

NEW NHS TREATMENT CENTRES FOR MILITARY HEROES

Murrison's NHS prosthetics services review recommendations supported by Government

Prime Minister David Cameron today announced that the Government is investing up to £15 million to support the recommendations to improve prosthetics services for military veterans who have lost a limb due to activities while serving their country.

In January, the Government asked Dr Andrew Murrison MP to lead a review into the prosthetic services currently offered to veterans by the NHS. This followed concern by service charities and some serving personnel who have been seriously injured that the NHS may not be equipped to provide prosthetic services to the same standard as the Defence Medical Service at Headley Court.

In response to Dr Murrison's key recommendation, the Department of Health will now introduce a number of national specialist prosthetic and rehabilitation centres for amputee veterans across the country. The Government will work with service charities, including Help for Heroes and BLESMA (The British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association) as well as specialists within the NHS to ensure that high quality NHS facilities are available to our military heroes.

The Department of Health will also use the experience and feedback from providing these specialist services to veterans and apply these to the wider NHS, so that all patients will benefit in the future.

Prime Minister David Cameron, said:

"I am passionately committed to our Armed Forces. As a country and as a Government we have a particular duty to servicemen and women injured on operational duty. This report maps out a clear strategy for ensuring that those brave people can be confident they will receive the same levels of access to prosthetic limbs and specialist care from the NHS as they do at Headley Court. They deserve nothing less.

"Based on the recommendations in this report, this Government will make the resources necessary to meet that need in England, and we are working with the Devolved Administrations on arrangements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

"Our service personnel make an extraordinary sacrifice for us all and I am clear that we need to go the extra mile for them. This report does that and I warmly welcome it."

Dr Andrew Murrison MP, said:

"I am delighted my report has been accepted by the Government. David Cameron's personal commitment to the wellbeing of the Service community is clear.

"The rapid roll out of the recommendations I made last year on veterans' mental health has been impressive and I look forward to these latest proposals being progressed with the same enthusiasm. I hope the action points I have offered honour the military covenant and benefit military amputees but I have been clear that they should also help to improve the service available to all limb centre users."

Health Secretary Andrew Lansley, said:

"Those who have served their country deserve the best possible care from the NHS and we are committed to giving these brave men and women the facilities they need to improve their health outcomes

"We will use the opportunity provided by Dr Murrison's report to extend the modern, high quality treatment currently provided by Headley Court not only to veterans but also to NHS patients, for whom it is clinically appropriate."

Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, Andrew Robathan, said:

"I very much welcome the report by Andrew Murrison into prosthetic provision for ex-Service amputees. It offers the right solution for our people as they transition into civilian life. The recommendations build on the high standards of rehabilitation and prosthetics provided by the Defence Medical Services and will ensure that the quality of care our people rightly deserve continues into civilian life through the NHS, for as long as the care is needed."

Jerome Church General Secretary of BLESMA (The British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association), said:

"BLESMA pays tribute to the military medical services for the care and support for amputees injured in recent conflicts. Over the last few years, our young veterans preparing to move on into civilian life have become increasingly concerned about the standard of prosthetic support they will receive from the NHS.

"Having had the opportunity to work closely with Dr Andrew Murrison we are delighted to see his clear recommendations have been accepted by Government. We are now much more confident that the NHS will be able to provide the prosthetic support veterans need and deserve - for the rest of their lives. We are also delighted that this enhanced support will be extended to all veterans who lost limbs in earlier conflicts. We believe this level of support is a national responsibility and BLESMA and other service charities expect this service to be sustained."

Bryn Parry OBE, co-founder and Chief Executive of Help for Heroes said:

“Help for Heroes welcomes this report and it's recognition that military amputees need specialist support not currently available within the NHS. We look forward to working with the NHS, MoD and other departments and charities to ensure that the amputees and indeed all military casualties, get the very best support for life.”

Notes to Editors

1. Dr Murrison made the following recommendations:

1 Ministers should take appropriate powers to provide for national commissioning of specialist prosthetic and rehabilitation services for amputee veterans, through a small number of multi-disciplinary centres in England, adequately resourced and determined through a tendering exercise.
2 Equivalent and complementary provision should be agreed with the devolved administrations.
3 Veterans should be able to access mainstream NHS provision through a DSC of their choice.
4 Each specialist centre should have provision for a BLESMA support officer.
5 The trial of the MoD Seriously Injured Leavers' Protocol and the MoD/ NHS Transition Protocol have the potential to improve handover from Headley Court and Personnel Recovery Units to DSCs and should be expedited with attention given to a refined system of case management including a comprehensive statement of needs and prescription on transition to the NHS.
6 The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) should be tasked with the production of national guidelines for prosthetic prescription and rehabilitation for all amputees including provision for military amputees.
7 A prospective study of amputee veterans' long-term outcomes should be commissioned.
8 The review supports the relocation of the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre from Headley Court to form part of a Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre. Closer integrated with the NHS holds considerable potential for Service attributable amputees at all stages of the patient pathway as well as the wider civilian amputee community.
9 There should be a programme of military/civilian exchange and capacity building for healthcare professionals to grow the specialist prosthetic and rehabilitation network, rapidly.
10 The NHS Healthcare Travel Cost Scheme currently available to War Pensioners to

be extended to beneficiaries of the Armed Forces Compensation scheme for the purpose of attending DSCs and accessing associated healthcare.

11 Case management to ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, amputee veterans abroad are able to access an equivalent standard of prosthetics and rehabilitation as they would have enjoyed had they remained in the UK.

12 An audit of the new funding arrangements should be undertaken after five years.

2. The Government will be investing up to £15 million during the period from April 2012 to 2015 to ensure this happens.
3. For any further information please contact the DH press office Newsdesk on 020 7210 5221 or Out of hours 07050 073581.