**VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES**

24 May 2023, 15.00-16.30

**ATTENDEES**

1. Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Rt. Hon. Johnny Mercer MP
2. Office for Veterans’ Affairs, DHSC, NHSE and MoD officials
3. VAB Members: Susanna Hamilton, James Phillips, Danny Kinahan, David Richmond, Sir Nick Pope KCB CBE, Prof Beverley Bergman OBE, Nicky Murdoch MBE, Louisa Clarke, Lee Buss-Blair, Leon Lloyd, Alistair Halliday

| **ITEM** | **MINUTES**  |
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| **1** | **Office for Veterans’ Affairs (OVA) update**The Minister for Veterans’ Affairs provided an update on recent OVA activity, including:* Launch of Op Fortitude, the referral pathway for homeless veterans or those at risk of homelessness.
* The development of the £20m capital housing fund for both new build and refurbishment.
* Launch of up to £8 million Reducing Veterans Homelessness Programme for funding for wraparound services in veteran supported housing.
* £250k grant awarded to University of South Wales to capture, tell and share stories and history of British Nuclear Test Veterans. The University will collaborate with the National Life Stories team at the British Library who will act as the repository for the interviews.
* The LGBT Veterans Independent Review.
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| 2 | **Review into the Government's welfare provision for veterans**The team working on the review provided an update on progress, including: * Engagement across the UK, and with charities and other organisations.
* Timelines, with the review reaching the mid-way point shortly.
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| 3 | **Veteran Health & Wellbeing**The board was joined by guest speakers from National Health Service England (NHSE) and the Veterans’ Trauma Network (VTN). The team provided an overview of veteran health and wellbeing programmes, including: Op Courage, General Practitioner (GP) ‘veterans friendly’ accreditation and the VTN, with specific updates including: * Activity to increase awareness - both among healthcare providers and the veteran community - of the healthcare pathways available to veterans.
* The board discussed progress so far and how to increase the number of GPs signed up to accreditation. The board committed to promoting these and other health & wellbeing initiatives with veterans, and supporting a number of provisions to increase participation.
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| 4 | **Update from Veterans' Commissioner for Wales (VCfW)**The Veterans' Commissioner for Wales Col. (Ret.) James Phillips provided an update to the board on current and upcoming veterans initiatives in Wales, including: Your Skills Your Future employment programme to support veterans into public sector roles, and health & wellbeing support programmes.  |