
To: Leadership Board

On: 16 September 2015

Report by: Director of Development & Housing

Heading: Support for Veterans

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the work of the Council to support service veterans living locally in accordance with the Armed Forces Community Covenant which the Council and our Community Planning Partners signed up to in February 2012.
 - 1.2 The report provides an update on the work of the Veteran's Support Coordinator in developing pathways for service veterans through the customer service model being developed in partnership with East Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Councils, and also recommends a change to the treatment of war disablement pension income in calculations for non residential social care costs for veterans who were injured prior to 5 April 2005, following an approach from Poppy Scotland.
-

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the work of the Council in supporting service veterans and of the progress made in development of a customer service model and pathways for veterans of the armed forces.
- 2.2 To agree that the War Disablement Pension income is to be disregarded in full when calculating clients contribution towards non residential care costs with effect from 1 October 2015.
- 2.3 To approve an in year adjustment to the adult services budget for 2015/16 and agree that an appropriate base budget adjustment is made moving into 2016/17 as part of the budget process.

- 2.4 To agree that the Council support the campaign by Poppy Scotland and the Royal British Legion for a change to the regulations in relation to the treatment of War Disablement Pension when assessing residential accommodation care charges.
-

3. Background

- 3.1 In February 2012 the Council agreed to sign up to a Community Covenant with the Armed Forces. The Community Covenant Agreement is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. The aim of the Community Covenant is to encourage local communities to support the service community in their area and to promote understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces Community.
- 3.2 By signing up to the agreement, the Council and its partners became eligible to apply for funding from the Ministry of Defence Community Covenant and Libor funds for projects which would provide a benefit to service personnel and the communities in which they live.
- 3.3 Officers from Renfrewshire Council, Inverclyde Council and East Renfrewshire Council have met regularly as part of local "Firm Base" arrangements over the period since 2012, and developed a joint bid for funding from the Community Covenant scheme to enable the development of a veterans support model and customer access model. The bid was successful in attracting £87,000 of funding in 2014/2015. This partnership between the three councils is the first of its kind in the UK.
- 3.4 A Veterans Support Advisor was appointed as a focal point to work on behalf of the three councils, strengthening the partnership and becoming responsible for coordinating the delivery of this project's outcomes, sharing resources, expertise and minimising duplication of effort. Each council identified 5 Veterans Champions who work at the frontline for services provided and are trained by the Veterans Support Advisor. The first training session was completed in August 2014 and 15 customer service champions and three customer service managers completed this training. Close support is provided within the council by money advice advisors, homelessness officers, CHCP and personnel from the Scottish Welfare Fund who will work closely with the Veterans Support Advisor to ensure specialist and targeted support as required by the individual client is provided.
- 3.5 The establishment of a partnership agreement and pathway to the Veterans Welfare Service is currently being finalised. This is a critical part of the project as this is the organisation that holds the information on all serving and ex serving regular and reserve members of the armed forces.

- 3.6 Work to complete the customer service model is also being finalised and rolled out across the three councils.
 - 3.7 Meetings have also taken place with charities and associations within the three council areas, and meetings with national veterans charities have also taken place and are an ongoing and critical part of the work.
 - 3.8. The project has been recognised as best practice in statements to the Scottish Parliament where our Veterans Coordinator was praised for her work during the veterans' debate, and through the Veterans Commissioner's Transition in Scotland report. It has also been published in a guide to housing solutions on the Scottish Governments website that will be circulated to all LA Chief Executives, Directors of Housing and Armed Forces Champions.
 - 3.9. Funding for the development of the veterans support model will expire at the 31 March 2016, and it is proposed that the position of Veteran's Support Coordinator on a shared basis across the three Council area should be continued beyond this date. The three Councils will also continue to work to further develop the service and seek additional funding as appropriate to support the development of the service.
-

4. War Disablement Pension

- 4.1 The Council has been approached by Poppy Scotland over the treatment of War Disablement Pensions in our assessment of client care contributions. The Royal British Legion has undertaken a campaign to have the entire pension disregarded to the calculation of client contributions.
- 4.2 Veterans injured prior to 5 April 2005 receive a War Disablement Pension, this is assessed as part of their income when calculating care costs. Veterans who were injured after this date receive compensation through the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme. This is not assessed as income, and therefore is not included in the assessment of client care contributions.
- 4.3 Both the Royal Legion and Poppy Scotland are urging government agencies to treat War Disablement Pension consistently with other compensation schemes and disregard the entire pension from care calculations. At present a number of councils take this approach and it is expected that this number will grow as a result of the recent campaign highlighting this issue. Renfrewshire Council do not include War Disablement Pension in the assessment of entitlement to Housing Benefit or Council Tax benefit.
- 4.4 At present there are 28 service users who receive care services who are in receipt of War Disablement Pension, 18 of these are supported in the community and 10 are in residential accommodation. The Council has

discretion over its non residential charging policy and as such it is recommended that War Disablement Pension is fully disregarded as income for the purposes of non residential accommodation. If the Council agrees to disregard fully this income, then the financial implication would amount to per £16,562 annum.

- 4.5 The treatment of income for the purposes of residential accommodation is determined by the National Assistance Act 1948 and associated guidance and regulations, and is therefore not at the discretion of the Council. However, this report recommends that the Council considers supporting the current campaign by Poppy Scotland and the British Legion for equitable treatment of War Disablement Pension in the assessment of income for residential accommodation.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – The Council's commitment to the ongoing employment of the Veterans Support Coordinator will be on the basis of a one third share of employment and on costs.

The disregard of War Disablement Pension from calculation of social care costs are outlined in para 4.4 of the report. This will require a supplementary in year provision for adult services budgets in 2015/16 and an appropriate base budget adjustment in 2016/17.

2. **HR & Organisational Development** - None
3. **Community Planning**
Community Care, Health & Well-being - The Veterans Support project provides support to serving and former serving members of the armed forces, regular and reserve, their partners, dependants and carers.
4. **Legal** - The Council's ability to disregard income from War Disablement Pensions when assessing care charges is controlled by statutory regulations and guidelines that must be complied with.
5. **Property/Assets**- None
6. **Information Technology** - None
7. **Equality & Human Rights**
The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the

recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

- 8. **Health & Safety** - None
 - 9. **Procurement** – None
 - 10. **Risk** – None
 - 11. **Privacy Impact** – None
-

List of Background Papers

- (a) Background Paper 1 (Report to Council February 2012, Community Covenant with the Armed Forces)

The foregoing background papers will be retained within (Development & Housing Services) for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting. The contact officer within the service is (Mary Crearie, Director of Development & Housing ext 6256)

Author: Mary Crearie