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Military health initiative launch at Carlisle Castle.

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Military health initiative launch at Carlisle Castle.

Posted on Wednesday 5th September 2012

Cumbrian health and support services will come together with military leaders and representatives of the armed forces at Carlisle Castle this month to look at how they can work together to deliver support to military personnel, veterans and their families.

Lieutenant Colonel Johnny Lighten MBE of the 4th Battalion (4 LANCS) and Mike France, Chair of The North West Region Service Advisory and Pensions Committee covering Cumbria, formerly known as the War Pensions Committee are hosting the first networking event on Friday 14 September 2012 at the Burma Block in the Castle.

Cumbria has one of the highest populations of military veterans, which was highlighted in the Director of Public Health's annual report this year.

Cumbria's Director of Public Health, Prof John Ashton will be attending the networking session. He said in his report: "In England there is currently estimated to be around 3,771,534 retired Armed Services personnel. In Cumbria, the figure is estimated to be around 43,121. This is the highest in the North West Region. Around 15,000 of these are under the age of 65.

"NHS Cumbria recognises the debt we owe to our ex-servicemen and women. We are currently conducting a Health Needs Assessment of ex-military personnel living in Cumbria. Our Health Needs Assessment will be targeting those veterans who have served in Northern Ireland, the Falkland Islands, the Gulf Wars, the Iraq Conflict and Afghanistan.

"Our findings should enable us to recommend actions which will allow any unmet health needs of veterans to be addressed.

"The full extent of the impact of service in the field in today's unusual wars is only now becoming apparent."

Prof Ashton added: "We owe it to these men and women, to their families and also to their communities who must share their burden that re-entry to everyday life is as normal as possible."

The Armed Forces Networking Event is the first of a series planned to bring together civilian and military services to provide a joint approach to developing a veterans and military health network in the North West.

Guests include regulars, reserves, veterans, from the Army and the cadet force, the NHS, third sector, local and county authorities.

Lieutenant Colonel Johnny Lighten said: "The main aim is to present the first hook on which to establish a network of interested voluntary and statutory sector agencies, from health, military and social care."

The event will take place in the mess from 12.30pm and will open with a briefing at 1pm followed by a traditional Cumbrian lunch.

NHS Cumbria's Associate Director for Commissioning Development Dr Elaine Church said: "We are working hard in Cumbria to ensure that Cumbrian agencies develop a joint approach to meeting veterans' needs locally. We need to ensure ex military personnel suffer no disadvantage from their military service.

"The purpose of the event at Carlisle Castle is to broaden the network, to make new contacts and deepen our mutual understanding.

"Our aim is to ensure continuity of care with regional colleagues for those medically discharged from the Armed Forces.

"We will be looking at ways to ensure veterans and service personnel are identified and registered in GP

practices to enable access to new bespoke regional services for mental health and make contact with the Disability Service Centre to ensure appropriate access for veteran amputees.”

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