



## **EAST MIDLANDS VETERANS' ADVISORY AND PENSION COMMITTEE (EMVA&PC)**

### **END OF YEAR REPORT – JULY 2012**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. Despite being constrained by numbers the EMVA & PC has had a relatively successful year. Principal among the achievements has been a wider acknowledgement by the Regional Military Brigade, Local Authorities, NHS Trusts and the Regional Armed Forces/NHS Forum. There has also been a considerable amount of progress in engagement with the Criminal Justice System.
2. The majority of Committee members are employed on a full time basis, many with charities in the Ex service area. Whilst there are disadvantages, particularly in terms of time availability, of a Committee who work, the Committee benefits from a close working relationship with many of the principal Ex service charities (e.g. TRBL, RAFA, BLESMA, Combat Stress etc.) and much of the face to face work with veterans occurs in the daily working routines of Committee members. This provides a broad basis for discussion at Committee meetings and the exchange of information and best practice. As time goes on, and with improved data collection, a “bank” of experience will be available to members of this and other Committees.
3. The Committee notes with concern the growth in Ex service organisations, but welcomes the increased interest in veterans' affairs by Local Authorities, the NHS and MoD. Whilst all help in this area is to be welcomed, this must be tempered by the question of sustainability in the longer term, and particularly when the Armed Forces are no longer the centre of attention – post withdrawal from Afghanistan. VA and PCs are well placed to provide guidance on the more local issues of sustainability, value for money, meeting veterans needs and the longevity of projects.
4. Members of the Committee have been involved with the development of major innovations surrounding the two Murrison Reports and have given evidence via the IMEG on the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme.

## **THE REPORT AUGUST 2011 – JULY 2012**

### **Membership**

5. Once again the recruiting exercise was relatively disappointing though it provided the opportunity to convert three co-opted members to full membership and in addition three new members were attracted. The result is that the Committee now numbers thirteen. With recruiting restrictions loosened and wider local acknowledgement of the Committee and its role, this is expected to improve. A full list of members is at Annex A.
6. The membership continues to represent a wide range of experience and capability which includes:
  - The Prison Service
  - The Police
  - Local Government
  - Royal British Legion both case-working and representation
  - BLESMA
  - Combat Stress
  - RAFA.
7. Attendance at meetings has been good with only two members missing more than one meeting.

### **Governance/Strategy**

8. The three year Strategy for the Committee was set at the start of 2011. It was reviewed and evaluated for continuing relevance as an agenda point at the March 2012 meeting. There were no changes and it was agreed that the objectives were still achievable. That said there was acceptance that with more Committee members considerably more could be done. More will be expected in 2012/13
9. The detailed strategy for the EMVA & PC was attached last year. To summarise, the Committee seeks to:
  - To be instrumental in ensuring that the expectations outlined in the Service Personnel Command Paper and the Armed Forces Welfare Pathway (2010) are met in the East Midlands
  - Raise Awareness of the support available to veterans and the Armed Forces community in the East Midlands and to assist serving personnel, their families and veterans in accessing services in the East Midlands.
  - Through advocacy, provide an independent position to the Service personnel and Veterans Agency complaints process.
  - Enhance Committee capability.
10. The Committee meets four times a year - January, March, June and October. An extra meeting is to be held in December 2012 to coincide with a Christmas event for veterans and their families.

11. All documents, agendas, minutes etc concerning the Committee are maintained by the Secretary

### **Outcomes for the Period August 2011 to July 2012**

***Objective 1. To be instrumental in ensuring that the expectations outlined in the Service Personnel Command Paper and the Armed Forces Welfare Pathway (2010) are met in the East Midlands.***

12. Health A number of members are closely associated with healthcare for veterans, between them they have:
- Continued liaison with the East Midlands NHS/Armed Forces Regional Network and attendance at the two meetings in the last year;
  - Liaised closely with the mental health sub group of the EM NHS/AF Network leading to the establishment of East Veterans Mental Health Service;
  - Represented veterans on the Steering Group of the EM Veterans Mental Health Service;
  - Been involved with the detailed implementation of the Murrison Report on prosthetics for veterans;
  - Been a leading advocate for veterans suffering from MS.

**Future Work: Build on the work that has been started and monitor the access to NHS services by veterans.**

***Objective 2. To Raise awareness of the support available for Serving Personnel, Veterans and their Families in the East Midlands.***

13. Prisons The East Midlands is home to a large number of prisons and one member (Mr John Berry) has been the lead in the area of veterans in the CJS. He has:
- Co-ordinated a closer working relationship between ex service organisations and the prison service;
  - Continued to coordinate health workers who liaise both internally and externally with veterans to provide a support service;
  - Developed a mentoring service to support veterans both in prison and once they leave. All East Midlands probation services are signed up to the initiative;
  - Established links with Ex services prison officers;
  - Continued to train in reach workers. (Service fully deployed this year);
  - Continued to ensure that veterans who find themselves in the Court system are identified and where requested offered appropriate support.

**Future Work: Provide objective evidence of the needs of veterans in the CJS and monitor and collect outcome measurement.**

14. Local Authorities This is an area where there is still much scope for development. Where members are either County or District Counsellors contact is good but there are too many areas where there has been little penetration. The recruitment of two new members, both alumni in their own areas will enable the Committee to improve its profile in Leicestershire and Derbyshire.

**Future Work: As a priority redouble efforts to engage with LAs.**

15. Ex Service Organisations The close links developed in the previous year have been maintained and others added. Much of this work is brought to the Committee by the professional contacts of committee members.
16. Veterans The Committee arranged and hosted a Christmas Lunch for some 40 veterans and their partners. The event was funded through donation from ex service charities.
17. Service Formations A presentation has been given to 49Bde and the Committee is now a member of their steering group for veterans.
18. Miscellaneous The following is a summary of other points/activities conducted over the past 12 months:
  - Initial Sub-Committee Meeting to discuss the Strategic Aims 2 and 3. Decision was made to re-organise the sub Committees into one (Minutes attached);
  - Actively advertising in hospitals, health centres and community centres. Speaking to health authorities and charitable organisations (PALS). Distributing posters and leaflets;
  - Making contact with Armed Forces Champions at the Job Centre Plus (JC+). EM VAPC is now registered on their activities list for all their consultants as a bespoke organisation for the military and ex-forces community;
  - Working with SERCO at HMP Lowdham Grange and HMP Watton to access Veterans in Custody (VIC). Began a monthly veterans meeting to introduce speakers and personalities to update VIC's with employment and housing news. Future intentions to arrange benefits and monetary advice clinics;
  - Established communications with JC+ with our contact number (Kidderminster) for referrals;
  - Encouraged City and County Councils to sign up to the Community Covenant; explaining the benefits to the armed forces community and the local community;
  - Working with the Trees Group to encourage Service Leavers (SL) and Veterans into a work program; working with social enterprise organisations, contractor and the Royal British Legion (TRBL);
  - Liaison with Nottinghamshire Probation Services for advice and guidance with Vets on release from custody. Disclosure documentation, training;
  - Establishing an annual Christmas Luncheon for Veterans and SL;
  - Liaised with SSAFA and TRBL County Welfare Managers for referral of Veterans;
  - Liaised with Portland College to attend their monthly veterans meetings to provide advice and guidance.

***Objective 3. Through advocacy, provide an independent position to the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency complaints process.***

19. There have been two referrals. Once again individual members, in line with their professional responsibilities, have represented veterans from the Region at Pension Appeal Tribunals and appeals with the DWP.

***Objective 4. Enhance Committee capability.***

20. Recruiting has resulted in increased membership which will enable the Committee to meet more of its targets. That said, 13 members – of which the majority are in full time work – is insufficient to meet our objectives, and more effort will be made to recruit.

P M POOLE MBE  
Chair EMVA & PC  
24 August 2012

**CURRENT MEMBERSHIP EM VA&PC**

1. Mr Peter Poole MBE – Chairman
2. Mr D Donovan – Vice Chairman and Raising Awareness Sub Group
3. Mr R Boyfield – Raising Awareness Sub Group
4. Mr K Meakin MBE – Advocacy/health
5. Mr D Harding – Raising Awareness Sub Group
6. Mr W Dixon Dodds – Recognition Sub Group
7. Mr C Streater – Advocacy Sub Group
8. Mr T Bryant – Advocacy Sub Group
9. Mr L Henson – Secretary and Capability Sub Group
10. Mr J Berry OBE – Recognition Sub Group
11. Ms D Bowles – new member wef July 2012
12. Mr P Davies – new member wef July 2012
13. Mr Crossley – new member wef July 2012