

NI VETERANS' SUPPORT COMMITTEE (NIVSC)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

NOVEMBER 2015

Background

1. There have been difficulties in extending the Armed Forces Community Covenant to Northern Ireland to the degree that it has been realised elsewhere in the UK. This is partly due to challenges in achieving political consensus to signing it in all local authorities but largely because local authorities in NI do not have the same levers over output delivery – as they may affect veterans in particular – as elsewhere. At the same time many veterans feel uncomfortable – due to legacy sensitivities – about expressing their needs through some of the public channels available to them.
2. Due to challenges of economies of scale and a lack of clarity as to need, NI does not have ready access to some of the facilities available to veterans elsewhere.

Purpose

3. The NI Veterans' Support Committee has been set up – under ministerial guidance - to improve cooperation between those organisations committed to delivering support to veterans. It is also designed as a pool of subject expertise which can be consulted by statutory or voluntary enquirers with a view to providing a consensus on veterans' issues. It is within this context that it will specifically track the formal programme being conducted by the University of Ulster¹, to identify the scale and nature of veterans' needs within NI, and to ensure this work is properly exploited.

Aim

4. To facilitate the optimisation of support to the welfare and well-being of the veterans' community in Northern Ireland through co-ordination, sign posting and exchange of best practice.

Principles

5. The Committee will link statutory and voluntary contributors to veterans' welfare by:
 - a. Informing all interested parties including the wider veterans' community, government (local and national) and the regional chain-of-command.
 - b. Coordinating effort and output throughout the service delivery process in support of veterans and, where applicable, the wider Service community.
 - c. Providing representation for service delivery organisations and a representative view for policy makers.
 - d. Identifying and working to close gaps in provision.

¹ Funded by Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) sponsored by the NIVSC.

Constitution

6. To avoid unwieldiness, the Committee will consist of an Executive comprising representatives with executive authority from the main organisations in Northern Ireland, both statutory and voluntary, which provide regular, direct and indirect support to veterans' welfare, including health, housing, financial support (pensions/recompense and benevolence) and employment. Co-opted representatives, which will include those from veterans' advisory and policy organisations, or those which provide niche support, may also routinely be included as shown:

a. Full members of the Executive will be chosen from service delivery organisations with permanent representation in NI which initially set up NIVSC and will consist of the core grouping of:

- (1) Veterans UK²
- (2) The Royal British Legion (TRBL)
- (3) SSAFA
- (4) Combat Stress
- (5) 38 (Irish) Brigade.
- (6) Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (NI) (RFCA (NI))³
- (7) The Not Forgotten Association (NFA)
- (8) Regular Forces Employment Association (RFEA)
- (9) Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA)
- (10) Royal Naval Association (RNA)
- (11) Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee (VA&PC)
- (12) The UDR & R IRISH (Home Service) Aftercare Service

Co-opted members may be invited to attend as appropriate. These may include:

- (13) Decorum NI
- (14) ABF The Soldiers' Charity
- (15) Help for Heroes (H4H)
- (16) Blind Veterans UK
- (17) BLESMA
- (18) Andy Allen Veterans Support (AAVS)
- (19) Regimental Associations
- (20) Others, including:
 - (a) The Ely Centre
 - (b) The Castlehill Foundation
 - (c) South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF)

Structure

7. Having been appointed the Cobseo representative for NI, CE RFCA will act as Chief Executive and facilitator for the Committee – taking his direction from the Executive. His

² Routinely represented by Veterans Welfare Services (VWS) of Veterans UK.

³ RFCA NI has been appointed by Cobseo as its representative in NI.

staff will provide a permanent secretariat. The Committee will elect a chairman on an annual basis, drawn from the Executive.

Frequency

8. The Executive will meet at least bi-annually or as frequently as required, with a minimum of Chairman/Vice Chairman plus five Executive members represented to form a quorum for decision-making purposes. A broader forum, effectively an Annual General Meeting, will be convened annually to report the findings of the Committee to the wider veterans' community where large scale representation will be encouraged, including from those listed in sub-paragraphs above.

Output

9. Provision of a focal point for local expertise and advice on veterans' welfare issues:

- a. Representation/advocacy – engage with government departments and local authorities to mutual benefit on behalf of veterans.
- b. Service delivery – present governance and assurance of functional outcome.
- c. Identification and prevention of duplication or shortfall.
- d. Communication:
 - (1) Promote veterans' issues.
 - (2) Advertise best points of contact.
 - (3) Disseminate best practice.
 - (4) Educate/inform stakeholders.

10. Co-operation and co-ordination of effort between constituent members:

- a. Encourage and facilitate best practice and consistency in and accessibility to service delivery.
- b. Enhance communication upwards, down and sideways through a robust networking system.
- c. Co-ordinate case-working procedures.

11. Liaison with national level representation of each organisation (where applicable). Provision of service delivery analysis annually via a comprehensive report.