

# SUPPORTING ARMED FORCES IN ACUTE HOSPITAL SETTINGS E – BULLETIN



**AUGUST 2023**

## UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER PROJECT EVALUATOR

### Update from Dr Rebecca Randles

Welcome to the fifth E-Bulletin for the Evaluation of the Supporting Armed Forces in Acute Hospital Settings Programme. The final month of data collection is fast approaching, as a reminder we will be closing data for the evaluation at the end of January 2024. We have now completed the interview stage of the evaluation and will shortly be looking to conduct focus groups, to help to strengthen the findings from the interviews and to facilitate discussion surrounding the role. It is now also pivotal that we receive case studies from the grant holders in each NHS Trust as these are key in providing examples of the impact that the AFA (or equivalent) has had on the veteran community in the hospital.

It remains as important as ever that we receive data from the NHS Trusts. We have seen an increase in the number of grant holders who are inputting onto the portal recently, and this is helping to provide a veteran profile of those who the AFA is engaging with. The feedback from veterans and family members, as well as the staff training surveys, also remain vital to help to further understand the impact of this role and we ask for this to continue.

Interviews have, so far, been conducted successfully, with themes already emerging in regard to impact, challenges and future recommendations for the sustainability of this role. Thank you to all of the participants for these interviews, these are certainly helping to provide further evidence of the impact of the AFA (or equivalent) role.

Please bare in mind that you will be contacted shortly in regards to the focus groups, these will be conducted virtually via Microsoft Teams and will be validatory in nature meaning that the themes from the interviews will be presented to participants for discussion.

Northern Ireland continues to receive phone calls, and identify the gaps in their reach, ensuring that presentations are given throughout the region, in numerous different organisations, on what the advice line can offer. Professor Alan Finnegan had a successful visit to Northern Ireland for the interview stage of the evaluation.

# EDUCATIONAL MODULE

The Westminster Centre for Research in Veterans educational module has been adapted into a Moodle Module which you can access [here](#). Originally created for student nurses, but has been found to be incredibly useful to numerous healthcare staff and professions.

Westminster Centre for Research in Ageing, Mental health and Veterans

University of Chester

## Welcome to the online training module for *Supporting Armed Forces in Acute Hospital Settings*

This Moodle Module has been created for the Supporting Armed Forces in Acute Hospital Settings programme funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and NHS England and is using the free online educational module "Introduction to the Armed Forces Community" which was created by the Westminster Centre for Research in Veterans at the University of Chester.

This programme is encapsulated into 6 chapters to educate healthcare practitioners to deliver optimum care to military veterans and their families through an understanding and insight into the Armed Forces Community.

The creation of the original online sessions were supported by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, Health Education England and the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust. Background to the project and the evaluation were published in Finnegan, AP., et al (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>

The original educational module can be accessed [here](#) and is also available on the NHS Learning Hub which can be accessed [here](#)

*The purpose of this training is to help you to feel empowered to connect with veterans, discuss experiences and offer appropriate support to them, and to each other, to provide the best possible care.*

Pre course knowledge assessment

Chapter 1 Introduction to the Armed Forces Community

Chapter 2 The British Armed Forces and Veterans

Chapter 3 Military Nursing

Chapter 4 Military Mental Health

Chapter 5 Caring for and supporting the Armed Forces Community

Chapter 6 Caring for and Supporting the Armed Forces Community: ...

Post course knowledge assessment

Completion Certificate

This module consists of videos which are designed to be able to be viewed at leisure. We have also included a pre and post quiz which tests knowledge before and after using the module. These quizzes are completely optional for staff. If the staff would like a completion certificate they must complete all chapters and quizzes.

## Chapter 1 Introduction to the Armed Forces Community

Welcome to Chapter 1.

This chapter gives an overview of all that is contained in this online module and introduces you to the what the Armed Forces Community means.

Approx 8 minutes.

Please check the tick box once you have watched the video



## THE EVALUATION

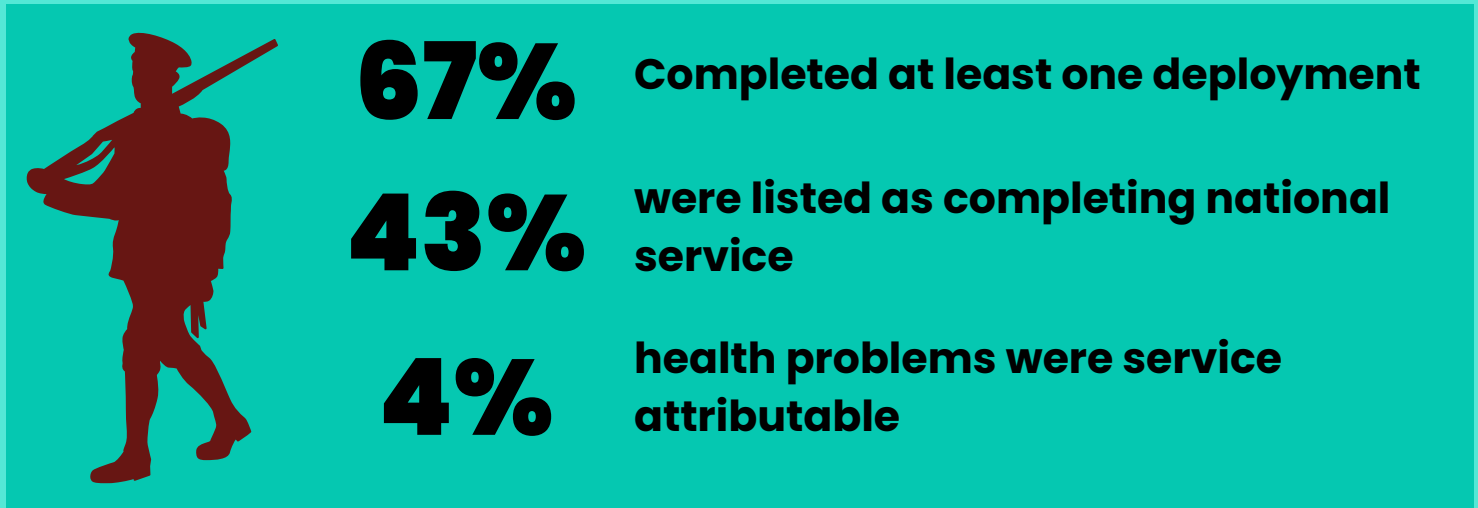
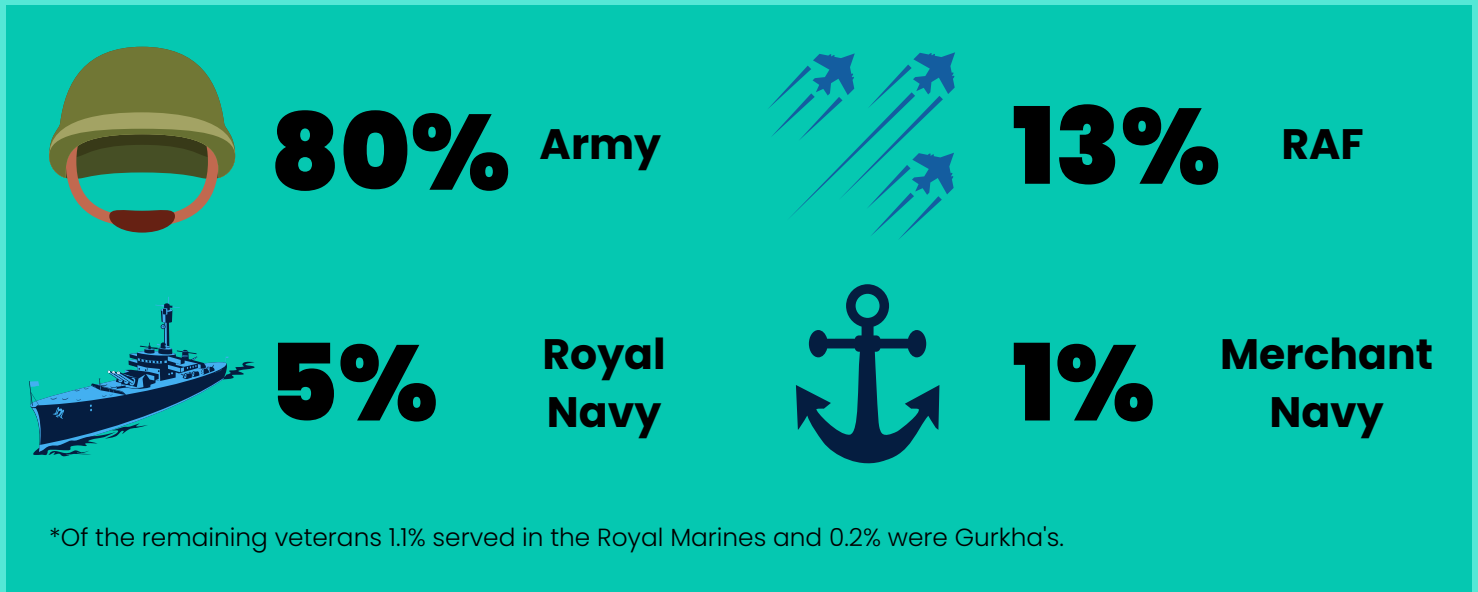
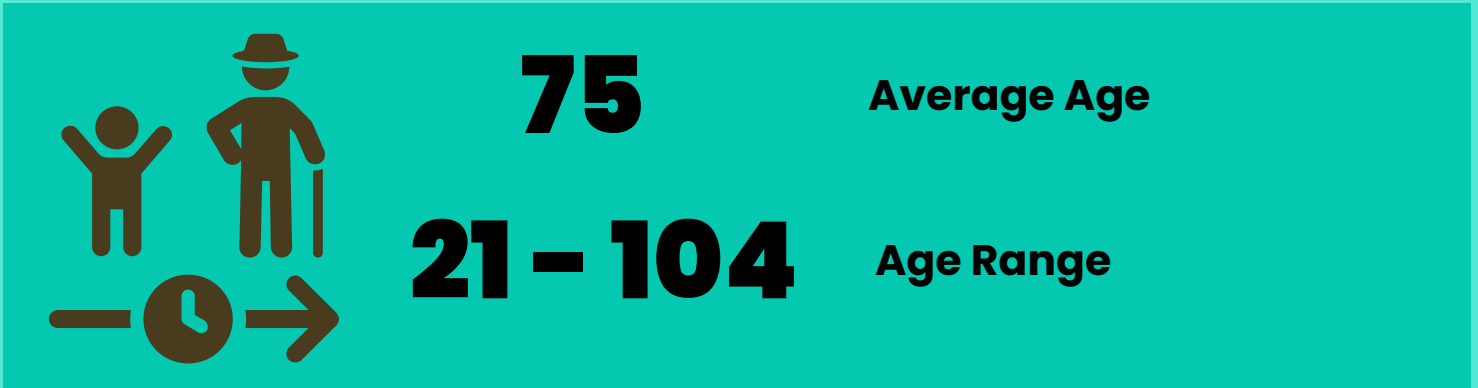
Data is received on a weekly basis in an anonymised format. Below is the data that has been received and analysed by the researcher as of the 13th of July 2023. Data past this point has been recieved but is yet to be analysed.

Type	N	Change Since 22/03/2023
Portal Entries	1529	+ 679
Service User Feedback Surveys	77	+ 22
Family Member Feedback Surveys	22	+ 4
Staff Pre Training Surveys	660	+ 197
Staff Post Training Surveys	680	+ 226
Northern Ireland Advice Line Calls	570	+ 237
Northern Ireland Feedback Surveys	16	+ 2

Thank you to those who have been inputting data, ensuring that surveys are completed and in the case of Northern Ireland, sending regular data. Without data, we are unable to complete the evaluation. Therefore, it is vital that this data is completed.

# VETERAN DEMOGRAPHICS

We now have 1529 veterans inputted into the Armed Forces Advocate Portal which have been analysed. A summary of the demographics of these veterans can be seen below.



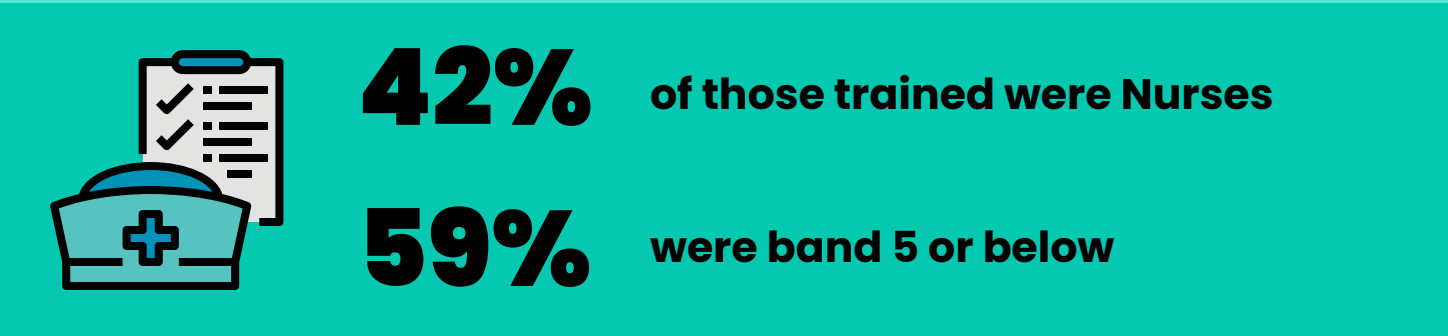


# REFERRALS

The portal also records where the AFA's are referring veterans to for support. Below is a snapshot of some of the services that veterans are being referred to.



# STAFF TRAINING



## Before Training



**52%**

selected "Strongly Disagree/Disagree" for knowing what services are available to veterans

## After Training

**89%**

selected "Strongly Agree/Agree" for knowing what services are available to veterans

Trainees have the option to leave comments regarding the experience of their training. The feedback received has been positive about the AFA.

*"Feel like the service should be bigger- now I have more knowledge I will definitely be referring more/asking more patients re: if they are veterans."*

*"I really enjoyed listening to the veteran's stories and hearing things from their perspective, as it makes it more human."*

*"I was absolutely hooked, its such a brilliant course and [the AFA] was great at explaining everything clearly, what can I say except 10 out of 10. Thank you so much."*

*"informative, relevant and reasonable length and directed to aid our patient care and support of their needs."*

*"Excellent overview of our armed services community support services and networks. Presented in a clear and concise way. Thank you."*

## SERVICE USER FEEDBACK

Service Users are also given the opportunity for feedback as well as their family members. Currently, we have 77 SU feedback surveys and 22 from Family members. Seventy Percent of SU's stated that they had received additional support , and 72.7% of family members stated additional support had been put in place for the SU.

The feedback received is positive with 98% of feedback surveys rating the AFA's overall support as either good or very good, the rest rated the support as average. Comments left on the surveys indicated that SU's and Family members liked that there was someone available who understood and were able to talk to about the military. Some improvements suggested simply included more visits from the AFA.

# NORTHERN IRELAND (NI)

Northern Ireland's evaluation is bespoke to them due to differences in legislation. Instead, NI has created an advice line that both organisations and veterans are able to call.



**570**

**calls have been made to the advice line since launching\***

**40%**

**of the calls came from organisations**

## REASONS FOR USING ADVICE LINE



**21.4%**

**Mental Health**



**20.9%**

**General Advice**



**19.7%**

**Physical Health**



**11.4%**

**Pensions**



**13.2%**

**Housing**

## SIGNPOSTING



**make the call**

**0800 232 1271\***

text 'CHECK' to 67300

[nidirect.gov.uk/makethecall](https://nidirect.gov.uk/makethecall)

Northern Ireland only

\*network charges may apply



Users of the advice line are asked to complete a feedback survey. Currently, there has been 16 surveys completed all of which are positive. One Hundred percent of those who completed the survey rated the advice line as either good or very good. In addition, 100% also rated the adviceline as either useful or very useful and were either likely or very likely to use the adviceline again.

**"No improvements could be made as far as I'm concerned."**

**"I always receive a swift response to queries.."**

**"VASP interaction style. He was incredibly caring and compassionate. He done so much for my client and always seemed prepared to go the extra mile to help."**

**"Improved partnership working."**

**"My own personal development and awareness of services available to veterans."**

Users also have the opportunity to express what was positive about the advice line and any improvements that could be made. One improvement suggested to include the council Veterans champion in signposting and that further staff is needed for the adviceline to grow.. Some of the positive comments can be seen here.

**\*as of the 13th of July 2023**

# ARMED FORCES COVENANT FUND TRUST

## Update from The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT)

As we approach the last quarter of the "Supporting Armed Forces in Acute Hospital Settings" programme, this is a wonderful platform to reflect on the achievements that have come from this ever-growing pilot programme.

We have seen many fundamental improvements made to the support of veterans in a secondary care environment, including the embedding of the question "Have you ever served in HM Forces" onto a myriad of different NHS database systems, which has been an incredible achievement. That, and linking/working together with the wider community, local authorities and the third sector, has emphasised the importance and due regard of the Covenant Duty principles. Staff training across the NHS has also provided wider knowledge and context to staff of the challenges that military life faces.

These changes will help to shape a veteran friendly future for our Armed Forces community, and you have been the forefront of that change within the Acute hospital setting.

One of our main goals at the Trust has been to support all our projects with ongoing sustainability.

In June, following on from the discussions at the roadshow event at the University of Chester, we held a business case online seminar with guidance from Professor Andy Bacon which was very well attended.

We also held a very successful webinar for all the Advocates with representatives from OP RESTORE. Prior to this, the Trust had received many queries regarding the changes to OP RESTORE during the rebranding process. This was an opportunity to update all AFAs on the new processes and referral pathways into this service, keeping in mind the strong working links between OP RESTORE services and the Armed Forces Advocates.

Grants lead Rachael Storr and Project Officer Gemma Calvert have held a number of successful surgery appointments and received some exciting feedback within these meetings. These include external award nominations and of course veterans' feedback from the support they have received from the Armed Forces Advocates themselves.

We would like to offer our congratulations to all Advocates receiving these high accolades.

We have also taken on board the feedback we have received regarding the continuation of the Armed Forces portal after the end date of January 2024. We can assure you that all feedback has been considered, and the Trust are currently working on a solution with DMWS in hope that we can secure an extended time limit for continued access to the online platform. Our Project Officer Gemma Calvert will update Advocates on the outcome soon.

Finally, we are excited to be working on the preparations and plans for the upcoming Roadshow in Scotland. This Roadshow will be an opportunity for the projects within the devolved administrations to highlight the excellent work that has been taking place, and what the future looks like for veteran support in secondary care in Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Due to the capacity of the room during the event, we unfortunately are only able to accommodate limited numbers of attendees. However, we are working to provide a live Teams link to give anyone who wishes to attend an opportunity to do so. Gemma Calvert will confirm all details with Advocates in due course – watch this space!

Just a final reminder that our communications team are always looking out for great stories to feature on our channels, so here is another opportunity to let the wider Armed Forces community know what you have been achieving. Please do drop Gemma a line and she will be delighted to link you up with our communications officers.

Contact details below:

Grant Management Lead:

[Rachael.storr@covenantfund.org.uk](mailto:Rachael.storr@covenantfund.org.uk)

Project Officer:

[gemma.calvert@covenantfund.org.uk](mailto:gemma.calvert@covenantfund.org.uk)



# NHS ENGLAND

## Update from NHS England (NHSE)

The last month has been an exciting one across the Armed Forces space; after much hard work and with support from our Armed Forces Patient and Public Voice Group, we were pleased to rename the Veterans Trauma Network (VTN), Op RESTORE: The Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service in the lead up to Armed Forces day.

We have also been working with colleagues piloting the single point of contact service for the Armed Forces community and following a period of engagement, this has been renamed Op COMMUNITY: Armed Forces Community Support.

We also welcome Op FORTITUDE, an Office for Veterans' Affairs initiative to end veteran homelessness, and Operation Stirling, an Age UK and Fighting with Pride service to support LGBT+ veterans, into the veteran support field. You can find out more about these initiatives below. We hope that these new services will offer valuable support to veterans of the UK Armed Forces.

With 5 July 2023 marking the 75th birthday of the NHS, we were delighted that in the same week the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA) announced that 75% of trusts across England are now Veteran Aware accredited.



### Op RESTORE: The Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service

The Veterans Trauma Network (VTN) is now called Op RESTORE: The Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service. This brings the service in line with the following NHS services in England,

providing a recognisable suite of services for the Armed Forces community: • Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service • Op NOVA: Supporting Veterans in the Justice System • Op COMMUNITY: Armed Forces Community Support

The decision to rename the VTN, Op RESTORE, was informed by engagement with veterans, providers and charities, with the aim of supporting improved access to and awareness of this service. Whilst there are some things that the NHS will not be able to restore in full, we aim to support veterans restore their health and quality of life as best we can. Op RESTORE is a service for anyone who has served at least one day in the UK Armed Forces and, as a result of their service, acquired a significant, lasting physical illness or injury. Op RESTORE will continue to accept only GP referrals; GPs can obtain a referral form by emailing [imperial.oprestore@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.oprestore@nhs.net)



Op RESTORE uses a network of both civilian and military consultants, along with welfare support from military charities, to support a veteran's health using a holistic approach. Whilst Op RESTORE cannot shorten NHS waiting times, it seeks to ensure the veteran 'waits well' and is seen by the most appropriate clinician for their needs. For more information, visit [www.nhs.uk/oprestore](http://www.nhs.uk/oprestore).

### Op COMMUNITY, Armed Forces Community Support

Following a robust engagement exercise with service users and providers on an appropriate name for the single point of contact service for Armed Forces families, this is now called Op COMMUNITY: Armed Forces Community Support. This model of care navigation for those in the wider Armed Forces community seeks to ensure individuals and families are able to access NHS services without disadvantage. This is particularly important for mobile service families and those transitioning from military to civilian life. Op COMMUNITY is being piloted in the following areas and can be contacted using the details below:

Pilot ICB	Contact Details
NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board (ICB) and NHS Kent & Medway ICB	T: 01273 403693 E: <a href="mailto:afn.admin@nhs.net">afn.admin@nhs.net</a> W: <a href="http://www.armedforcesnetwork.org">www.armedforcesnetwork.org</a>
NHS Hertfordshire & West Essex ICB	T: 07908 209 912 E: <a href="mailto:HWE.AFCfamiliesveterans@nhs.net">HWE.AFCfamiliesveterans@nhs.net</a>
NHS Humber and North Yorkshire ICB	T: 01609 765315 E: <a href="mailto:hnyicb-ny.spocmilitaryfamilies@nhs.net">hnyicb-ny.spocmilitaryfamilies@nhs.net</a>
NHS Dorset ICB	T: 01202 584428 E: <a href="mailto:dhc.dorset.veterans@nhs.net">dhc.dorset.veterans@nhs.net</a>
NHS Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland ICB	T: 0116 2256858
NHS North Central London ICB	T: 0800 999 3697 E: <a href="mailto:velliott@dmws.org.uk">velliott@dmws.org.uk</a>

# NHS ENGLAND

## Update from NHS England (NHSE)

### Veteran services: Op FORTITUDE and Operation Stirling

#### Op FORTITUDE

Veterans across the UK will have access to Op FORTITUDE, a new dedicated referral pathway for homeless veterans, including those sleeping on the streets. The hotline is part of a two-year £8.55 million programme to fulfil the Government's pledge to end veteran rough sleeping. The Veterans' Strategy Action Plan 2022-24 sets out the intention to achieve this within the current Parliament, but thanks to new funding this is set to be achieved ahead of schedule. The housing hotline, delivered by Riverside group, 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. The programme aims to support 1,300 veterans over two years across almost 60 housing complexes, ranging from apartment blocks to shared houses.

Projects delivered by nine housing providers will support veterans to thrive in civilian life. Wraparound services include specialist medical care, connections with local communities and the tools they need to get jobs. All nine projects will be ready to take Op FORTITUDE referrals by September 2023, expanding the pathway's network of housing providers from 10 to 14. This includes plugging into a network of 650 homes across Scotland with Veteran Homes Scotland, as well as a brand new consortium of housing across the North West of England. Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and the organisations working with them are encouraged to contact the Op FORTITUDE hotline from Monday 3 July 2023 on 0800 952 0774 or through a secure web portal at [riv.org.uk/opfortitude](http://riv.org.uk/opfortitude).

Further information can be found at [www.riverside.org.uk/care-and-support/veterans/](http://www.riverside.org.uk/care-and-support/veterans/).

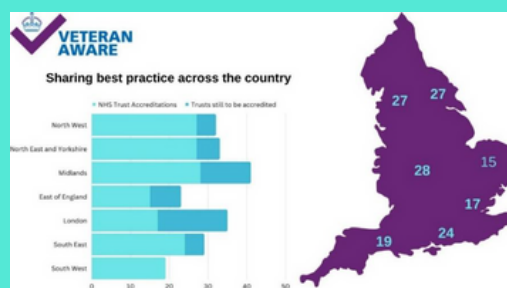
#### Operation Stirling

Age UK, in partnership with Fighting With Pride, is delivering Operation Sterling – a programme to help older LGBT+ veterans, who were adversely affected by the ban on LGBT+ personnel serving in the Armed Forces.

Before 12 January 2000, there was a ban on LGBT+ personnel serving in the British Armed Forces – those who did sign up were forced to hide their identity. Because of the ban, thousands of LGBT+ service personnel were removed or forced to leave service. For some, this meant not only losing their jobs, but also friends and family, as well as access to pensions that they'd earned while serving the country. Operation Sterling will provide telephone based support, advice and casework to older LGBT+ veterans through Age UK's Advice Line; combining the expertise of Age UK together with the expert knowledge of Fighting With Pride. Operation Stirling will be able to help older LGBT+ veterans access financial support, housing options and social care. LGBT+ veterans who served in the Armed Forces who would like to access Operation Sterling's specialised support, can do so by visiting the Fighting With Pride website to start the referral process.

Begin the referral process on the Fighting With Pride website

### Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA)



In the week the NHS celebrated its 75th birthday, the VCHA reached the milestone of 75% of NHS trusts accredited as Veteran Aware. In total, 157 Trusts across England are now accredited as Veteran Aware.

Accredited trusts can be found here

<https://veteranaware.nhs.uk/vcha-accredited-trusts-map/>



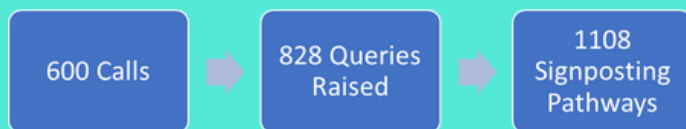
# GRANTHOLDER UPDATES

## NORTHERN IRELAND/SOMME NURSING HOME (VASP)



In summary, the VASP Service in Northern Ireland seeks to bridge a gap between the Statutory, Community/Voluntary sectors and individual Veterans seeking signposting support to the myriad of Veteran organisations and State Welfare Services available.

The Adviceline went 'live' on 10th June 2022. The VASP Service has received 600 calls as of 31st July 2023. The data has been examined and it has been noted that from the 600 calls, 828 queries were raised by the callers, leading to 1108 signposting pathways being provided by the VASP Service. Broadly, two signposting pathways per call.



The VASP Service is now in its second year and is due to finish on 31st March 2024.

Shortly the Project Manager will deliver a targeted outreach refresh of the Service. The reasoning for this targeted approach is based on the uptake received by the Service to date. The refresh will target those groups who have longer periods of engagement with clients/patients thereby ascertaining their background and providing an opportunity to share the Adviceline details. The targeted outreach refresh groups are as follows:-

- HSC Mental Health Trauma, Social Work Teams & GP Practices.
- NI Police & Probation Services
- NIHE, Housing Associations & Homeless Charities
- Veteran Organisations

The conclusions from the previous E- Bulletin dates 9th May 2023 remain accurate and also pertain to this reporting period. The number of individuals seeking signposting to ameliorate their welfare/financial difficulties remains high at 39% of queries.

Issues associated with housing either as unsuitable accommodation or homelessness also remains an area of concern.

The Project Manager is routinely requested to visit Veterans at home to complete forms and advocate owing to the complexity of the forms, ill health, IT literacy, technology access and GDPR issues. This is particularly prevalent with older Veteran trying to access both State Benefits and Service-related Welfare support.

Given its uptake consideration should be given to some form of perpetuity of the Service either in isolation or within the established Veteran framework in Northern Ireland.

# SCOTLAND – DEFENCE MEDICAL WELFARE SERVICES



## NHS Lothian

Since the last bulletin our Welfare Officers have continued to deliver our service within both the Acute Hospital Setting and in the community. Welfare Officer Brian Brown who we introduced in the last bulletin has certainly hit the ground running and has supported 25 service users in the Hospital and Community during this time as well as managing to attend DMWS induction training and integrate himself into the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.

We have continued to have a variety of Service Users and have assisted with transport to Hospital treatment, adaptations to housing, social isolation and cost of living support to name a few. The case study below gives an example of the support we can offer due to our backing from the AFCFT.

In July DMWS celebrated their 80th anniversary with an event in the parliament building at Holyrood, hosted by the cross-party veteran's committee. We were delighted that Grame Dey MSP, the Veterans Minister for Scotland and Professor Jason Leitch the Scottish Government's Clinical LEAD were able to attend. The event allowed them to meet not only some of our service users but also many of the NHS staff and our partner organisations who have assisted in the delivery of the AFCFT Acute Hospitals Project in not only Lothian but also Greater Glasgow & Clyde.

The assembled guests were also privileged to watch a production called "Kaleidoscope" by the Theatre Group Stand Easy Productions that highlighted the experience of veterans and their families as they navigate through the Health Care System. This was definitely an emotive part of the evening and the content was very much formed by the Veterans that took part in the production.

We continue to strive to help our NHS colleagues to identify veterans within our hospital settings and also educate on the Armed Forces Community and Armed Forces Covenant. Our Welfare Officers have presented to a variety of Teams within the Hospital's which has resulted in referrals for support coming from a variety of sources.

We have worked closely with our NHS colleagues and the TRAK Care Team (Patient tracking system) to develop a method for staff to refer veterans to our service and we now have a prototype that is at the development stage before testing.

We continue to work directly with our colleagues in Greater Glasgow and Clyde on both education, veteran identification and future funding with the aspiration that any success can be used on future projects and increase awareness and education within other Health Boards in Scotland.



Stand Easy Productions performance– DMWS Scottish Parliament event.



# SCOTLAND – DEFENCE MEDICAL WELFARE SERVICES



## NHS GREATER GLASGOW AND CLYDE

### Celebrating and Communicating

Over the past three months there have been several occasions to celebrate the work that NHSGGC and DMWS does to support members of the Armed Forces Community, and in particular veterans receiving treatment in our hospitals.

On 2 June, NHSGGC organised an event at the Erskine Reid MacEwan Activity Centre bringing together public and 3rd sector organisations who are working to improve the health and wellbeing of veterans in Greater Glasgow and Clyde. The purpose of the event was to help improve collaboration. The event was chaired by our Board Chair, Professor John Brown and we were joined by three guest speakers: Susie Hamilton, Scottish Veterans Commissioner, Dr Charles Winstanley, Chair of the Scottish Government Implementation Board for the Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing System and Professor Beverly Bergman, Scottish Veterans Research Group, Glasgow University. This was also a great opportunity to showcase the collaboration between NHSGGC and DMWS through the Acute Hospitals Project.

Also in June, DMWS celebrated their 80th anniversary with an event in the parliament building at Holyrood, hosted by the cross-party veteran's committee and attended by the veteran's minister, Grame Dey, MSP and the Scottish Government's Clinical Lead Prof Jason Lietch. The event facilitated the bringing together of many of their partners, champions, and service users to celebrate the work the charity does to support veterans and their family members. This included staff and beneficiaries of the AFCFT Acute Hospitals Project in both Greater Glasgow & Clyde and Lothian. The next day, DMWS staff in Glasgow organised a coffee morning for Service Users and contacts at HMS Dalriada, where Service Users were able to meet each other and the DMWS CEO Paul Gaffney.

In July, NHSGGC was recognised with a Gold Award by the Ministry of Defence Employers Recognition Scheme. This marks the outstanding commitment NHSGGC offers veterans and armed forces personnel across the west of Scotland but also the large part of the NHSGGC workforce with close links to the Armed Forces as reservists, veterans or as family of serving members.

As part of its wider work to support veterans, NHSGGC is also pleased to announce the creation of a new role in mental health services. Dean Cameron, a veteran himself, is the new Veteran's Mental Health Services Project Lead. Dean will work on preparation for

implementation of a Scottish Government led initiative to improve access for veterans to mental health services.

### Ongoing Delivery

Project delivery in our hospitals continues and we are pleased to confirm the recruitment of a second Welfare Officer (our Advocate equivalent) to work alongside Samantha Wilkie. Samantha has been working solo since April and we now look forward to the return of wider coverage across the GGC acute hospital estate.

So far 98 veterans have received welfare support, with some requiring multiple interventions and referrals to other 3rd sector organisations. Using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale as an indication of mental wellbeing and the DMWS conversational based needs assessment, it shows that 33% of these Service Users had high, severe, or exceptional complex needs.

We are making good progress on the creation of a new secondary care eLearning resource in collaboration with the Scottish Government and NHS Highland. This three-module package will be available to all NHS Scotland staff later this year. Together with the primary care resource, which is already available on Turas (NHS Education for Scotland's single, unified platform), these will be branded as the Armed Forces and Veterans Recognition Scheme.

Our request for change to NHSGGC's TrakCare (electronic patient data management system) is in progress and we hope this will be agreed by the eHealth Project Board later this month. This will make the identification of members of the Armed Forces Community a mandatory part of the admission process.

### Future Funding

Work also continues to identify sources of future funding. We would like to establish a sustainable service and have ambitions to develop this to include veteran patients in primary care. But this will depend on finding the funds to do so. We can already see the impact and value of our welfare support service. We hope that this, together with the work we are leading on to deliver an educational resource for all NHS staff in Scotland and to improve the identification of veterans (and other members of the Armed Forces Community), will demonstrate our commitment and ability to improve the health and wellbeing of our veteran community in Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

# BETSI CADWALADR UNIVERSITY HEALTH BOARD



To kick-start Armed Forces Week celebrations, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board officially opened its new memorial area outside Wrexham Maelor Hospital. Wrexham Maelor Hospital raised the Veteran Aware flag alongside the official opening of its memorial area outside the main entrance of the hospital, which includes benches, three new flag poles and three bespoke stone memorials with engraved plaques dedicated to the Armed Forces, Blue Light Services and the third sector / voluntary service providers.

Zoe Roberts, Armed Forces Covenant and Veteran Healthcare Collaborative Lead, said: "I am thrilled to see the newly commissioned memorial site now in place, which will offer staff, patients and their families a place of remembrance, a place for a period of reflection and an opportunity to pay respects to those whom we have lost."



## **Veteran Aware Flag raising ceremony Glan Clwyd Hospital**

The Health Board also held an Armed Forces flag raising ceremony at its Central Acute Hospital Site Ysbyty Glan Clwyd, to show support for staff and patients who are in or have family in the Armed Forces Community, either currently serving, veteran or reservists.

The "Veteran Aware" flag raising ceremony was led by Glan Clwyd Hospital's Management Team and supported by Colonel Mark Andrews (DGM for Surgery), BCUHB's Armed Forces Lead, Site Chaplain, YGC Porters, dedicated Armed Forces Champions and colleagues from WAST and the Royal Naval Association. The flag was hoisted to celebrate that Glan Clwyd is a Veteran Aware Hospital and to mark the week's Armed Forces activities.

## **Armed Forces in Wales Award 2023**

BCUHB is proud to announce that, as a result of the fantastic work being undertaken across the Health Board in support of our Armed Forces Community (Staff and Patients), our Armed Forces Covenant Veteran Healthcare Collaborative Lead Zoe Roberts, was awarded the Armed Forces Covenant Award 2023.

Zoe has been recognised for her efforts in progressing Veteran Support Services within the Health Board and across North Wales; Zoe was commended for being visible, effective and a charismatic leader, always endeavouring to lead by example and demonstrating a high level of individual motivation and selfless commitment.

Congratulations Zoe!



## **Vikki is Major hit in Welsh Veterans' Awards**



An advanced clinical practitioner at Glan Clwyd Hospital "didn't believe" she had been shortlisted for a prestigious armed forces award. However, Vikki Montgomery (aka Army Major Victoria Montgomery QARANC, 206 MMR) was delighted to find out she had been nominated for the final stages of the Reservist of the Year award. Vikki said: "I got an email and said 'this looks good' but I didn't believe it when I heard I had been nominated."

Vikki has worked for Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board for almost 24 years in one guise or another and moved from the Isle of Man to take up nursing training at the University of Wales, Bangor, in 1996. She started her army career with 208 Liverpool Field Hospital in 2001 and rose to the rank of Major in the Queen Alexandra Royal Army Nursing Corps. Vikki supports the Army Medical Service Training Centre and BCUHB with resuscitation training as immediate life support and advanced life support instructor when able. She also runs an honorary contracts (HC) project for regular and reserve armed forces personnel with the backing of BCUHB.

The scheme supports and enables HC participants to maintain and increase their clinical skills and exposure to healthcare provision to ensure they are deployable. "Betsi has been really good with honorary contracts," said Vikki. "People come from all across the North West and North Wales to benefit from them." She has provided multiple immediate life support courses for regular and reserve armed forces personnel for many years outside of Brigade, including throughout COVID. Vikki has seen active service in Iraq twice, been on a military exchange programme with the US National Guard in Virginia and been deployed on military exercises across the UK, Europe and the Americas. She has been an advanced clinical practitioner as part of the Acute Intervention Team at Glan Clwyd Hospital for the past 10 years and says she loves her role.

## **Female Veterans Alliance**

Following the success of the inaugural workshop, held in South Wales in June 2022, BCUHB is proud to announce that the next Female Veterans Workshop will be hosted in North Wales (Wrexham AFC) on 26th October 2023. Female Veterans across the UK have been invited to come together to discuss any challenges faced during Service, transition and integration back into civilian life and also any positive experiences of female veterans too! All finding from this event, alongside the commentary and recommendations will be published in due course.

## **GP Forces Friendly Scheme**

A new scheme has been launched to enable GPs in Wales to register to become 'veteran-friendly' practices and provide specialist care for current and former military personnel. Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) has created the new programme to enable GP practices to register to become accredited Veteran Friendly practices.



# WARRINGTON AND HALTON TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



## VCHA Re-accreditation

The Trust is thrilled to announce a successful VCHA re-accreditation in August. This accreditation recognises the continued good practice and strengthening of our existing processes to best support our Armed Forces community.



## The Data

The Trust continues to collect veteran status from patients and further work has recently been undertaken with the Outpatients Team to ensure ask and record veteran status.

The Veteran Patient Dashboard continues to develop with live data of numbers of veteran patients recorded. Further extension of the dashboard has allowed the inclusion of all veterans who have been referred into the hospital and are awaiting appointment and those on active waiting lists. As we continue to gather information and data, we will continue to develop this dashboard to support us in providing appropriate services.

## Communication

There is a regular series of awareness and communication events with staff to emphasise the importance of identifying veterans. The Veteran Patient Dashboard clearly identifies a surge in recording following each event which demonstrates the impact of ensuring regular communication and awareness.

The Armed Forces Advocate also delivers training to specific staff groups, wards and department with information targeted at the specialty they provide to ensure we can support signposting of veteran and their families to appropriate services. The Trust is currently further developing its patient information provision and visual imagery for Armed Forces across the Trust sites to ensure staff and patients are aware of the Trusts' veteran aware status and can seek support and advice accordingly

The Trustwide Task and Finish Group continues to meet monthly to identify and implement veteran centred approaches to care across a range of specialties.

## Events

WHH celebrated Armed Forces week in style with a range of events including staff information breakfast seminar, training and awareness session 'Afghanistan – A Soldiers Story' delivered by WO2 Mick Flaherty, market style information stalls for staff and patients, flag raising ceremonies, installation of armed forces artwork by Snow Grafitti.com and afternoon tea on the wards.



Plans are currently being formulated for our Remembrance events in November.

# WRIGHTINGTON, WIGAN AND LEIGH (WWL) NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



At WWL we continue to grow the number of Armed forces Champions across the trust, with numbers now just being shy of 50 champions.

Our Champions quarterly meeting which took place in June concentrated on how Champions could be Advocates for our Armed forces Service Users and when it is appropriate to bring in a professional advocate to support patients.

## Armed Forces Week

In June we celebrated Reservist and Armed Forces Day by holding a weeklong event. Each day focused on different aspects of the Armed forces Community from Armed Forces Families and our Veterans to being an Armed Forces Friendly Employer and our support for the Armed forces LGBT+ community. We had 207 Field Hospital Reservists attend for Reservists Day and held and staff and patient Armed forces themed afternoon tea so that everyone across the trust could be involved and we supported the Wigan Armed Forces Day parade which ended with a charity ball to raise funds for local veteran charities. We also encouraged wards and departments to dress up their display boards to mark Armed Forces Week - which they did with a very creative flare!



## Launch of the Armed Forces – Forces Friendly Policy and the Carers Policy

During Armed Forces Week the trust launched two new policies to for the benefit of the Armed Forces Community. The Armed Forces –Forces Friendly Policy, brings together all our commitments to not only our patients but also to our exiting employees and our employment policy for future employees. This will for example, allow spouses of those that are serving apply for short notice leave where it is related to the service/deployment of the serving person which will be honoured in all but exceptional circumstances. The Carers Policy - although a trust wide policy - allows anyone who has care and support needs, including our Armed Forces Community, to nominate their Carer to stay with them whilst hospital or for attending appointments. This means they will benefit from having someone who is familiar with their needs with them, and that person can help support them through their hospital stay. The Armed Forces Team were fundamental in leading both these projects.



## Other business...

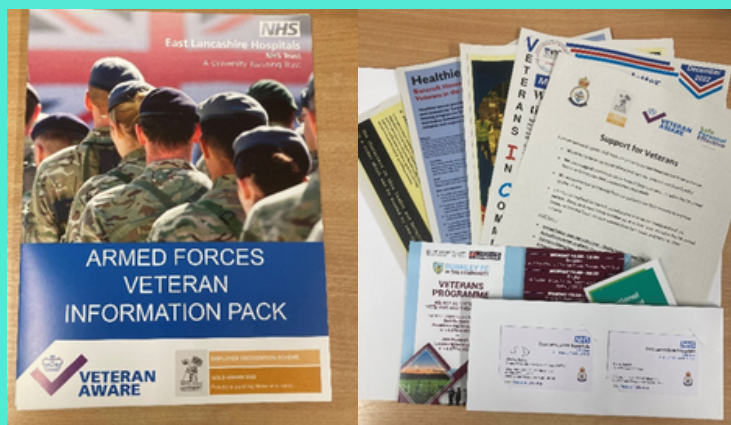
Training continues to go well, although due to pressures in the trust new ways of delivery are being explored. The AF team plan on producing some short webinars over the next 6 - 12 months to support staff in gaining Armed Forces Awareness. However, this will not be recognised as CPD and staff will still be offered the opportunity to attend formal training.

We are already starting to plan our Remembrance Day Service, which is slowly taking shape and hope to be able to build on last year's success.



# EAST LANCASHIRE HOSPITALS NHS TRUST

Since our last report ELHT have had a busy few months as always. We have now visited and supported 1608 Veterans in-patients across our five hospitals since April 2022. This support has ranged from a simple chat and reassurance to referrals to Op Courage and Op Restore for those veterans that have found themselves in very difficult positions. We have also assisted with housing for the homeless veterans that have presented to our ED Department.



Each patient we visit receives one of the packs and both Fiona and I chat through the various support options that are available, both locally and nationally.

## ELECTRONIC PATIENT RECORD

The epr has now gone live. The staff can now annotate veteran status on a patient's record. This process now automatically notifies the teams when a patient is either admitted or presents at the Emergency Department.

## VETERANS COVENANT HEALTHCARE ALLIANCE (VCHA) NHS

East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust Veteran Team has been invited to present at the VCHA Best Practice Conference September 2023 at the Barbican in London.

## OFFICE for VETERAN AFFAIRS

Fiona and Sid have been invited to the Veterans' Health priority setting workshop on 7th September 2023 at the Office for Veteran Affairs, Whitehall,

we have been asked to present is - Demonstrating impact to the Trust (savings) and the patient.

## Combat Medical Technicians (CMT's)

The trust now has CMT's on placement at our hospitals. The program has been successful so far and we have had great feedback from the CMT's that have attended so far.

The program consists of a 4-week placement and is broken down as follows:

Week 1: Induction, Orientation & Training

Week 2: ED Majors

Week 3: Urgent Care – Minor Treatments

Week 4: Ward experience on Medical Assessment Wards

## Assisting other NHS Trusts

Due to the success of the ELHT Veteran Team we are constantly being asked for help and guidance from other trusts, nationwide. Although it's not a 'one size fits all' program we try and offer our expertise to those just starting their journey. We have shared information with trusts from Glasgow to Cornwall and everywhere in between. If you require any help or advice please do contact [armedforcesveterans@elht.nhs.uk](mailto:armedforcesveterans@elht.nhs.uk).

## Awards

The ELHT Veteran team have been short listed in the following awards:

- Nursing Times 2023 - Team of the Year
- HSJ Awards 2023 - Military and Civilian Partnership Award

## Looking Ahead

The ELHT Veteran Team have a busy schedule and the following are some of the projects that are currently being initiated and worked on:

- Building an internal network of Veteran Champions
- Furthering links with NHS and working on a Shared Care Records Project
- Building links and relationships with local veteran organisations.
- Our business plan to take this service beyond the pilot which ends April 2024 has now been submitted.

# MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

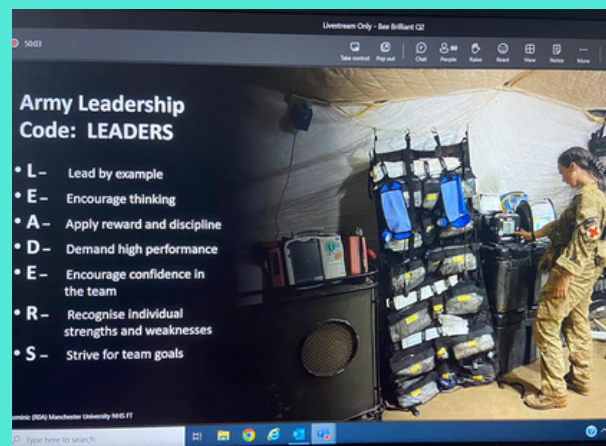


Amidst the further industrial actions and additional challenging operational pressures, the Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust (MFT) have been continuing to support the armed forces community. Grace is continuing to work within the departments of the Manchester Royal Infirmary (MRI) and continues to engage with all ward staff to ensure support is freely available to the Armed Forces Community.

Armed Forces Day was held within the month of June and Grace had planned for an Armed Forces Day celebrations, but this was sadly cancelled due to industrial action that was taking place. As such Grace hosted a display within the MRI; the Estates and Facilities team kindly transferred the display to various locations within the MRI to enable all staff and patients to have view of the display, and access to leaflets and resources.



In addition to displays, Grace took the opportunity to share and celebrate the stories of our Armed Forces Community who have found employment within the Trust. Below we have images of Daniel McNeil a Veteran, and Service-Leaver who found employment within civilian street at our North Manchester General Hospital site following a 12-year career within the Royal Navy. He resettled only 12-months ago, and he has transitioned extremely well here at MFT, with a wonderful career within our Fire Safety department, as well as volunteering within the Armed Forces Network. We also shared the incredible work of our Critical Care Sister and Reservist Diane King at our latest Bee-Brilliant event that focused on Leadership and Culture within MFT. Diane shared a 10-minute presentation on how she applies the Trust and British Army Leadership Values in her day-to-day work within both of her NHS and Military roles as a Nurse.



MFT supported an employment event alongside the Department of Work Pensions in Stockport, to support Veterans into employment within the NHS. As a healthcare organisation Grace ensured that she not only shared employment support, but also brought along leaflets and resources for NHS services such as Op COURAGE and OP Restore, formally known as the Veterans Trauma Network to advocate good health in our local community.



Grace has been given a place to be part of the Manchester and Trafford Pride Parade with MFT. The theme for the parade this year is "Queerly Beloved", marking the 10-year anniversary of the passing of the Marriage Equality Act in England and Wales and the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act. The Armed Forces Network and LGBTQ+ Network work together closely and have teamed up with Fighting with Pride to acknowledge and raise awareness and impact of the Year-2000 Gay Ban within MFT. It is a privilege to be taking place within this event and Grace is extremely excited to be partaking and representing the Armed Forces and LGBTQ+ Community.



# **SOUTH TYNESIDE AND SUNDERLAND NHS FOUNDATION TRUST**



The AFA Portal is now in regular use at the STS FT with details of 19 patients documented. The main method of identification is now Electronic Patient Record notification via an optional question in the Nursing Assessment. A paper was submitted by the Armed Forces Healthcare Lead (AFHL) to the STS FT Trusts Clinical Informatics and Assurance Group endorsed by the Medical Director with the recommendation for the question to be part of the mandatory suite of questions. It was agreed by the group that the question should be made mandatory and this was implemented from the end of April.

A donation of toiletries for veteran inpatients was received in January by the AFHL thanks to the generosity of ASDA Sunderland and has already benefitted 3 patients on hospital wards.

The AFHL has continued to use a range of avenues to promote the role and support available to veterans.

In March the AFHL spoke at the North East & Yorkshire Veterans Network Meeting held at the Beacon of Light and attended by a range of different organisations including representatives from the DWP, local and national veteran organisations and hosted by Sporting Force. The talk was well received and a number of links were made which has led to wider promotion of the role.

In April the AFHL spoke at the Sunderland AFC Veteran Breakfast Club held monthly at the Stadium of Light to promote the role and the support and employment and voluntary opportunities for veterans at the STS Foundation Trust.

The Trust produces a regular podcast for staff, patients and the wider community and the AFHL featured in the episode for 'Military March' alongside the workforce Armed Forces Champion (<https://spotify.link/Toqe5Et8myb>).

As part of the Anzac Day commemorations in South Shields, the AFHL was invited along with the Trust's Executive Director of HR and Armed Forces Champion, Kath Griffin, to attend the service and lay a wreath on behalf of the Trust.

The Armed Forces Healthcare Lead (AFHL) was attended the Sunderland City Council Armed Forces Day flag raising ceremony held at the City Hall as well as the University of Sunderland Armed Forces Day reception held in the university's armed forces garden. The events provided an opportunity to share with partners in the wider area the work of the AFA programme in the local hospitals and opportunities to further promote the work.

On the Saturday the AFHL attended the Sunderland Armed Forces Day event held at Seaburn Dene which provided an opportunity to promote the work to the wider armed forces community, allies and the general public. The event was also attended by the Lady Mayor of Sunderland who expressed interest in the work in the hospitals. This followed the AFHL attending the South Shields Armed Forces Day event held in Bents Park the Sunday prior. Both events were well attended by the local community and veteran organisations.

The Children's wards in the Trust produced thank you cards which were presented to local veteran organisations, Veterans In Crisis Sunderland and NAAFI Break South Tyneside which were greatly appreciated and well received by both organisations.



In his primary role, The AFHL continues to support veterans in the hospital as well as veterans due to attend hospital or otherwise needing support with respect to care provided by wider NHS providers in the area. To date there have been 270 contacts with veterans, mostly in the inpatient setting but also those in the community making contact to request support in navigating their care.

The Trust held a regional Step Into Health event on the 19th July which was attended by neighbouring Trusts, service leavers and also current members of the armed forces due to leave soon who travelled up from Catterick Garrison. The event was well received and had coverage in local press. Former Armed Forces members invited to find out more about careers in the NHS, thanks to new programme ([sunderlandecho.com](http://sunderlandecho.com)) The AFHL produced a webpage to further promote the Trust's offer to Armed Forces leavers and Reservists interesting in working in the Trust. Working in our Trust as a veteran or reservist :: South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust ([stsft.nhs.uk](http://stsft.nhs.uk))

Teams with higher amounts of contact with veterans have had training on identifying veterans, support available for them in the community via local and national organisations as well as support available for them from the AFHL whilst they are in hospital. These teams include the Care of the Elderly Physio, Ward Managers, and ED Team. The AFHL has been invited to record a video in September for the local McMillan team on veteran specific support.

The AFHL has met with the Trust's Education and Training Manager regarding the Chester University Moodle Module and she is liaising with Trusts already using it with a view to embedding the module within the suite of optional e-learning.

The Trust passed a one year review of its Veteran Aware Accreditation in August following an updated submission by the AFHL of activities contributing towards maintaining the accreditation and improved support for veteran accessing care provided by the Trust.





# AIREDALE NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

I thought, for this update, it would be good to talk about my experience as the Armed Forces Advocate for Airedale NHS Foundation Trust over the past 11 months; and the journey and learning curve it has been. Firstly, and most importantly I would like to express what an honour and privilege it has been to hear first-hand so many awe-inspiring life stories and experiences from Veterans around the UK and other parts of the world. These Veterans proudly regale varied tales from their service.

I have found over the months that when I enter hospital wards it is quickly apparent who has served in the Armed Forces. For example, as I entered the ICU, the RAF gentleman I was visiting was busy entertaining all the others in the ward, both staff and patients who were laughing along with his jokes. He did sadly pass away, but I was invited to the funeral by family as they felt my input had been so meaningful for him.

The proud, caring nature of the Veteran's always shines through. Some are carers to husbands and wives who have their own care needs, and these are often more worried about their loved ones than themselves. It is humbling to experience and highlights how they put others needs first at the expense of their own, leaving their own needs until crisis point.

Most of the Veterans I listen to are happy for a listening ear from someone relatable to whom they can share their story. Most are highly independent, using the skills embedded from their Service life that ensure their needs have been provided for, often not requiring too much additional support from me. However, for some who have become socially isolated and lonely; the ones whose families and friends have passed away, my interactions appear to be the most vital. I have been invited to hospices and neighbouring hospitals to visit veterans who are coming to the end of their lives but who have requested to see me again—a testament to the relationship that has been built. I have also been asked to attend a funeral, as someone who had made a “positive effect” in a veteran's life.



My personal learning is that is the younger Veterans, the Veterans who served in more recent conflicts require more intervention and are not aware of services available. A conversation with a Mental Health Nurse in ED, “I wish we had known about you before; we have a young soldier who keeps coming in following attempts to kill themselves”. Finally, I got to meet this person after another attendance at ED and we made a call to Op Courage together, where they were offered the help they needed.

I have had some harrowing conversations with Veterans who have attempted or are planning to take their own lives. Being a Veteran and diagnosed with PTSD myself, we have been able to relate our own stories, build rapport, gain trust, and plan appropriate support. Always with a little dark humour, leaving some difficult conversations laughing.

It has been a surprise to me that in the over 200 interactions with Veterans while in my role, very few had heard of the Armed Forces Covenant and only two Veterans had heard of the Armed Forces Act. Staff were not aware of Op Courage or Op Restore (VTN) or the large number of charities available to Veterans. The older generation report they are struggling with the greater reliance on technology, and many do not use social media; relying on information passed from professionals such as their GP or TV and Radio. These people in particular are grateful for the hard copy information packs I provide.

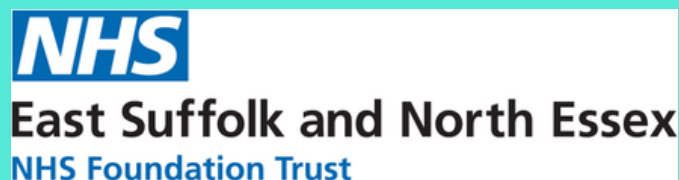
Hospital Trust colleagues connected to the Armed Forces have also approached me for a wide range of guidance and support. I have also provided career advice for staff whose children are considering Armed Forces Life (obviously I recommend REME). Again, being able to provide advice and hearing of the positive outcomes and the gratitude of staff members is fantastic.

I love the fact that staff now approach me with enthusiasm to tell me of Veterans they have met, demonstrating they understand the unique needs of Veterans and feel my support would be of useful.

My role as Armed Forces Advocate has improved the experience of Veteran's accessing the hospitals services.

Oh, and Armed Forces week went well, even with the VTN rebranding to Op Restore halfway through.

# EAST SUFFOLK AND NORTH ESSEX FOUNDATION TRUST



Since our last report ESNEFT has had a busy quarter. Our AFA continues to provide support to inpatients who are identified as part of our armed forces community. Most recently our AFA has experienced an increase in contact from members of the armed forces community who are not inpatients seeking support and advice. This has resulted in a number of referrals / sign-posting to other organisations and services such as:

- Royal Naval Association
- Royal British Legion
- Defence Welfare Service
- Army Welfare Services
- Walking with the Wounded
- SSAFA

This demonstrates the need for a point of contact not only within NHS Trusts but also the wider communities.

## June 23

ESNEFT celebrated Armed Forces Week, hosting events throughout the Trust.



## Monday 19 June

Trust executives raised the Armed Forces flags at Ipswich and Colchester Hospital.



Following the flag raise our Armed Forces Network (AFN) hosted a veteran awareness roadshow at Colchester hospital alongside representatives from Combat 2 Coffee, Blind Vets UK and SSAFA armed forces charity.

## Tuesday 20 June

Veteran awareness roadshow at Ipswich hospital - AFN members were joined by representatives from Combat 2 Coffee and SSAFA.



## Wednesday 21 June

To celebrate Reserves Day, personnel from 254 Medical Regiment were invited to host recruitment stands at Colchester and Ipswich hospitals.



## Thursday 21 June

Representatives from ESNEFT's AFN were invited to attend and host a stand at Suffolk's Armed Forces Day in Woodbridge.

## Friday 22 June

Our AFN hosted a coffee morning and were joined by members of our armed forces community. Local schools across Essex and Suffolk also joined in the celebrations, kindly donating artwork to display across our hospital sites.



## Veteran Aware



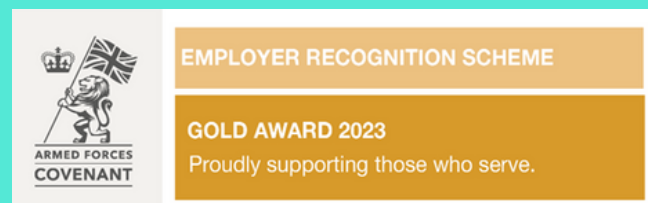
To complete our Armed Forces week celebration, we received fantastic news - we were successful our one year review following re-accreditation in June 2022. ESNEFT will continue working towards improvements supporting members of our armed forces community.

## July 23

ESNEFT were delighted to receive amazing news! We were recognised for our work supporting the armed forces community through the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme 'Gold' Award.

Nick Hulme, Chief Executive at ESNEFT said: "This is absolutely fantastic news. I'm so proud of all the hard work that has gone into gaining this award.

"Our armed forces are an extremely valuable part of our community and we know that their skills and experience can bring huge benefits to the NHS. "We are committed to continue to advocate for them now and in the future."





# JAMES PAGET UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



The Trust has now had an Armed Forces Advocate in post for 15 months and work continues to make the Hospital the focal point in the community for support. Staff and patients now expect the AFA to support them and referrals from partner organisations have continued to increase. The AFA continues to engage with the community and is regularly asked to speak at events and groups. A noticeable increase over the last few months has been the number of individuals contacting the AFA to see if they are entitled to priority treatment. Most hospital departments are now aware of this and try to support where possible.

## Armed Forces Week

This year the Trust celebrated Armed Forces week in style with various events planned. Monday 19 June, we began our celebrations of Armed Forces Week by raising our flag in front of the hospital. Our Armed Forces Advocate Chris Blyth raised the flag with some of our colleagues including those who have served.



The garden included a dedicated remembrance area to show the Trust's continued support to the Armed Forces Community. The next day the AFA was invited onto local radio to talk about the meaning and importance of Armed Forces week.

Continuing with our celebrations in Armed Forces week, another successful veterans coffee morning was held on Wednesday, 21 June, run by our Armed Forces Advocate, Chris Blyth.



The event included tea/coffee and a buffet, and representatives from organisations that support veterans, including the Royal British Legion, RAFA, RAFA, RNA and Op Courage attend to talk about their work.

Over 50 people attended the event which was the 3rd held at the Trust. 2 more are planned this year with fundraising now starting in order to host more next year. To finish off the week, on Friday 23 June Marks & Spencers café at the Trust offered free hot drinks to all members of staff wearing a Veterans pin or carrying a veterans ID card. A number of staff were keen to make the most of this opportunity.

## Staff Training

On 13 July two members of staff were selected to attend Ex Future Leader 2023. The aim of the day was to introduce attendees the way the Army teaches leadership with a focus on theory and practical application.

Taking place at the Royal Norfolk Showground, both members of staff had a fantastic day and really enjoyed the experience.

## Trust Receives Award

In July the Trust was awarded a prestigious Defence Employer Recognition Scheme – Gold award for its hard work and support to the Armed Forces Community.



We are delighted our hospital has received an ERS Gold Award, as it recognises the significant impact our Armed Forces Advocate and colleagues have achieved in ensuring we are welcoming and inclusive towards veterans, people with experience of the armed forces, and their families. As an NHS Trust, we are committed to working closely with the people we provide health services to, so that we can ensure the care we provide meets their needs, and to being an employer that provides opportunities to people with armed forces experience.



Later that day we officially opened our "Safe Garden" a project organised by the AFA who had been fund raising for a number of months and supported by local companies Morgan and Sindall and ATD landscaping.

The Mayor of Great Yarmouth opened the garden with over 60 people in attendance.



# UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS DORSET

## NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

The Trust appointed its Armed Forces Community Advocate (AFCA) March 2022 and since then, they have established strong foundations and networks. The AFCA continues to raise the profile and staff awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant within UHD by being a presence within the hospitals, networking, establishing connections with multi-disciplinary organisations and supporting the needs of the armed forces community (AFC), both internally and externally.

The AFCA has been working and meeting with other local NHS trusts; The Queen Victoria Hospital, The Royal Cornwall Hospital and Dorset County Hospital sharing UHD's best practise and documents with them to enable them to offer as much support to the AF community as possible. Alongside this UHD are working with Bournemouth University on two projects:

1. Exploring a Medical Research Grant Partnership Grant to support Mental Health Matters programme for veterans.
2. To set up a Defence Recovery Neurological Centre hub in Dorset;

The AFCA is an active member of the Dorset Armed Forces Covenant Programme; helping in their 5 year Strategic plan to deliver better support to the Armed Forces Community in Dorset.

### Introduction of Welfare and Information Packs:

After an event, the AFCA held a meeting with the local chairman of RBL. Following this meeting, RBL were able to fund a project the AFCA was implementing, to provide welfare packs for veterans that are admitted to Hospital with no basic supplies. With the help of funding from the RBL, these welfare packs are now available to veterans.



### ERS Gold:

The progress since the appointment of the AFCA has been highlighted by UHD being awarded the Silver and Gold DERS accreditation in consecutive years. This is a fantastic achievement and one that will have indefinite benefit in the future for the AFC.

### UHD Reservist Policy

The AFCA has now ensured that the Trust has in place a new UHD Reservist Policy. This policy outlines the procedure for managing reservist staff members as well as Cadet Force Adult Volunteers. Actions for staff members if they are a reservist, managing requests for time off for training for reservists and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers, 10 days paid leave and 5 days paid leave respectively.



### Reservist Recruitment

243 Field Hospital continue to hold their regular recruitment days at two of UHD locations, Poole and Royal Bournemouth Hospitals. Both locations are getting plenty of encouraging enquiries and paternal recruits, keeping Sgt Eastman busy.

### UHD Staff Training:

The AFCA is due to start presenting to the Preceptors (helps professionals to translate and embed their knowledge into everyday practice, grow in confidence and have the best possible start to their careers) on a regular basis. This will include all newly qualified registrants across UHD, with the vision for the Programme being, to create awareness of the AFCA's presence, to enable members of staff to be better able to support veterans as inpatients and to access or signpost to support available to members of the armed forces community.

### UHD Supporting Armed Forces Week:



### UHD ED Introduce Agyle:

With the introduction of Agyle, (a modern new patient administration and management system) into ED, the AFCA will get direct notification when a member of the AFC is admitted to the Trust. It is a major step forward and it is hoped that it will increase referrals and the number of service uses.

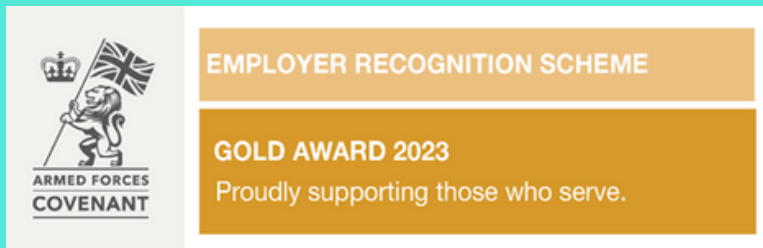


# FRIMLEY HEALTH NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



A relatively quiet period at FHFT, we received the news that the trust had been selected for The Employer Recognition Scheme Gold which further strengthens our commitment to Veterans we employ and potentially employ in the future. It allows all members of The Reserve Army to have 10 days paid leave in addition to the yearly allowance.

Looking ahead we have the Gold Award Presentation in October and continue to visit, liaise, signpost and address the welfare needs of any veterans we identify.



We have continued to educate and promote the covenant and awareness of veterans and spoke at Parachute Regiment Association meeting, Here 4 Hart, Helpforce, and the presentation to your organisation recently on what we are achieving and aiming to do. It is equally important that veterans are aware and self identify as well as staff asking the question, the education needs to be provided in both directions.

We have started to look into outstanding appointments for surgery of serving soldiers as the MOD has circa 8000 awaiting treatment across the NHS which is close to a 10% capability gap in the military which when coupled with recruiting and retention running at around -18% causes some concern as to our ability to carry out the primary function of The Armed Forces to defend the nation! We still aim to expedite Veterans awaiting treatment where possible with parity not priority however through the AFCL role here this process is simplified and actioned with direct liaison between myself and the patient removing the delay caused by sending letters or email and awaiting a reply.



# GLOUCESTERSHIRE HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



The Armed Forces Advocates (AFA) are continuing to assist veterans that access the Trusts acute services. Since the start of the project over 2000 veterans have been admitted to the trust representing nearly 4% of all patients requiring an acute inpatient stay. This figure is based on a current 78% capture rate upon admission and training is ongoing in order to increase this rate higher.



For Armed Forces Week the CEO, Deborah Lee, re-signed the Armed Forces Covenant as well as accepted the VCHA Veteran Aware accreditation achieved by the trust earlier in the year. Deborah remains committed to ensuring that Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (GHNHSFT) continues to invest in the care and experience of all veterans accessing its services.



Staff training and education is continuing with the AFA having a slot on the trust induction and providing bespoke education in both the acute and support areas of the trust. Having this place within the induction is essential in ensuring that the work of the AFA and the wider Armed Forces Covenant is known across all areas, services and levels of the trust whilst ensuring we see as wide an audience as possible. Feedback received from colleagues and patients is that the service is well received and the positive impact and enhancement that the AFA have on the patient experience of those veterans identified is noticeable in making their acute stay that much better of an experience.

Alongside the work within the hospital the AFA are continuing to forge, and strengthen, working relationships with a range of external partners such as the County and local councils, local military establishments, other health care providers in the county as well as military charities.

Support from the executive and operational levels of the trust remains good and planning is underway for the future once the project completes in 2024.

Overall, the project continues to be successful in both the collecting of data and enhancing the patient experience whilst also helping to get veterans home sooner with the support needed. The AFA are looking forward to expanding the reach and benefits of the service over the coming months and years.

The AFA have seen an increasing number of veterans who have complex needs and it is these links with external resources that are proving to be of great benefit to the veterans, their families and carers and the trust. Referrals to services such as OP COURAGE and OP RESTORE continue to grow as well as a steady stream of homeless veterans requiring help with housing. Jamie had great success in helping a veteran get housed in the county who was homeless on admission. This support helped reduce his time as an inpatient allowing the patient to settle and rebuild within his home county.



# CARDIFF AND VALE UNIVERSITY HEALTH BOARD

All Wales Approach to Armed Forces Week- all health boards across Wales joined up to run a series of webinars during the week to allow all staff in NHS Wales to access them. We had talks from the SSE Cymru, Nicki Scott (founder of Scotty's Little soldiers & military spouse), CO of 203 Field Hospital (who works as a Radiographer in Velindre) and from Ruth Birch (Fighting with Pride).

We ran a raising the flag event with the air and sea cadets from Cardiff along with the Lord Mayor in attendance, this event was a great success and helped to raise the profile of the Armed Forces Community across the health board.



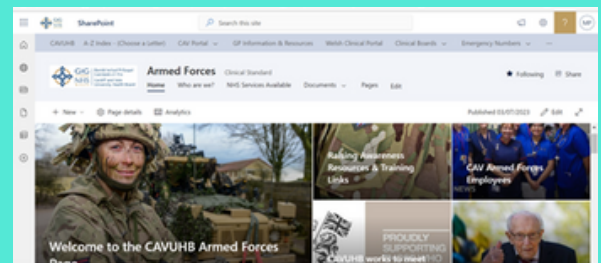
Poppy magnets have arrived and a roll out will begin late August when our IT coding system for the Armed Forces Community also goes live.



Staff training around Armed Forces Awareness has begun across the Health Board in face to face and virtual sessions. With positive feedback being received:

"Thank you again for doing your presentation. Everyone felt they had learnt from the talk and am sure it will benefit many of our patients and their families in the future."

Links and resources are also available on our staff intranet SharePoint site.



We are continuing our work to re-accredit our ERS Gold later this year. This includes a re-audit on our numbers of Armed Forces personnel that we employ, covering; regulars, reservists, veterans, spouses & adult cadet volunteers. Along with plans to re-sign the Armed Forces Covenant.

Looking ahead, our plans going forward include:

- IT and Poppy Programme roll out
- ERS Gold re-accreditation
- VCHA re-accreditation
- Continued Armed Forces Awareness Training
- Growth of VTN Wales
- Increasing the number of Veteran Friendly GP practices to assist with appropriate veteran referrals into secondary care
- Increasing the utilisation of DMWS across the health board to support the bid for more DMWS representation across Wales
- Armed Forces Breakfast Morning for Cardiff & Vale Staff



# UNIVERSITY STAFF PROJECT TEAM



## **Professor Alan Finnegan PhD RN FRN FRSA CF FAAN**

Alan joined the NHS in 1978, and then joined the British Army as a Nursing Officer in 1987. During his military career he reached the rank of Colonel and had numerous appointments. Since commencing at the University of Chester in 2016, Alan has been appointed as the principal investigator for over 30 research projects. Alan holds numerous Fellowships such as the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust and Chairs numerous committees such as the Northwest Armed Forces Network.

Further Information:

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



## **Dr Becky Randles BSc PhD FHEA PGCert GMBPsS**

Becky has a background rooted in Psychology and progressed directly onto her PhD in 2019 after completing her undergraduate degree at Liverpool John Moores University. She has completed several research roles in areas such as Domestic Homicide, Touch Perception and Research Ethics and Governance. Becky has extensive experience in both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.

Further Information:

<https://www1.chester.ac.uk/departments/westminster-centre-research-veterans/staff/becky-randles>



## **Lottie Ainsworth-Moore**

Lottie joined the Centre in January 2019. She is a military spouse of a currently serving Officer and has previously worked for military charities. Her principle role within the Centre is Project Administrator where she is working on various evaluations with the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and the NHS. Lottie is also a Families Representative on the Cheshire Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Committee.

Further Information:

<https://www1.chester.ac.uk/departments/westminster-centre-research-and-innovation-veterans-wellbeing/staff/lottie-ainsworth-moore>

## **The Westminster Centre for Research in Veterans**

Faculty of Health and Social Care  
University of Chester  
Riverside Campus, Castle Drive,  
Chester, CHI ISL, UK.

Tel: 01244 511621

Email: [WCVeterans@chester.ac.uk](mailto:WCVeterans@chester.ac.uk)

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



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# EVENTS, NEWS AND INFORMATION

## Armed Forces Community Research International Webinar Series

The Westminster Centre for Research in Veterans host free webinar sessions that take place every 2 months via Zoom. The previous webinar took place on the 24th August 2023 with a presentation from Dr Stephen Hernandez. The next webinar will take place in October 2023.

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Chester



Royal College  
of Nursing

Details of the next session as well as recordings of previous sessions can be found here:

<https://www1.chester.ac.uk/events/armed-forces-community-research-international-webinar-series>

# CURRENT RESEARCH

The Westminster Centre for Research in Veterans has several research projects currently ongoing. Further Information: <https://www1.chester.ac.uk/westminster-centre-research-veterans>

## **Exploring the Employment Experiences of Spouses/Partners of British Armed Forces Personnel**

This research seeks to explore the challenges experienced by spouses/partners of serving personnel when gaining employment. Funded by the AFCFT the research has been designed in co-production with military spouses/partners at the Centre and starts on 01st June 2023.

## **Understanding the impact of Hearing Impairment on working age British Armed Forces Veterans**

The hearing impairment study is a mixed methods study aiming to understand and determine the impact of hearing impairment on working age British Armed Forces Veterans as a direct result of service or acquire whilst in service and establish whether their support needs are being met by current provision and any barriers to accessing this support.

## **A Comparative Study of Common Mental Health and Physical Disorders in the Veteran and Non-Veteran Populations**

The FiMT comparison study commenced on 01st April 2023 and is a development of the pioneering work carried out in the 'Where are all the Veterans' study. The aim is to compare the clinical data from veteran and non-veteran populations across a number of physical and mental health conditions. The Centre has secured the cooperation of their target 13 GP practices.

## **An evaluation of the NHS Single Point of Contact for Armed Forces Families Pilot (SPOC)**

An NHS England and NHS Improvement pilot programme sees the establishment of an Armed Forces families and Armed Forces community care coordination support framework system and single point of contact (SPOC) across England to help them navigate the NHS.

The Centres evaluation will explore the perspectives of families who have accessed the initiative, SPOC staff members and those involved in implementing the initiative. The study aims to identify the benefits, challenges and effectiveness of the SPOC on Armed Forces Families' social needs and healthcare mobility.

## **Understanding the Experiences of Minority Ethnicities in the Armed Forces**

This is a feasibility study to understand the motivators behind why Black and Asian and ethnic minority communities choose to join the British Armed Forces, why they remain and ultimately their reasons for leaving. This study also seeks to understand the experiences of both veterans and their families whilst serving whilst in the military and during their transition to civilian life.

## **An evaluation of the AFCFT One is Too Many (OITM) Programme**

The One is Too Many evaluation aims to explore social isolation, help-seeking behaviour and provide indicators of the situational factors causing distress and potentially self-harming / suicide in military veterans. The evaluation intends to provide recommendations to help improve health outcomes and reduce determinates of poor health for military veterans.

# PUBLICATIONS 2023

Currie, J., Thompson, C., Grootemaat, P., Andersen, P., Finnegan, A., Carter, M., & Halcomb, E. (2023). A scoping review of clinical skill development of preregistration registered nurses in Australia and five other English-speaking countries. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 32, 283–297. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.16239>

Finnegan, A. and Randles, R. (2023) Where are all the veterans? A mixed methods assessment of a systematic strategy to increase veteran registration in UK primary healthcare practices. *BMJ Open*. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2022-068904>

Finnegan, AP, Salem, K, Green, N., Ainsworth-Moore, L., Ghomi, M (2023). Evaluation of the NHS England 'Op COURAGE' High Intensity Service for military veterans with significant mental health problems; *BMJ Military Health*, Published Online First: 14 July 2023. doi: 10.1136/military-2023-002385

Finnegan, AP. (2023) How Nurses Can Improve Mental Health Outcomes for Nurses. *Mental Health Practice*. RCNi 16 May, At: <https://rcni.com/mental-health-practice/opinion/expert-advice/how-nurses-can-improve-mental-health-outcomes-for-veterans-195931>

Finnegan, AP. (2023). Educating Nurses to Deliver Optimum Care to Military Veterans and their Families. *Science Talks*. 100144 /[doi.org/10.1016/j.sctalk.2023.100144](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sctalk.2023.100144)

Randles, R. and Finnegan, A. (2023) Guidelines for Writing a Systematic Review. *Nurse Education Today*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2023.105803>

Randles, R., Burroughs, H., Green, N. and Finnegan, A. (2023) Prevalence and Risk Factors of Suicide and Suicidal Ideation in Veterans who Served in the British Armed Forces: A Systematic Review. *BMJ Military Health*. doi: 10.1136/military-2023-002413

Rodriguez-Santana, I; Mestre, T; Squitieri, F; Willock, R; Arnesen, A; Clarke, A; D'Alessio, B; Fisher, A; Fuller, R; Hamilton, J.L.; Hubberstey, H, Stanley, C; Vetter, L; Winkelmann, M; Doherty, M; Wu, Y; Finnegan, A; Frank, S (2023). Economic burden of Huntington's Disease in Europe and the USA: Results from the Huntington's Disease Burden of Illness Study. *European Journal of Neurology*. 30; 1109–1117 DOI: 10.1111/ene.15645 Open Access

Salem, K., Randles, R., Sapre, B., & Finnegan, A. (2023) The experiences of ethnic minority personnel in the armed forces: a systematic review. *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health*. 9 (1), 5–14. doi:10.3138/jmvfh-2022-0019. open access.



# RESOURCES

Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust:

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

Veterans Gateway:

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

Westminster Centre for Research in Veterans:

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

## USEFUL LINKS

10-step video to improve the registration of military veterans

<https://www1.chester.ac.uk/westminster-centre-research-veterans/research/where-are-all-veterans-finding-forgotten-phase-2>

Free Educational module – Westminster Centre for Research in Veterans Online Training:

<https://www1.chester.ac.uk/introduction-armed-forces-community>

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