

# WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Parc Cathays  
Caerdydd CF10 3NQ

Cathays Park  
Cardiff CF10 3NQ

**Issue Date: 11 June 2008**

**Status: Action**

**Title: Priority Treatment and Healthcare for Veterans**

**For Action by:**  
Chief Executives of Local Health Boards and  
NHS Trusts

**Action required:**  
See paragraphs 1, 2

**For Information to:** See attached list

**Sender: Peter Lawler, Health and Social Services Department, Welsh Assembly Government**

**Welsh Assembly Government contact(s):**

Peter Martin / Marc Boggett, Mental Health, Vulnerable Group and Offenders Policy Branch, Community, Primary Care & Health Services Policy Division, at the above address – Tel Cardiff (029) 20 80 1211 / (029) 20 82 5476 / E-mail [MentalHealthPolicyMailbox@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:MentalHealthPolicyMailbox@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

**Enclosure(s):** WHC (2003) 065 is available with this circular at <http://howis.wales.nhs.uk/whcirculards.cfm>

<http://howis.wales.nhs.uk/whcirculards.cfm>

Dear colleague,

## Priority Treatment and Healthcare for Veterans

### Summary

1. The purpose of this Welsh Health Circular (WHC) is to update and extend existing guidance on priority treatment for war pensioners **WHC (2003) 65**. All veterans should now receive priority access to NHS secondary care for any conditions which are likely to be related to their service, subject to the clinical needs of all patients.

2. Action:

**Local Health Boards (LHBs)** – to ensure that GPs, in making referrals for diagnosis or treatment, are aware of the current priority treatment provisions and of their extension to all veterans who have a condition that is likely to be related to their service.

**NHS Trusts** – to ensure that clinical staff are aware of WHC (2003) 65 and its extension to all veterans, for conditions which are likely to be related to their service, subject to clinical need.

### Background

1. The Welsh Assembly Government is determined to do as much as it can to help co-ordinate and deliver high quality public services in recognition of the service that veterans have given to their country.

2. On 23 November 2007, the Minister for Health and Social Services announced that all service veterans will be entitled to priority NHS treatment and care in Wales:  
<http://new.wales.gov.uk/news/ThirdAssembly/Health/2007/1820777/?lang=en>

### Priority NHS Healthcare for Veterans

3. Under long-standing arrangements, war pensioners in England, Scotland and Wales have been given priority NHS treatment for the conditions for which they receive a war pension, subject to clinical need

4. This provision has now been extended to all veterans where a person has a health problem as result of their military service. They no longer need first to have applied and become entitled to a war pension. Those entitled to priority treatment for conditions related to services are:

- All Army, Navy and Air Force personnel who served at least one day and are considered veterans for this purpose
- Reservists
- Former members of the Merchant Navy who took a direct part in legally-defined UK military operations.

5. When referring a patient who they know to be a veteran for secondary (more specialist) care, GPs have now been asked to consider if, in their clinical opinion, the condition may be related to the patient's military service. Priority treatment **ONLY** applies to conditions which are

related to veterans' service. Where this is the case, and with the patient's agreement, it should be made clear in the referral.

6. Where secondary care clinicians agree that a veteran's condition is likely to be service-related, they have been asked to prioritise veterans over other patients with the same level of clinical need. Veterans will not be given priority over other patients with more urgent clinical needs. It is for clinical practitioner to decide, on the balance of probabilities, whether a veterans' condition is related to the patients' service.
7. Except in exceptional circumstances, the extension does not apply to anyone who had already been referred to treatment or who was already undergoing treatment before the new arrangements came into effect. To prioritise them could affect other people who have already received dates for appointments.
8. Patients are under no obligation at any time to declare themselves a veteran. They may, however, wish to discuss this entitlement with their GP during consultation for treatment of a condition related to service.

### **Related information**

9. Details of the policy have been available on the Veterans-UK website [http://www.veterans-uk.info/vets\\_issues/healthcare.htm](http://www.veterans-uk.info/vets_issues/healthcare.htm). Veterans can also contact the Veterans-UK helpline on 0800 169 2277 should they have any queries.

### **Queries and Correspondence**

10. Queries about this Circular should be addressed to:

Peter Martin / Marc Boggett  
Mental Health, Vulnerable Groups and Offenders Policy Branch  
Community, Primary Care and Health Policy Services Division  
Department for Health and Social Services  
Welsh Assembly Government  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff CF10 3NQ  
(029) 20 80 1211 / (029) 20 82 5476 / [MentalHealthPolicyMailbox@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:MentalHealthPolicyMailbox@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

Yours sincerely



**Peter Lawler**  
Acting Director, Community, Primary Care and Health Services Policy Directorate

## Distribution List

Chief Executives	NHS Trusts
Chief Executives	Local Health Boards
HR Directors	Business Services Centres
Director	Welsh NHS Confederation
Chief Officer	Board of Community Health Councils in Wales
Director	Welsh Local Government Association
Dean	University of Wales, Bangor
Chief Executive	Commission for Racial Equality
Chief Executive	NLIAH
Director	British Dental Association (Wales)
Dean	Cardiff University Dental School
Postgraduate Dean	Cardiff University Dental School
Postgraduate Dean	Cardiff University Medical School
Director information services	Cardiff University Medical School
Secretary	British Medical Association (Wales)
Regional Head of Health	UNISON
Director	Royal College of Nursing (Wales)
Wales Secretary	British Orthoptic Society
Wales Secretary	AMICUS MSF
Regional Secretary	The GMB
Regional Secretary	Transport & General Workers Union
Chair	Community Pharmacy Wales
Chair	Royal College of General Practitioners
General Secretary	Wales TUC
Assistant Director	Chartered Society of Physiotherapists
Secretary	College of Occupational Therapists
Officer for Wales	Society of Radiographers
IR Officer	Society of Chiropractors and Podiatrists
Regional Secretary	Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians
Board Secretary for Wales	Royal College of Midwives
Officer for Wales	AMICUS Electrical & Engineering Staff Association
Regional Secretary	AMICUS Amalgamated Electrical and Engineering Union
Welsh Executive	Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain
Health & Social Care Policy Officer	Wales Council for Voluntary Action
National Member for Wales	AMICUS - Guild of Health Care Pharmacists
Business manager	Institute of Health Care Management Welsh Division
Deputy Chief Executive	Association of Optometrists
Director General	Audit Commission (Wales)
Director	Business Service Centres
Patch Managers	Business Service Centres across Wales (6 copies each)
Secretariat	Statutory Health Advisory Committees
	Academy of Royal Colleges Wales
Regional Directors	NHS Wales Regional Offices
Chief Executive	Health Commission Wales (Specialist Services)
Librarian	National Public Health Service
Chief Executive	Welsh Language Board / Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg
Librarian	Health Promotion Library
Chief Executive	Healthcare Inspectorate Wales
Welfare Managers	Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA)

# WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

Parc Cathays  
Caerdydd CF10 3NQ

Cathays Park  
Cardiff CF10 3NQ

Issue Date: 3 June 2003  
Status: Action

Title: Priority Treatment for War Pensioners and the Veterans Agency  
Notes about War Disablement Pension and War Widows/Widowers Pension

For Action by: NHS Trusts, LHBs, GPs

Action required *See paragraph(s) : 9*

For Information to: See Distribution list

Sender: Mrs Ann Lloyd, Director NHS Wales, Tel: 029 2082 1182

Welsh Assembly Government contact:Gwenan Roberts, NHS Central Support Team, Tel: 029 2082 5463

Enclosure(s): WPA –Leaflet- 1 (from April 2002)  
Notes about War Disablement Pension and War Widows/ Widowers Pension

Tel: 029 20825111 GTN: 1208  
Llinell union/Direct line: 029 2082 3118  
Ffacs/Fax: 029 2082 3403  
Minicom: 029 20823280  
<http://cymruweb.wales.nhs.uk>

Dear Colleague

## **PRIORITY TREATMENT FOR WAR PENSIONERS AND THE VETERANS AGENCY**

### **Introduction**

1. This circular reaffirms the priority treatment to be given to war pensioners for their accepted disablement. A similar circular has been issued in other parts of the UK.

### **Background**

2. The present War Pensions Scheme had its origin pre Welfare State and in the early days the Scheme included provision for treatment of service related disablement. In the 1950s, following the establishment of the National Health Service, Ministry of Pensions Hospitals were absorbed into the NHS and the system of Priority Treatments for War Pensioners was set up. Under this provision, war pensioners are entitled to priority treatment for their accepted disablement, dependent on clinical needs as determined by the clinician in charge.
3. Guidance on this matter was last issued to the NHS in Wales in February 1995.
4. In March 2002 the War Pensioners Agency was renamed The Veterans Agency and its role expanded to take on wider responsibilities for support to Service Personnel throughout their lives.
5. At the first Veterans Forum attention was brought by ex-Service organisations that they considered that Priority Treatment for war pensioners was not being operated within the NHS. Subsequently, the UK Joint Ministerial Committee on Health of the priority treatment policy has asked that all NHS Chief Executives are reminded of this commitment within their area of responsibility.

### **Entitlement of War Pensioners**

6. War pensioners are entitled to priority treatment in NHS hospitals as both in-patients and out-patients for treatment or examinations for their accepted disablement; that is, for the condition/s for which the Veterans Agency (VA) pay a War Disablement Pension. This is subject to emergency and other urgent cases which demand clinical priority. The decision as to the degree of priority given rests with the Consultant in charge of the case, who must clearly take account of the needs of other patients. Priority should not be given for unrelated conditions.
7. Should a war pensioner wish to apply for priority treatment he or she should first contact the VA who will issue a letter listing the accepted conditions and explaining the arrangements for priority treatment. The letter will also quote the reference number of the latest Health Service Guidelines should the consultant wish to refer to them. Referrals for treatment should be made through the pensioner's GP and the GP should make clear that the patient is a war disability pensioner and requires treatment for the condition/s for which the war pensioner was given a pension or a gratuity.
8. If there is a breakdown in this arrangement, the NHS complaints system should be used to resolve the matter. This includes ultimately asking the Health

Service Ombudsman (Commissioner) to investigate any case of alleged breakdown.

### **Action**

9. Chief Executives of Trusts and Local Health Boards are asked to bring this information to the notice of appropriate clinical staff within their organisations as many current NHS staff have little or no awareness of the War Pensions Scheme or entitlement to Priority Treatment.

### **Related information**


10. Chief Executives are also asked to bring the following booklet to the attention of staff who may be in a position of providing help or advice to pensioners.

11. A copy of WPA booklet which includes useful contact details is available on <http://www.veteransagency.mod.uk/pdfolder/wpaleaflet1.pdf> or from the Veterans Agency, Norcross, Blackpool, FY5 3WP. Email: [help@veteransagency.mod.uk](mailto:help@veteransagency.mod.uk) freeline 0800 1692277.

The document is also available in Welsh

<http://www.veteransagency.mod.uk/pdfolder/welsh.pdf>

These documents are quite large and if you do not have access to the internet we would be happy to send you a copy. Please contact the Central Support Team on 029 2082 3118.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ann Lloyd', is written above a long horizontal line that extends across the width of the signature area.

Mrs Ann Lloyd  
Director  
NHS Wales

**Distribution List**

Chief Executives	NHS Trusts
Chief Executives	Local Health Boards
Director	NHS Confederation in Wales
Chief Officer	Association of Welsh Community Health Councils
Director	Welsh Local Government Association
Dean	University of Wales, Bangor
Chief Executive	Commission for Racial Equality
Chief Executive	Centre for Health Leadership
Secretary	British Dental Association in Wales
Postgraduate Dean	University of Wales College of Medicine
Director information services	University of Wales College of Medicine
Secretary	British Medical Association (Wales)
Regional Head of Health	UNISON
Board Secretary	Royal College of Nursing (Wales)
Welsh Council Representative	British Dietetic Association
Wales Secretary	British Orthoptic Society
Wales Secretary	AMICUS MSF
Regional Secretary	The GMB
Regional Secretary	Transport & General Workers Union
Chair	Community Pharmacy Wales
Chair	Royal College of General Practitioners
General Secretary	Wales TUC
Assistant Director	Chartered Society of Physiotherapists
Officer for Wales	Society of Radiographers
IR Officer	Society of Chiropractors and Podiatrists
Regional Secretary	Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians
Board Secretary for Wales	Royal College of Midwives
Officer for Wales	AMICUS Electrical & Engineering Staff Association
Regional Secretary	AMICUS Amalgamated Electrical and Engineering Union
Welsh Executive	Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain
Information Officer	Wales Council for Voluntary Action
National Member for Wales	AMICUS - Guild of Health Care Pharmacists
Business manager	Institute of Health Care Management Welsh Division
Chief Executive	Association of Optometrists
Librarian	British College of Optometrists
Director General	Audit Commission (Wales)
Director	Business Service Centre
Patch Managers	Business Service Centres across Wales (6 copies each)
Secretariat	Statutory Committees
Regional Directors	NHS Wales Regional Offices
Chief Executive	Health Commission Wales (Specialist Services)
Chief Executive	Health Professions Wales
National Director	National Public Health Service
Librarian	National Public Health Service
Chief Executive	Welsh Language Board / Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg
Librarian	Health Promotion Library