

North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership - Executive

7 January 2010

Armed Forces Community Welfare Pathway

1 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To seek views from the NYSP Executive on the Ministry of Defence's request to work with local partners to develop the Armed Forces Community Welfare Pathway in North Yorkshire.

2 Background

- 2.1 Last year, the Government asked what more could be done to demonstrate the nation's commitment to the armed forces and its gratitude for their service and sacrifice. The Command Paper 'The Nation's Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans'¹ was the result of that process and provided a comprehensive framework to address these issues.
- 2.2 Two principles underpin the Command Paper:
- First, it is designed to end any disadvantage that armed service imposes on the nation's forces, their families and veterans. It specifically seeks to counter the difficulties that follow from being required to move around the country or the world, and identifies those areas where special treatment is needed to achieve this.
 - Second, the Paper also set out how as a nation we can better support and recognise those who have been wounded in the service of their country.

3 Armed Forces Community Welfare Pathway

- 3.1 Many organisations in North Yorkshire already work in partnership with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in supporting the families of the armed forces based in North Yorkshire and the many veterans who live within the county.
- 3.2 The MoD have now sought our assistance in building on this, in particular by supporting the introduction of the Armed Forces Community Welfare Pathway in North Yorkshire and the identification of 'armed forces community champions' in key local organisations (eg local authorities and the NHS).
- 3.3 The Armed Forces Community Welfare Pathway is not a literal but conceptual pathway, which seeks to make it easier for service personnel, families and veterans (including merchant seafaring veterans) to access the help and support available

¹ The Nation's Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans (Cm 7424) July 2008 <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm74/7424/7424.asp>

from the MoD, from statutory providers and from the third sector. It facilitates the delivery of services across all sectors by raising awareness of entitlement at all levels.

- 3.4 One important feature of the Welfare Pathway is a new national point of contact telephone number (08000 223366) which is intended to increase the chances of people getting the help they need - particularly the people who do not know where to turn for advice.
- 3.5 It is expected that the role of the 'armed forces community champions' in key local organisations will be to ensure that the national point of contact has the necessary information to signpost people to the appropriate services in their organisation and to be the named port of call should a member of the armed forces community find difficulties accessing a service using normal routes of access. From time to time the 'armed forces community champions' will be encouraged to meet locally with the MoD and relevant third sector organisations (eg The Royal British Legion and SSAFA Forces Help) to review access to services for the armed forces community.
- 3.6 The Welfare Pathway will also be encouraging all those who provide help and advice to the general public to ask at the first point of contact "Are you part of the armed forces community?". If they are the client, where appropriate, should be made aware of the national point of contact (unless they have already come via that route) and be advised about the statutory support available to them plus the extra help that may be available from the third sector.
- 3.7 Existing local networks of support will not be replaced or fundamentally changed. Enquirers can still approach current sources of advice like citizens advice bureaux, GPs, government organisations and charities. The Welfare Pathway initiative aims to enhance the local liaison between these organisations in order to provide a more complimentary service.
- 3.8 Other developments may also be encouraged by the MoD as part of the Welfare Pathway. For example:
 - in the first pilot (with Kent County Council) there is also a 'member champion'
 - the establishment of a local veterans' board (perhaps along the lines of the NYSP older peoples partnership board)
 - collection of anonymous statistical information on use of services by members of the armed forces community to support service review and planning

4 Next steps in North Yorkshire

- 4.1 Views are invited from the NYSP Executive on the Welfare Pathway proposal, in particular whether partners would be willing to support it by identifying 'armed forces community champions' in key local organisations and by encouraging all those who provide help and advice to the general public to ask at the first point of contact "Are you part of the armed forces community?" and make appropriate referrals.
- 4.2 Subject to the agreement of partners, a local meeting would be convened between potential 'armed forces community champions' and the MoD to progress implementation.

5 Recommendation

- 5.1 The NYSP Executive should agree a response to the Ministry of Defence's request to work with local partners to develop the Armed Forces Community Welfare Pathway in North Yorkshire.

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