

Dear Colleague

## **MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR VETERANS IN SCOTLAND**

This letter is to inform NHS Boards of new arrangements that have been in place since 1 April 2009 with Combat Stress, the Ex-services Mental Welfare Society, to provide specialist mental health services at Hollybush House in Ayr for Veterans resident in Scotland.

The arrangements replace the former war pensions based system to ensure all Veterans assessed as requiring these services have access irrespective of their war pension status.

### **Background**

£1.2m per year has been committed to fund a commissioned service through arrangements with NHS Ayrshire and Arran as host NHS Board. The arrangements will be kept under review and future funding will be subject to the next Scottish Government Spending Review outcome.

This will support the costs of Veterans who attend Hollybush House, over 4700 bed days per year, which is about 60% of the bed capacity at Hollybush House.

The Service is for Veterans of all ranks of the Navy, Army, Air Force and other allied services resident in Scotland who suffer from mental health problems, including psychological trauma, attributable to or associated with their military service.

### **Community Outreach Services**

£200k per year to 2011 is also available to Combat Stress as a contribution towards 2 Regional Multi-disciplinary Teams providing community outreach services to Veterans and their families.

An important aspect of their role is to seek to enhance the further understanding of NHS professionals who encounter Veterans in their communities and to build and sustain joint working across the ex-services and healthcare communities. See further information below.

**CEL 45 (2009)**

**13 November 2009**

---

### **Addresses**

For action  
Chief Executives, NHS Boards

For information  
Chief Executives, Local Authorities  
Medical and Nursing Directors,  
NHS Boards  
Appropriate professional and  
voluntary bodies

---

### **Enquiries to:**

Scottish Government  
Geoff Huggins, Head of Mental  
Health Division  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh EH1 3DG  
Tel: 0131 244 3749  
[Geoff.Huggins@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Geoff.Huggins@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

NHS Ayrshire & Arran  
Jim Crichton, Director of Mental  
Health Services  
NHS Ayrshire & Arran Crosshouse  
Hospital  
21 Lister Street, Kilmarnock  
KA1 1TR  
Tel: 01563 826357  
[jim.crichton@aapct.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:jim.crichton@aapct.scot.nhs.uk)

Combat Stress  
Gary Walker  
Head of Clinical Services  
Hollybush House  
Hollybush  
Ayrshire KA6 7EA  
Tel: 01292 561 312  
[cmhb@combatstress.org.uk](mailto:cmhb@combatstress.org.uk)

## Action

NHS Boards are asked to note the new arrangements for accessing specialist mental health services at Combat Stress and the range of services provided; the operation of Combat Stress Regional Community Outreach Teams; and bring this letter to the attention of all those with an interest in their area.

Yours sincerely



**GRAEME DICKSON**  
Director of Primary and Community Care

## **Combat Stress**

Combat Stress holds a unique position as the leading specialist charity in its field and provides specialist clinical, rehabilitation, social and welfare support to ex-Service men and women suffering from service related disability, and to their families. Hollybush House in Ayr offers a 25 bedroom home with occupational therapy unit. Four 2 bed units are also available, to allow patients to be accompanied by a carer.

Combat Stress fully acknowledges and supports the NHS philosophy of care in that it will fully complement and enhance the mental health and well being of Veterans suffering from mental ill-health.

### **Aim**

The service to be provided by Combat Stress is expected to provide Veterans with mental ill health prompt access to specialist assessment, treatment, education, advice and support.

All service users accepted by the service will have their needs fully assessed and will be provided with a holistic care plan drawn up by the Multi Disciplinary Team which will identify their individual milestones and goals. Group and Individual Therapies will be applied as appropriate with Rehabilitation Skills being developed.

The service will also include providing education and specialist advice and support to the carers of Veterans with mental ill health.

### **Range of Services To Be Provided**

- Each Veteran will be assigned a welfare officer to act as a conduit to assessment, admission and follow-up and to provide advice and signposting where required;
- On admission, each Veteran will undergo a full and comprehensive assessment of need and be assigned a key worker who is clinically responsible at all times for the management and delivery of care to that Veteran;
- All Veterans admitted for treatment will, following assessment, be provided with a whole person care plan which is recovery focussed;
- All Veterans will be cared for in line with current best practice;
- All Veterans will have their medication requirements reviewed by a Psychiatrist;
- Psychological Treatment Programmes will be delivered by skilled and competent therapists, which will include Group and Individual Therapies and Psychoeducation; and
- Where for clinical or welfare reasons it is deemed necessary to admit a Veteran to another Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society centre other than Hollybush House this will be managed on a case by case basis in consultation with the commissioning authority.

### **Category of Service To Be Provided**

The service will be provided by a Multi Disciplinary Team (MDT) through the delivery of evidenced based treatments. The number, frequency and type of all therapy interventions delivered will be recorded for audit purposes, and a comprehensive in-patient discharge report will be provided.

## **Group Therapies**

- Post Traumatic Stress Education;
- Anxiety Management;
- Anger Management;
- Coping Skills Training;
- Cognitive restructuring groups;
- Sleep Hygiene;
- Activities involving Creative Therapies and Relaxation;
- Education about medication; and
- Alcohol and Drugs education.

## **Individual Therapies**

- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy including Trauma Focussed Cognitive Behaviour Therapy;
- Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR);
- Solution Focused Therapy;
- Counselling; and
- Problem Solving.

## **Rehabilitation**

- Occupational Therapy including Gardening Leave Project;
- Social Skills Development;
- Problem Solving; and
- Relapse Prevention.

## **The Service Will Achieve Its Aims Through:**

- The deployment of sound governance arrangements;
- Working to standardised policies and jointly developed (NHS/Combat Stress) care pathways and models of care;
- Senior Medical Staff who have military expertise, many of whom have advised the MOD nationally (e.g. HASCAS), particularly in the field of Adult Psychiatry and Substance Misuse;
- Senior Nursing Staff who have expertise in working directly both with the MOD and NHS through Veterans work and some of whom have extensive military operational experience themselves; and
- Nursing and medical staff trained in CBT and EMDR psychological therapy which is evidence based to treat Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

## Specific Service Objectives

- All service users accepted by the service will have their needs fully assessed and will be provided with a 'whole person care plan' drawn up by the Multi Disciplinary Team which will identify their individual milestones and goals;
- All service users will have a Regional Welfare Officer allocated to them;
- On admission each service user will be allocated a key-worker;
- Waiting time from referral to first contact will be a maximum of 4 weeks;
- All service users will have their needs matched to an appropriate treatment programme;
- All service users will have their progress monitored over each 24 hr period and where required will have their package of care adjusted accordingly; and
- All service users will be treated with dignity and respect, and will be helped to regain and maintain improved levels of independence.

## Expected levels of service provision

4,700 bed days, which is 60% of bed capacity at Hollybush House.

## Service User Involvement

Service users will be consulted through regular group meetings, individually through their key worker, and through patient satisfaction surveys whilst receiving care and treatment at the Treatment Centre.

Regional Welfare Officer will ensure service users are consulted in person pre and post admission/discharge and through newsletters and information bulletins.

## Referrals

Referral may be via:

- NHS/Social Services/Service Discharge Boards;
- Service Charities, Welfare Organisations, Service Personnel and Veterans Agency, War Pensioners Welfare Service; and
- Self referral.

## Needs not normally accommodated by the service

Combat Stress makes a number of exclusions, mainly to those whom they are unable to offer meaningful help, or who are considered a high risk category, for example:

- Those with a primary problem or diagnosis of:
  - Learning Disability;
  - Personality Disorder;
  - Organic Illness (Dementias);
  - Severe Alcohol/Drug Addiction;

- Those sectioned under the Mental Health Act;
- Severe physical illness requiring special care;
- People currently undergoing detoxification from alcohol/drugs;
- Admissions direct from acute units;
- Category 1 Sex Offenders;
- Those with a recent history of violent offending; and
- Anyone with a conviction for arson.

Other exclusions may be made following an initial risk assessment eg it may not be safe for Veterans who exhibit extreme behaviours to be admitted to Combat Stress treatment centres.

Clarification on eligibility for treatment should be directed to the Head of Clinical Services at Hollybush House in the first instance – contact details above.

### **Travel Arrangements**

The Scottish Government will be considering with NHS Ayrshire and Arran and Combat Stress what further financial help can be provided to assist in meeting the travel costs of Veterans who need to travel to Hollybush House in Ayr to access these services.

### **Community Outreach Services**

Combat Stress community outreach services will help respond to the mental health needs of Veterans, their families and carers to improve access to home based care, screening and assessment, to enable a more integrated approach to the delivery of outpatient and inpatient care.

Funding of £200k per year to 2011 is available to Combat Stress and it is intended that this service will complement the specialist services provided at Hollybush House to help reach a wider spectrum of Veterans living in the community to tackle poor mental health and help alleviate the associated problems which can be experienced by carers and families.

The service will consist of multi-disciplinary teams that will be able to carry out initial community assessment, group/individual therapy, treatment and follow up, education and welfare advice for Veterans and support to carers and families. The teams will also seek to enhance the understanding of health and mental health professionals who encounter veterans in their own communities and to build and sustain joint working across the ex-services and healthcare communities.

There will be 2 Regional Teams to cover the East and West of Scotland. Each Regional Team will comprise 3 full time members of staff: a welfare officer; a community health nurse; and a community mental health worker. Support staff will also be available at Hollybush House.