**VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES**

05 July 2023, 11.00-12.30

**ATTENDEES**

1. Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Rt. Hon. Johnny Mercer MP
2. Director of the Office for Veterans’ Affairs, Jessie Owen
3. Office for Veterans’ Affairs and Ministry of Defence Officials
4. VAB Members: Susanna Hamilton, James Phillips, Danny Kinahan, David Richmond CBE, Sir Nick Pope KCB CBE, Prof Beverley Bergman OBE, Louisa Clarke, Lee Buss-Blair, Alistair Halliday

| **ITEM** | **MINUTES**  |
| --- | --- |
| **1** | **Office for Veterans’ Affairs (OVA) update**The Minister for Veterans’ Affairs provided an update on recent OVA activity, including:* Launch of the Op FORTITUDE helpline: the referral pathway for homeless veterans or those at risk of homelessness.
* The announcement of the beneficiaries of the up to £8 million Reducing Veterans Homelessness Programme.
* Launch of the Housing Guide on Gov.UK website, setting out support available to veterans, service leavers and their families.
* The imminent announcement of the £3 million Veterans Mobility Fund programme.
* NI Legacy Bill recently completed the Report Stage in the House of Lords.
 |
| 2 | **Review into the Government's welfare provision for veterans**Officials 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 final draft stages shortly.
 |
| 3 | **Veteran’ Strategy & Veterans’ Strategy Action Plan*** Officials provided an overview and plans for an upcoming refresh of the 2022-2024 Veterans’ Strategy Action Plan

The board discussed:* priorities and areas of interest across themes,
* how advancements made on outcomes for veterans in the UK could help to inform future versions of the documents,
* to what extent these strategies can help inform thinking and also be supported by Devolved Administrations.

The board committed to providing input to the planned refresh, and to promoting opportunities for engagement and consultation with stakeholder groups and the veteran community. |
| 4 | **Update on Veterans’ Housing & Homelessness** Lee Buss-Blair, Director of Operations and Veterans Lead at Riverside Group provided an update and briefing paper on the current landscape of veterans housing in the UK, including: * how veterans facing homelessness and rough sleeping can be best supported,
* the unique circumstances and challenges faced by veterans in regards to housing when compared to the general population,
* how the circumstances and available support provision in England and Wales can be different to Scotland and in particular Northern Ireland,
* progress on data and how this can be utilised,
* how collaboration can be supported between Local Authorities, housing providers and charities in regards to housing and wrap-around support for veterans.
 |
| 5 | **Any other business** There was no other business. |