
UPDATE ON ACTIONS TO SUPPORT VETERANS

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on current work for veterans at a regional and local level and to seek agreement for:-
 - (a) Performance reporting and delivery of the Darlington section of the North East Regional Joint Health Scrutiny Committee action plan
 - (b) Tees Valley activity and Darlington's input into this group to support the regional reviews of the health needs of the ex-service community
 - (c) Darlington Armed Forces and Veterans Action Group

Summary

2. Scrutiny has been involved at a regional and local level in responding to the needs of Veterans and the Council signed up to a Community Covenant to acknowledge the debt owed to this community.
3. Darlington has a key relationship with Catterick Garrison and therefore needs to ensure that there is support available to serving armed forces personnel and their families. The Council is involved in the North Yorkshire Armed Forces Forum as many servicemen leave the base and remain in Darlington. As reductions in the armed services take effect it will be important to reflect the changes in demand for housing, health and school places.
4. To deliver support to both members of the armed forces and service veterans requires a considerable amount of partnership working with the voluntary and public sector. This includes the need to work with colleagues in Tees Valley and the North East Region as some issues need regional and sub-regional solutions.
5. In the current economic climate it is important that Scrutiny is confident that the actions being taken are the best way to deliver against the priorities in their action plan. The main report sets out details of current activity. This work will be facilitated by staff in the Communities Team but will involve staff from across the Council and in partner organisations.

Recommendation

6. It is recommended that:-

- (a) Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee comments on progress and proposed actions
- (b) Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee agree to receive reports prior to submission to the Regional Overview and Scrutiny Committee and delegate the Chair to sign this off prior to submission

Murray Rose, Director of People

Background Papers

Darlington Armed Forces Community Covenant
Regional Scrutiny Veterans Action Plan
Final Report of the North East Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee –
Regional
Review of the Health Needs of the Ex-Service Community

David Plews: Extension 2023
Mary Hall: Extension 2676

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for Crime & Disorder.
Health and Well Being	This report has implications to the address Health and Well Being of residents of Darlington.
Carbon Impact	There are no issues relating to Carbon Impact which this report needs to address.
Diversity	We are making arrangements to improve access to services for this vulnerable group of people but this needs to be considered in the context of other groups. Would there be capacity to support others in this way?
Wards Affected	The impact of the report on any individual Ward is considered to be minimal.
Groups Affected	This report impacts on the ex-service community and their families, but also Darlington residents as a whole.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This reports links to Healthy Darlington and specifically addresses health inequalities to narrow the gaps in health and well-being and life expectancy.
Efficiency	This report does not identify specific efficiency savings.

MAIN REPORT

Background

7. The North East Regional Joint Health Scrutiny Committee agreed, at its meeting in January 2010, to undertake a project to 'examine the physical, mental and broader health needs of ex-servicemen and women, their families and communities, how they are being assessed and their needs 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'. The final report was agreed by the North East Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 February 2011.
8. Darlington agreed to undertake specific actions within the plan contained in the final report to ensure that work took place to improve access to services for veterans living in Darlington. These priorities related to health, housing and information. This work has been commissioned by Scrutiny and operational delivery will be co-ordinated from the Communities Team.

Progress against Regional Priorities

9. An updated action plan is attached at Appendix 1, a further update will be provided to the Chair of Health and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee in time for this to be circulated and agreed prior to submission to the North East Regional Joint Health Scrutiny Committee on 18 April 2013.
10. Some actions are being finalised in relation to communication and this follows work with stakeholders to bring together a directory of support available in Darlington and the region. Information will include the North East Veteran Network content but also contain local services that are specific to Darlington. It will provide a useful guide not only for veterans and their families but will be a resource for a wide range of services from all sectors. The directory will also support the Veteran Champion and other members by enabling them to signpost individuals to the necessary support. This information has been collated and it has been agreed to put the directory on the Council's Armed Forces and Veteran's web page and the method of doing this has now been agreed and will be in place in February 2013.
11. The update indicates the health activities already undertaken and the lead for health activities will be the Director of Public Health. Discussions are currently taking place to ascertain how training can be given to key service providers so that they more fully understand the issues faced by veterans and their families. A specific communication strategy has also been developed by health colleagues to ensure key information is shared at the appropriate time and in the appropriate way.

Tees Valley Armed Services Forum

12. The Teesside Armed Forces Forum is established to provide a forum for discussion between representatives of the Armed Forces Community and service providers to raise and resolve issues of significant impact or where consistent trends give cause

for concern. The forum exists for members and officers responsible for veteran's activity in each authority in Tees Valley. Terms of reference have been agreed and it has been agreed that the forum will be co-chaired by a representative of the armed forces and a representative of the local authority.

13. To act as a forum for the local authorities including education and housing, NHS, GPs, Military Charities and Veterans Welfare Service along with Jobcentre Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau to support and improve the health and wellbeing of members of the armed forces, veterans and their dependents.
14. The forum will meet bimonthly and will work on joint activities to deliver priorities in relation to the armed forces and veterans. The armed forces lead is Lt. Colonel Ian Adkins, 102 Battalion Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and the local authority co-chair is Councillor Jim Beall, Deputy Leader of Stockton Borough Council.
15. The group also has representation from the Department of Work and Pensions, Health and Housing. The next session will examine the employment issues and will include a presentation by the Department of Work and Pensions.

Darlington Armed Forces and Veterans Action Group

16. As part of the developments agreed within the Darlington section of the North East Regional Joint Health Scrutiny Committee plan, an event was held on 28 November in Central Hall. The event was attended by over 30 organisations from Darlington and surrounding areas.
17. The aim of the event was to provide an opportunity for organisations to understand the needs of veterans and their families and how they could help to meet these needs. The event was set up in a marketplace format with workshop sessions to discuss what gaps in provision existed and how best to meet these needs.
18. It was agreed to develop a directory of services from this event to cover the following topics:-
 - (a) Ex-service Organisations
 - (b) Employment and Training
 - (c) Families and Leisure
 - (d) Housing
 - (e) Information and Finance
 - (f) Health and Wellbeing
19. The directory has been compiled and should be on the Council website in early February. This information has also been shared with Stockton and the other Tees Valley Authorities so that they can use it as the core for the Tees Valley region and add more localised information covering specific Tees Valley authorities.
20. To ensure that other work set out in the regional action plan is taken forward a group is being formed which covers all the key topic areas listed above. This group will take delivery forward at the appropriate level and feed back to a broader group

of stakeholders a couple of times per year.

21. This should give confidence that actions will be delivered and join up work at a regional, sub-regional and local level. Housing for example is being dealt with at a regional level but we need to understand what is happening at a local level to feed into that work.
22. The next event will be the launch of the directory in March 2013 at an event aimed at veterans and their families. Also at this event we hope that stakeholders will bring information and provide drop-in support at the session.
23. Following the initial awareness raising event a number of people identified the need for training for staff and volunteers. This training will help them to respond to queries and to know what help is available. Discussion is currently taking place with Finchale Training College about the best way to undertake this training for the voluntary and public sectors in Darlington. Staff in the Customer Contact Centre will receive calls and it is proposed that they are among the invitees. Access to training has already been funded by health colleagues but discussion is taking place about whether Darlington's requirements can be covered by this training or if bespoke training needs to be discussed.

Conclusion

24. The above processes will enable delivery of the Darlington actions in the regional plan but also meet localised priorities. It will enable performance reports against the regional plan to be supported by evidence of delivery and any areas of concern to be raised to Health and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny as the responsible body for the Darlington part of the regional plan.