



Wirral JSNA: Survey of AMMO veterans

**Summary Report
May 2015**

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Programme Lead**

Wirral Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
Survey of members of AMMO (Ex-service personnel and military veterans)
Summary Report May 2015

Introduction

This short report outlines the survey results provided by the Wirral based *All Military Members Organisation or AMMO* in April 2015. This was an opportunity for ex-service personnel and veterans, living or accessing support in Wirral, to provide their insight into issues they see as affecting their lives. It is hoped this will increase awareness for people, groups and organisations across the borough. There were 12 responses to the survey through the individual survey submissions during April 2015.

Background

The process of identifying current and future health and wellbeing needs is an ongoing process that should wherever possible look to include detail, knowledge and experience from a wide group of contributors. JSNAs should be making efforts to enhance that content through the involvement of local people.

Following the initial JSNA Call for Information 2014 process (*Wirral JSNA Executive Group, working with Healthwatch Wirral and Community Action Wirral*) that looked to ask individuals, groups and local organisations to submit information they were aware of that would add to our local understanding. The opportunity remained for this process to be repeated on a group by group, and as and when, basis to supplement JSNA content.

Approach

This simple information gathering process, asking three questions, has been used in a limited way previously, with AMMO being the first organisation to undertake a similar approach, asking its members to complete survey forms, independently, during April 2015.

The questionnaires were reviewed by the JSNA Lead in order to collate content, ascertain key themes and provide summarised highlights. There is a degree of inherent bias in this approach but the results are intended to guide and not to act as an absolute.

However the qualitative content gathered by such an approach is always valuable and can be collated at any time to inform both the local JSNA and the wider Wirral audience of issues affecting individuals and groups, so adding to the already available knowledge and information for service providers and commissioners.

Results

12 responses were received based upon the bespoke survey form, submitted by AMMO members (Appendix One) covering three key questions:

- In your opinion, what health & wellbeing issues matter to you the most now? Why?
- In your opinion, what health & wellbeing issues will matter to you the most in the future? Why?
- What could make a difference? Suggest key changes that might improve outcomes for Ex-armed services/Military Veterans in relation to their own and family's health & wellbeing

Key Issues

Below are the summarised results of issues most highlighted across questions one and two with more detail in appendix two:

- **Concerns for current physical and/or mental health & wellbeing (now/future)** which covered aspects of being able to remain fit, active and able to cope with every day or even enhanced levels of stress
- There appeared an overwhelming theme coming from the responses that people felt **fearful of losing control of personal, home and any work life** and this might be related to their previous military service and the control and order that was evident there, then possibly not so available to them in civilian life.
- A number of surveys identified concerns for **returning to dependency on drugs/alcohol** and the inferred issues that could happen again. This in some ways could relate to a loss of control in those circumstances
- Those completing the survey pointed to **Health Services being inaccessible and/or not responding to Veteran needs**
- Two responses, **more funded/better access to community support activities** and an **ability to access support services that provide information, advice and guidance (IAG) and social contact** possibly highlight the ongoing need for veteran support opportunities

Please see Appendix 2 for full list

In terms of the reasons people why these aspects were reported as current and potential key issues it is thought that they are people's perceptions and experiences of issues and changes happening to them. This might be an opportunity for the AMMO and partners to consider some more specific work to realise more local information to inform local provision and practice.

Additional highlights

A number of individual interesting and insightful comments were recorded that might be further considered or explored by AMMO, its members, partners and the range of interested organisations. These include (in no particular order of expressed importance):

- Greater access to services, both in the evening, and for families
- Uncertain pathways to the range of services
- Education at community and individual level around issues for vets (Perceived lack of local knowledge of veteran issues)
- Keeping access to a learning environment and being able to have social interaction
- Armed services need to do more at discharge to prepare ex-service men/women for return to civilian life

Some quotes from the respondents:

- ... 'Thinking about getting employed or simply having a purpose'...*
- ... 'concerned about how I feel and my personal relationships'...*
- ... 'just staying clear of drugs and alcohol'...*
- ... 'need a Mental Health Team that offers more than CBT... must be other options! ...*
... 'just to have a job ... and to live my life stress free'...
- ... 'the number and range of medication is too much to be healthy' ...*
- ... 'things in my life become stressful when I have to deal with change'...*
- ... 'looking for best outcome from my recovery and for my family'...*

Suggestions – summary

Finally, respondents submitted ideas, suggestions and possible solutions to the issues being reported in the survey (Appendix 3 and Appendix 4). Generally these covered:

- **Access, range and number of mental health support services to be improved** - e.g. PTSD, for Psychological therapies, for group support and all with minimal waiting times
- **Extend range and amount of support before discharge from armed services** - to return to civilian life, to cope, to know where and who to go to before they leave
- **Guidance on diet, exercise and general health & wellbeing issues**
- **Alcohol & Drug dependency service support** including more dependency counselling
- **Increased support and awareness of issues affecting Veteran families**
- **Improve awareness and access to all Veteran support organisations**
- **Awareness raising sessions for staff across organisations** in relation to issues affecting veterans and ex-service personnel including PTSD

See Appendix 3 and Appendix 4 for complete lists

Discussion

- The results of the AMMO survey response for the local JSNA, albeit from 12 people, do provide added insight into the situations being faced by Wirral ex-service and military veteran residents and the subsequent range of outcomes they might experience.
- There are opportunities to consider the information further and also to gather, and then report, more insight where possible
- These will be included in the JSNA content and shared with commissioners, providers and wider audience wherever possible.

John Highton, Wirral JSNA Lead, May 2015

Acknowledgment – Tina Buckley, AMMO colleagues and the members for their support for the JSNA and completing this survey

Appendix 1 – Blank Survey

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) Questionnaire.

Please state the obvious, don't assume prior knowledge and do express your own views and experience.

Question 1

In your opinion, what health & wellbeing issues matter to you the most **now**? Why?

Question 2

In your opinion, what health & wellbeing issues will matter to you the most **in the future**? Why?

Question 3 - Informing future service planning

What could make a difference?

Suggest key changes that might improve outcomes for Ex-armed services/Military Veterans in relation to their own and family's health & wellbeing

List as many as you want to record but please consider the list as:

a) Practical changes and ideas that could feasibly be achieved given local financial constraints and b) Aspirational or in 'an ideal world' scenario.

Suggestions could also cover options for preventative measures as well as treatment options

Write as much as you like! (Please don't be constrained by the lines)

Please return to **xxxx** at AMMO OR direct to johnhighton@wirral.gov.uk

Appendix 2 – Summarised response numbers to Questions One & Two

Theme	Q1	Q2	Total
Concerns for current physical and/or mental health & wellbeing (now/future)	9	6	15
Fear of losing control of personal, home and any work life	4	4	8
Fear of returning to dependency on drugs/alcohol	2	1	3
Health Services inaccessible or not responding to Veteran needs	1	2	3
More funded/better access to community support activities	0	3	3
Concern for eating healthily and maintaining healthy weight	2	0	2
Ability to access support services that provide information, advice and guidance (IAG) and social contact	0	2	2
Fear of unemployment	1	1	2
Access and use of services for drug and alcohol to be better joined-up	1	1	2
Future issues - possibly out of their control such as access to NHS services	1	1	2
Negative impact on relationships	1	0	1
Better Housing	1	0	1
Fear of financial insecurity	1	0	1
Future issues - possibly out of their control such as the value of their pension	0	1	1
Lack of local knowledge of veteran issues	0	1	1

Note: Each survey form carried multiple answers per submission so numbers of comments will be greater than number of returned questionnaires

Appendix 3 – Summarised responses to Question Three

Question 3 - Suggestion summary	Number noted
Access, range and number of mental health support services to be improved - e.g. PTSD, for Psychological therapies, for group support and all with minimal waiting times	6
Extend range and amount of support before discharge from armed services - to return to civilian life, to cope, to know where and who to go to before they leave	5
Guidance on diet, exercise and general health & wellbeing issues	3
Alcohol & Drug dependency service support including more dependency counselling	3
Increased support and awareness of issues affecting Veteran families	3
Improve awareness and access to all Veteran support organisations	2
Awareness raising sessions for staff across organisations in relation to issues affecting veterans and ex-service personnel including PTSD	2
Development of both welfare advice and employment advice support	2
Better accommodation	1
Out of hours support to be improved	1
Potential to develop a collaborative, wraparound support service for all veterans including housing, benefits, employment and personal support	1

Note: Each survey form carried multiple answers per submission so numbers of comments will be greater than number of returned questionnaires

Appendix 4 – Long list of responses to what could make a difference*

Question 3 – Suggestions* (long list – multiple submissions per respondent)

- More help for psychological problems
- More help form 'in-service' welfare at discharge
- Guidance on diet & exercise
- Guidance on employment
- Training for individuals and families
- Access to dependency counselling
- Veterans organisations keeping in touch/signposting
- More MH and PA
- More support for PTSD
- More counselling and support groups
- Wirral could provide an holistic wrap-around housing based service from housing needs to PTSD and health support (elements there now)
PTSD still killing soldiers long after left service
- More promotion to service personnel of the support agencies and groups who are there to help
- More drugs, alcohol and MH support from and into services
- Wider staff training to ID and deal with signs/symptoms of PTSD
- more help and support for/through/by veteran groups
Activities and opportunities for Veteran Families
- Help to get back into 'civilian' life by services and by Armed Services at discharge
- Help with PTSD - those who have been there are best at helping
- Support with everyday tasks
- Counselling and avoiding situations that cause flashbacks
- Support with Welfare issues
- Support with accommodation
- Support improving issues related to drugs, alcohol dependency and better MH & PA
- Greater access to services in the evening and for families
- Much more help from Armed services and others when leaving the service
- More emphasis on the skills and coping mechanisms needed for transition
reduce waiting times for therapies
- More and greater understanding of the impact on the families
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Note * in no particular order - as received