

Veterans Policy

Version:	Owner:	Created:
2.1	Dixine Douis (Practice Manager)	1 st June 2009
Published:	Approving Director:	Next Review
6 th August 2026	Jo Temple	6 th August 2028

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Introduction

Our duty to the Armed Forces Community

The NHS has a duty to deliver on a number of health commitments in relation to the Armed Forces community (service personnel (regular and reserves), their families and veterans), which are set out in the Armed Forces Covenant and the NHS Constitution.

The Armed Forces Covenant

- The Armed Forces community should enjoy the same standard of, and access to healthcare as that received by any other UK citizen in the area they live.
- Family members should retain their place on any NHS waiting list, if moved around the UK due to the service person being posted.
- Veterans should receive priority treatment for a condition which relates to their service, subject to clinical need.
- Those injured in service should be cared for in a way that reflects the nation's moral obligation to them, by healthcare professionals who understand the Armed Forces culture.

Visit the [Armed Forces Covenant](#) for more information.

This is recognised in the [NHS Constitution](#), which states 'the NHS will ensure that in line with the Armed Forces Covenant, those in the Armed Forces, reservists, their families and veterans are not disadvantaged in accessing health services in the area they reside'.

Who counts as a Veteran?

You are a veteran if you have served in the UK armed forces for at least 1 day.

Non-mobilised reservists are also regarded as veterans.

If you are a mobilised reservist registered with Defence Medical Services (DMS), find information about [accessing NHS healthcare while in active service](#).

What is the Armed Forces Covenant?

To those who proudly protect our nation, who do so with honour, courage, and commitment, the Armed Forces Covenant is the nation's commitment to you.

It is a pledge that together we acknowledge and understand that those who serve, or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives.

Dedicated Services for Veterans

Help for Service Leavers

During and after the resettlement period, there are a number of actions that can be taken to help NHS and specialist veteran services support Veterans. The most important is for them to register with an NHS GP surgery and let them know they have served in the UK armed forces.

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[Find more information for service leavers](#)

Veterans' mental health services

Whilst there is often an emphasis on veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the actual rates are not high (around 6.2%), which is broadly equivalent to the incidence amongst civilians. More common issues include other mental health difficulties, such as anxiety and depression, as well as problems related to alcohol. However, for those veterans who deployed when serving, rates of PTSD are higher at 9% and up to 17% for those who deployed in a front-line, infantry combat role.

There is growing evidence that a range of mental health conditions may appear (or patients may present) some years after individuals have left the armed forces. These conditions may relate to combat, training or other military experiences, transition out of service or indeed pre-service vulnerabilities.

The historical issues of stigma associated with mental health and a traditional culture of reluctance to admitting to a perceived weakness or being in a position of having to ask for help means that a substantial number of unwell veterans are unlikely to access the appropriate support and services. This is further compounded by a lack of awareness amongst veterans of what services are available to them, as well as varying levels of awareness across the NHS on the health needs of this patient group. In addition, the widespread public perception, often fuelled by mainstream media, that all veterans are damaged by their military service and all of them have PTSD is not only wrong but harmful.

Op Courage: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service

Op Courage is the new over-arching name for the three NHS veterans' mental health services (Veteran's Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS), Veteran's Mental Health Complex Treatment Service (CTS) and Veteran's Mental Health High Intensity Service (HIS). The new name has been developed by veterans and their families and is intended to make the services easier to find and access.

Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS)

This is a dedicated out-patient service for serving personnel approaching discharge from the Armed Forces and veterans who are experiencing mental health difficulties. The TILS provides a range of treatment, from recognising the early signs of mental health problems and providing access to early support, to therapeutic treatment for complex mental health difficulties and psychological trauma. Help may also be provided with housing, employment, alcohol misuse and social support.

The service comprises three elements:

Transition: service for those in transition, leaving the armed forces

The service works with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to offer mental health support for Armed Forces personnel approaching discharge.

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Intervention: service for veterans with complex presentation

Service personnel approaching discharge and veterans will have an assessment within two weeks of a receipt of referral. Where appropriate, the TILS will aim to see patients two weeks after this. This will be with a clinician who has an expert understanding of Armed Forces life and culture. They may also be supported by a care coordinator who will liaise with other services and organisations to ensure a coordinated approach to their care.

Liaison: general service for veterans

Patients who do not have complex presentations, yet would benefit from NHS care, will be referred into local mainstream NHS mental health services where they will receive treatment and support. If an assessment finds that an individual has significant mental health difficulties that are service related and have not improved with previous treatment, they will be referred to their local CTS.

Veterans' Mental Health Complex Treatment Service (CTS)

This is an enhanced out patient service for ex-forces who have military related complex mental health difficulties that have not improved with previous treatment. The service provides a range of intensive care and treatment that may include (but is not limited to) support for drug and alcohol misuse, physical health, employment, housing, relationships and finances, as well as occupational and trauma focused therapies.

The NHS Veterans Mental Health High Intensity Service (HIS) for veterans needing urgent help who are in mental health crisis has been trialled in some regions since October 2020. It is now being rolled out across the country as part of a phased approach. Those needing urgent help will receive a same day referral.

Veterans can self-refer or be referred by their GP, a charity or family or friends to access specialist care through this single route of Op Courage see below:

More than 13,000 veterans have benefitted from specialist care for problems such as anxiety and depression and almost 2000 have received help for more complex problems such as PTSD.

Further details are available on the [NHS website](#)

Combat Stress

Combat Stress is the UK's leading mental health charity for veterans. They provide free specialised clinical treatment and support to ex-servicemen and women across the UK with mental health conditions. Combat Stress has a strategic partnership with the MOD and the Department of Health and Social Care. This enables them to work directly with NHS mental health trusts and Armed Forces health networks to develop services suitable for military veterans. For further information, visit the [Combat Stress website](#).

Op RESTORE: the Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service

Op RESTORE is the veterans physical health and wellbeing service for those who have served in the UK Armed Forces and is the new name for the Veterans Trauma Network (VTN). Op RESTORE will continue to accept only GP referrals.

Op RESTORE can help you if:

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- you have served at least one day in the UK Armed Forces
- you are soon to leave or are in the process of leaving the UK Armed Forces
- you have sustained a physical health injury that was attributable to your time in Service regardless of when that happened
- you have ongoing medical problems related to the physical injury sustained in Service
- we have received a clinical referral from your GP.

GPs can obtain a referral form by emailing imperial.oprestore@nhs.net

Op FORTITUDE

Veterans across the UK have access to Op FORTITUDE, a referral pathway for homeless veterans, including those sleeping on the streets. The housing hotline, delivered by Riverside, will give homeless veterans a single point of contact to get them the help they need. Op FORTITUDE staff will refer callers to a network of support, including housing providers, charities, and local authorities. Veterans can access the scheme through a dedicated helpline on 0800 9520774 or an [online referral form](#).

Integrated Personal Commissioning for Veterans (IPC4V)

Integrated Personal Commissioning for Veterans (IPC4V) is an approach to personalised care for veterans who have a long-term physical, mental or neurological health condition or disability.

Eligible veterans are supported by a personalised care plan they develop and agree together with local health and social care organisations. A range of military charities may also help in some cases.

For further information about personalised care:

- read the [Armed Forces personnel in transition, integrated personal commissioning for veterans – information for patients leaflet \(NHS England website\)](#)
- contact your local integrated care board (ICB) – [find your local integrated care board \(ICB\)](#)

Veterans Welfare Service (VWS)

The Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) provides 1-to-1 support to all veterans, and their families and carers.

It's run by Veterans UK, which is part of the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

[GOV.UK: Veterans Welfare Service](#)

Support for disabled veterans

There are many different NHS, MOD and charity services dedicated to providing support and treatment to veterans with disabilities.

Disablement Service Centres (DSCs)

If you lost a limb during your service, Disablement Service Centres (DSCs) can offer specialist prosthetic and rehabilitation support.

You can be referred to a DSC during your regular medical treatment if the service will benefit you.

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Speak to a GP for more information about DSCs.

Veteran's Prosthetic Panel

If you need to apply for funding for a prosthetic limb, DSCs can apply to the Veteran's Prosthetic Panel on your behalf.

You cannot apply for funding by yourself.

For the application to be considered, you must have either:

- lost a limb during military service
- lost a limb due to an injury caused during military service

Blesma

Blesma offer advice and support to veterans who have lost a limb, the use of a limb, an eye or use of sight during military service.

They work closely with NHS and MOD services for disabled veterans and can refer you to useful services.

They also offer advice on financial benefits and support, as well as helping you find appropriate community groups.

[Find out more about Blesma](#)

Blind Veterans UK

Veterans with sight loss can get help and support from Blind Veterans UK.

They offer a range of support, including rehabilitation services, practical advice and emotional support.

[Find out more about Blind Veterans UK](#)

Financial support

There are many organisations who offer financial advice and support to veterans and their families or carers.

This includes [charities dedicated to supporting the armed forces community](#).

Veterans UK

Veterans UK is part of the MOD.

They provide free support for serving personnel, reservists, veterans and their families, including:

- an urgent helpline
- running the Veterans Welfare Service and Defence Transition Services
- helping access support from government, local and charity organisations
- funding compensation scheme payments

[GOV.UK: Find more information about Veterans UK](#)

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[GOV.UK: Contact Veterans UK](#)

The Armed Forces Healthcare Navigation Service

The Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS) provides emotional and practical support to the Armed Forces community when they are on a health care pathway, receiving treatment in hospital, community-based health care, or at home.

Assessing, identifying, and addressing welfare and wellbeing issues that are a barrier to recovery or good health and wellbeing, DMWS work with the individual, their family, carers, and health and social care partners, to find solutions and provide onward supported referrals to other organisations for services beyond the scope of DMWS intervention.

DMWS' professional and expert medical welfare service evidences reduction in delayed transfers of care, reduction in frequent attendance at A&E, enables independent living, reduces social isolation, improves wellbeing, and provides a coordinated, holistic approach to accessing the right support, in the right place, at the right time

Veterans can be referred to DMWS or can contact DMWS directly. For more information, visit [Defence Medical Welfare Service website](#)

Other Services Available to Veterans

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/armed-forces-community/charities-support/>

Charity support

There are many charities dedicated to providing support, advice and aid for veterans and their families.

Many of these charities provide a range of help, including disability support, rehabilitation, self-help programmes, accessing services and further financial support.

[Find more information about charities that can help veterans and their families](#)

Op NOVA

Provides support for veterans who are in contact with the justice system, helping them access the services they need.

Visit the [Op NOVA website](#) for more information.

HM Armed Forces Veteran Card

An HM Armed Forces Veteran Card is a way to prove that you served in the UK armed forces. [Applying for the card](#) can make it quicker and easier to apply for support as a veteran.

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Sexual assault and abuse support

If you have been sexually assaulted or abused while in the armed forces or since you left the military, you can get help and advice from NHS services, including sexual assault referral centres (SARCs).

[Help after rape and sexual assault](#)

Support for families of veterans

There is a range of support and advice available for families of armed forces veterans and non-mobilised reservists.

This includes services and charities dedicated to helping you with any healthcare and welfare concerns.

[Find more information about support for armed forces families](#)

Requesting a Patients Service Medical Records

Veterans are given a personal copy of their summary medical record when they leave the Armed Forces, together with information on how to obtain their full service medical record if they need it.

If this has been lost, you can send an email regarding a specific medical record to the contact details below.

Royal Navy / Royal Marines

RN Service Leavers
Institute of Naval Medicine
Crescent Road
Alverstoke
Gosport
Hants PO12 2DL

Email: NAVYINM-RNServiceLeavers@mod.gov.uk

British Army

Secretariat Disclosure 3 (Medical)
Mail Point 525
Army Personnel Centre
Kentigern House
65 Brown Street
Glasgow G2 8EX

Email: APC-sp-disclosures3@mod.gov.uk

Royal Air Force

ACOS (Manning)
RAF Disclosures
Room 14
Trenchard Hall
RAF Cranwell

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Sleaford
Lincs NG34 8HB

Email: Air-COSPers-Disclosures@mod.gov.uk

Learning Resources

<https://www.rcgp.org.uk/clinical-and-research/resources/toolkits/veterans-healthcare-toolkit.aspx#>



Training Leaflet for
GP staff.pdf

1. Change Register

Date	Reviewed and amended by	Revision details	Issue number
June 2009	DD	Created	1
September 2021	DD	Updated	2
September 2025	DKT	Updated – links to NHS Website and removing of out of date resources.	1