

Tackling Serious Stress in Veterans, Carers and Families

E-Bulletin

November 2019

University of Chester

Update from Principle Investigator, Professor Alan Finnegan PhD RN FRCN FRSA FAAN



Welcome to the second E-Bulletin for the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's (AFCFTs) Serious Stress programme. It is 7-months since the various UK initiatives commenced, and CAIS, Wigan Council, WWTW, Inspire and the Ely Centre have opened their initiatives and enlisted support whilst NHS Solent and Veterans 1st Point are due to start enrolling participants in the near future. This E-Bulletin contains an update from the Westminster Centre for Research in Ageing, Mental Health and Veterans (The Centre) and includes information from the grant holders. There is no update from the AFCFT due to the General Election and political purdah.

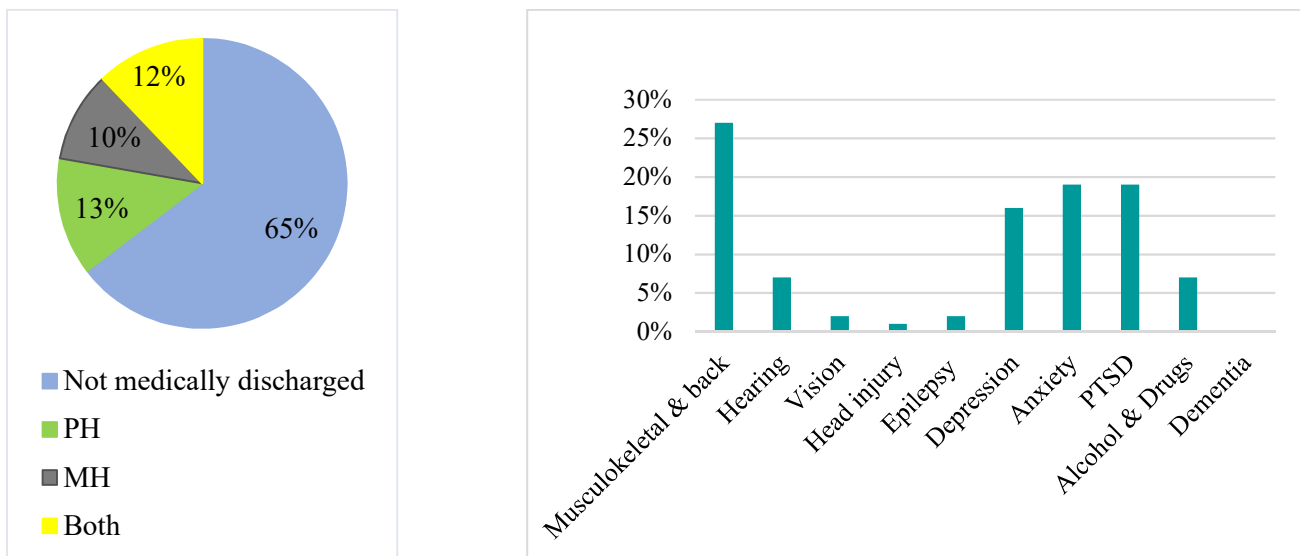
The Evaluation

To date, the Centre has received questionnaires from 177 participants who have entered the Serious Stress programmes. Of these, 98 were Veterans and 19 were from a family member/carers. See Table 1.

Grant holders	ENTRY Questionnaires	
	Veterans	Family or Carer
Veteran 1st Point	/	/
Inspire	16	3
Ely Centre	20	6
CAIS	16	0
Wigan	41	7
WWTW	5	3
Solent NHS	/	/
TOTAL = 117	98	19

Table 1. Received questionnaires separated by organisations delivering the programmes.

Veteran participants were mostly male at 94% (N=91), of which 88% (N=85) had served as Regulars and 93% (N=91) were in the Army. The mean age for veterans was 49 years old and family members and carers was 43 years old. The majority of veteran participants had left the armed forces as Private soldiers (or equivalent) at 58% (N=56). The average length of service was 10 years with 99% (N=73) serving for more than 1 year. Of these, 79% (N=76), had completed an operational tour; most commonly in Northern Ireland at 55% (N=52). The primary reason for leaving the armed forces was due to a medical discharge at 35% (N=34), and this was due to a combination of physical and / or mental health problems. Eighty-six percent (N=79) of veterans reported having long term physical or mental illness. The most common physical problems were due to musculoskeletal injury and MH issues were depression, anxiety and PTSD. (See Figures 1 and 2).



Figures 1 & 2. Veterans medical discharge details and breakdown

These were associated with a wide range of common symptoms including sleep disturbance, low mood and loss of confidence; symptoms that were also common with family and carers. Eighty six percent (N=79) of participants had been exposed to a traumatic event during their service (See Figure 3 for details).

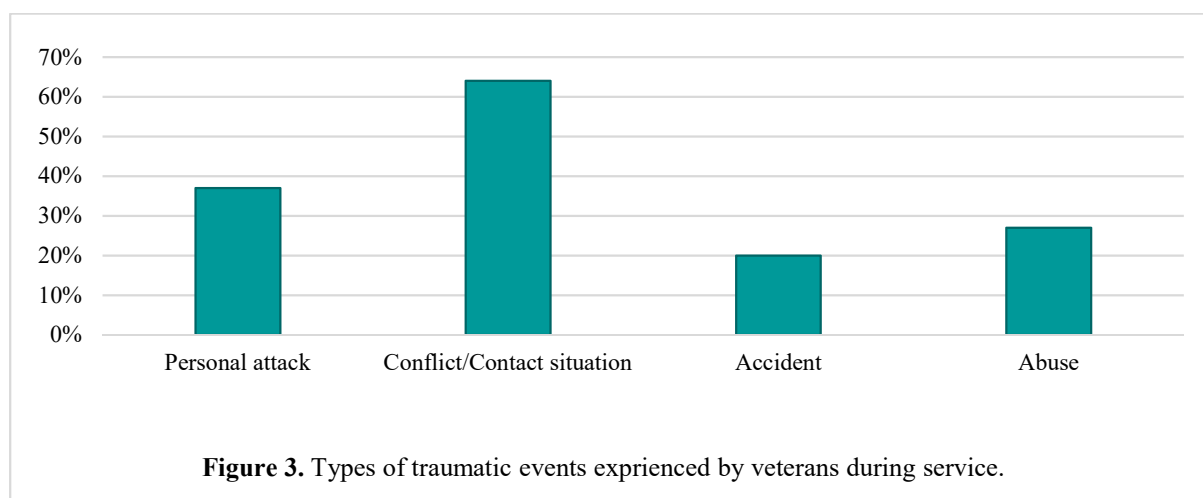


Figure 3. Types of traumatic events experienced by veterans during service.

The majority of the veteran participants at 71% (N=73) reporting having few people to rely on, and 57% (N=54) felt 'much less' likely to engage in social activities compared to other people in their age group. Many veterans were unemployed 44% (N=43), and reported high levels of stress on entering the programme; with an average score of 7 (out of 10) for both veterans and family / carers. Participants are experiencing on average five significant life stressors, with the most common factors being previous unresolved trauma and family stressors. Veterans reported higher levels of social isolation. Participants are mainly entering the Serious Stress programmes via charities 45% (N=43) or self-referrals at 22% (N=21); 69% (N=64) had previously accessed support to help deal with stressful situations, although many felt it hard to ask. A larger report will be shared with grant holders in December 2019.

Ensuring Quality

It remains vital to obtain as many questionnaires as possible to provide the evidence to build the sustainability of the Serious Stress projects. We are all aware of the importance of collecting data that is accurate, authentic, and reliable to both measure the value of the initiatives and provide a template to support the health and well-being of those members of the Armed Forces Community requiring help in the future. The questionnaires have clearly been completed diligently and reflects the participants' understanding the rationale for the study. This cannot be achieved without the delivery partners and their grant holders championing the projects.

Data collection and transmission has been successfully completed, and timing for the completion of the entry questionnaire must make sense to the grant holders, delivery partners, and most importantly the participants. The audit mechanism to ensure that the Centre has received questionnaires from all the participants who have entered the programme is to compare the number of questionnaires received with the number of consent forms that the grant holders have collected. This maintains the participant's anonymity. On the whole, differences between the number of participant's enrolled onto programmes and the number of questionnaires that have been received are due to not having reached the point where the questionnaires have been given out.

Up to date, participant willingness to partake in the evaluation is high. The first dozen exit questionnaires have very recently been distributed, and similar flexibility is required as there will be instances of extended maintenance / safeguarding interventions that are provided after the Serious Stress programme to ensure on-going health and wellbeing. Therefore, the participant should complete the exit questionnaire on the completion of the specific Serious Stress element. The Centre appreciate that they will continue to be supported, so the message is that the grant holders should not wait for participants to be heading out of the door to ask them to complete the exit questionnaire.

All grant holders have identified the benefits in continuing data collection after the participants have exited the Serious Stress programme. The aim being to collect and analyse repeated observations (via questionnaires) to identify improvement / deterioration over time. This could be six and twelve months after exiting the programme. I have forwarded this recommendation to the AFCFT and will update grant holders once a decision has been reached.

The Centre is adding any emerging themes onto the Q&A section of the Centre website under the heading of "frequently asked questions". <https://www1.chester.ac.uk/westminster-centre-research-veterans/research/serious-stress-veterans-carers-and-their-families>. This section also contains hyperlinks to useful websites, and grant holders can any additional references to the Centre if required.

Serious Stress Symposium at the University of Chester on 24–25 March 2020

We are looking forward to hosting members of the AFCFT team and grant holders at the Serious Stress Symposium from the 24-25 March 2020. We intend to hold this important event in the Eisenhower Board Room at Churchill House within the Queens Park Campus of the University of Chester. This building was formerly the home to Western Command during WW2, where Winston Churchill would secretly meet with Generals Dwight Eisenhower and Charles De Gaulle to plan the downfall of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party. It is an excellent location for grant holders to share news of their successes and the challenges they have faced. The Centre team will present results at approximately the mid-point of the evaluation. We'll also receive an update from the AFCFT and two guest speakers in Andy Bacon from the NHS and Jamie O'Hara who is the CEO of HCD Economics. HCD Economics complete multi-national health economic studies, and Jamie will provide insight into how the Serious Stress evaluation can help determine cost effectiveness and extra-financial value measured by health, environmental and social outcomes. The Centre team will be very happy to help attendees with any details associated with the event.



Grant Holder Updates

Inspire



Inspire's Recovery Together Project has progressed from service establishment into more routine service delivery phase.

We have however continued to focus upon raising the awareness of the service across Northern Ireland, presenting to a number of local veterans charities and establishing safe referral pathways into the service.

With the service now fully operational we will be officially launching the project on the 18/11/2019, and have over 50 confirmed attendees to date, including from local charities, Health Trusts, local Council Veterans Champions and the Personnel Recovery Unit.

Service activity to date has been as follows:

- 82 entrants to service to date
- 50 engaged in psychological treatment and addiction support
- Programmes delivered in horticultural therapy and equine-based support.
- Educational programmes on Living with PTSD and Mental Health Advocacy for completed
- Trauma Sensitive Mindfulness Programme underway

Ely Centre



The Ely centre are progressing well with the programme and have had some great feedback from their clients on their experiences. Referrals continue to come in.

Veterans 1st Point



Veterans 1st Point are at the looking to receive participants onto the programme shortly.

CAIS



- CAIS have received 201 referrals to date, 31 people have completed support, 75 are currently on the programme
- 17 University of Chester entry questionnaires have been completed
- Ongoing communication with Chester and feedback from Peer mentors regarding questionnaires
- 3 successful applications have received funding from the innovation fund
- Second tranche of innovation fund has been launched
- Staff training continues and a robust staff resilience care package has been developed in partnership with Veterans NHS Wales and Cadw CAIS
- 2 new staff have been recruited
- Monthly Team meetings held
- Specialised training for Q3 to develop bespoke programme with UCLAN
- Conference event scheduled for Q4 to share learning and further develop delivery
- We continue to refine our data collection and recording

Wigan



Wigan Borough have a large population of Armed Service Leavers; over 22,000 men and woman have returned to the borough after service. This is a large population in comparison to other areas of the North West. The facility was opened by Simon Weston on Saturday 10th November 2018.

The Tackling Serious Stress in Veterans Families and Carers Programme named locally as Unite Inspire Achieve is delivered from Wigan Borough Armed Forces HQ. The HQ is a state of the art faculty specifically designed to support the Armed Forces Community in the Borough. A year into operational delivery, we have supported well over 200 members of the Armed Forces Community into housing, physical and mental health treatment as well as employment, training and volunteering.



"The HQ is a one stop facility providing support for the Armed Forces Community in Wigan Borough regarding Health and Wellbeing, Welfare, Education, Housing, Employment and Social Inclusion"

We do it the Wigan Way

Our Unite Inspire Achieve Programme has seen 64 beneficiaries enter the Tackling Serious Stress in Veterans, Families & Carers Programme. This demonstrates the immediate local need for this type of service tackling a range complex needs from homelessness and addiction to offending and debt and everything in between.

Integrated Partnership Working

As part of Wigan Placed Based Working Strategy the team working on the Tackling Serious Stress Programme are co-located working in partnership with members of staff from the complex dependency team as well as adult social care and housing. This allows us to wrap services around the beneficiary. Due to this partnership approach, we have already housed 14 homeless Veterans and their Families.

Improved Access to Mental Health Services

Our Mental Health Service Manager started in post on 11th November – Access to therapeutic support and counselling for Veterans and their Families is now immediate and on site. We're working with NHS partners and the local CCG to map out and navigate national and local mental health services to ensure our beneficiaries get the support they need as soon as possible. We're delivering person centered counselling, EMDR therapy as well as commissioning mental health assessments for better diagnosis and treatment.

MP Visit – Shadow Minister for Veterans, Reserves and Personnel – Gerald Jones

On the 15th of October, Wigan Council hosted an event with Gerald Jones and Cllrs responsible for the Armed Forces Community Strategy in their Local Authorities across Greater Manchester.



Gerald said “During my visit to Wigan Borough Armed Forces HQ, I was extremely impressed with the activities and support services hosted at the HQ, and huge thanks go to Wigan Council for all they do to support Molyneux House and the excellent support given to veterans - a true facility for veterans and the wider community coming together and one others can learn from”.

Peer Mentoring Programme

As part of the Tackling Serious Stress in Veterans Families and Cares Programme we are working with an organisation called Community Lead Initiatives (CLI) to develop a lived experience peer mentoring programme. This will allow us to build capacity in delivery using community assets that is co-designed by the people acceding support on the programme for the Armed Forces Community by The Armed Forces Community.

CLI have been delivering peer led mentoring for six years in a variety of settings including criminal justice, recovery and those with multiple complex needs. They are highly respected in the sector for the quality of their delivery and the impact it has on beneficiaries’.

The services they deliver make a real difference in people’s lives, delivering support, advice, advocacy and community links within a mentoring relationship.

They specialise, as we do in utilising peer experience in a meaningful way to shape services and deliver that support.



The Northern Care Coordination Partnership (NCCP) is gaining great momentum and the collaboration between the partnership and referral partners has a real sense of cohesion. With new partnerships being brought on board, the access for quick support is second to none for our clients and their families.

Soon after launching the project, it became apparent, there is no lack of clients within the Greater Manchester and North East of England areas for us to support. With The NHS veterans mental health teams (Transition Intervention and Liaison Service and Military Veterans Service) in both areas receiving approximately 140 veterans per month in to their services, we very quickly established a working relationship with these teams so we could work together to support the most complex veterans, their families and carers.

The referral pathway is quite vast, but targeted. Individuals can self-refer or they can be referred from any one of the local referral partners we work with such as Housing Officers within the local authorities, SSAFA, RBL, Combat Stress and of course our programme partnership as well as WWTW other programmes. Internal cross programme support is proving very useful for us. With the ability to get extra support from our Project Nova team or the Family Support team as well as the IPS employability teams enable us to support more clients at any one time. The NCCP project Manager has organised 3 monthly steering groups with the whole referral and portfolio which are designed for us all to get together, update the group and share ideas around best practice.

Work has started on our plans for how WWTW are able to sustain the project post March 2021. This is in the early stages of planning, but WWTW have already included High Intensity Support in to its 5 year plan.

The early signs are, that by having our Support Care Coordinators (SCCs), being able to spend that extra time with our clients, the clients progress very quickly in a positive way in their journey. This quick response is very clear and with us being able to get them swift and effective support through our partnerships goes a long way towards this progression. The SCCs have also been able to build relationships with local authorities and the statutory services. These relationships have enabled us to get quick and tailored support for our clients. One example of this is that one of the North East clients was banned from their local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) for his anger issues, this clients Mother died recently and he did not know how to take care of any bills and was slowly sinking. Our SCC contacted the CAB and managed to get 1-2-1 appointments for the client which has helped him start to work on his finances and debt. Hand holding at the start of the relationship before pulling away slowly was critical for him.

The feedback from our clients has been great, even at this early stage with one of our clients saying “I feel so much better about myself. Since working with Jill (the Greater Manchester SCC) my outlook on life is so much more positive. Jill has helped me realise that I can’t just sit and wallow in my home, I need to get on with my life and that I need to take the support that is being offered.” This client had not been going out of his home for a long time, he is now already getting out to the gym, using public transport and even going away with his mum for a weekend. Only working with this client for circa 5 weeks, the improvement is amazing, he has done so well and we look forward to seeing how far he can progress in the coming months.

Working with all partners including referral partners is key for the Veterans to gain as much bespoke support and quickly. Rebecca Holden, the supported tenancies officer from Salford council said “the support from the NCCP programme at WWTW for my veteran client base is vital. For example, I have been working with a client for the last 12 months, supporting him with his housing. I struggled to support him fully as he had so many support needs. I am supposed to work with clients for a limited time of around 3 months, but I needed to continue to support this client as he had no one else. Once the NCCP project launched, I contacted WWTW straight away to see if they could support my client. Once I meet Jill, the SCC for Greater Manchester, it became very clear the NCCP maybe the exact service to help me support my client. Within just a few short weeks, I was able to concentrate on supporting the client with his housing whilst Jill concentrated on all the other support needs. He is now no longer self-harming, he is regularly going to the gym, his tenancy is secure and his outlook on life is so much better. For this client, his journey has only just began. If it was not for the NCCP and specifically Jill, I dread to think what state he would be in right now. The NCCP service has been vital for this client and I can see the added value on working together with WWTW to support my entire veteran client base.”

WWTW look forward to continuing the great work with the NCCP across both areas. We will continue to build the partnership portfolio as per the needs of the clients.

Solent NHS Trust



- The Portsmouth Military Mental Health Alliance continues to expand and now includes the Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity, Naval Families Federation and All Call Signs.
- A number of stakeholder engagement events have taken place to help co-produce the new services.
- A veteran with many years military service has been recruited to the role of Veterans Coordinator for Solent Recovery College and is now in post.
- Solent Recovery College completed a pilot programme of its veterans and families curriculum offer in the summer and is now signing up veterans as new students.
- Recruitment of the Quick Response Force (QRF) volunteers continues and will now be an ongoing rolling programme.
- A veteran with many years Royal Navy experience has been recruited to the role of Veterans Wellbeing Coordinator and has started work developing the roles of the QRF and Veterans Wellbeing Advisors.
- Veterans Wellbeing Advisors have been recruited to PositiveMinds (Wellbeing House) - all of whom have served in UK armed forces - and are being trained.
- After some frustrating delays PositiveMinds has secured a location from where it will provide support to veterans and their families and will open its doors before Christmas.
- The local primary and secondary care health IT system, SystmOne, has been developed to capture and report information about the support offered to Veterans under the programme to enhance understanding of veterans specific needs and how these are addressed.
- A lead Veterans Therapist role has been created and recruited to and will manage the provision of Psychological Therapies to veterans.
- Building on our model for tackling serious stress the Alliance has been successful in receiving a substantial 3 year grant from a leading military veterans charity to expand support to serving personnel and their families.

University Staff Project Team

Staff Members



Dr Alan Finnegan

Professor of Nursing and Military Mental Health, and Director of the Westminster Centre for Research

Colonel (Ret'd) Alan Finnegan's military career included appointments as: Commanding Officer at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine, MOD Nurse Consultant Advisor in Military Mental Health and Defence Professor of Nursing. His overseas deployments include Iraq, the Balkans, Afghanistan, Africa and four years in Northern Ireland where he was OiC of the Stress and Trauma Clinic within HQNI. On retirement from the Army, he joined the University in 2016.

Dr Lisa Di Lemma

Senior Researcher – Veterans Projects

Lisa is a psychologist and her research interests focus on health and cognitive processes, behaviour change and cost-effective interventions. Currently, she is a post-doctoral researcher at the University, and the Tackling Serious Stress in Veterans, Carers and Families project is one of her main focuses.



Lottie Ainsworth-Moore

Project Administrator – Veterans Projects

Lottie has a strong background in working with serving personnel, their families and veterans in previous employment with military charities and volunteer work. She is also an Army wife of 10 years.

Lauren West

Administrative Assistant

Lauren studied at the University of Chester before gaining employment at the Westminster Centre for Research. She has good links to the military community and assists a number of military forums including being Secretary for the Cheshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Committee.



Dr David Sacree

Researcher

David served for 27 years in the British Army, spending 16 years with the special-forces. The experience gained from various appointments in commissioned rank and his personal experience of integrating back into civilian life, provide him with valuable insight to the range of challenges faced by serving personnel, veterans and their family members.

We would also like to introduce you to our associated staff:

Alan Massey – Having left a successful career in the British Army, Alan is a Senior University Teaching Fellow in the Public Health Department at the University of Chester.

Ian Moorhouse – Currently a Clinical Skills and Simulation Demonstrator, Ian served in the British Army from 1985-2015 having completed tours in Iraq, the Balkans, Northern Ireland, West Africa, Afghanistan and others.

Events, News & Information

Symposium

The Tackling Serious Stress Symposium will take place on the 24th and 25th March 2020 in Chester for all Grant Holders. More detail about this exciting event will be provided closer to the time.

International Conference

The University of Chester are hosting an International Armed Forces, Veterans and their Families Research Conference on Thursday 17th September 2020. All levels of Veterans research will be included from PhD students to Executives. Click [here](#) for tickets and further information.

Award Finalists

The team at the University's Westminster Centre for Research in Veterans were shortlisted for the Military and Civilian Health Partnership Award in the *HSJ* (*Health Service Journal*) awards.



The *HSJ* awards are the largest annual benchmarking and recognition programme for the health sector. Over the last 39 years, the awards have been celebrating healthcare excellence through huge political, technological and financial challenges within the sector. Through a rigorous, fair and transparent judging process the awards produce a roll call of the best organisations, teams and people in the NHS and the wider health sector.

Two projects were highlighted for the *HSJ* awards. [Finding the Forgotten \(FtF\)](#) was designed to motivate veterans to register with a GP practice and to use education to motivate Primary Health Care (PHC) staff to engage. This recognised that only 9% of veterans are correctly registered within PHC. There was an improvement of 200% in registration following the project.

A second initiative was the design of manualised, systematic and structured, evidence-based undergraduate nurse education sessions. The educational programme includes freely available online material, including informational cartoons and animations and was developed to address the fact that there is no formal requirement nationally to educate undergraduate nurses to care for the veteran community. Results from 468 student nurses demonstrated a significant improvement in students' knowledge, satisfaction and awareness and 93% found the training was useful.

Dr Alan Finnegan said: "The *HSJ* Awards are recognised as an outstanding opportunity to celebrate excellence and innovation in the NHS. The team members are absolutely delighted that the judges have decided that our application is worthy of being short-listed and for giving us this fantastic opportunity to share our research, academic innovations and community engagement with a large and influential audience."

HSJ Editor Alistair Mclellan, said: “We would like to congratulate the University of Chester’s Westminster Centre for Research in Veterans on being nominated in the category of Military and Civilian Health Partnership Award ahead of this year’s 2019 HSJ awards. We are looking forward to welcoming them to the ceremony in November, to join us in recognising the very best achievements and innovations in the healthcare sector. The entrants this year have been of incredible calibre, and each of the finalists in this category have been chosen based on their outstanding commitment to excellence in healthcare.”

Recent Publications

Finnegan, AP., Di Lemma, L., Moorhouse, I., Lambe, R., Soutter, EM., Templeman, J., Ridgway, V., Hynes, C., Simpson, R., & McGhee, S. (2020). Educating Nurses to Deliver Optimum Care to Military Veterans and their Families. *Nurse Education in Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2019.102654>

Finnegan, AP & Aitkenhead, S (2019). A Research Portfolio: Transformational change by nursing, midwifery and care staff across health and care. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. Published online 7 Oct
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jan.14228>

Useful links

<https://www1.chester.ac.uk/westminster-centre-research-and-innovation-veterans-wellbeing>

<https://www.covenantfund.org.uk/>