

North of England Mental Health Development Unit

Welcome to this month's edition of our newsletter. In this edition we focus on armed forces veterans, and in particular on a new **veterans' mental health and well-being service** being piloted in the North East, which aims to provide a single point of access to local services as veterans re-adjust to civilian life.

The project looking at the **physical health needs of people with severe mental illness** which we told you about in Issue 4 is now well underway. Focus groups and completion of questionnaires for people who use mental health services and their carers are being carried out as we write, as well as interviews with professionals. We will update you on the progress of this work in future editions.

Whilst we were tracking progress of the Health and Social Care Bill, now the Health and Social Care Act 2012, we were also closely following progress of the **Carers (Identification and Support) Bill**. In summary, this was "a Bill to require health bodies and general

medical practitioners, and certain other organisations, to identify patients who are carers or who have a carer; to require identified carers to be referred to sources of help and support and to make further provision in relation to such arrangements; to make provision in relation to the responsibilities of local authorities and schools for the needs of young carers and their families; and for connected purposes..."

Unfortunately, at its second reading in the House of Commons in March the Bill failed to complete its passage through Parliament before the end of the session, which means the Bill will make no further progress. It can be introduced into the new session of Parliament when it would start at its first reading - we will keep watching to see if it is re-introduced and update you on its progress if this is the case.

As ever, we hope you find this an interesting read.

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Supporting better mental health

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North east to launch new veterans' mental health service

The NHS in the North East will be launching a new mental health and wellbeing service this June for the 200,000 military veterans in the region.

The Veterans' Wellbeing Assessment and Liaison Service (VWALS) will provide a single point of access for veterans, their families and carers who need mental health support by directing them to the most appropriate health, social care and third sector services in the north east.

One in four people can experience mental health problems in their lives, and those who have been in the armed forces are no exception to this. In fact veterans can be at an increased risk due to the difficulties that they sometimes face transferring from military to civilian life.

Despite this, those veterans who suffer from mental health problems can often delay seeking help for many years after they have returned home from active service.

Martin Barkley, chief executive of Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust and chair of the north east NHS armed forces forum, said:

"For a veteran experiencing mental health problems, there are a range of NHS services which can provide help and support in the north east, as well as a number of services provided by veterans' charities.

"Whilst this variety of services is undoubtedly a positive thing, veterans can sometimes find it difficult to identify which one might be best placed to help them – especially if they have only recently left the armed forces and are still adjusting to civilian life.

"VWALS will provide a solution to this issue by giving veterans a single point of contact and directing them to the local services which are best placed to provide the support that they need.

"It is hoped that by providing a simple, accessible way for veterans to receive mental health support, VWALS will also encourage north east veterans to come forward sooner about mental health issues rather than suffering in silence. "

VWALS, which is set to launch next month, will run as a pilot for twelve months and will be provided as a partnership between the region's two mental health trusts, Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust and Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust, and the charity Combat Stress.



Martin Barkley, Chief Executive, Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust

Continued...

North east to launch new veterans' mental health service - continued...

The service will be based at Lanchester Road Hospital in County Durham, but the VWALS outreach workers will carry out assessments in community settings across the north east.

In short, here's how VWALS will work:

- Veterans will be able to contact VWALS themselves directly by telephone or email, or may be referred by another service such as their GP or a charity
- VWALS will offer an initial assessment with each veteran to establish what kind of help would be most appropriate
- A suitable care pathway will be designed and VWALS will liaise with the existing services that are able to provide the treatment needed
- Veterans receive treatment and support
- VWALS will work closely with service providers to monitor the care pathways of each veteran from the point of referral to treatment and discharge to ensure that each veteran has the best possible outcome

VWALS will also take factors such as housing, welfare and employment issues into consideration as part of the initial assessment and, when appropriate, liaise with local organisations to ensure that veterans also receive support in these areas as part of their care. The service will collaborate with the Royal British Legion when providing advice and support in this area.

VWALS will work closely with Combat Stress' Borders outreach team in the north east to deliver the service, utilising their expertise when developing care pathways for each veteran.

The service will not replace existing crisis care pathways or established health pathways for veterans that are already working in a responsive and timely manner. Instead, VWALS will act as a signposting service, making sure veterans get the right healthcare and support.

More information about the new VWALS service will be shared with stakeholders in the coming weeks. In the meantime, to find out more about the VWALS service, contact tevv.vwals@nhs.net

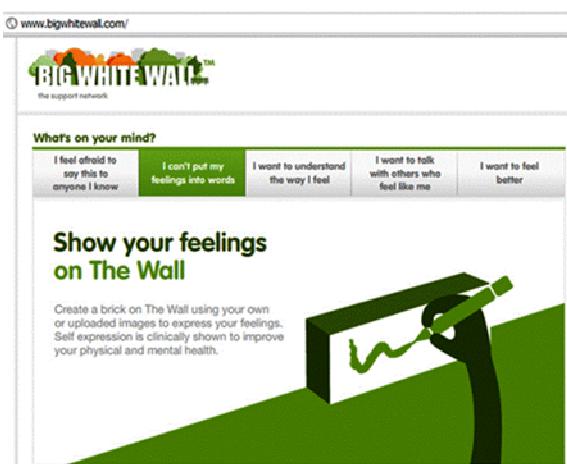
Armed Forces Veterans National News

Extra funding for Armed Forces online mental health network

Ministry of Defence news; 15 May 12

Extra funding of £400,000 will be provided for the Big White Wall online mental wellbeing service which provides support for UK Service personnel, veterans and their families.

The Big White Wall provides information on mental health issues and is staffed by professional counsellors.



The award-winning Big White Wall (BWW) is an online forum specifically for serving personnel, veterans and their families which provides information on mental health issues and is staffed by professional counsellors who can be contacted 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week.

It was launched in 2009 as a pilot scheme and yesterday's extra funding announcement represents a long-term commitment by the government to address the mental wellbeing of the Armed Forces community and ensure a smooth transition into civilian life.

Help for Heroes also supports the service, providing a grant to co-fund the pilot scheme with the Department of Health, and now committing a further £300,000 to the initiative.

The service allows users to chat anonymously to others who may have gone through similar experiences, and in the last nine months has been used by over 2,500 registered users.

Read more at:

<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/DefencePolicyAndBusiness/ExtraFundingForArmedForcesOnlineMentalHealthNetwork.htm>

Interim system for funding military veterans' prosthetics announced

Department of Health; 11 May, 2012

An interim funding system for military veterans' prosthetics is now in place and can be accessed by veterans with the support of their NHS Disability Service Centre.

Full details of how veterans and NHS Disability Service Centres can access these funds is available from NHS London:

<http://www.london.nhs.uk/what-we-do/our-current-projects/armed-forces-healthcare/veterans-prosthetics>

See letter on interim system for funding military veterans' prosthetics at:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Lettersandcirculars/Dearcolleagueletters/DH_134038

The Queen's speech; 9 May 2012

Key points for health and social care:

- A Bill will be introduced to reduce burdens on charities, enabling them to claim additional payments on small donations
- My Government will strive to improve the lives of children and families.
- My Government will propose measures to improve provision for disabled children and children with special educational needs. New arrangements will be proposed to support children involved in family law cases, reform court processes for children in care and strengthen the role of the Children's Commissioner.
- Measures will be proposed to make parental leave more flexible so both parents may share parenting responsibilities and balance work and family commitments.
- A draft Bill will be published to modernise adult care and support in England.



Commenting on the Draft Care and Support Bill, David stout, NHS Confederation deputy chief executive, said:

"The announcement of today's draft Care and Support Bill will bring some hope to elderly people and their carers. But draft legislation means that political agreement on this issue is still some way off.

"Our current model of social care is broken and we desperately need a long-term, sustainable resolution if we are to avoid further negative impact on local government and NHS services. We cannot emphasise enough just how critical it is to create a sustainable and high quality solution.

"The NHS and our social care systems are inextricably linked and each relies on the other working effectively to make sure people get the best care available. We need a system which provides the best possible care for older people and reduces crises leading to emergency hospital admissions.

"We urge the Government to treat this issue as a real priority. None of us - patients, carers, staff or government - can afford for this to be kicked into the long grass again."

Policy News

The next few pages give a quick round-up of recent national policy announcements and publications, with links to the relevant pages on the Department of Health and partner organisation websites.

Members' views on alcohol abuse impact submitted to MPs

NHS Confederation; 21/05/2012

The NHS Confederation has submitted evidence to the Health Select Committee's inquiry into the Government's alcohol strategy. The submission warns that alcohol abuse is putting a growing strain on health services which will be unsustainable if demand continues to grow and argues that improvements to public health and NHS services must be made in conjunction with cross-government action to effectively tackle the impact on our health of the way we consume alcohol.

<http://www.nhsconfed.org/priorities/latestnews/Pages/Members-views-impact-alcohol-abuse-to-MPs.aspx>

NHS pledges more support for women with postnatal depression

Department of Health; May 16, 2012

Women who have postnatal depression or who have suffered a miscarriage, still-birth or the death of a baby will get more support from the NHS, Health Secretary Andrew Lansley has pledged. The extra 4,200 health visitors – who provide services for expectant and new parents at home and in local communities after they have had a baby – being recruited by the Government will get enhanced training so they can spot the early signs of postnatal depression.

<http://mediacentre.dh.gov.uk/2012/05/16/nhs-pledges-more-support-for-women-with-postnatal-depression/>

Mental Health (Discrimination) Bill [HL] 2012-13

The first reading of this Bill took place on 15 May. This stage is a formality that signals the start of the Bill's journey through the Lords. The second reading - the general debate on all aspects of the Bill - is yet to be scheduled. This is a bill to make provision about discrimination against people on the grounds of their mental health. Download the Bill at:

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2012-13/mentalhealthdiscrimination.html>

Substance misuse services in prisons, immigration and removal centres

Department of Health; 14 May, 2012

The Department, together with the Ministry of Justice and the Youth Justice Board, has issued a dear colleague letter that sets out policy for provision of services related to substance misuse in prisons, immigration and removal centres and the children and young people's secure estate in England. Responsibility for funding of these services transferred to the Department during 2012.

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/05/substance-misuse-services-in-prisons-immigration-and-removal-centres/>

Authorisation process for Clinical Commissioning Groups issued

Department of Health; 10 May, 2012

A letter and a set of slides issued describe the authorisation process for clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and have been sent to primary care cluster chief executives and local authority chief executives. CCGs are due to come into statutory form from April 2013 and will need to be formally authorised. Local government and their partners in health and wellbeing boards have an important role in the process. <http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/05/authorisation-process-ccg/>

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Policy News—continued

Understanding personal health budgets

Department of Health; 3 May, 2012

The Department has published a revised version of the leaflet on personal health budgets relating to personal health budgets pilot programme. Personal health budgets is one of the ideas that the NHS is promoting in order to make it easier to get the care that is best suited to particular individuals.

By April 2014 everyone in receipt of NHS Continuing Healthcare will have a right to ask for a personal health budget, including a direct payment for healthcare.

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/05/understanding-personal-health-budgets/>

Transforming Public Health Bulletin: issue 8, May 2012

Department of Health; 2 May, 2012

The latest issue of the Transforming Public Health Bulletin is now online. In this edition, Anita Marsland welcomes Duncan Selbie as the new Chief Executive Designate of Public Health England, and we hear from Duncan himself as he gets to grips with his new role. The next steps following the Royal Assent of the Health and Social Care Bill are explained and Spotlight takes a look at the specialised services commissioning teams.

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/05/transforming-public-health-bulletin-issue-8-may-2012/>

Transforming health and social care for people with dementia

Department of Health; April 30, 2012

Health and care leaders have come together to drive improvements in dementia services and deliver on key ambitions set out in the Prime Minister's dementia challenge.

The Champion Group brings together representatives from the health sector, social care, local government and charities. They will be tasked with driving work on the ground to ensure that health and social care services get to grips with improving services for both people with dementia and their carers.

<http://mediacentre.dh.gov.uk/2012/04/30/transforming-health-and-social-care-for-people-with-dementia/>

Long term conditions strategy - closing date for comments 15 June

The closing date for comments on the cross-government long term conditions strategy is 15 June 2012, so don't miss your chance to have your say.

The strategy is being drafted by the Department of Health and is expected to be published at the end of this year.

To help with the drafting process, the Department wants to hear the views of people whose work affects those with long term conditions, whether they work in health, housing, transport or other areas. They would also like input from people with long term conditions, carers and the voluntary sector.

Find out more and give your views at:

<http://longtermconditions.dh.gov.uk/have-your-say/>