**Veterans Information Network Meeting – 1.12.15**

**Present:** Ian Campbell, Neil Bettison, Andy Gregory, Sue French, Simon Worsely, Digby Bown, Maria Cooke, Rick Harrington.

**Apologies:** John Gilpin, Judith Swann, Rachael Price

**Feedback from the Civilian Life event (12th November):**

Total audience members = 110

Total (including stall holders) = 143

There were some ‘walk-ins’ so it’s hard to predict the actual total number. There was an overall satisfaction rating of 83%. Evaluation forms were limited but those that were completed offered useful feedback. Feedback included identifying ways to include public health and the NHS (especially CCGs) more and some of the family associations as well as purely ‘veterans’ services.

Press coverage included an article on Central news that evening and a large article in Nottingham Post on Friday 13th

8 requests were made to join VINN as a result of the event.

The event was judged to be a success by all. Leader of the Council, Cllr Rhodes was very pleased with the event and Cllr Kay Cutts (Opposition leader) was ‘very proud’ of what had been achieved. There was representation from all boroughs and districts so it was, truly, a county-wide event. People who attended the event had been in touch with Neil and enquiries made about new links and opportunities.

Neil had also received requests from other areas asking how it was done because other councils wanted to stage something similar. He confirmed that a report on the whole process was already under way.

**2016 action plan:**

The group agreed that it was useful to have a focussed plan of action for 2016 to ensure we delivered useful outcomes and did not become bogged down as other groups had. We decided that the theme of the year should be engagement and education. There was limited time and resources so the group agreed to be realistic about what could be achieved to push the agenda forward and to remain outcome-focussed rather than process based which would actually achieve nothing for people who needed to be helped in the face of vulnerability and need.

Rick identified that the Police had identified they needed more support to deal with veterans issues as a result of attending the Civilian Life conference.

Three main aims were agreed upon:

* Website development and operation
* Armed Forces Champions Workshops
* Newsletter communications

**Website:**

There was discussion over inclusion in the website which is currently in development with Nottinghamshire County Council. The group debated how to decide upon inclusion and what authority we would have to make decisions about that. We decided that the Terms of Reference should be reviewed to clarify what would be expected of groups that wanted to join the network. All agreed that the members present (and absent) should remain as the Steering Group for VINN and to decide upon the action plan each year. Involving more people in the Steering Group would lead to stasis.

**Action Point:**

Maria and Neil agreed to meet on 30th December to review the Terms of Reference.

There was debate about how more people could be included in the information sharing aspect of the network and Simon advised that there was a regular meeting of Veterans Support organisations (such as regimental associations etc) an d the next one was on 19th February 2016 at County Hall.

**Newsletter communications:**

Maria agreed to write a newsletter (to be called ‘Civilian Life’) twice annually which would be published in May and November. This would provide a wide range of organisations with an opportunity to share information about their services, opportunities and projects and hopefully enable people to feel more included in the VINN.

Ian advised that he had contacted all local councils to encourage them to appoint an Armed Forces lead and was hoping to organise a first group meeting of all of them in March 2016.

**Armed Forces Champions Workshops:**

Following on from that meeting, the group agreed to hold an Armed Forces Champion Workshop in June (to support Armed Forces Day) where the VINN could explain more about:

* the range of services on offer
* sharing best practice
* identify what’s happening in communities
* share information about sources of funding
* encouraging the Champions to be pro-active in their boroughs and districts

If the Workshop proved successful, it could be re-run later in the year for the benefit of health bodies such as CCGs, Public Health and the police.