

ANNEX A – VAPCs’ Supplementary Terms of Reference

VETERANS ADVISORY AND PENSIONS COMMITTEES SUPPLEMENTARY TERMS OF REFERENCE

Context

1. Thirteen regional Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committees (VAPCs) - nine in England, two in Scotland, one in Wales, and one in Northern Ireland – are established by a statutory instrument made under section 25 of the Social Security Act 1989. Each committee has between 12 and 20 members. Their members are all volunteers appointed by the Minister for Defence People and Veterans (the Minister) for terms of three years.
2. These Terms of Reference (TORs) have been written to reflect the fact that the VAPCs, given their independent and regional set-up, may be able to make a useful contribution to the Government’s drive to make the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran.
3. As such, these TORs have two principal purposes:
 - a. To set out the activities that members of VAPCs, as individuals and as members of informal regional groups, are asked to carry out relating to **all** veterans and their families.
 - b. To provide direction relating to their performance for an initial period of 12 months beginning from the date these TORs are agreed.
4. Following the initial 12-month period, the Minister will review these TORs and performance against the activities set out in them, and will make a determination on next steps (e.g. extending these TORs, replacing them or withdrawing them). The TORs will stay in effect until the outcome of the review.

Formation of informal groups of the members of the VAPCs

5. The Minister hereby invites:
 - a. The members of each VAPC to act as members of an informal group (a ‘Regional Group’) so long as they are members of that VAPC or until the withdrawal of this invitation;
 - b. The chair of each VAPC to chair the Regional Group so long as they remain chair of that VAPC or until the withdrawal of this invitation; and
 - c. The acceptance or refusal of these invitations and of the invitation in paragraph 7 below to be recorded by each VAPC.
6. Each Regional Group shall act in parallel and together with the relevant VAPC and, unless a majority of its members decide from time to time to take a different course, it shall hold its meetings at the same time as and adopt the procedure of that VAPC.

Activities

7. The Minister hereby invites the members of the Regional Groups to carry out the following activities relating to all veterans and their families:
 - a. Provide a distinct, identifiable, and independent point of reference in their region for both the Veteran community and all those supporting it to raise, respond to and

- promote issues relating to Veterans Services, the Strategy for our Veterans and the Armed Forces Covenant (the Covenant);
- b. Raise awareness of and support the implementation of Veterans Services, in particular:
 - i. the Veterans' Welfare Service (VWS) and the Defence Transition Services (DTS).
 - ii. the Covenant, what it means and does not mean, and the forthcoming Covenant duty (being introduced as part of the Armed Forces Bill 2021) on local public bodies to have due regard to its principles.
 - c. Act as an advocate, promoter, facilitator, or communicator of Veterans Services provided by government, central and local authorities, stakeholders, charities, and others;
 - d. Report and make representations and recommendations on existing or proposed Veterans Services, The Strategy for our Veterans and the Covenant to the Minister for Defence People and Veterans (the Minister), the Armed Forces Covenant Team in the Ministry of Defence (the MOD) and the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) in the Cabinet Office; and
 - e. Liaise, cooperate, and share information on issues of common interest relating to the delivery of Veterans Services with Regional Groups for other areas of the United Kingdom and others, including regimental associations; and
 - f. Any other specific taskings made by the Minister, the OVA or the Armed Forces Covenant Team in the MOD.
8. For activities related to raising awareness of particular services, initiatives or policies (e.g. VWS, DTS, the Covenant, and the Strategy for our Veterans), the Regional Groups are expected to seek and receive information and guidance from relevant policy teams in the MOD and the OVA in order to ensure any information they are communicating is accurate.

Reporting and performance

9. Based on their carrying out of the activities listed at paragraph 7 above, the Regional Groups will provide to the Minister (via the OVA and the Armed Forces Covenant Team in the MOD) evidence-based information and recommendations on:
- a. the Strategy for our Veterans 2028 key themes outcomes:
 - i. Community and relationships: veterans are able to build healthy relationships and integrate into their communities;
 - ii. Employment, education, and skills: veterans enter appropriate employment and can continue to enhance their careers throughout their working lives;
 - iii. Finance and debt: veterans leave the Armed Forces with sufficient financial education, awareness, and skills to be financially self-supporting and resilient;
 - iv. Health and wellbeing: all veterans enjoy a state of positive physical and mental health and wellbeing, enabling them to contribute to wider aspects of society;
 - v. Making a home in civilian society: veterans have a secure place to live either through buying, renting or social housing; and
 - vi. Veterans and the law: veterans leave the Armed Forces with the resilience and awareness to remain law-abiding civilians.
 - b. The Covenant:

- i. Awareness and understanding: the awareness of, and support for, the Covenant among local veterans and their families, and any other relevant actors;
 - ii. Beneficiaries engagement: individual cases of disadvantage due to military service, the use of the Covenant by veterans and their families (and how successful they have been in doing so and in which areas); and
 - iii. Local/ Regional Covenant ‘Actors’: the Regional Groups may offer – or, on occasion, be invited to provide – their support to the military-civil integration / engagement teams in the MOD’s Regional Points of Command, and the MOD’s Armed Forces Covenant Team, in identifying and supporting individuals/organisations operating in support of the Covenant in their local area or region.
10. The Regional Groups are to collate and collectively report their findings and make their recommendations, based on the conduct of their activities listed in paragraph 7, to the Minister twice during the initial 12 month period of these Terms of Reference – once six months following their agreement (“initial findings and recommendations”) and once at the conclusion of the 12-month period (“final findings and recommendations”). Additional requests may be made during that time for supplementary reports on specific issues or to support specific aspects of Government work.
11. The OVA and the MOD may issue guidance on the format for those reports in due course and each will nominate a lead official/s who the Regional Groups are to contact on day-to day matters.
12. The reports will help inform the Minister’s determination on next steps following the initial 12-month period of the operation of these TORs, as set out in paragraph 4 above.
13. One or more (as appropriate) members or nominees of the ad hoc committee of the chairs of the Regional Groups will meet with the Minister once during the initial 12-month period, to discuss updates on their work and findings.
14. The Regional Groups will work closely with the Government’s Independent Veterans Advisor (IVA) and (where relevant) the Veterans Commissioners in Scotland and Northern Ireland to feed their views and recommendations up to the relevant national-level consideration. A future Veterans Commissioner, or equivalent, in Wales will be part of this list if and when one is appointed.

Signed;



Minister for Defence People and Veterans