



YORKSHIRE & HUMBER
VETERANS ADVISORY & PENSIONS
COMMITTEE (Y&H VAPC)
ANNUAL REPORT JUNE 2010- JUNE 2011



GENERAL

1. **Membership.** VAPC's are independent non departmental public bodies established by Parliament under the War Pensions Act 1921 & Social Security Act 1989 with Members appointed by Secretary of State for Defence. They are a regional network to assist veterans and their families' access vital welfare support and advocate for veterans with Regional stakeholders; Y&H VAPC Membership this year was:

Col (Retd) Tony Phillips MBE – **Chair and Lead Governance**
Mr John Anderson – Welfare Sub-Group
Mr Alexander Baxter – **Vice Chair & Lead Health** Sub-Group
Maj (Rtd) Duncan Bell – Welfare Sub-Group
Mr Steven Bentham-Bates – Local Authority Sub-Group (Recently Resigned)
Mr Alex Bentley - **Lead Local Authority** Sub-Group
Ms Alison Carter – Health Sub-Group
Mr David Chapman – **Assistant Secretary** & Welfare Sub-Group
Mr Tim Cole – Local Authority Sub-Group
Mr Peter Heys – Welfare Sub-Group
Flt Lt (Retd) Ian Johnstone RAF - **Secretary**
Dr David Jolliffe – Health Sub-Group
Mr Robert Mortimer – Health Sub-Group
Mrs Helen Owen – **Lead Public Information** Sub-Group
Mr Peter Shields MBE QGM – **Lead Welfare** Sub-Group
Mrs Helen Singleton – Welfare Sub-Group
Mr John Topping – Public Information Sub-Group

2. **Y&H VAPC Membership is 16 and strongly cross representational**, with ex RN, Army & RAF people, members of RBL, Combat Stress, BLESMA, representatives of the civil welfare community and councillors from Local Authorities. Regrettably **one Member recently resigned** due to commitments. We also have 2 people very interested in joining Y&H VAPC should a vacancy arise, who are willing to act as co-opted members in the meantime for special purpose tasks, although they have not yet been called upon.

3. **Boundaries/Dependency.** Y&H VAPC **boundaries are contiguous** with local government, many service and ex-service organisations and those for the Regional Army Brigade (15 (NE) Bde), which eases collaboration. **Within boundaries are 24 Local Authorities** (down to District Council), **14 Strategic Health Authorities (SHA)**, and **5 Regional Forums**. Our **dependency** is nearly **13K War Pensioners** (including over 2K widow/ers) and just **under 1K AFCS**, the former diminishing and the latter increasing.

GOVERNANCE/COMPLIANCE AND OBJECTIVES

4. **Y&H VAPC has a Governing Directive** (enclosed) detailing a 3 Year Plan that defines Members responsibilities, Sub-Group Terms of Reference and objectives, also **providing public transparency**.

5. **Y&H VAPC meets quarterly** on a fixed schedule (Sep/Dec/Mar/Jun) and from inauguration to the present **has met 4 times**, to a standardised Agenda, to review progress over the past 3 months and more particularly to direct priorities for the next 3 months, ensuring focus. The **Chair and Sub-Group Leads** for LAs, Health and Governance **additionally met on 27 Jan 11** to formulate and agree TOR's and priorities.

6. Y&H VAPC is governed by, and complies with, the Code of Practice from the Office of Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA) and its Members abide by the principles and standards of public service.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/PERFORMANCE STRATEGY

7. **Building.** Y&H VAPC developed a **strategy** of driving performance through community connections and consequently focused its first year activities on building necessary links. We set ourselves an ambitious plan for the first year but wanted **to rapidly establish a presence and credibility**, which we **successfully achieved in a challenging 9 month period** since first meeting in Oct 10. This **strategy consisted of**:

- **Planning:** to identify sponsors, stakeholders and core team members as well as define objectives and measures of success against timescales, encapsulated in a Governance Directive or Charter. This **ambitious aim was successfully achieved** through the determined commitment and active engagement of Y&H VAPC Members, and is encapsulated in a comprehensive 3 Year Plan against which future performance of Y&H VAPC may be judged (enclosed).
- **Developing links:** to establish community processes, veterans/dependents requirements and the necessary administrative framework to enable Y&H VAPC to operate effectively; a **“stretch” objective accomplished most successfully**. We identified processes across 70% LA’s and SHA’s and worked hard to **identify veterans and dependents needs, although this is an area that requires further development next year**.
- **Implementing:** a veterans regional identity, training Y&H VAPC Members, capturing lessons learnt, exporting best practice across Regional stakeholders and other VAPCs; we have **been notably successful promoting both the appointment of Armed Forces Champions** across 12 LA’s based on best practice and TOR’s we developed with North Yorks County Council (NYCC) **and we encouraged 9 LA’s to develop their own veteran focused community strategies**. Through engagement with NYCC Welfare Pathway and Regional SHAs involved in the Armed Forces Network, we **effectively promoted the needs of veterans across the region** and **appraised a huge number of stakeholders** about veteran’s issues; approximately 4-500.

8. **Sustaining.** Having established an effective and respected regional presence, built on reputation and credibility, Y&H VAPC is now engaged on the 2nd stage of our strategy to develop our role through:

- **Feedback:** regularly servicing the networks established in year 1, polling attitudes and progress with our direction against our 3 Year Plan.
- **Evolution:** to refine our plan, based on feedback, lessons learnt, best practice and by collaborating to standardise our approach with Regional Stakeholders, Central Policy and other VAPC’s.

DETAILED ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS

ASSISTANCE - VETERANS & PUBLIC BENEFIT ASSESSMENT

9. Our **focus this year was** *“Critical ground for veterans support is assessed as: development of Central Policy, Local Authorities (LA), Health Trusts and current government appetite for “big society”, with welfare and PR underpinning our fundamental raison d’être”*. Consequently Y&H VAPC performance converged on 3 broad groups: Veterans & dependents, Local Authorities/Strategic Health Authorities and Community Organisations; next year we will focus more on a wider public information campaign. Specific Sub-Group effect was as follows:

- a. **Governance Sub-Group (Lead-Chair):** Established firm, sustainable links with regional stakeholders, securing permanent membership of: HQ 15 (NE) Bde Civil Military Interface (CMI) Forum, NYCC Welfare Pathway Working Group, Regional Life Force (AFN) Group and Reserve Forces & Cadet Association. In addition, we secured wide regional recognition as advocates for veteran’s affairs with LAs, SHAs, main service/ex-service organisations and various projects

addressing issues such as: homelessness/housing, debt, vulnerable adults and community support. WE have been formal signatories to Community Covenants supporting delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant for 9 x Local Authorities.

b. **Local Authority Sub-Group (Lead-Alex Bentley)**: Focused on assessing Local Authorities levels of engagement, knowledge and effective support to veterans and dependents, followed by visiting those assessed as “lagging” to assist them enhance support and encourage appointment of AF Champions, Community Covenants and general engagement in support of their veterans. The **current status of effect is at Annex A** in the form of a traffic light assessment demonstrating success of LA engagements and highlighting those we still need to work on influencing.

- The Group also engaged with NYCC Welfare Pathway Working Group, advocating strongly for veterans and effectively influencing over 80 regional stakeholders.
- We encouraged best practice, particularly developing regional Terms of Reference for AF Champions, based on that pilot and also heavily engaged with HQ 15 (NE) Brigade Civil Military Integration staff to ensure a coherent approach with serving forces.
- In addition significant numbers of stakeholders now specifically and discretely ask those presenting to GP surgeries, Citizens Advice Bureaus and other agencies if they are a veteran or serving HM AF and, if so, now know how to signpost them to additional support.
- LAs now promote details of Unit Home Coming Parades to stakeholders so they can be widely advertised and increase opportunities for veterans, and public, to support them.

c. **Health Sub-Group (Lead-Alex Baxter)**: This Sub-Group engaged in a series of planned meetings, targeted at SHAs and PCTs needing greatest encouragement or already showing greatest engagement, to establish examples of best practice to export to the former. The **current status of effect is at Annex B** in the form of a traffic light assessment demonstrating success of LA engagements and highlighting those we still need to work on influencing.

- This Group has been instrumental in securing collaborative engagement, identification of AF health champions and ensuring veterans (and dependents) needs are recognised/met.
- They secured wide regional recognition as advocates for veteran’s affairs and also made inroads with justice stakeholders supporting veterans in custody, or rehabilitating.
- They worked to ascertain how GP Trusts will operate in the region, ensuring veterans issues are at the forefront of new delivery mechanisms, in conjunction with the AFN, and this will be remain a major focus area for Y&H VAPC next year.
- Engaged with Vulnerable Veterans and Adult Dependents (VVADs), a new service set up by NHS Yorkshire as part of Improved Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme, supported by Catterick Garrison, and operated by N.Yorks/York Community Mental Health Services to deliver therapy for anxiety, depression and PTSD focused on Armed Forces.

d. **Public Information Sub-Group (Lead-Helen Owen)**: Y&H VAPC made a decision to concentrate on developing a credible, trusted presence so focused on LA, SHA and established organisations this year but did also work on a public profile, although this will receive greater focus next year. Activities included:

- Chair took part in development of a Podcast for SPVA Website to promote the VAPC concept and launch across all regions that was well received.
- We identified the 6 local BBC radio and TV stations in our boundaries and began to cultivate links as “friends in court” in order to develop a more detailed media strategy; we have begun drafting Press Releases, which will be centrally cleared, for future promotion.
- We provided a presence at Regional presentations by the Army Presentation Team that was specifically welcomed by Commander 15 (NE) Brigade, and where Y&H VAPC members promoted veterans issues to a large, influential regional audience.
- One negative result of a public profile was an approach by 2 x not for profit companies supporting the Armed Forces seeking formal endorsement of their activities by Y&H VAPC.

We did not give any such recommendations as it would undermine our independent status and also perhaps cloud relationships with our sponsors, MoD.

f. **Welfare Sub-Group (Lead Pete Shields)**: This group is led by a very experienced practitioner but its members had greatest training needs and time to gain experience so deliberately did not actively seek new clients until satisfied of competency, which they are well on the way to achieving. While details will be brief due to confidential nature this Group has focused on establishing sound working links with service and ex-service organisations and assisting those in seeking help:

- The Group directly assisted one client pursue an appeal and actively offered SPVA RWS support should they request it, which has so far not been necessary.
- There was one other case inappropriately referred to us by an ex-service organisation and due to our inexperience regrettably took longer than we would have wished to re-signpost appropriately. We informed SPVA so a response could be effected if required and our own members were briefed on process.
- The lesson learnt was that, although Members Notes are clear, training needs are important and referrals need moral courage to be applied to ensure deserving cases are properly handled and those lacking justification are firmly guided.
- This group also articulated concerns about the methodology and objectivity of SPVA Medical Board process, which they briefed to Head of Veterans Services when he attended our meeting on 9 Mar 11 and which he positively responded to.
- Y&H VAPC Chair has been a member on 3 x Independent Complaints Panels.
- This group will focus next year on offering support to clients and executing their monitoring role of SPVA RWS.
- One member of this group also assisted a serving RAF officer conduct a records search to secure his Grandfathers missing medals. Although slightly outside or remit and 3 Year Plan, the positive promotional effects of such advocacy are complementary and beneficial.

FINANCIAL

10. We have not been provided any financial data by SPVA so are unable to draw any cost effectiveness conclusions; this may be an issue VAPCs wish to address at next Conference.

ADVICE & ADVOCACY

CONTRIBUTIONS TO POLICY/REGULATION

11. We have formally contributed comments on the following:

- Report to DCDS Pers-PCV on 2 Feb 11 regarding NYCC WP – well received as the clearest report they had received.
- 29 Aug 10 – comments to Comms on Veterans Website
- 9 Sep 10 - Comments to FP on PR and Ext Comms strategy
- Nov 10 – contributed comments to veterans Services Study.
- Chair drafted VAPC/SPVA Partnership Protocol covering collaborative arrangements.
- 16 Nov 10 – contributed comments for CAG
- Comment on Resettlement for Early Service Leavers; 7 Jan 11
- 2 May 11 – Stewardship review amendments to SPO commented upon.
- Led proposals for development of VAPC area on SPVA Web.

OUTREACH/ENGAGEMENTS

12. **Engagements**: Y&H VAPC has **delivered a high level of activity**; within a 9 month period that also included their own internal establishment and organisation, we **completed 50 formal engagements** as well as many other informal discussions, telephone and e-mail exchanges. We **secured permanent positions on 4 influential Regional forums** (NYCC Welfare Pathway, Y&H CMI Forum, Y&H Life Force, RFCA) as well as being invited to several Local Authority forums developing 9 covenants and events for Veterans and the Armed Forces. **Details of engagements are at Annex C**, which demonstrates ample commitment of Y&H VAPC Members.

13. **Training:** Although some VAPC members transferred from WPCs, and allowing for existing skills levels in others, 11 Members were identified for SPVA training, of which only 4 have been completed so far; we **recommend more training places need to be resourced** by MoD/SPVA.

14. **Summary:** Y&H VAPC has had a tremendously successful year (8 months) and secured a presence as a respected advocate in the region; for the future we need to work harder to reach down to the individual veterans and widows to better understand the grass roots issues and complementary to that work a little harder at “outreach” activity to attract such engagement. This will then allow us to provide more objective input to policy and strategy.

Original Signed
AW PHILLIPS MBE
Chair
Y&H VAPC

5 July 2011

Annex:

- A. LA Traffic Light Assessment.
- B. SHA Traffic Light Assessments.
- C. List of Y&H VAPC Outreach Engagements Jun 10 – Jul 11.
 - RED: No contact made and/or believed to be reluctant to engage veterans issues
 - YELLOW: No contact made and/or believed to be supportive of veterans issues
 - GREEN: Contact made and/or are supportive of veterans

Enclosures:

- 1. Y&H VAPC Governing Directive.

Y&H VAPC OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENTS

June 2010

- x: Chair – N.Yorks CC Welfare Pathway Meeting

July 2010

- 6: Chair – informal meeting 15 NE Bde SO2 CMI and ECHG (Trevor Morris)
- 3: Chair - York AF Day Event; engaged 2 x MP (Hugh Bayley/Julian Sturdy) & stakeholders
- 16: Chair – NYCC WP Steering Group to define priorities for WG

August 2010

- 11: Chair conducts recruitment interviews for VAPC Members

September 2010

- 6: Chair - Discussion with CEO Humberside NHS PCT regarding veterans needs.

October 2010

- 25: 2 x Members - Head of Partnerships, N.Yorks CC - VAPC, LA role and Welfare Pathway
- 25: Chair - met Mr T Morris, ECHG, Beacon Project, Catterick - homeless veterans support

November 2010

- 1: 4 x Members - attended Y&H RFCA Quarterly Meeting – Networking
- 5: Chair – N. Yorks CC Welfare Pathway Working Group
- 29: Chair & 2 x members - NHS Hull, Traumatic Stress Service, Life Force promotion

December 2010

- 20: 2 x members - met N. Lincs & Goole Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust Care Trust Plus

January 2011

- 6: 1 x member - Meeting with Cllr Knowles–Fitton - Craven DC
- 6: 1 x Member - Meeting with Julian Smith MP

February 2011

- 4: Chair - Meeting Head of Partnerships N. Yorks CC- input to Welfare Pathway scheme
- 4: Chair & 1 x Member - Doncaster DC regarding community covenant for military
- 5: 1 x Member - Meeting with Cllr Jim Dodds, Kirklees District Council
- 5: 1 x Member - Meeting with Simon Reeve MP Dewsbury MP
- 15: 2 x Members – contributed to Vulnerable Veterans/Adult Dependents Project
- 18: 2 x Members - Doncaster DC AF Day Planning Meeting
- 23: Chair - N. Yorks CC - Welfare Pathway Working Group
- 28: Chair - meeting Military Health Network, with Dave Rutter & Rob Moorhead Dept of Health

March 2011

- 7: Chair - Discussion ECHG - veterans housing offer, introduced to RBL and SPVA RWS
- 10: Chair - 15 NE Bde Conference to conduct formal Community Engagement Appreciation
- 11: 1 x Member met MP for Scarborough & Whitby
- 15: 1 x Member - met Director Humber Probation Service - Veterans in the Justice System
- 16: 1 x Member - attended Army Presentation Team – Northallerton
- 17: 1 x Member - attended Army Presentation Team – Doncaster
- 17: 1 x Member – meeting with Scarborough PCT
- 18: 1 x Member – met Mr Julian Smith MP to explain VAPC and advocate for veterans

- 25: 1 x Member presented to Green Howards Regimental Association
- 31: 1 x Member presented to Merchant Marine Association Scarborough

April 2011

- 1: 1 x Member - met Doncaster Council/15 NE Bde reference AF day & Community Covenants
- 11: 3 x Members - attended Y&H RFCA Quarterly Meeting – Networking
- 14: 1 x Member met Scarborough Town Council
- 18: 1 x Member met Yorkshire Coastal Homes Housing Association

May 2011

- 10: Y&H Military Health - meeting - Deputy Director (Claire Jones), Leeds – veterans promotion
- 25: 1 x Member - Defence Community Mental Health Team Catterick– raised awareness vets needs
- 26: 1 x Member met Sanctuary Housing Association
- 27: 1 x Member met with Age UK Welfare Officers for Y&H

June 2011

- 10: Chair – York Royal Salute – met regional military, LA and Civic Dignitaries
- 19: Chair – Skipton AF Day events – met regional military, LA and Civic Dignitaries
- 20: 1 x Member “Flying the Flag” ceremony Scarborough
- 25: Y&H VAPC - Stand for AF Day, Cleethorpes - collaboration with RAF and RN Association
- 25: Y&H VAPC - Stand for AF Day, Doncaster – adjoining CTP stand
- 25: Chair – Doncaster BC Community Covenant Launch
- 25: Y&H VAPC - Stand for AF Day, Scarborough - adjoining SPVA stand
- 30: 1 x Member Hambleton & Richmond DC Financial Inclusion
- 30: Chair, 1 x Member – NYCC Community Covenant Launch
- 31: 2 x Members - Health Sub-Group - Meeting with Lincolnshire SHA

July 2011

- 3: 1 x Member – VAPC Stand at Thirsk
- 12: Great Yorkshire Show – Y&H VAPC stand (*planned*)
- 14: 1 x Member – NE Lincs Council Signing of Covenant
- 22: 1 x Member – Y&H AFN Meeting, York

August 2011

- 5: Chair - Dir Vets Svcs SPVA Meeting with CMI Staff 15 (NE) Bde

November 2011

- 9: Harrogate CTP Job Fair - Y&H VAPC stand (*planned*)

December 2011

- 13: Chair + 1 x member - Presentation to Y&H Regional CBI

April 2012

- 3: Chair - Presentation to Y&H Retired Men’s Forum