



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Review of Veterans NHS Wales (formerly the all-Wales Veterans Health and Wellbeing Service)**

DATE **07 November 2014**

BY **Mark Drakeford AM, Minister for Health and Social Services**

The Welsh Government is committed to supporting veterans and the wider armed forces community. The range of support and services available to veterans and serving personnel is detailed in our Package of Support for the Armed Forces Community in Wales (June 2013).

Central to this commitment is ensuring veterans, in particular, have access to appropriate and timely healthcare. In recent years we have worked with partners in the NHS, the third sector, Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the military to develop initiatives and policies to ensure veterans' and serving personnell's physical and emotional needs are met.

We can be proud of our work, particularly in relation to mental health services for veterans in Wales. Veterans NHS Wales, which was previously called the all-Wales Veterans Health and Wellbeing Service, provides dedicated veterans' therapists in each health board and is the only national service for veterans of its kind in the UK.

It was developed from a successful pilot in south Wales, which was jointly funded by the Welsh Government and MoD. The Welsh Government expanded the service to cover all of Wales in 2010, investing £485,000 to support its development.

In the years since, more than 1,100 veterans have been referred to the service, with 395 between April 2013 and March 2014 alone. This year, the Welsh Government invested a further £100,000 in Veterans NHS Wales, which will ensure veterans receive faster access to assessment and treatment services. Early indications show this funding is already having a positive impact, with waiting times reducing across health boards. The results are particularly striking in Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, where the waiting time to access treatment has reduced from 7 months to 6 weeks, over the period June to September 2014.

Earlier this year I commissioned Public Health Wales to carry out a review of Veterans NHS Wales, which would include an analysis of current and future demand for services, a consultation with providers and users about how the service operates, and to consider how it could be improved.

The report is available on Public Health Wales' website.

[http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/HealthTopicLeads.nsf/85c50756737f79ac80256f2700534ea3/f93e1024a5edd6fd80257d880034fd88/\\$FILE/Veterans%20NHS%20Wales%20Review%202014%20Final%20Version%20051114.docx](http://www2.nphs.wales.nhs.uk:8080/HealthTopicLeads.nsf/85c50756737f79ac80256f2700534ea3/f93e1024a5edd6fd80257d880034fd88/$FILE/Veterans%20NHS%20Wales%20Review%202014%20Final%20Version%20051114.docx)

The review reports that veterans who have used Veterans NHS Wales are very satisfied with the service and treatment they have received; there was unanimous satisfaction with the therapists and despite some concerns about waiting times to first appointment – the vast majority of veterans who were asked said they were happy with their waiting time.

Public Health Wales has highlighted the low number of women and early service users who have accessed Veterans NHS Wales to date and identified the Welsh prisoner veteran population as an area of potential unmet need. The review makes a series of recommendations to improve Veterans NHS Wales in the immediate and longer term to address this unmet need. Public Health Wales is continuing to work with Veterans NHS Wales to take these forward.

Health boards and Veterans NHS Wales must now work together to implement the recommendations of this report to ensure veterans in Wales continue to have access to the UK's only national, dedicated service to support their emotional and mental health needs.