

What Councillors and MPs can do for Veterans

This is a cover-all document with a few suggestions of what can be done to aid war veterans living in your communities. If you have questions about any aspect of this document, please call me direct on 07971 99 77 10.

I ask for your support towards realising some, if not all, of these objectives in your area.

Some of the suggestions may already be in place but I ask you to communicate directly with the heads of department about them. Eg Housing Benefit legislation allows Local Authorities to completely disregard all of a Veteran's War Disablement Pension (and other similar payments) for the purposes of a Housing Benefit entitlement calculation. Not all Local Authorities are aware of this piece of legislation.

1. Please check that War Disablement Pensions and Armed Forces and Reserve Forces Compensation Schemes are completely disregarded for the purposes of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit calculations or for the new benefit systems that will replace them.
2. Please ensure that Veterans with severe mental health problems are 'Unbanded' for the purposes of Council Tax and its replacement scheme.
3. Please arrange a travel card scheme for all disabled Veterans. We currently discriminate against people with mental health problems. A travel card for a disability should encompass the needs of people with mental health difficulties as well as physical disabilities. People with mental health problems can find it extremely difficult to leave their homes. A travel card could go some way towards encouraging people to venture out with or without support and promote a degree of social inclusion. Many Veterans do not have appropriate fiscal support in the way of benefits that they are entitled to.

London operates a travel card for all disabled Veterans on production of their letter of entitlement to a War Disablement Pension., irrespective of where the Veterans live. The pass is valid for buses, trains and the underground on the majority of routes in the city. I urge other cities and towns to do the same. My feeling is that this should be a centrally run initiative by London for the whole of the Country. Veterans didn't fight for a particular town or city ... they fought for the whole country and should be honoured as such.

4. Extend cover for all environmental improvement schemes to include War Disablement Pensions as well as Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA). At present some severely disabled Veterans are excluded from home insulation and boiler replacement programmes because they're not claiming DLA or AA.
5. Ensure that local Gas and Electricity suppliers extend their special rates schemes to include disabled Veterans in receipt of War Disablement Pensions and Armed Forces and Reserve Forces Compensation Scheme. These schemes currently only cater for people in receipt of the middle or higher rate of DLA or AA.

These are just some ideas for helping to improve the quality of life of Veterans in your area from a fiscal point of view. You may have identified other initiatives. If so, I would be grateful to hear about them. This document will be placed on my website: www.lwptsd.com. The site holds some other resources that you may find useful.

Kind regards

Villayat 'Wolf' Sunkmanitu
'Living with PTSD'