

Bury Health and Wellbeing Board

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| Report Title | | | |
| Meeting Date | | | |
| Contact Officer | | | |
| HWB Lead | | | |
| 1. Executive Summary | | | |
| Is this report for? | Information <input type="checkbox"/> | Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> | Decision <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Purpose of report: | | | |
| Key Actions: | | | |
| What requirement is there for internal or external communication? | | | |
| Assurance and tracking process: | <i>Has the report been considered at any other committee meeting of the Council/meeting of the CCG Board/other stakeholders?</i> | | |

2. Introduction / Background

The Royal British Legion is at the heart of a national network that supports our Armed Forces community through thick and thin – ensuring that their unique contribution is never forgotten.

We support people all year around, not just during Remembrance, undertaking a breadth of welfare work for serving and ex-Service communities throughout the year. We are proud to provide this support across the United Kingdom, with services in Scotland delivered through our sister charity Poppyscotland, and to people who have served the UK Armed Forces and now live overseas through a dedicated team and our network of branches around the world.

The Legion provides a range of welfare services, a number of which address social isolation and loneliness within the Armed Forces community. This includes the work of our welfare staff in their everyday contact with the people we support, our Branch Community Support scheme which is currently focused on support through telephone buddying, and the activities provided through our Care Homes. The Legion supports beneficiaries experiencing loneliness and social isolation through our casework on a daily basis.

We are the country's largest Armed Forces charity, with 217,000 members, 120,000 volunteers and a network of partners and charities who help us deliver support wherever and whenever it's needed.

In 2018, we published our research into loneliness and social isolation in the Armed Forces community which found that one-in-six members of the ex-Service community reported experiencing some relationship or isolation difficulty, and that one-in-four respondents to our survey said they felt lonely or isolated 'always' or 'often.' Findings from this research highlighted that some elements of a Forces lifestyle may increase vulnerability to loneliness and social isolation, such as a culture of self-reliance, increased volume of transitions and long periods of separation from family.

In Bury Ministry of Defence (MoD) data shows there are:

- 10 MOD civilian personnel based in the area.
- 88 service children eligible for the Service Pupil Premium
- 409 veterans claiming a military pension
- 26 war widows, whose wife, husband or civil partner died as a result of their Service
- 222 people in receipt of military compensation

Meanwhile, MoD Annual Population Survey data from 2017 shows that a total of 80,000 veterans live in the Greater Manchester area as a whole.

3. key issues for the Board to Consider

The Legion is calling on all local authorities in England to improve the measures they take to support members of the Armed Forces community who are feeling lonely or socially isolated. Specifically, by including loneliness and social isolation and its effects on the Armed Forces community in Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies (JHWS).

Loneliness and social isolation are recognised as a national health priority, and Legion research has shown that the Armed Forces community can be more vulnerable to its effects.

The wider impact of Covid-19 and the lockdown specifically are still being analysed but early indications from the Mental Health Foundation indicate a significant increase in feelings of loneliness in the UK. In March 2020, 10% of UK adults said they felt lonely, increasing to 24% by the beginning of April 2020, and calls to the Legion's own Telephone Buddies service increased by 455% over this summer. It is therefore incredibly timely to consider additional measures to alleviate loneliness and social isolation and acknowledge it as a public health priority.

Attachments:

1. *Loneliness and Social Isolation in the Armed Forces Community – Briefing for local authorities.*
2. *Loneliness and Social Isolation in the Armed Forces Community (2018 Royal British Legion research in full).*

4. Recommendations for action

1. Include loneliness and social isolation and its effects on the Armed Forces community in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS).
2. Help members of the Armed Forces community find appropriate support when it is needed by ensure that all residents approaching health services are asked a question that will identify:
 - Former members of HM Armed Forces, Regular and Reserve
 - Spouse or Partner of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces
 - Widow(er)s of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces
 - Dependent children of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces
 - Recently divorced or separated spouses or partners of serving or former members of HM Armed Forces.

5. Financial and legal implications.

If necessary please seek advice from the Council Monitoring Officer Jayne Hammond (J.M.Hammond@bury.gov.uk) or Section 151 Officer Mike Woodhead (Mike.Woodhead@nhs.net).

6. Equality/Diversity Implications. Please attach the completed Equality and Analysis Form if required.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Contact Officer:

Telephone number:

E-mail address:

Date: