**VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES**

30th November 2023, 15:00 to 16:30

**ATTENDEES**

1. Office for Veterans’ Affairs and Ministry of Defence Officials
2. VAB Members: Alistair Halliday, Susanna Hamilton, James Phillips, Danny Kinahan, David Richmond CBE, Prof Beverly Bergman OBE, Louisa Clarke, Sue Liburd MBE

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| **ITEM** | **MINUTES**  |
| **1** | **Office for Veterans’ Affairs (OVA) update**The Interim Director provided an update on recent OVA activity, including:* In September, the Veterans Mobility Fund providers were announced as Blesma and Help for Heroes.
* The Employers’ Guide to Hiring Veterans was launched in October.
* It has been announced that Defence Medical Welfare Service in Northern Ireland will pilot a health and wellbeing programme.
* The government’s consultation on veterans was launched at the end of October, closing in January 2024
* The Minister gave an oral statement to Parliament, providing an interim response on the veterans welfare services review.
* The OVA Conference in York took place in November, with the majority of VAB members in attendance. There has been positive feedback on the event.
* In the Chancellor’s Autumn Statement an additional £10 million was provided to support the Veterans’ Places, People and Pathways Programme, to increase support to a significant community of vulnerable veterans throughout the UK and enable it to become self-sustaining.The Statement also announced that National insurance relief would also be extended for a further 12 months.

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| 2 | **Veterans Gateway*** Earlier this year it was announced that the Veterans Gateway will be refreshed and transferred from the Royal British Legion to Government.
* Recommendations on the Gateway recognising this were also outlined in the veterans welfare service review.
* Officials provided an update on the progress which is still under development with early stage designs and demos being explored and tested with veterans.
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| 3 | **Families*** With the expansion of the OVA, this was a collaboration agenda item to explore what opportunities and gaps there are for the Government, to better support this group, including using data from the census 2021.
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| 4 | **Update from the CEO, Forces Employment Charity** Alistair Halliday, CEO of Forces Employment Charity, provided an update as the VAB representative of the Veterans’ Employers Group (VEG), including: * Data on the job seekers market and how it is changing over time
* Updated the purpose of the VEG, which brings together organisations employing veterans to share best practice and provide insight.
* The VEG membership comprises a range of organisations in the private, public and third sectors.
* A key product of the VEG’s first year has been the Employers’ Guide to Hiring Veterans, now ‘live’ on gov.uk.
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| 5 | **Any other business** There was no other business.Next Meeting: 25th January 2024 |