

## **HEALTH OF THE EX-SERVICE COMMUNITY**

### **Report of the Chief Executive**

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 For the Committee to receive a briefing about progress in the development of a regional health scrutiny review of ex-service personnel.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 In December 2009 a bid was made to the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) on behalf of the 12 local authorities' overview and scrutiny committees in the North East. In summary the bid made was for a project that would *"examine the physical, mental and broader health needs of ex-servicemen and women, their families and communities, how they are being assessed and met across the range of agencies at regional and local level, and how far ex-service personnel and their families are aware of the support available to them"*.
- 2.2 The bid was considered by CfPS and a letter confirming the successful application was received in January 2010. The bid successfully secured 6.5 days consultant time and £5000 budget from CfPS.
- 2.3 Since January progress has been made in constructing a governance and management framework for the project, clarifying the final scope of the project and establishing relationships with key contacts.

#### **3. Scope, Outcomes and Outputs**

- 3.1 The original description of the project used for the bid to CfPS was comprehensive. The project is subject to a non-negotiable timeframe and therefore, the scope of the project has been clarified as focusing on the Cross Government Working<sup>1</sup> workshop themes of:
- a) Veterans' mental health
  - b) The transition of armed forces personnel to NHS care following medical discharge

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<sup>1</sup> "Delivering Health & Social Care to the Armed Forces Community" - Cross government workshop hosted by the Department of Health, November 2009.

- c) Ensuring equality of access for Armed Forces families
  - d) Promoting effective communication and coordination across agencies, providers and the third sector.
- 3.2 The Project remains focused on its original outcome of improved health outcomes for veterans in the region.
- 3.3 As part of the agreement with CfPS the Project is required to deliver two outcomes. The first outcome is a report which will focus on the current understanding of the health of veterans in the region, the levels of coordination between agencies and any recommendations to improve the coordination of public and voluntary sector services. The second outcome will focus on the learning that has taken place across the region during the Project. This will inform the development of the CfPS health scrutiny toolkit which will be made available nationally.
- 3.4 Three work streams will focus on a specific issue relating to health inequalities. These are:
- a) Physical Health
  - b) Mental Health
  - c) Socio-economic wellbeing.
- 3.5 The role of the work stream groups is to scrutinise how the needs of veterans and their families are being assessed and met in one of the three areas, and if veterans and their families are aware of the support available to them. This will require the involvement of witnesses, experts, advisors, public and third sector service providers, community and voluntary groups and veterans. Members will set the work programme for their chosen streams, with officers sharing monthly progress reports to the Project Support Team. This information will then be collated and shared across all partners within the project.
- 3.6 An event to launch the work streams is arranged for the 28 June 2010. The event is planned to provide evidence from a range of speakers that will form a baseline for further scrutiny.

#### **4. Governance & Project Plan**

- 4.1 All the local authorities in the North East of England have agreed to work in partnership for the duration of the project. These are: Darlington, Durham, Gateshead, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, North Tyneside, Northumberland, Redcar and Cleveland, Stockton-on-Tees, South Tyneside and Sunderland. Newcastle is the project lead.

- 4.2 The review Project Board will be established with one member representative from each local authority nominated by the Health & Well=Being Scrutiny Committee, with an officer from each in attendance. The North East Regional Health Scrutiny Network is fulfilling this role until its standing Joint Committee is formally established. A memorandum of understanding is being developed to support this partnership working and a formal protocol developed for the Joint Committee.
- 4.3 The role of the Project Board is to provide:
- a) Strategic leadership to the project agreeing the project governance, planning and execution
  - b) Assurance that the project plan will deliver the agreed outcomes within the timescale
  - c) Assurance that resources are used appropriately
  - d) A forum to resolve disputes
  - e) Assurance that outcomes are reported to all partners
  - f) The final report to the Centre for Public Scrutiny.
- 4.4 The Project Support Group is made up of lead officers for the Project, the three work streams and communications. These are:
- a) Project Lead – Newcastle City Council
  - b) Physical Health Work stream – Middlesbrough Council
  - c) Socioeconomic Work stream – Gateshead Council
  - d) Mental Health Work stream – Durham County Council
  - e) Communications Lead – Redcar & Cleveland Council
- 4.5 The role of the Project Support Group is to manage the project within the agreed the plan. This includes:
- a) Monitoring risks to the project and adjusting the project plan
  - b) Supporting the work streams
  - c) Collating the responses of the work streams
  - d) Allocating the available resources
  - e) Supplying and collating information for the final reports

## 5. Recommendation

5.1 The Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- a) Support the successful delivery of the project by participating in a working group and attending the event in June (note that in view of the number of authorities involved, attendance at the Overview Day is likely to be restricted to approximately 3 members per authority).
- b) Consider receiving regular reports and updates until the Project is concluded in November 2010.

## 6. Background Papers

Bid to the Centre for Public Scrutiny

Draft Programme for the Baseline Evidence Day

MOD (2008) The Nation's Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans

<http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/415BB952-6850-45D0-B82D-C221CD0F6252/0/Cm7424.pdf>

MOD (2009) The Nation's Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans, external reference Group

annual report [http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/BBAC5D78-7183-403F-B45E-8259C27B5932/0/TheNationsCommitmentAnnualReport\\_2009.pdf](http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/BBAC5D78-7183-403F-B45E-8259C27B5932/0/TheNationsCommitmentAnnualReport_2009.pdf)

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