

Shropshire Council
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
Shropshire
SY2 6ND

Date: 11th October 2017

Dear Local Dentistry Community and NHS England

Re: Armed Forces Covenant – responsibility for Dentistry & Orthodontics for the Armed Forces Community

I am writing on behalf of the Shropshire Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) to request support for our Armed Forces Community in accessing NHS dentistry.

The Armed Forces community comprises current serving personnel, their families, and military veterans and their families; Reservists are considered serving personnel when mobilised or training, and veterans when not carrying out military duties. Whilst many aspects of health need are the same as other members of society, there are sometimes significant differences from other patients and particularly conditions attributable to life in the services and the overall impact of military life upon the family. These differences are sometimes reflected in the way in which healthcare is delivered, the range and types of services and the long-term impact upon the patient and their family.

It is vital that all health workers understand the context of military life and also how to appropriately respond to patient need.

The NHS has nationally signed up to the Covenant and has pledged that where appropriate, veterans are prioritised when referred, or ensuring that families of serving personnel are not disadvantaged by losing their place on waiting lists. Family members should not be disadvantaged by losing their place on hospital waiting lists, due to frequent moves. Family members should retain their relative position on any NHS waiting list, if moved around the UK due to the Service Person being posted, subject to clinical need.

The Armed Forces Covenant partnership understands that some military families and transitioning Veterans (those leaving HM Armed Forces) have experienced or will experience problems with registering with a NHS dentist in Shropshire. We are also aware that orthodontic treatment can involve long waiting lists and is subject to local area variations. This can result in disrupted service provision due to frequent moves.

Some of the issues we are aware of include:

- Ability to access NHS dentists in Shropshire– for Veterans who have received dental care through their military organisation, they have long given up their

previous access to dentistry. Many Veterans will have to re-register at their new local dentists but may be told dental surgeries are no longer adding to their waiting lists.

- Dentist not accepting NHS patients – For service spouses who lead a transient lifestyle it can become extremely difficult to access services with many travelling back to an old residence as they are still able to access services rather than at their new home.
- Waiting list times for orthodontic treatment – we are aware of some families experiencing long waiting list times for orthodontic treatment. There have also been issues with transferring waiting list times upon moving from Shropshire to another area, or when moving in to Shropshire.
- Continuity of orthodontic treatment –some families have experienced problems with continuing the orthodontic treatment their child is having when they move to another area.

The full report and minutes from the HWBB can be found via the following link:

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=217&MId=3520&Ver=4>

Some solutions the Board would like the Local Dentistry Committee and NHS England to consider include (but certainly not restricted to):

- Reducing Dentistry and Orthodontic waiting list for the Armed Forces Community, perhaps in a similar fashion that schools extend class sizes when children of Armed Force families move into the area;
- Consistent approach to gathering an understanding of who in a practice population is a member of the Armed Forces Community;
- Include the Armed Forces Community as a vulnerable group to prioritise.

Many thanks for your consideration of this matter. We look forward to hearing your responses.

Yours faithfully,



Rod Thomson
Director of Public Health
Rod.thomson@shropshire.gov.uk
01743 252003