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## Armed Forces Health Partnership eNEWS

July 2012

Dear Pete

Welcome to the third edition of the Armed Forces Health Partnership e-Newsletter supporting the work of The Royal British Legion and Combat Stress in their roles as Armed Forces and veterans strategic partners with the Department of Health. We hope you find this a useful resource on providing up to date healthcare policy news for anyone working with the Armed Forces Community.

### Veterans Prosthetics Interim Funding Information



Dr Andrew Murrison MD MP was commissioned by the Government in December 2010 to examine the future needs of veteran amputees, including how best to fund high-specification, evidence-based prosthetics services for them in the NHS. In support of the recommendations of the report, the Prime Minister announced that the government would invest up to £15 million over three years to improve prosthetics services for military veterans who have lost a limb due to activities while serving their country.

The interim funding arrangements and application information is set out on the [NHS London website](#). The guidance details who qualifies for the new funding, what will be funded and the interim arrangements for achieving this before the National system goes

live in April 2013. The London Armed Forces Network is coordinating this national programme on behalf of the Department of Health.

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### New figures from Combat Stress reveal that over £6.5 million has been spent treating Falklands Veterans

On the 30th anniversary of the end of the Falklands War (13 June), Combat Stress – the UK's leading military charity specialising in the care of Veterans' mental health – revealed that the charity has spent over £6.5 million on treating Falklands Veterans suffering from mental health problems.

Combat Stress has helped more than 400 Falklands Veterans come to terms with their mental health problems. These Veterans have received the equivalent of over 22,180 days of treatment at a cost of over £6.5 million. This figure does not include the cost of treatment carried out by the charity's 14 Community Outreach Teams across the UK. For more information about Combat Stress' work, visit [www.combatstress.org.uk](http://www.combatstress.org.uk)

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### Continued support for Veterans' mental ill-health, 24/7

In March, the Department of Health confirmed its commitment to veterans mental health, by providing additional funding for both the Combat Stress 24-hour Helpline and The Big White Wall.

The Combat Stress Helpline (tel: 0800 138 1619, text: 07537 404 719 or email: [combatstress@rethink.org](mailto:combatstress@rethink.org)) is open 24 hours a day and is for the whole military community (those currently serving in the UK Armed Forces, those who have served, as well as family members or carers). The Helpline is delivered for Combat Stress by Rethink Mental Illness, one of the UK's leading mental health membership charities. To find out more please visit the [Combat Stress website](#).

Big White Wall ([www.bigwhitewall.com](http://www.bigwhitewall.com)) is an award-winning online mental wellbeing service. It is a discreet and confidential web forum, which is monitored by trained "Wall Guides", who are supervised and trained by clinicians from Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. On Big White Wall, veterans, their families and carers can get help and support anonymously, allowing for early intervention in potentially serious psychological conditions.

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## Unsung Heroes: Developing a better understanding of the emotional needs of Service families



Armed Forces families must be better supported to deal with the emotional and psychological impact of deployment, according to a report released by Centre for Mental Health. The report, *Unsung Heroes*, also calls for urgent research into alcohol misuse, domestic violence and the impact of mental health problems on the partners and children of Service personnel and veterans.

The report, which is supported by The Royal British Legion and the veteran's mental health charity Combat Stress, argues that while progress is being made to address the psychological needs of Service personnel and veterans themselves, the practical and emotional impact on their partners and children must also be taken into consideration.

*Unsung Heroes* examines the services already in place for Armed Forces, reserves and veteran families and identifies areas where more evidence is required, about both the need for services to support families and the effectiveness of these services.

[Please use this link to view and download a copy of the report.](#)

To request hard copies of the report, please contact [MSharp@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:MSharp@britishlegion.org.uk)

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## Unique consultation event with injured veterans, their families and healthcare professionals

The consultation focused on the current and future healthcare needs of injured veterans and their families. The event aimed to help inform future healthcare strategy for Government, Service charities and other stakeholders by enabling service user led engagement and coproduction of future service strategy with healthcare professionals.

The event brought together 100 individuals, including 40 seriously injured veterans with their partners or carers as well as healthcare professionals from the Department of Health, the National Health Service (NHS), Mental Health, Public Health, local authorities, Service charities, and the Ministry of Defence. The event was organised in partnership with Combat Stress, the Department of Health, BLESMA, Blind Veterans UK and the SPVA.

The consultation specifically focused on injured veterans' current and future healthcare needs and their experiences within the NHS or social care services. It provided an opportunity for dialogue with clinical professionals currently working within the NHS or local authorities with commissioning responsibilities, or who provide health and long-term care services for veterans.

Veteran participants and their family members were involved in preparatory interviews that shaped the agenda and workshops for the event. The invited veterans had a range of serious injuries from Service in conflicts such as the Falklands, First Gulf War, Bosnia, Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan. The veterans also represented a diverse age group with representation from all branches of the Armed Forces. This mixture allowed broad representation of experiences of injury.

The preliminary outcomes for the event have highlighted areas of success and areas of misunderstanding, and have pinpointed areas where more work needs to be done both now and in the future to provide for veterans' healthcare needs. The output will be collated and key themes and recommendations will be taken up, where appropriate, by all core partners into meaningful actions and outcomes. This will ultimately generate workplans for Government, Service charities and other participating organisations to improve healthcare provision and service design in the future.

An independent report of the consultation will be available late Summer 2012 – please check [www.armedforceshealthpartnership.org.uk](http://www.armedforceshealthpartnership.org.uk) for updates.

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