions can relate to their personal welfare, property or affairs.

The law has established a new Court of Protection to deal with all aspects of the Act. The Court has the power to decide if someone lacks mental capacity and, if they do, to decide how decisions should be made for them. Sometimes, the Court may appoint someone (a deputy) to act on behalf of the person who lacks capacity.

A new position of Public Guardian has been created, supported by the Office of

the Public Guardian (OPG). This replaces the previous Public Guardianship Office. The OPG will support and supervise deputies appointed by the Court. The deputies replace the current system of receivers and

may make on-going decisions on personal welfare and financial matters.

As of, 1 October 2007, Lasting Powers of Attorney have replaced Enduring Powers of Attorney.

The OPG will register Lasting Powers of Attorney, which allow people to plan ahead and set out in advance what should happen if they lose the ability to make decisions in the future. While Enduring Powers of Attorney only covered property and affairs, Lasting Powers of Attorney will also cover personal welfare decisions.



For further information call 0845 330 2900 or visit www.publicguardian.gov.uk

VETERANS POLICY

Joining up veterans support across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland



The Scottish Executive

The government in Whitehall continues to develop and build contacts in the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to help ensure that together a better service is offered to ex-Service personnel.

The health and wellbeing of veterans is a major concern and given the nature of devolved responsibilities it is crucial that the UK Government and the devolved administrations work closely together. Meetings between Derek Twigg, UK Minister for Veterans, and his ministerial colleagues from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland began last December. Discussions with Stewart Maxwell MSP and Edwina Hart AM brought healthcare and support to the top of the agenda. Minister will complete this round of meetings in early 2008 when he brings a range of Whitehall and devolved administration Ministers together. A key aim of these meetings is to strengthen the

partnership and thus improve the service for all veterans wherever they might be in the UK.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) also meets, on a regular basis, a range of officials in the Scottish Government and Welsh Assembly Government who have responsibility for veterans' issues.

How devolution works

Overall, devolution involves some powers that are retained by the UK Parliament and Government (e.g. defence) and others that are devolved to Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales (e.g. health, housing and social services).

How powers are devolved is different for each in terms of the role of their parliaments or assemblies and their governments. Stewart Maxwell, the Minister for Communities and Sport in the Scottish Government and Edwina Hart, Health Minister & Social Services in the Welsh



The Welsh Assembly

Assembly Government have a ministerial role for veterans in Scotland and Wales respectively.

What's next on the Agenda?

Work plans are now being developed for Scotland and Wales to capture the current work in progress for supporting veterans and to identify future priorities. This will include plans for Wales and Scotland to each run one of the mental health pilots which are being established across the UK to trial a better service to veterans with mental health needs. (see page 4 for more details)

The MOD also hopes to develop a similar relationship with colleagues in Northern Ireland with the restoration of devolution that has taken place in 2007.



The Northern Ireland Assembly

COMBATING HOMELESSNESS AMONGST VETERANS

Thank you for your Issue 8 Summer 2007 edition of *Veterans WORLD*.

I was interested to read the article on page 3 headed *Combating Homelessness Amongst Veterans*. This is an issue of concern to me and I am interested to explore whether the situation in Kent (and Maidstone in particular) would warrant a similar project in our area. Of course we already make use of the excellent facilities provided by the Royal British Legion at Aylesford but wondered whether the scheme highlighted in your magazine provides for a different type of supported accommodation.

I would be grateful if you could direct to the right person to have further discussion with?

John Littlemore JP
Chief Housing Officer
Maidstone Borough Council

John, many thanks for your letter. You will be pleased to know that Richard Macintyre of The Royal British Legion Village in Aylesford, Kent sits on the Ex-Service Action Group (ESAG) representing your area. The initiatives mentioned in the article are currently based in London but the Ex-Service Fellowship (Recently re-branded as Veterans Aid) takes client referrals from all over the UK and has helped veterans as far off as Australia! Project Compass does have plans to move out to the regions in the future, based on the areas of greatest need.

Ed

...LETTERS...

Write to *Veterans WORLD* Editor (See contact details on page 2).

The Editor reserves the right to accept or reject letters and to edit for length, clarity or style.

SAME SERVICE, DIFFERENT NAME

VETERANS AID is the new name for an ex-Service Charity that is 75 years old.



"care for homeless veterans...now"



VETERANS AID - (formerly The Ex-Service Fellowship Centres (EFC)) - is a small ex-Service charity with its head office - a veterans' initial point of contact - near Victoria Station and 57-room hostel, based in Stepney. The Charity's mission is to "care for homeless veterans...now", which means that any street homeless ex-Serviceman or woman calling in for help that day will have a bed and a roof over their head that same night

for however long - weeks, months, slightly more sometimes - it takes to regain their self-esteem, find a job and permanent accommodation.

A key aim is to help prevent veterans - aged between 19 to 75 - becoming homeless in the first place. However, the majority of their work concerns those who are actually already on the street, destitute, and in a lot of cases dealing with alcohol and/or substance dependence, mental health disorders or just thoroughly depressed and broke.



For more information call 0207 828 2468 or visit www.veterans-aid.net

UPHOLDING THE

Continued from page 1

VETERANS' HEALTH

Alan Johnson



On 23 November 2007, Health Secretary Alan Johnson and Minister for Veterans Derek Twigg announced major improvements to the support available to

Armed Forces veterans who have developed health problems as a result of their military service. The Ministers announced the expansion of NHS priority treatment to all veterans, whose injuries or ill-health are assessed by a GP to be due to their service. NHS waiting times are at an all-time low but priority treatment could still be significant for a small number of veterans. Clinicians will determine the allocation of priority treatment based on clinical need.

Health Secretary Alan Johnson said: "Our Servicemen and women do an outstanding job and we all owe them a debt of gratitude and a duty of care, particularly those who have developed health problems as a result of their military service. Under long-standing practice, war pensioners have had priority NHS access, but that has not always been fully understood. I want to make sure that everyone understands the current provisions. I also want to expand the eligibility for priority treatment in the NHS to veterans who may not yet have claimed a war pension."

In addition, a new model of community mental health services was also announced. This will give veterans access to clinicians with expertise in veterans' mental health who will provide assessment and help them to obtain suitable treatment. The new model will be piloted at six sites across the UK for two years, after which its effectiveness will be assessed and nationwide roll-out considered. The pilot at the Staffordshire & Shropshire Foundation Healthcare Trust is now open, and it will be followed in the coming months by pilots in Camden & Islington, Cardiff, Newcastle, St Austell and Scotland. The location for the pilot in Scotland is still to be confirmed. Each site

will have a trained community veterans' mental health therapist. Veterans will be able to access this service directly or through their GP, ex-Service organisations, the Veterans Welfare Service, or Social Service departments.

In the interim, the MOD's Medical Assessment Programme (MAP) offers expert mental health assessment to any veteran with mental health problems who has served in operations since 1982;



in particular, for areas not yet involved in the pilots, this offers support where a GP may be concerned that he has not fully understood the military background to a veteran's problem or who wishes specialist advice on the medical options. The MAP is currently staffed by Dr Ian Palmer, an ex-serving military medical officer, he is a qualified GP and Consultant Psychiatrist.

Derek Twigg, Minister for Veterans, said: "I am delighted to launch the first pilot of this new community mental health service for veterans. The new community health pilots will be staffed by qualified mental healthcare professionals. By working with us, these professionals will be able to develop further their understanding of the military ethos and military operations, and to enhance and keep up to date their expertise in veterans' mental health, enabling them to give better support to our people."



ROUND THE CLOCK SUPPORT



JCCC Incident Centre

Being a member of the Armed Forces isn't a 'nine to five' job. It's unique in the potential risks faced in particular current operations overseas. Injury in conflict is traumatic for everyone involved but it sets in motion a finely tuned operation...

Step One – an Operational incident occurs

A member of the Services is injured or suddenly taken ill. Their colleagues will provide or arrange immediate medical assistance. The casualty will be moved to a field hospital for further treatment or assessment. Details of the incident are then sent to the relevant admin post at their Unit or HQ.

Step Two – Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre is notified

JCCC (as it's known within the MOD community) will receive a report with details of the incident electronically either, via the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system or signal. With the introduction of JPA, incidents can be notified quickly (within minutes) to start the process of notifying relatives or evacuation of the casualty, if required.

Step Three – Informing Family

Before posting overseas, Service personnel provide details of their emergency contact and Next of Kin (NOK), on the JPA system, who need to be informed if an incident occurs. The JCCC will liaise with the relevant Service (for example an Army Division) to arrange notification to those listed. For serious injuries, this is done via a personal visit. (For Service personnel under 18 years old, their guardian/NOK must be informed irrespective of their wishes).

Step Four – Further Treatment, if required

Injured personnel who cannot be fully treated in theatre will normally be medically evacuated to a specialist hospital in the UK. More seriously injured soldiers may, however, be evacuated to specialist treatment in hospitals closer to the theatre of operations, before being moved to Selly Oak Hospital, Birmingham. JCCC also work

INQUESTS

Bereaved families of those killed in-Service understandably want to know what happened to their loved ones and inquests are a key part of the process.

Inquests seek to establish who died, when they died, how they died and why they died. They are not adversarial and legal representation is not usually necessary.

If families want legal representation but cannot afford it, they can apply to the Legal Services Commission, part of the Ministry of Justice, for financial assistance.

The timing of inquests is a matter for the individual coroners, who are appointed and paid for by local authorities. The MOD now has a dedicated team to improve liaison with local coroners to help avoid delays.

We recognise how upsetting it is for families who have been affected by the delays in the inquest process that resulted from all Service fatalities being repatriated through RAF Brize Norton.

We have funded the appointment of deputy coroners to clear outstanding inquests and, from April 2007, repatriations have taken place via RAF Lyneham, Wiltshire – where there is no backlog.



THE COVENANT

WELFARE AT THE HEART OF THE VETERANS COMMUNITY

The Ministry of Defence's Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA) provides a range of 'through life' support functions direct to around 900,000 serving personnel and the Veterans Community. These include Pay and Human Resources for the Services, Pensions Schemes and Compensation Schemes for those disabled or bereaved through service.

Case study

Marianna is a single mum from York with four young children. She served in the Royal Army Medical Corps during the first Gulf War in 1991. Working in a field hospital, she witnessed first hand the injuries suffered by members of the Iraqi forces during the conflict, leaving her with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Marianna has been helped for many years by the Veterans Welfare service in Yorkshire. She says "I first met Helen, my Welfare Manager when I moved to York from Chester a few years ago, She's fantastic - she sorted out my war pension and helped me build a support network from the many different Agencies involved. More women veterans should apply for the help that's out there."

Its dedicated Veterans Welfare Service provides one to one support, in the home if needed, via 25 offices across the UK. Each veteran's needs are unique, but enquiries can range from help in completing claim forms, requests for financial assistance, and enquiries with Social Services to referrals for treatment or home adaptations. Welfare Managers work with local authorities and other bodies to ensure veterans get the help and support to resolve their problems.

How to arrange a visit

Just call the **Veterans-UK FREE Helpline** on **0800 169 2277** and request a visit.

Where to find your local office

To find out the address of your local Veterans Welfare Service office, visit our website at www.veterans-uk.info and click on welfare or call the **Veterans-UK FREE Helpline** on **0800 169 2277**.

Turn to page 7 for more welfare information.



Supporting Services Through Life

FOR HM ARMED FORCES

closely with the NHS whose expertise in specialist care, such as burns treatment, ensures the best care is identified to aid Service personnell's recovery.

Step Five - Visits from Relatives

In certain circumstances such as severe injuries, the JCCC will arrange travel and accommodation to allow two family members to visit the injured personnel in hospital, even if this is outside the UK.

Step Six - Continuous Support

The Unit or Visiting Officer, if one has been appointed, will provide advice and support to the family, keeping them updated on any change in the condition whilst the casualty remains in hospital. Rail warrants and refunds for motor mileage may be available to enable the family to make hospital visits.

Step Seven - Claiming compensation

Once medical treatment is in hand, a claim should be made to the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA) under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS). This 15 tariff MOD scheme

provides tax-free lump sums of up to £285,000 and a regular monthly income post discharge for those more severely injured. Claiming will not affect future promotion prospects.

Step Eight - A return to Service?

Medical treatment hopefully leads to a return to Service but where this is not possible, a medical discharge may follow. If Service personnel are medically discharged, their case is automatically referred to the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency for an AFCS claim to be considered and full welfare support is offered post-discharge.

Death in Service

A similar process occurs if Service personnel are killed in conflict (or due to an accident, natural causes, etc), but clearly the process focuses on support for the family and will provide detailed support in repatriation, funeral arrangements and dealing with the estate.



For more information on AFCS call 0800 169 2277 or visit www.veterans-uk.info



An intensive care unit, within the hospital at Camp Bastion.

COMPENSATING INJURED SERVICE PERSONNEL AND VETERANS

The Service Personnel and Veterans Agency administers two pension and compensation schemes for injuries, illness or death linked to service. The date determines under which scheme they are considered – 6 April 2005.

War Pension Scheme

A War Disablement Pension can be claimed if a person was injured, became ill or disabled due to their service before 6 April 2005. If a claim is successful, payment may be made as a lump sum gratuity or weekly pension depending on the assessment made.

A War Pension cannot be paid until service in the HM Armed Forces has ended and there are also various additional allowances payable, for example, to those with mobility or employment problems caused by their disablement, providing the qualifying criteria are met.



Service Personnel & Veterans Agency
An Executive Agency of the Ministry of Defence

Armed Forces Compensation Scheme

This Scheme was introduced from 6 April 2005 as a simple and modern way of compensating Service (and ex-Service) personnel for injury, illness or death sustained as a result of their service. This includes "warlike" incidents and acts of terrorism.

Under the terms of the Scheme, a lump sum is payable based on a 15-level tariff which is graduated according to the seriousness of the condition. A Guaranteed Income Payment, payable for life, will also be paid to those in the higher tariff levels. The lump sum awards for injury paid in Service are tax-free.
For the latest update see page 7.

Death due to Service

Under both schemes, pension and lump sum payments may be payable to surviving

family of Service personnel killed as a result of service.



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Bringing together services for veterans

How to claim

Claiming is simple, a call can be placed to the **Veterans-UK FREE Helpline** on **0800 169 2277** or claim forms can be downloaded from the Veterans-UK website.



Further information about the schemes can be found on www.veterans-uk.info

FOCUS ON... SUPPORTING EX-SERVICE WOMEN

The Spirit of the Service Lives on...for the Association of Wrens



Brighton & Hove Branch of the Association of Wrens celebrate their 60th anniversary in June 2007.

Friendship and support is the mainstay of the Association with over 7,000 members based across the world. The Association was formed in 1920 by a group of ex-Wrens who felt that both the friendships they had made and the spirit of the Service should be kept alive. That same ideal is still upheld today.

Support for members is offered by over 100 Branches and informal social groups across the UK. Members keep in touch via 'The Wren' magazine and the

Association's website. It's used as a good resource to promote events of special interest and any other issues which might benefit the veteran members, such as the National Reunion 2008 to be held in York

Membership includes serving RN and former RN women ensuring that the Association, whilst drawing on the traditions of previous generations, is kept relevant to today's service.

"Care and camaraderie is able to enrich lives at little cost; the Association of Wrens continues to ensure that the spirit of the Service lives on for the benefit of women who have served in the past, and those who serve today in the Royal Navy."



The Association fully supports the work of the WRNS Benevolent Trust: from fundraising activities to referrals on help and support needed by its members.

A follow up article on the Benevolent Trust will be in a future issue.

i For further information call 0207 932 0111, email Wrensassoc@aol.com or visit www.wrens.org.uk

KEEP WARM KEEP WELL

Help for veterans to stay warm and well in the cold this winter

As the cold weather sets in many veterans and older people find themselves worried about how to keep warm and well. There is a direct link between cold weather and heart and respiratory problems, serious illness, discomfort and depression, so what can you do?

The Government's 'Keep Warm Keep Well' campaign offers advice on staying healthy, living well, and keeping warm in winter, as well as information on financial help available, such as grants to make homes warmer or assistance to meet the cost of heating bills.

Older people, those on low incomes and disabled people are most vulnerable to the winter cold. The Government makes Winter Fuel payments to people aged 60 and over to help with the costs of keeping warm in winter.

A free 'Keep Warm Keep Well' winter guide is also available – look out for a copy at Citizen's Advice Bureaux, GP surgeries or local pharmacies. The guide offers a host of top tips for coping with the cold and staying healthy this winter.

While many of the tips require planning – with grants available to make homes warmer through extra insulation and new heating systems, there are other tips that will make a real difference immediately. For example, having regular hot drinks and meals, checking the heating system works safely, setting the thermostat at around 21°C (70°F) for rooms used in the day and keeping active.

i To find out about eligibility to financial help call the Warm Front Scheme on 0800 072 0151. Call 08459 15 15 15 for information about Winter Fuel payments.

Editor's Note

For more details of this event check out the National Calendar of events on www.veterans-uk.info

ST DUNSTAN'S IN WALES - RESTORING INDEPENDENCE

St Dunstan's - the charity offering lifelong support and rehabilitation to blind and partially sighted ex-Service men and women – has recently purchased the former North Wales Medical Centre in Queens Road, Craig-y-Don, Llandudno.

The Grade II Listed former convalescent home, most recently used as a private hospital, will be adapted to become an additional centre for St Dunstan's, providing rehabilitation, training, respite care and holiday accommodation for its beneficiaries. The building, comprising 50,000 sq. ft., is located on a site of about 11.5 acres on the edge of Llandudno commanding views over the Irish Sea towards the Isle of Anglesey, Snowdonia and the Great Orme.

Robert Leader, Chief Executive, St Dunstan's said of the purchase, "The new centre will be invaluable in helping us to meet the needs of ever increasing numbers of St Dunstaners. We shall be able to provide help and support to more beneficiaries, enabling them to adapt to their loss of sight, regain their independence and achieve a better quality of life. We also hope that our presence in Llandudno will make a useful contribution to the town and surrounding area"

Depending on planning permission, the centre is expected to have 40 double bedrooms, adapted to both residential and nursing care standards. The projected opening date will be in 2009.



The Grade II Listed former convalescent home

i For further information contact the Public Relations Officer 0207 616 8367 Or log on to www.st-dunstans.org.uk

WELFARE PARTNERSHIPS

How partnership events have helped the Veterans Welfare Service enhance their skills to support veterans...



Headley Court

"He was receiving ongoing help from Headley Court, as well as support from myself through the discharge and claim processes.

"Being able to relate more closely with my clients needs and difficulties and tease out details of incidents was a great aid to providing support and preparing the claim. Adapting communication methods and reminding the individual of the strategies they had used and what I had learned about, during the event, was of great benefit to the claims process, to myself and, most importantly, to Mark."

* name changed to protect privacy

"The event at Headley Court provided me with much needed skills"

Best practice events for Veterans Welfare Service staff and partner organisations - The Royal British Legion, Blesma, St Dunstan's to name a few - ensure each has the appropriate skills to assist and support their mutual clients.

The themed events reflect requests from both staff and senior management about improving skills and practices when working with veterans and their families, in particular the younger generation. The emphasis is on the necessity to provide a seamless transition from Service to civilian life not only for the newly discharged veteran but also for their families.

A 'Working with Younger Veterans and their Families' event was held at Headley Court with the aim to provide a greater awareness of the psychological, practical, emotional and physical issues affecting younger veterans and their families. It was an opportunity for staff from different parts of MOD to have a better understanding of the impact of each others efforts in providing a holistic, all encompassing dedicated service.

"The event at Headley Court provided me with much needed skills whilst I was supporting Mark* a veteran who had suffered a brain injury," Says Eileen Murray, Veterans Welfare Service Aberdeen.

To find out more about future Best Practice Events, call Keith Simmonds on 0117 9718436



Workshop at St Dunstons



EXTENDING THE LIGHTER TOUCH

A new pilot scheme has been introduced to build on the support available for Early Service Leavers.

Individuals who leave the Armed Forces earlier than planned can sometimes find the transition to civilian life difficult to manage. To counteract this, in 2004, the MOD introduced mandatory resettlement advice for Early Service-Leavers (ESL). The ESL scheme involves signposting to public services and ex-Service charities, and a personal interview at which the Unit interviewing officer assesses the individual's vulnerability to becoming socially isolated.

For the past two years, the MOD, in consultation with the major ex-Service charities and building on earlier research, has developed a "light touch" mentoring scheme for vulnerable ESL at Catterick Garrison. This pilot scheme officially started in June 2007.

The scheme is run by the Veterans Welfare Service (an integral part of the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency), which, together with the charity SSAFA Forces Help, also provides a pool of potential mentors.

How it works

Interested vulnerable ESL are assigned randomly to either a mentored or un-mentored group.

Those in the mentored group are given a durable card with a telephone number to ring within six weeks of discharge, if they want to arrange mentoring support. When they ring, the scheme co-ordinator establishes their needs and preferences and nominates a mentor for an initial meeting. If the pairing is acceptable to both parties, "light touch" mentoring by telephone (as

opposed to more formal case-working) is provided for six months on demand. At the end of this period the ESL's situation is reviewed. A follow up with the unmentored ESL will also be undertaken, so that the benefit of the mentoring can be determined.

What happens next?

ESL will be recruited on to the pilot until mid-March 2008. Initial findings have shown that soldiers who leave during training rarely need mentoring support: and efforts are focussing more on ESL from front-line Units. Increased uptake of the pilot scheme is expected early in 2008 when Operational Units return to Catterick from overseas deployments.

The decision on whether to introduce a permanent mentoring scheme for vulnerable Service-leavers will probably be made in early 2009 following detailed evaluation of the pilot toward the end of 2008.



Cartoon character used on the contact card and Guide for ESL

For further information email charles.williams191@mod.uk (Project Manager)

...STOP PRESS... ..STOP PRESS...

NEW COMPENSATION RULES TO BENEFIT SERIOUSLY INJURED PERSONNEL APPROVED

New rules to improve the level of compensation awarded to the most severely injured military personnel will come into effect on 8 February, the Ministry of Defence has announced.

This marks the completion of the MOD's consultation period into proposed changes to the multiple injury rules of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme. The Under Secretary of State for Defence, Derek Twigg, said:

"I am pleased to announce the successful conclusion of the consultation period into the changes to the multiple injury rules of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme proposed in October. This review ensures that our most seriously injured personnel will be compensated in full for all their injuries up to the full £285,000 lump sum payment. This is in addition to, a guaranteed tax-free payment paid to them, on discharge, monthly for life. This can amount to hundreds of thousands of pounds over a lifetime."

Under the new rules, the lump sum compensation payment for the most seriously injured will be based on the full rate for all their injuries in a single incident, up to the highest lump sum of £285,000. In addition, they will continue to receive the 100% tax-free index-linked Guaranteed Income Payment for life once they have left Service.

Additional benefits will be paid to the most seriously injured whose multiple injury claims have been paid since the start of the scheme in April 2005. This will bring their lump sum awards to the same level as those who will benefit from the new rule changes.

Currently the most seriously injured receive lump sum compensation payments for only the three worst injuries. Lump sum compensation is paid at 100% for the first injury with the second and third injuries being discounted to 30% and 15% respectively. In addition, the most seriously injured receive a tax-free index-linked 100% Guaranteed Income Payment to compensate for loss of earnings once they have left Service. This can amount to hundreds of thousand pounds over a lifetime. Those with less serious injuries, who do not qualify for 100% GIP payments, will continue to have the current discounting rule applied to their multiple injuries.

The rule changes follow a review into the multiple injury rules of the scheme commissioned by the Under Secretary of State for Defence, Derek Twigg. The changes have the full support of the Service Chiefs of Staff.

VETERANS DAY

27 JUNE



VETERANS DAY 2008

Time to start planning!



After the success of Veterans Day in 2007 which saw 250 events being held, planning has now started in towns and cities across the UK to celebrate the third National Veterans Day on the 27 June 2008. Events aren't limited to 27 June; many are likely to take place on weekends throughout June and July. Veterans Day is an opportunity for the whole community to celebrate all aspects of veterans and the veterans community.

If your organisation would like to organise a Veterans Day event or you want to know where your nearest Veterans Day event is to take place, visit www.veterans-uk.info and click on the Veterans Day link or

VETERANS DAY KEY MESSAGES

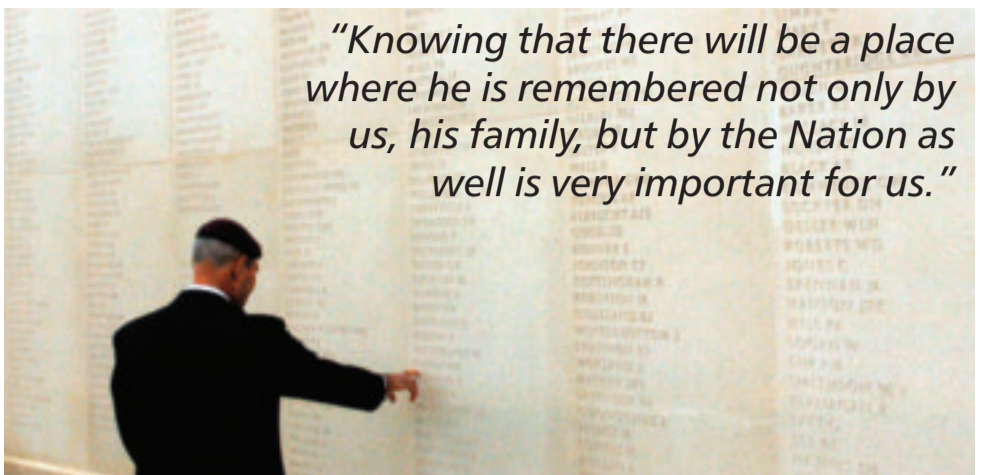
- Veterans are valued, both because of their Service and because of the contribution they continue to make to their community and civil employers through the transferable skills they have acquired in the Armed Forces.
- The Veterans Community is highly diverse; all ex-Service personnel are Veterans whatever their age or Service experience.
- A wide range of support and advice is available to Veterans through the public, charitable and voluntary sectors.

call the **Veterans-UK FREE Helpline** on **0800 169 2277**.

Free promotion for your event

The National Veterans Events Calendar is published on the Veterans-UK website. Organisers should complete and submit an on-line application form; the details will then be entered onto the calendar. The calendar can be found at www.veterans-uk.info.

THE NATIONAL ARMED FORCES MEMORIAL



"Knowing that there will be a place where he is remembered not only by us, his family, but by the Nation as well is very important for us."

The new national Armed Forces Memorial in Staffordshire was dedicated in the presence of HM the Queen on 12 October 2007. It is designed to provide fitting recognition for the British Servicemen and women who have been killed on duty since the end of the Second World War. It is not a war memorial. Alongside the names of those killed in conflict are the names of those killed in training accidents, on peacekeeping missions, or as a result of terrorist action.

Almost 16,000 names are carved on the huge Portland Stone walls, but this is also a Memorial for the future with room for a further 15,000 names.

Uniquely, the memorial also recognises and acknowledges the courage of family and friends left behind. It is hoped it will play a valuable role in supporting the bereaved as they manage their loss through different stages in their lives.

Nine year old Georgina Chapman read a letter to 'Daddy in Heaven' at the dedication event. Her father, Lieutenant Commander Darren Chapman of the Fleet Air Arm, died in a helicopter crash in Basra in May 2006. Her mother Elizabeth Chapman said,

"Knowing that there will be a place where he is remembered not only by us, his family, but by the Nation as well is very important for us."

Georgina reads her letter



Admittance to the AFM is free and it is located at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire. For further information visit www.forcesmemorial.org.uk or call 0207 2182020.

LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND IS THE LEGACY OF WOUNDED SOLDIERS

Since 7 November 1935, when the first Talking Books were issued, the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) has issued over 80 million audio books to over two million people.



Talking books were developed after the First World War when thousands of soldiers blinded in action returned from the front and wanted to carry on reading. 'Typhoon' by Joseph Conrad and 'The Murder of Roger Ackroyd' by Agatha Christie were amongst the first books issued on long-playing records.

The service has grown and evolved to meet the changing needs of readers. Talking books are now sent via post on DAISY CDs and 'read' on players designed for ease-of-use by people with sight and some dexterity problems.

The Talking Book Service, part of RNIB's National Library Service, contains over 14,000 titles - the largest collection of unabridged audio books in the UK and one of the largest in the world.

Anyone who has difficulty reading 12 point print or less, with glasses, could be eligible to join the RNIB Talking Book Service.

For further information call 0845 762 6843 or visit www.rnib.org.uk/talkingbooks



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