



## Veterans' healthcare GP accreditation – FAQs

### What is a veteran?

A veteran is anyone who has served for at least one day in the Armed Forces, whether regular or reserve. It means the same as 'ex service personnel' or 'ex-forces'.

### What is the RCGP advice on veteran's health?

Whilst many aspects of health need are the same as the general public, there are sometimes significant differences, particularly in relation to conditions attributable to service life and the impact upon families. These differences can be reflected in the way in which healthcare is delivered, the range and types of some specific services provided and the long-term impact upon patients and families.

It is therefore recommended that you undertake the following online learning sessions, which have been developed with NHS England:

[e-learning for health training session: NHS healthcare for the Armed Forces](#)  
[e-learning for health training session: health needs of military veterans](#)  
[RCGP learning: military veterans.](#)

The second and third training sessions require you to register to get online access.

### What is the veterans' Read code?

As there are two versions of Read coding in use, we would recommend the practice code a veteran as 'military veteran' then the computer system will code correctly on whichever version it uses.

### What is the Armed Forces Covenant?

The Armed Forces Covenant sets the following goals with respect to healthcare:

- 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 have an understanding of the Armed Forces culture.

This is reflected 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’.

The Covenant is an important aspect of our approach to care, especially as the Armed Forces community can be at a disadvantage due to their mobility, and frequent moves.

## **What dedicated NHS services are available to veterans?**

### **Veterans’ mental health services**

There is a common perception that many military veterans have mental health problems, especially Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Whilst the prevalence of PTSD) has increased amongst veterans in recent years (9% for those who have deployed and 17% for those who have deployed in a combat role), more common issues include other mental health difficulties, such as anxiety, depression and problems related to alcohol. In light of this, some veterans would benefit from a more specialised referral and especially to a service that understands the differences and culture of military life.

GPs can either refer to their normal NHS services, if this is the wish of the patient, or to the dedicated NHS veterans’ mental health services, which are the Veterans’ Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS) and the Veterans’ Mental Health Complex Treatment Service (CTS).

### **Veterans’ Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS)**

This is a dedicated out-patient service for serving personnel approaching discharge from the military 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:

- 1. 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.
- 2. 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.
- 3. 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 military 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.

Access to the CTS is via the TILS. This ensures that any previous treatment and support has been considered. Once referred to the CTS, the service aims to see patients for their first appointment two weeks after this. They will be supported by a military aware team who will develop a personalised care plan with them, which will include arrangements for crisis care.

Access to both of these services is through the TILS. GPs and patients can contact the service direct (see below) for a referral:

- North of England services: call 0191 441 5974 or email [vwals@nhs.net](mailto:vwals@nhs.net)
- Midlands or East of England services: call 0300 323 0137 or email [mevs.mhm@nhs.net](mailto:mevs.mhm@nhs.net)
- London or South East of England services: call 020 3317 6818 or email [cim-tr.veteranstilservice-lse@nhs.net](mailto:cim-tr.veteranstilservice-lse@nhs.net)
- South West of England services: call 0300 365 0300 or email [sc.veterans@nhs.net](mailto:sc.veterans@nhs.net)

See the [NHS website](#) for more information as well as this [leaflet on veterans mental health services](#).

### **Veterans Trauma Network (VTN)**

Following feedback from veterans, their families and GPs, NHS England has worked with the MOD and key military charities to launch the Veterans Trauma Network, which provides care and treatment to those who have been injured during their time in service.

Located in ten major trauma centres across England (Plymouth, Oxford, London (three centres), Birmingham, Nottingham, Liverpool, Leeds and Middlesbrough), the network links with the TILS, CTS and key military charities to provide a complete package of care.

Veterans can be referred to the service by their GP, [Blesma](#), [Blind Veterans UK](#) or [Style for Soldiers](#), where they will benefit from specialist care by military and civilian experts in trauma.

Patients using the service will have a personalised treatment plan that links to other services where required, such as rehabilitation and mental health, whilst families and carers will be supported to access services they may benefit from.

For more information or to refer a patient, email [england.veteranstraumanetwork@nhs.net](mailto:england.veteranstraumanetwork@nhs.net).

## **Prosthetics**

A veterans' prosthetics programme was put into place to implement the key findings of '[A better deal for military amputees' report](#) by Dr Andrew Murrison MP.

Dr Murrison recommended that a small number of NHS disablement centres should provide specialist prosthetic and rehabilitation support to veterans to ensure that they continue to have access to high quality care similar to that which was provided to them whilst they were in the Armed Forces. The following nine Disablement Service Centres (DSCs) were selected to provide this support although veterans are free to attend the NHS DSC of their choice:

- Bristol – Bristol Centre for Enablement, North Bristol NHS Trust
- Leicester – Leicester Specialist Mobility Centre, provided by Blatchford Clinical Services on behalf of clinical commissioning groups (CCGs)
- Sheffield – Mobility and Specialised Rehabilitation Centre, Northern General Hospital
- Carlisle – Disablement Services Centre, Cumberland Infirmary, North Cumbria University Hospitals NHS Trust
- Preston – Specialist Mobility & Rehabilitation Centre, Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Stanmore – Stanmore Prosthetic Rehabilitation Unit, Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital Trust
- Portsmouth – Prosthetic Regional Rehabilitation Department, Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust
- Birmingham – West Midlands Rehabilitation Centre, Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Trust
- Cambridge – Addenbrooke's Rehabilitation Clinic, Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

In addition to providing support to nine DSCs, a veterans' prosthetics panel (VPP) was established in 2012. The VPP was designed to ensure that veterans could access high-quality prosthetics regardless of which DSC they attend. Applications for funding from the VPP are made by a veteran's prosthetist. More information on the VPP is available [here](#).

## **Mobility equipment support**

The Royal British Legion has a Veterans' Mobility Fund, which provides specialist wheelchairs, orthotic equipment and other mobility related items for veterans who have a service related serious physical injury and whose needs cannot be met through statutory services. Eligibility for the fund requires the condition to be attributable to service and typically applicants will be in receipt of a War Pension or relevant award under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme. To find out more, visit [here](#).

## **Veterans Covenant Hospital Alliance**

The Veterans Covenant Hospital Alliance is a network of over 20 NHS hospitals that share and drive the implementation of best practice in NHS care for the Armed Forces community. These hospitals are working to be accredited as 'Veteran Aware

Hospitals', by raising awareness amongst staff and ensuring veterans and their families are signposted or referred to services where they could be beneficial. For more information email [england.armedforceshealth@nhs.net](mailto:england.armedforceshealth@nhs.net) or visit [here](#).

### **The Armed Forces Healthcare Navigator 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, click [here](#)

**More information on NHS services for veterans can be found on the NHS website [here](#).**

## **What other services are available to veterans?**

### **Veterans' Gateway**

Veterans' Gateway is for any ex-service personnel and their families looking for advice or support, 24 hours a day. It is the first point of contact to a network of military and non-military partner organisations to help veterans and their families find exactly what information, advice and support they need, when they need it - across key areas from physical and mental health to employability, housing, finances, personal relationships and more. For more information, visit [here](#) or call 0808 802 1212.

### **Contact**

Contact is a group of charitable, support and state organisations that have joined forces to enhance mental health support available to the Armed Forces community. The partnership consists of Big White Wall, Cobseo, Combat Stress, Help for Heroes, The Royal British Legion, Walking With The Wounded, the NHS, MOD, UK Psychological Trauma Society and King's College London. Contact aims to improve collaborative care management, increase instances of help-seeking behaviour, improve service provision, encourage best practice across the sector and improve public knowledge of what support is available and how best to access it. For more information, visit [here](#).

### **Cobseo – the confederation of service charities**

Cobseo, as the Confederation of Service Charities, offers membership to charities who promote and further the welfare and general interests of the Armed Forces community, subject to fulfilling the membership criteria. Comprising 255 members,

Cobseo provides a single point of contact for interaction with the Armed Forces community. For more information, visit [here](#).

### **Help for Heroes**

Help for Heroes provides direct, practical support for wounded, injured and sick Service personnel, Veterans and their families. No matter when or where someone served, the charity offers the help they need, if necessary for life. They have four recovery centres in the UK that offer a wide range of services, including, but not exclusive to, psychological wellbeing, clinical support and sports recovery.

Alongside this they also offer two further services: Hidden Wounds and The Veterans Clinical Liaison Service (VCL).

The Help for Heroes Hidden Wounds service is a Step 2 IAPT guided self-help model supporting ex-service personnel, their family members and the families of serving personnel. Weekly sessions are delivered by psychological wellbeing practitioners using bespoke workbooks and practical tools and techniques to help individuals better understand and positively manage their emotions.

The service is suitable for those exhibiting low to moderate symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress, anger and excessive alcohol use, using evidence-based CBT interventions that have proven to be effective for a wide range of people. Support is delivered by phone, Skype or face to face. The service also works with the NHS, other charities and Armed Forces health networks to ensure the most appropriate care pathway for their beneficiaries. Beneficiaries can self-refer or be professionally referred. For further information, visit [here](#).

The Veterans Clinical Liaison (VCL) Service acts as a point of contact for those with serious complex injuries and long term health issues and focuses on holistic clinical support to improve an individual's quality of life. The VCL nurses engage and empower Help for Heroes beneficiaries to optimise their clinical status in partnership with statutory (NHS and social care) and voluntary organisations. Beneficiaries can self-refer or be professionally referred. For further information, visit [here](#).

### **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 [here](#).

### **Blesma**

Blesma supports limbless veterans to lead independent and fulfilling lives. Blesma is dedicated to assisting serving and ex-service men and women who have suffered life-changing limb loss or the use of a limb, an eye or loss of sight. They support these men and women throughout the UK and provide centralised assistance to those living overseas.

Blesma works closely with the NHS to ensure the latest advances in the relevant medical fields are converted into practical solutions that can benefit all of their

members. They do not provide members' prosthetics, but they do help prosthetists develop their skills at undergraduate and PhD level.

Anyone fitted for a prosthesis will know that the socket fit is paramount and it is often the cause of most issues. Blesma keeps up to date with developments in this area and encourages research and development, maintaining close links with NHS national teams, Defence Medical Services (particularly the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Stanford Hall) and industry.

For further information, visit [here](#).

### **Hearing loss and tinnitus services**

If a patient has acquired hearing loss and / or tinnitus relating to their time in service, additional support can be funded through the Royal British Legion Veterans' Hearing Fund. To access the service, patients can be referred by their GP to their local NHS audiology department or an application form can be downloaded from the [Veterans' Medical Funds webpage](#).

### **What happens now I am accredited?**

Once your application has been reviewed and accepted, you will be sent a certificate to display in your practice, a poster to display with information for patients and a leaflet with information for your staff. A poster for your waiting room screen will be sent electronically, along with an accreditation mark and these frequently asked questions, which provide information on the services available to veterans. The nominated lead for your practice will be sent updates with the latest information as and when they become available.

### **Will our accreditation be reviewed?**

We will review your accreditation every three years. This will also give us the opportunity to review and update our information.