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Dear Colleague

## ACCESS TO NHS CARE FOR ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL

### Summary

1. This guidance is further to the policy document “Scotland’s Veterans and Forces Communities: meeting our commitment – The Scottish Government’s commitment to the Armed Forces and their Families in Scotland and to our Veteran’s Community (July 2008)”<sup>1</sup> **Service Personnel and their families who move between areas will retain their relative point on the pathway of care within the national waiting time target(s). When patients move within the UK, previous waiting time will be taken into account with the expectation that treatment will be within national waiting time standards.**

### Background

2. Our commitment on waiting times to service personnel and their families takes forward and builds on the principles set out in “The Nation’s Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veteran’s” (Cm7424).<sup>2</sup> **The essential starting point is that those who serve must not be disadvantaged by virtue of what they do. Service personnel and their dependants must receive continuity of public services wherever they are based and whenever they are obliged to move.**

3. The definition of ‘armed forces personnel’ is any serving member of the regular armed forces or reservists who have been called up.

4. The definition of family of armed forces personnel is the spouse or civil partner and dependants of the serving member, who reside in the family home.

5. Scotland’s existing elective waiting time standards are covered by this CEL, including: 18 weeks (reducing to 15 weeks) for outpatients and inpatients/daycases, 9 weeks for 8 key diagnostic tests (reducing to 6 weeks), 16 weeks pathway waiting time for cardiac conditions and 18 week pathway waiting time for cataract surgery.

CEL 3 (2009)

22 January 2009

### Addresses

For action  
Chief Executives,  
NHS Boards

For information  
Chief Operating Officers,  
NHS Boards  
Chief Executives,  
Special Health Boards

### Enquires to:

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6. Urgent patients should always be seen according to clinical priority. The cancer target of 62 days from urgent referral to treatment already covers patients crossing NHS Board boundaries.

7. Future guidance on NHSScotland's 18 weeks referral to treatment standard, to be in place by 2011, will include instructions on implementing our waiting times commitment to armed forces personnel and their families.

## Action

8. NHS Boards are asked to ensure that general practitioners, clinical and managerial service leads in secondary care, medical records and all other relevant staff are made aware of this guidance.

9. The armed forces will advise personnel and their families of their rights regarding waiting times when they move area of residence.

10. NHS Boards must ensure that armed forces personnel and their immediate families who move between areas will retain their relative point on the pathway of care within Scotland's national waiting time targets. In addition Boards should ensure that those who move into Scotland from elsewhere in the UK have their previous waiting time taken into account.

11. Each NHS Board is asked to designate a senior member of staff to have overall responsibility in ensuring the implementation of this guideline and address any difficulties that may arise. For convenience, Boards may wish to designate the same individual who has responsibility for priority treatment for veterans ([CEL 8 \(2008\)](#)) refers. **The name of this individual should be provided to the Access Support Team by 31 March 2009.**

12. These arrangements should take immediate effect.

## Monitoring and Review

13. The Access Support Team will review with NHS Boards any issues arising from the implementation of this guidance at annual reviews of waiting times. The next round of reviews will be held during January/February 2009.

14. NHS Boards should record the number of patients against whom this guidance has been applied for discussion at annual reviews.

15. In the interim NHS Boards may raise any issues with the Access Support Team.

16. The Access Support Team will prepare a report on the application of this guidance to cover the calendar year 2009.

Yours sincerely



**MIKE LYON**  
Deputy Director

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<sup>1</sup> [www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Social-Inclusion/veterans](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Social-Inclusion/veterans)

<sup>2</sup> [The Nation's Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans](#) (2008) London: The Stationery Office Ltd.