

## NI VETERANS SUPPORT COMMITTEE (NIVSC)

In essence, the NIVSC is a voluntary coalition of organisations which specialise in delivering support services to veterans and their families. It has been likened to a NI version of COBSEO, the Confederation of Service Charities, but has wider membership to include MOD-linked and other statutory bodies. It has no premises, resources or “corporate” entity but is facilitated entirely by Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA) NI. It meets usually twice per year and has agreed Terms of Reference which state the following:

**Purpose** NIVSC is intended to improve cooperation between all service deliverers involved in supporting veterans and to facilitate better coordination of effort in order that efficiency and effectiveness is achieved at all levels, when interacting both for individuals and for groups. It will also provide an effective pool of subject matter expertise which can be consulted by statutory or voluntary inquirers with a view to providing a consensus on veterans’ issues.

**Aim** To enhance wherever possible the welfare and well-being of the veterans’ community in Northern Ireland by co-ordination of effort in order that the best possible service is delivered to alleviate suffering or disadvantage.

**Principles** The Committee will link statutory and voluntary spheres of influence to:

- a. Inform and add visibility to all interested parties including the wider veterans’ community, government (local and national) and the regional chain-of-command.
- b. Coordinate effort and output throughout the service delivery process in support of veterans and, where applicable, the wider Service community.
- c. Provide representation for service delivery organisations and a representative view for policy makers.
- d. Identify and work to close gaps in provision.

The committee is very much a “work in progress” and, like most coalitions, relies entirely on the good will of its constituent members to add value and not be just a talking shop. (It should be remembered that each representative reports primarily to his or her own organisation and will reflect aims, policies, message and intent accordingly. However, the existence of such a committee has the backing of many other stakeholders such as some of the NI devolved governmental departments, the NI Office and the MOD but, it is stressed, it is apolitical. In many respects, it embodies delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant without specifically trumpeting this and will look forward to engaging with appointed AF “Champions” from Local Authorities is due course.

To date, three key outcomes achieved have been:

- a. To convene a working committee comprised of disparate elements:
- b. To produce the NI Veterans’ Handbook as a reference document for stakeholders and opinion formers in assisting veterans and their families.
- c. To seek funding for academic research on all issues affecting the care of veterans and their families.

