

Armed Forces Community Welfare Project

On 4 November 2009 the MOD and Kent County Council joined forces to launch the Armed Forces Community Welfare Pathway. This project is designed to enable serving personnel, their families and veterans to receive the help, advice and support they need from the people best placed to provide it.

Enquirers now have a single point of contact and will be directed to the right people to help and advise them. The new national telephone number is: 08000 22 33 66.

Kent County Council is the first local authority to pilot the Welfare Pathway. Members of the Armed Forces Community will be able to access advice on their entitlements by visiting the Council's Gateway centres across Kent. Gateway is a partnership between county and district councils that also includes the National Health Service, voluntary and community organisations. The Armed Forces Community will be able to get advice on everything from priority healthcare, housing and education as well as link in with Service and veterans' charities and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Veterans Minister Kevan Jones said:

“This is a significant step forward in the way that our Service men and women, their families and veterans can access help and advice about the things that are important to them. By making one phone call, or visiting one of the local Kent Gateways, the Armed Forces Community can access advice on what they are entitled to. The support that our people deserve is out there and we want to make sure that they can take full advantage of that. I would like to thank Kent County Council for all their support.”

John Davies, Chairman of Kent County Council said:

“Kent County Council is delighted to be the first local authority in the UK to pilot this joint initiative between local and central government. Kent has strong links to the Armed Forces; Service men and women and veterans are an important part of the wider Kent community. Here, at the Tunbridge Wells Gateway, we have a dedicated team of people ready to help. If there is a problem with what people are entitled to, there is now a simple route to raise issues and get things resolved. This council is immensely proud to be at the forefront of delivering local services to the Armed Forces Community.”

Air Cdre Geoff Simpson CBE AFC from the Royal British Legion said:

“As our role is to deliver Legion benevolence to the Service and ex-Service community, we very much welcome a coordinated approach for directing people towards, and helping them get access to, welfare services which are currently provided by a very wide range of charities and government departments.”

A spokesperson for the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen’s Families Association – Forces Help said:

“SSAFA Forces Help is delighted to be involved, with Government, in the development of the Welfare Pathway concept and welcomes this initiative, which aims to provide a seamless welfare service for serving and ex-serving personnel and their families through the use of a single national point of contact.”

Several other Local Authorities will establish similar pilot programmes across the UK. The intention is to roll out a best practice model to cover all areas.

Some of the benefits that Serving personnel, families and veterans can receive are:

- Advice about access to NHS services,
- Information about help for veterans with mental health problems,
- Help and advice about education, skills and careers,
- Affordable and social housing,
- Help with transport including Blue Badges and concessionary transport,
- Advice about, and access to, affordable childcare.