

## **A SHARED VISION FOR UK VETERANS**

### **A statement of Strategic Intent and Joint Principles for those supporting the UK's Ex-Service population**

#### **The Vision**

***Those who have served in the UK's Armed Forces draw upon the skills and experience gained from service to lead fulfilling civilian lives in which their service to the Nation is appropriately recognised and supported where necessary by the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant.***

#### **The Strategic Intent**

The future security of the Nation rests upon its willingness to entrust its sons and daughters to military service in the knowledge that their commitment is valued. Central, Devolved and Local Government as well as charities, commerce, individual communities and citizens have a role to play in ensuring that UK veterans have an opportunity to lead fulfilling lives.

Veterans are citizens first and foremost and they are appropriately supported by public, private and charitable services which must take account of any specific needs created as a result of their service and reduce the impact of any disadvantage as a result of service to the absolute minimum. Additionally, their commitment and sacrifice to the Nation is valued by all through acts of recognition, commemoration and remembrance.

**Purpose** - The majority of Service leavers do well but a small proportion face challenges after their Service life. This shared vision for veterans seeks to provide a focus for driving coherence amongst those with responsibilities for, or interests in, the UK's ex-Service community. It builds on the principles enshrined in the Armed Forces Covenant to create an overarching vision for veterans that embraces the full opportunity for them to achieve, to contribute and be recognised in society. It is, for the first time, a shared vision and set of principles for veterans that has been endorsed by key Government departments, Devolved Administrations, Local Government Association and UK Service charities.

**Principles** –To add a greater level of guidance to those setting policy or delivering services to veterans, the following principles should be applied:

○Adhere to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant:

- Positive measures to address disadvantage.
- Special consideration where appropriate for those who have given most (brief explanation of who).
- Recognition and gratitude.

○Wherever possible, the State's delivery of public services to veterans by public bodies of any type should be part of the normal provision to the rest of society to ensure that the provision is well founded, funded and reflects best practice. This principle should be

discounted only when the needs or circumstances of the veteran are so specific as to sit outside of the normal provision.

- A consistency of outcome should be sought for issues arising as a consequence of service, regardless of where in the UK a veteran lives; recognising that the way in which these outcomes may be achieved can differ across the UK.

- Greater coordination of effort should be continually sought between organisations offering support to veterans. Central Government, Devolved Administrations and local authorities will engage with Service, ex-Service and non-Service charities to support them in their work to the benefit of veterans and vice versa. This should include the sharing of data and research where possible within the constraints of the Data Protection Act and any contractual limitations. Much is delivered at the local level and thus the role of local authorities to seek coordination of effort, under Community Covenant where appropriate, is critical. Service charities should be encouraged to join Cobseo (The Confederation of Service Charities), subject to meeting its membership criteria, and Veterans Scotland where appropriate since both aim to seek greater coordination of effort.

- The campaigning role of some veterans' organisations is legitimate and should not prevent joint work with the Government. Similarly, the Government's work with the charitable sector to deliver more holistic support for veterans should not impinge on charities' independence.

- A veterans status in the context of the Armed Forces Covenant does not in itself convey entitlement; rather, the principles of the Covenant and those identified above will help determine any additional support that may be appropriate according to individual circumstances.

- Communication must be an essential element of all veterans support activity. This includes:

- communication to improve the awareness and knowledge amongst veterans (particularly vulnerable veterans) of the benefits, help and support available to them and how to access it, as well as raise awareness of veterans' achievements and of the issues affecting them;
- communication from the veterans' community to understand fully their concerns;
- communications between decision makers and service deliverers to continue to work to ensure that veterans' issues are understood and addressed, both within Government and more widely within society and;
- communications to promote greater public awareness of the contribution of veterans to society.

Wherever possible, policies and services should be developed and introduced around evidence showing that they are needed and appropriate. This evidence should be robust, open to scrutiny and transparent. As part of the evidence gathering process, Government and other stakeholder parties should work together and cooperate on taking forward research projects, making use of data produced in other countries addressing similar issues.