

County Council - 17 December 2019

Item 12(e) - Notice of Motion by Mr Edwards

Support and Recognition for Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder – Briefing Note

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is defined by the NHS as 'an anxiety disorder caused by very stressful, frightening or distressing events.' Members of the Armed Forces can be exposed to events of this nature at any time during their service and the NHS describes common symptoms as 'reliving the traumatic event through nightmares and flashbacks, and may experience feelings of isolation, irritability and guilt. They may also have problems sleeping, such as insomnia and find concentrating difficult. These symptoms are often severe and persistent enough to have a significant impact on the person's day-to-day life.' It can be several years after the traumatic event occurred that the symptoms PTSD become apparent.

The local press in West Sussex have been campaigning for those who have taken their own lives as a result of PTSD to have their deaths registered as being as a result of active service. Coroners currently do not register this, so it is difficult to establish the number of cases with any certainty.

The National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire holds memorials to those who died in active service. Some of the memorials name individuals. The Sapper Support charity has recently established a statue at the Arboretum that is dedicated to those who have died as a result of PTSD as a result of events occurring while on active service.

The County Council's existing suicide prevention strategy is due to be revised in 2020 and there is ongoing funding for work with NHS Armed forces Healthcare through the Sussex Health and Care Partnership Suicide Prevention Programme.

In addition, the Military Champion chairs the West Sussex Civilian Military Partnership Board which brings together a number of partners from local government, armed forces, cadets and the voluntary sector. It has enabled closer working between these partners and the NHS are represented by Kate Parkin, Director – NHS Armed Forces Community, who works across all NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups in Sussex.

Tony Kershaw

Director of Law and Assurance