

# New healthcare package for military veterans

11/01/2010

**A new package of measures has been announced to support Service personnel who have received serious injuries whilst on active service.**



*Marine Peter Dunning, injured in Afghanistan, undergoing physiotherapy at Selly Oak Hospital [Picture: Stuart Bingham, Crown Copyright/MOD 2008]*

As part of the Government's commitment to provide Armed Forces veterans and those preparing to make the transition from Service to civilian life with the very highest standards of healthcare, personnel with the most serious injuries will have a customised healthcare plan through the National Health Service.

The new package includes:

- A guarantee that all those seriously injured will receive an early and comprehensive assessment of their long term needs before they leave the Armed Forces;
- High quality care for life for those with continuing healthcare needs based on a regular review of their needs overseen by an NHS case manager;
- Grant funding of £140,000 with Combat Stress (that they are matching) to work directly with mental health trusts to ensure that the services they provide are accessible to and appropriate for military veterans;
- Closer NHS links with a full range of third sector partners and charities with extensive experience of working with veterans, to share advice, knowledge and best practice to improve services for veterans;
- An entitlement for all veterans who have lost a limb whilst serving in the Armed Forces to receive, where clinically appropriate, the same standard of prosthetic limb from the NHS that they received or would receive today from Defence Medical Services as a result of major technological advances;
- Responsible Directors within each Strategic Health Authority, together with Primary Care Trust Champions for the Armed Forces, their families and veterans are identified to ensure their needs are fully reflected in local plans and service provision; and



*Matron Marie Hale and Major Christine Birkby with Lieutenant Colonel David Richmond who was injured in Afghanistan [Picture: Stuart Bingham, Crown Copyright/MOD 2008]*

- Improved transfer of medical records to the NHS on retirement from the Armed Forces, including greater GP awareness of veteran status of new patients to ensure veterans receive their entitlement to priority treatment for any injuries or illness attributable to their time serving in the Armed Forces.

In addition, six ongoing mental health pilots within the NHS will continue, with the evaluation and learning from these pilots used to help other Trusts gear their services to better meet the needs of veterans.

Veterans Minister Kevan Jones said:

"Today, the Government is making a lifelong guarantee to the brave men and women who have served their country. My part of that promise is to ensure that those members of the Armed Forces who have suffered serious injury will have an individually tailored healthcare plan before they leave the Services.

"I have strived to alert all Government departments to the needs of our veterans and I am proud to have played a role in this new and ground-breaking series of announcements.

"Together, the MOD, Department of Health and Armed Forces charities will build on our existing good work to bring about real change to the lives of our former servicemen and women."

Health Minister Mike O'Brien said:

"Those who have given so much for their country deserve the very best healthcare and that is why we are working with the MOD, the NHS and Service charities to make these improvements. The package of measures set out today will build on the excellent service provided by the NHS and improve the experience of veterans to ensure that their specific health needs are better met.



*A medic checks an x-ray image of a patient at the field hospital in Camp Bastion, Afghanistan [Picture: Sgt Ian Houlding, Crown Copyright/MOD 2008]*

"The NHS already has high quality mental health services and is the best place to treat veterans, but we want to make sure that the NHS understands their very specific needs. That's why we and Combat Stress are providing professional support for ex-servicemen and women to help them get the help and the care they need from the NHS and put them in touch with local support groups."

David Hill, Chief Executive of Combat Stress, said:

"Efficient planning of veteran services and joined-up working between both statutory and voluntary sectors are crucial - if service providers are to rise to the challenge of properly meeting the mental health needs of veterans in their communities. Combat Stress has seen a 66 per cent rise in referrals in the last four years and there is no sign of this increase in demand abating.

"Combat Stress sees this relationship as an important step forward in reaching a common goal - making sure that those veterans who need support have access to the best care possible. By combining the expertise gained from Combat Stress's 90-year history in the field and the recent NHS veterans' mental health pilots, we can deliver help to those who need it as quickly as possible."

The Department of Health is also working with the military to develop clearer and easier routes into accredited NHS jobs to provide employment opportunities for those leaving the Armed Forces.