

SUPPORTING ARMED FORCES IN ACUTE HOSPITAL SETTINGS E – BULLETIN



NOVEMBER 2023

UNIVERSITY OF CHESTER PROJECT EVALUATOR

Update from Kate Salem, Senior Researcher

Welcome to the sixth E-Bulletin for the Evaluation of the Supporting Armed Forces in Acute Hospital Settings Programme.

We will be closing data collection for the evaluation at the end of January 2024. The data is providing a veteran profile of those who the Armed Forces Advocate is engaging with, and details are presented in this report. 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.

We have now completed the interview stage of the evaluation and are conducting online focus groups throughout November and December which will aid in strengthening the findings from the interviews. Four focus groups will be held with staff involved in the strategic provision of this programme in addition to the Armed Forces Advocates themselves. These focus groups are validatory in nature and will provide further clarification and opinion from those involved in delivering the programme.

We have received case studies from each of the NHS Trusts involved in this pilot study. These will help demonstrate the impact that the Armed Forces Advocate has had on the veteran community within the hospital.

The Northern Ireland programme provides an advice line which initially aimed to provide a signposting service for professionals who are involved with veterans as patients. However, this service has evolved and is now accessed by veterans themselves and their family members. As part of the evaluation, the specific needs of those calling for advice and the type of advice which they are seeking can be identified. 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.

As the project draws to a close, we will be hosting the final regional webinars in December.

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 Veterans
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

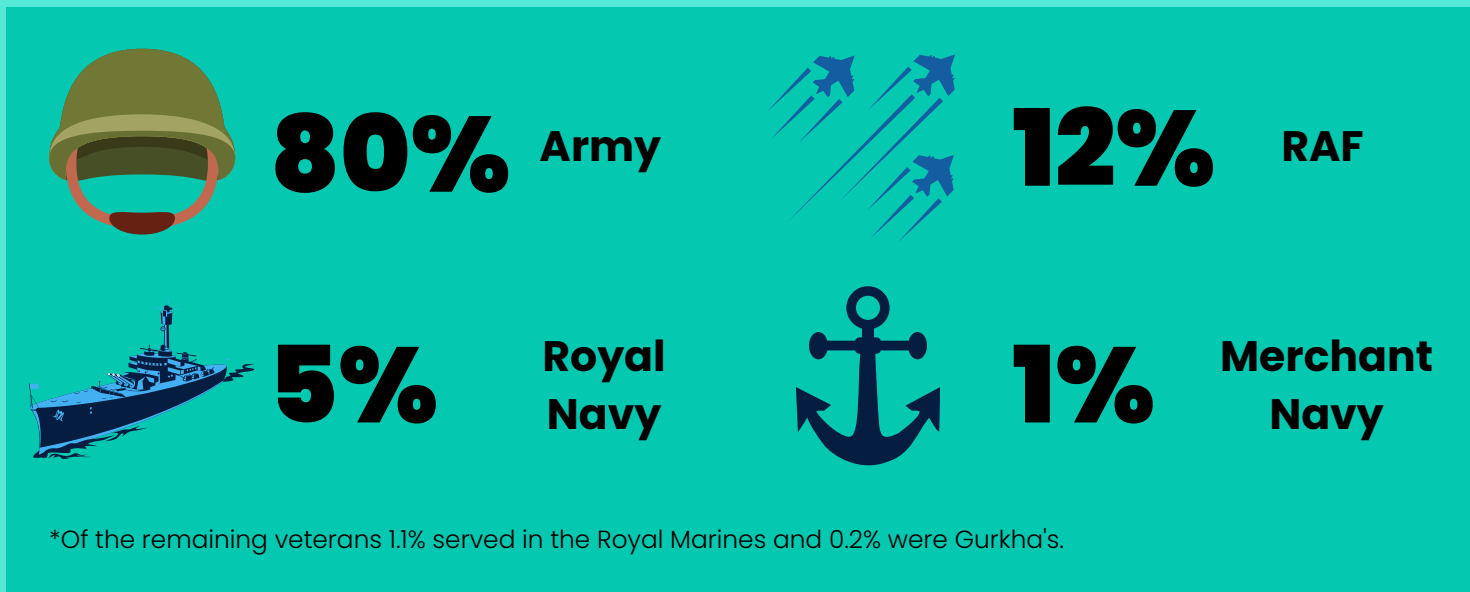
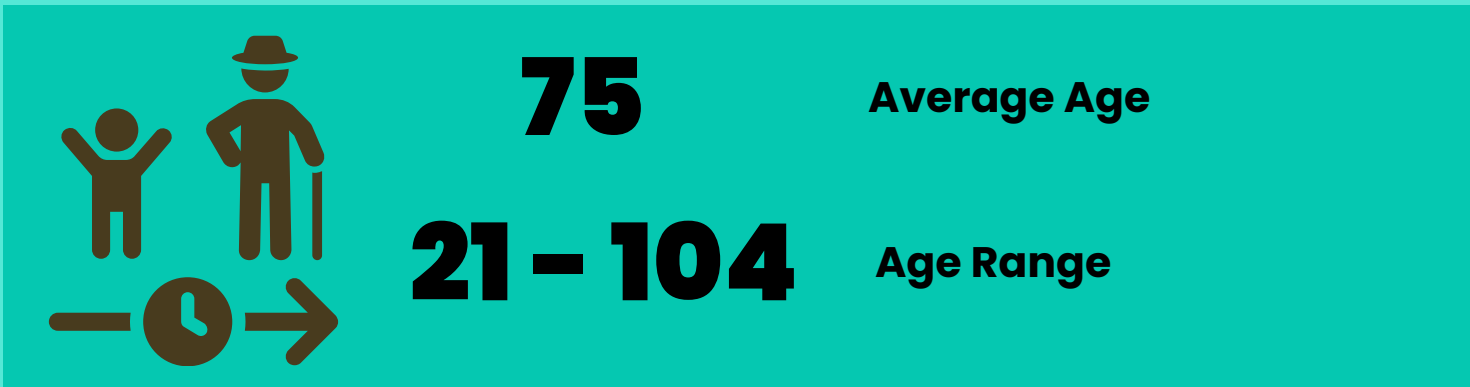
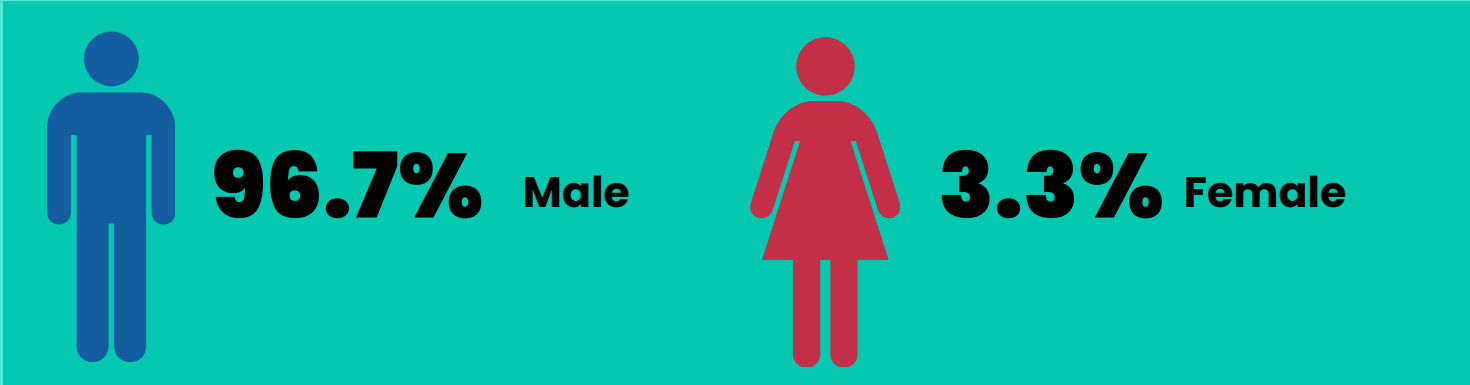
Data is received on a weekly basis in an anonymised format. Below is the data that has been received and analysed by the researcher as of the 29th of August 2023. Data past this point has been received but is yet to be analysed. Numbers may change due to data quality checking and exclusions.

Type	N	Change Since 10/05/2023
Portal Entries	1765	+ 607
Service User Feedback Surveys	90	+ 33
Family Member Feedback Surveys	22	+ 3
Staff Pre Training Surveys	708	+ 192
Staff Post Training Surveys	727	+ 181
Northern Ireland Advice Line Calls	642	+ 189
Northern Ireland Feedback Surveys	18	+ 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 1765 veterans inputted into the Armed Forces Advocate Portal which have been analysed. A summary of the demographics of these veterans can be seen below.

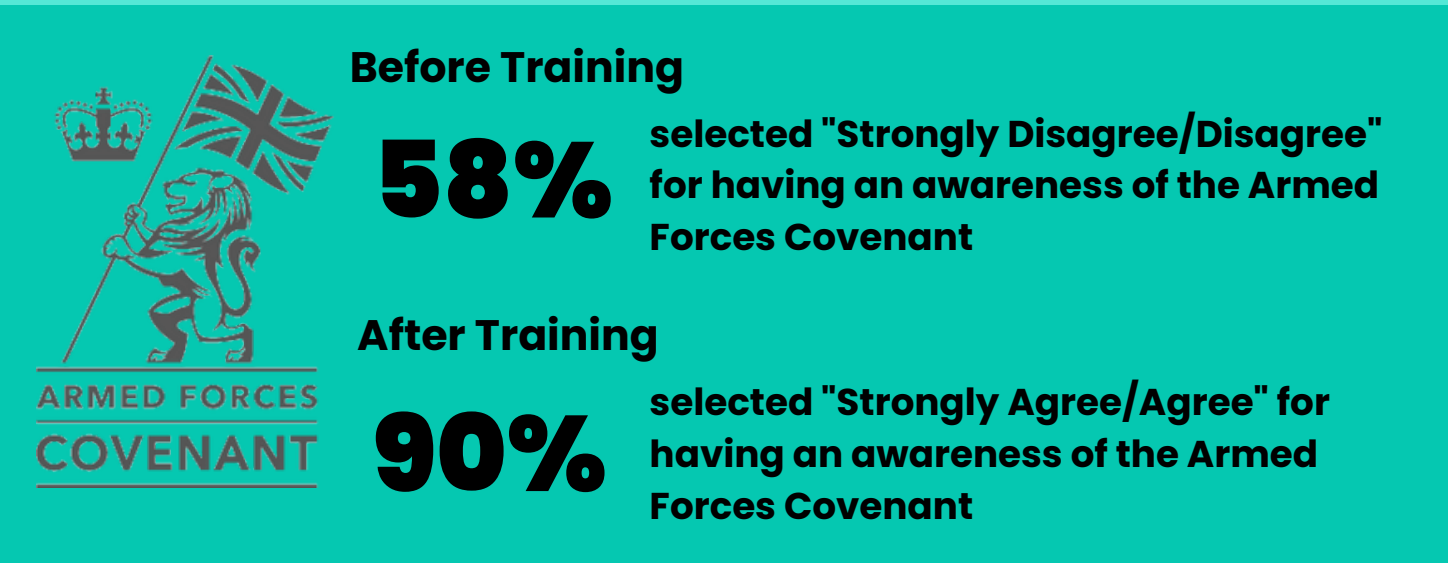
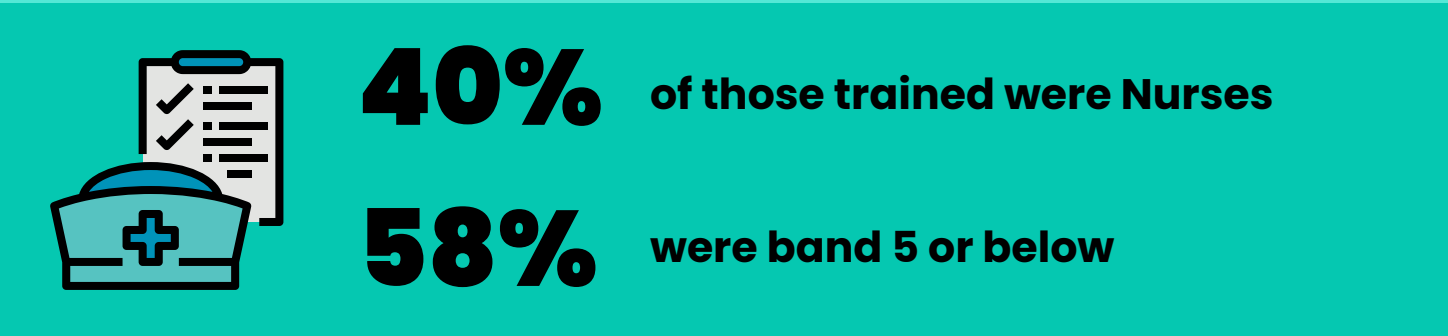


REFERRALS

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



54%

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 role of the AFA.

"Thoroughly enjoyed the session, great knowledge shared, examples provided were relevant & specific to our department which helped us relate to our practice. I feel more confident approaching veterans now."

"I knew nothing about veterans or the support they can receive. Now I know I can contact the AFA with any veteran questions."

"Good to know what is available at Trust level. I'm very much in favour of this post."

"Was very informative I am now aware and more confident to signpost. Thank you."

"Really interesting & a lot of information provided about services for veterans and charity organisations. I am more clued up about services due to this session."

SERVICE USER FEEDBACK

Service Users are also given the opportunity for feedback as well as their family members. Currently, we have 90 SU feedback surveys and 22 from Family members. Seventy one percent of SU's stated that they had received additional support and 73% 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, with the remaining 2% rating the support as average. Survey comments indicated that SU's and family members appreciated having someone available who understood and were able to talk to about the military. Some improvements suggested simply including more visits from the AFA and raising awareness of the role.

NORTHERN IRELAND (NI)

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



642
49%

calls have been made to the advice line since launching*
of the calls came from veterans themselves

REASONS FOR USING ADVICE LINE



22%

Mental Health



19%

General Advice



19%

Physical Health



11%

Pensions



15%

Housing

SIGNPOSTING



Users of the advice line are asked to complete a feedback survey. There have been 18 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 advice line as either useful or very useful and were either likely or very likely to use the advice line again.

"The level of proactivity in helping my situation has been fantastic."

"He seemed to know everything which was relevant to my client."

"A knowledgeable, trustworthy & capable supervisor."

"Great knowledge relevant to my situation."

"Someone cares."

Users also have the opportunity to express what was positive about the advice line and any improvements that could be made. One improvement included the suggestion of additional staff to extend the service.

Some of the positive comments can be seen here.

ARMED FORCES COVENANT FUND TRUST

Update from The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT)

As we near the conclusion of this pilot programme, the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust would like to take a moment to extend heartfelt congratulations to each and every one of you.

Your dedication and efforts throughout this initiative have brought about remarkable positive changes in care and education within NHS settings. The impact you have contributed to will undoubtedly pave the way for ongoing success and continued support for our Armed Forces Community. Each of you has played an integral role in driving this significant change.

Congratulations are also in order for those who have successfully secured continuation funding!

Additionally, we would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Grace, who departed from the role in November. We wish Grace the very best for her ongoing work within the NHS.

"We have an update to share regarding the Northern Ireland VASP service. Due to a reported underspend at the end of Year one, the Trust have worked with The Somme Nursing Home, to agree a grant variation to re-distribute their funding. Consequently, the fantastic work by the VASP will now continue until March 2025."

Final preparations are currently underway for the Scotland roadshow event. Shortly, you will receive an email containing the detailed agenda for the day's proceedings and instruction on how to sign up for the waiting list or virtual session. This will provide you with an opportunity to secure your spot for the upcoming event.

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NHS ENGLAND

Update from NHS England (NHSE)

Ministers visit Op RESTORE: The Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service

On Tuesday 29 August, Secretary of State for Health, Steve Barclay and Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Johnny Mercer met with colleagues from NHS England, the wider NHS, Armed Forces charities and veterans who have benefited from Op RESTORE: The Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service. Funded by NHS England and hosted by Imperial College NHS Trust, Op RESTORE supports veterans with ongoing, service attributable physical health needs.



Available across England, the service helps veterans access the most appropriate NHS pathways whilst providing wrap around support from Armed Forces charities to ensure the veteran 'waits well' for their care. Both ministers are keen to support the Armed Forces healthcare programme of work by using government and parliamentary communications routes to share messaging and drive an awareness of the services available to veterans. Recognising the best practice model of care that Op RESTORE delivers, Steve Barclay was keen to see similar approaches to delivery replicated within the NHS. He said: "Veterans have given so much to this country and when they need support as a result of their dedicated service, it's only right that the NHS is there for them." The ministers used the visit as an opportunity to encourage those who have served in the UK Armed Forces, to identify themselves as veterans with healthcare professionals in order to improve access to the range of dedicated services.

Suicide after leaving the UK Armed Forces

Cathryn Rodway and colleagues from Manchester University have published a retrospective cohort study of suicide in personnel who left the UK Armed Forces between 1996 and 2018. Their findings indicate that the overall rate of suicide was lower in veterans than the rest of the population, however there were some groups which had a higher rate.

Veterans under the age of 25, both male and female, were two to three times more likely to die by suicide than the same age groups in the general population. Factors associated with an increased risk included:

- male sex
- Army service
- discharge between 16–37 years of age
- being untrained upon discharge
- under 10 years service.

Factors associated with a decreased risk included being married, of a higher rank and deployment on combat operations. This study is the first in recent years and that reflects the wider context of the Armed Forces following years of intensive operations.

Latest veteran aware/friendly accreditations

Please see below for the current number of accreditations.

Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) veteran friendly	77% of primary care networks (PCNs) have at least one Veteran Friendly accredited practice with a total 2,370 GP practices accredited across England.
Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA) veteran aware	T: 01273 403693 E: afn.admin@nhs.net W: www.armedforcesnetwork.org



NHS ENGLAND

Update from NHS England (NHSE)

Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA) best practice conference

The VCHA held their annual best practice conference on 20 September. The conference began with the sharing of an [animated video](#), which asks staff to remember to always ask the question: "Have you, or anyone in your immediate family, ever served in the British Armed Forces?" The video was conceived by Jordana Wright, an Advanced Clinical Practitioner with Derbyshire Community Health Services NHS Foundation Trust.



Kate Davies CBE, Director of Health and Justice, Armed Forces and Sexual Assault Services Commissioning for NHS England (pictured), provided an overview of the Armed Forces healthcare programme of work led by NHS England. This included an overview of healthcare responsibilities and commissioned services for the Armed Forces community.

Keynote speakers included the veterans minister, the Rt Hon. Johnny Mercer MP, as well as Col (Retd) David Richmond CBE, the Independent Veterans Advisor for the Government. Mr Mercer thanked the National Chair of the VCHA, Professor Tim Briggs CBE, for his continued hard work and also referenced Op COURAGE and Op RESTORE. He reiterated that it was critically important that while we are designing pathways, the main access points have to be GPs or our NHS trusts. David Richmond said the health sector could take 'considerable satisfaction' from the offer for veterans and added: "I think what the VCHA is doing is providing the framework within which you can deliver your initiatives. The support available for veterans and their families is simply unrecognisable compared to that available in 2006/07 when we were in Afghanistan and Iraq."

Office for Veterans' Affairs launches employers guide to hiring veterans

The OVA have launched a [new guide](#) to assist employers with recruiting veterans and members of the Armed Forces community. The guide offers advice and guidance to employers on how to recruit, retain and support the career development of veterans and features case studies and examples of best practice.

Members of the Armed Forces community, including veterans, looking for work or a new career can take advantage of [Step into Health](#). Step into Health is an NHS England funded programme that supports members of the Armed Forces community applying for jobs throughout the NHS and setting up training and work placement opportunities.

Launch of anti-racism framework for mental health trusts and mental health service providers

NHS England have launched their first ever anti-racism framework, the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (PCREF), for all mental health trusts and mental health service providers to embed across England. This mandatory framework will ensure trusts and providers co-produce and implement concrete actions to reduce racial inequality within their services.



GRANTHOLDER UPDATES

NORTHERN IRELAND/SOMME NURSING HOME (VASP)



The Veterans' Adviceline for Statutory Professionals (VASP) Service in Northern Ireland went live on 10th June 2022 and the Project Manager is pleased to report that the VASP Service has been extended to run until March 2025.

The VASP Service provides an array of signposting support specific to Veterans, for those statutory bodies helping Veterans in need; in areas such as Welfare, State Benefits, War Disablement & Service Pensions. It Provides ill health referrals to assistive Veteran organisations, nursing care and legal signposting. It advocates on housing and homeless issues and can provide 2 nights' emergency accommodation.

To achieve this the VASP Service has undertaken outreach activities in the form of stands at formal events, presentations/talks, and multiple media outreach including dissemination within professional bodies. Contact from individual Veterans and professional groups underpins the value of this.



The VASP Service has received 807 calls as of 31st Oct 2023. The data has been examined and it has been noted that from the 807 calls, 1106 queries were raised by the callers, leading to 1444 signposting pathways being provided by the VASP Service.

Future Intentions

The VASP Service is now in its second year and is due to finish on 31st March 2025.

Shortly the Project Manager will deliver a further targeted outreach refresh of the Service targeting those groups who have longer periods of engagement with clients/patients thereby gaining trust and 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
- NIHE & Housing Associations
- Homeless Charities
- Probation Services

Conclusions

Financial and health concerns represent the greatest number of calls. The fifty to eighty age range of callers are often on fixed incomes. They are a price sensitive group. The increasing cost of living renders them vulnerable to hardship and in need of greater assistance. Additional to this the older Veterans are suffering from poor physical and mental ill health. Signposting and positive outcomes are very important for them as they would struggle to do this on their own.

Homelessness, inadequate/unsuitable housing remains an issue for 10% of the enquiries. The VASP Service has advocated through Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA)s, Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and Housing Associations for individual Veterans and their families. In partnership with other stakeholders in the last quarter alone the VASP Service has seen two Veterans and one family moved into new/more suitable accommodation.

The Project Manager is regularly 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 Veterans trying to access both State Benefits and Service-related Welfare support.

UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS DORSET

NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

It has been a busy few months at UHD for the Armed Forces Community Advocate (AFCA). There has been a sharp increase in the number of staff contacting the AFCA for support and assistance, which is a great sign that staff members are aware that the AFCA and the Armed Forces Support Group is there to help. There has also been an increase of third sector referrals showing that working partnerships within the local area are beneficial; another positive sign that people are aware of the support available to the Armed Forces Community from the Trust.

The AFCA was invited to be part of the interview process for the new Deputy Chief Medical Officer for UHD which was a very interesting and beneficial experience.

Community Interaction:

The AFCA has had a number of very useful and informative meetings with a number of outside agencies including The Red Cross, who work out of one of the Trust sites and with the Community Action Network; helping people live healthy, happy lives. They also operate a Wellbeing Collaborative Virtual Hub which the AFCA has now joined. This allows the AFCA to have more involvement in assisting the AFC in the Dorset area.

After a meeting with the Medical Director Integrated Care, it has been arranged the AFCA gives a presentation to the monthly Integrated Care meeting which includes most local GP surgeries. It is hoped from them doing this, it will encourage more surgeries to become Veteran Friendly and to build some good working partnerships and hopefully improve Veteran care within the local area.

Remembrance Day 2023

UHD actively supported Remembrance Day 2023. The AFCA was able to set up a stand and promote/sell poppies at Poole Hospital, Christchurch Hospital and The Royal Hospital Bournemouth. The RBL are the only outside charity able to collect within UHD. The AFCA was able to arrange for both reservist and veterans to do readings and lay wreaths on Remembrance Day Services at all three sites.



University Hospital Dorset Jobs:

This month @UHDjobs were shining a light on our Armed Forces veterans and reservists at UHD.

Meet Ben, estates Decontamination Officer; use the link below to see the full article.

[University Hospitals Dorset Jobs on X: "We're shining a light on our armed forces veterans and reservists at UHD! Meet Ben, estates decontamination officer" \(a \[redacted\]\) #NHS #ERSGold #armedforces #armedforcescovenant https://t.co/kzwusCpTAh" / X \(twitter.com\).](#)

AFCA Out and about

The AFCA has been out and about attending a number of local and National AFC events:

- VCHA National Best Practice Conference London
- On Track: In association with Dorset Armed Forces Covenant Programme.
- Meet Your Army: The Army Engagement Group
- VCHA SW Regional Workshop
- ERS Gold Award Presentation

All of the events have been good for networking, establishing partnerships and understanding and sharing best practise.

Staff Training:

The AFCA is now doing regular presentations 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). This includes all newly qualified registrants across UHD, with the vision for the programme 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 AFC. After just a couple of presentations, there have been some very positive feedback and a number of referrals as well as a with a request for the AFCA to present to a department on a staff training day.

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. It is hoped that this system will be up and running within the next two weeks, this will coincide with a new poster campaign asking Veterans and members of the AFC to notify a member of staff that they are a veteran or a member of the AFC.

WARRINGTON AND HALTON TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



The Data

The Trust continues to collect veteran status from patients and the more data we gather the better we can understand the varying needs of our veteran population and therefore implement services accordingly.

The Veteran Patient Dashboard continues to develop with live data of numbers of veteran patients recorded.

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.

Case Studies

Patient admitted to Ward B12 Forget Me Not ward. Previously served in the RAF and fondly remembered his service. The patient's wife visited daily and is the main carer for her husband. Both the patient and his wife were completely unaware of the support available to them and were therefore signposted to a number of external services including the RAF befriending service along with practical support for mobility aids for the home.

Outpatient who had served in the Army, had left service following an injury whilst on a training exercise and has suffered mobility problems ever since along with a number of other health issues. Patient requested support and guidance to support financial issues such as pensions and PIP application. AFA has obtained support and information via DWP.

The patient is also undergoing exploratory test which may result in surgical interventions and the AFA will continue to monitor the patient journey in order that waiting lists can be reviewed, where clinically appropriate to give a level of prioritisation to the patient.

Events

WHH commemorated Remembrance and Armistice with a special service of Remembrance held on Friday 10th November. The event was organised by the Armed Forces Veterans Staff Network and supported by local veterans from the community. The service was led by the hospital chaplaincy team, veteran staff and the Trust Executives. The event was well attended by both patients and staff who were able to lay their own wreaths and crosses. The event was live streamed on Facebook to allow patients who couldn't come from the wards to watch. The event was followed by a coffee morning.

A remembrance service was also recorded and broadcast via the Hospital Radio for patients over the remembrance weekend led by the hospital chaplain and veterans from the staff network.



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

Remembrance Week

The Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Remembrance week saw lots of activities all around the trust.

Starting with remembrance stone painting within Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care where all staff and patients were invited to come and decorate one in remembrance of a loved one. These will be placed into our Armed Forces Community Garden when the weather improves!



All around the trust the wards decorated to commemorate Remembrance and what it stands for . The Amazing displays that brightened the wards with pictures of serving loved ones. Many of our own staff that have served and gave thought to those who have fallen.

These pictures are our colleagues in Wrightington and some of the wards around RAFI what an amazing effort from all involved.



Our new Armed Forces Healthcare Navigator, Joanne, started her first week in post at the start of Remembrance Week. Joanne commented "I was blown away with the work and commitment that the wards had put into their displays. I look forward to working across all 4 sites".



During Remembrance week we had help with our Poppy Appeal with various members of staff and volunteers going around the hospital with our Poppy appeal.

We were also very lucky to once again have Reservist from 206 Field Hospital whom stood at the front of the hospital in all weathers promoting our Poppy Appeal. They even kindly spared some time to visit our childrens Rainbow Ward were they spent time with Patients aswell as staff.

The Remembrance Service was a very sombre and emotional occasion.

The Service was charged with emotion with Readings from Leanne Cobham Armed Forces Lead, Joanne Lee Armed Forces Navigator, Jane Astley Assistant Chaplain . And Readings from Other members of Staff.

We had a visit from a WWII VET from Billinge Ward who made the occasion even more emotional. The Service was played live over The Hospital Radio for patients and staff who were unable to attend.

At the end of the Service, we were played out by PC Andy McCombs playing The Last Post.

Huge thank to our WWL maintenance Team for their hard work getting our flag pole erected with our Armed Forces Flag in situ, in time for Remembrance week. Also for placing our Soldier that was kindly made by a patient's daughter which has been placed in our Armed Forces Community Garden.

Finally,

Looking forward towards Christmas, we will be collecting food items to create hampers which we can take down to our local Armed Forces HQ to support our veterans over the Christmas period. Once again the whole trust will be involved with this. Merry Christmas to all.

EAST SUFFOLK AND NORTH ESSEX FOUNDATION TRUST

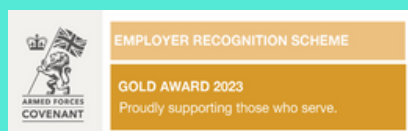


Since our last ESNEFT update our Armed Forces Advocate has had another busy quarter.



In Sept 23, our AFA attended the Veterans Covenant Health Care Alliance – National Best Practice Conference held in London.

In Septemeber 23, we also had the honour and privledge to accept our Defence Employer Recognition Scheme 'Gold' award at the Churchill War Rooms in London. We celebrated the evening alongside 11 other organisations across East Anglia.



Since July 22, our AFA has successfully supported four organisations to pledge their support to the Armed Forces Covenant.

Provided support to our HR team to implement a Trust – Reserve Policy.

Supported four veterans and one serving partner to secure employment within ESNEFT.

They have worked directly with the Step into Health programme and the Ministry of Defence – Career Transition Partnership.

In March 23, our AFA supported ESNEFT in partnership with Colchester Institute to host an Armed Forces Community – Employment programme.

Testimonial – Veteran

Since the end of my service after two decades in the Army I was not aware how daunting the civilian employment world could be and to be honest I did not know what direction to go in.

After speaking to the Armed Forces Advocate, who opened my eyes to all the opportunities within the NHS and more specifically at ESNEFT it all seemed a little less daunting to me. I really appreciate all the help that's been provided to me, as I imagine the other veterans within the trust do too. Bringing us all together on Remembrance Day introducing veterans and reservists to each other and how can I forget the leave policy for veterans, it makes me feel like the trust values our service in the Armed Forces. Lee Kemp Estates & Facilities



Act of Remembrance

In the lead to Remembrance ESNEFT supported the Royal British Legions – Poppy Appeal. Donations were collected across our hospital sites.

On the 10 Nov 23 ESNEFT's Chaplaincy Teams held beautiful services at Colchester and Ipswich hospitals. We were honoured to be joined by Military representatives from 161 Medical Squadron and 7 Aviation Support Battalion.

The Children's ward and local nurseries, kindly donated artwork to display.

Following the services of Remembrance our Armed Forces Network hosted coffee mornings inviting all 75 members and invited guests to join.



EAST SUFFOLK AND NORTH ESSEX FOUNDATION TRUST



East Suffolk and North Essex
NHS Foundation Trust



During these events representatives from Op Courage, Walking with the Wounded, SSAFA and Combat 2 Coffee (C2C) were invited to join forces. Working in partnership we shared information on the support and services available – enabling a further reach to a significant number of ESNEFT staff and members of the public.

As we draw a close to our final E-Bulletin update, we would like to give thanks to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. It's been a honour and privilege for ESNEFT to be involved in the programme, working towards shaping a veteran friendly future for our armed forces community.



Awareness and Training

In line with the programme objectives and the statutory duty to consider the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant. One of the key areas of focus for our AFA has been on the delivery of training.

Since Sept 23, over 42 training sessions have been delivered by the AFA to 340 staff members who have voluntarily attended face-to-face or virtual training sessions.

In addition over 400 new starters to the Trust have benefited from an armed forces community awareness stand during welcome fairs at induction.

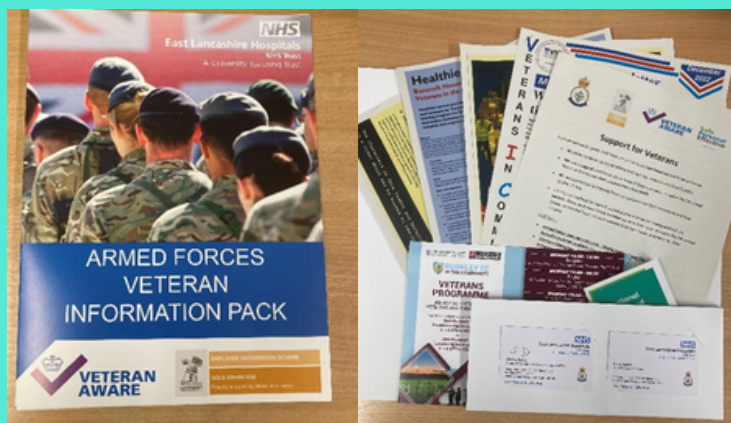
Over 15 colleagues have completed the Sussex Armed Forces Service Champion Training Course.

To capture the wider workforce the Trust also implemented an armed forces community eLearning package – unfortunately the uptake at present has been limited.

To further increase awareness our AFA has facilitated four veteran aware roadshows. As a Trust we feel these events provide a valued opportunity to advocate for our armed forces community, whilst raising awareness of the Armed Forces Advocate role.

EAST LANCASHIRE HOSPITALS NHS TRUST

Since our last report ELHT have been busy as always. We have now visited and supported over 2000 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. We also now have a dedicated referral pathway that all staff can use to refer the Armed Forces Community to the team.

BUSINESS PLAN

The trust has not agreed to our business plan to expand the team, however they are going to keep the advocate role and will agree to have one extra member of the team to help take this project forward into the future.

ARMED FORCES STAFF NETWORK

We have now gone live with the new Armed Forces Staff Network and currently have around 50 members, which include – Veterans, Reservists, and relatives of the aforementioned. It is our aim to utilise this network to keep the Staff Armed Forces Community UpToDate with events and any relevant information.

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.

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.
- Cadet Forces training sessions.
- Undergraduate shadowing and training program.
- Armed Forces Job Fair attendances
- Expanding the project into the Community based teams and patients.

JAMES PAGET UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



The Trust has now had an Armed Forces Advocate in post for 18 months and work to make the hospital the focal point for Armed Forces Community support is paying off. Staff and patients now expect the AFA to support them and referrals from partner organisations have continued to increase. The AFA is being asked to present at different events and to local groups, most of which just want their staff to have a better understanding of the Armed Forces Community and how they can support where possible. The AFA has done a lot of work with the local council to see how we can improve support in our area. This has also resulted in additional funding being provided which means 6 coffee mornings can be held each year and additional 20 welfare packs can be purchased. The Trust has also received letters for three patients in the last 4 weeks thanking the AFA for their support. These are from patients admitted over 6 months ago. The Trust has seen the success of the role and agreed to fund the AFA role after 31st March 24. Work continues with the ICB to increase support further.

Remembrance

On the 10th November the Trust held a Remembrance service for staff and patients. As well as over 50 staff members and patients, members of the local Royal British Legion branches and Royal Marine Cadets attended the event.



The event was a great success and was the first time we were able to lay the wreath in our remembrance garden, luckily for all attending the weather was dry. To complete the service we were able to have a local choir and bugler perform at the service.



We also had members from the poppy appeal back in the trust for the second year. They could not be happier with the support they received from members of the trust during their 2 week appeal and we look forward to finding out how much we raised. They were also supported by our project search students who were very happy to be involved.

Coffee/information event

Since our last bulletin the Trust has hosted 2 successful coffee events. Each time with different organisations and more people attending. Our November event was the biggest yet with WWTW, Op Courage, RNA, Veterans service, veterans gambling support and over 60 veterans attending.



We were also lucky to have hospital volunteers and project search students support the event and 2 currently serving individuals from Wattisham attend.

MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



In 2019, MFT signed the Armed Forces Covenant and was awarded the Bronze Accreditation as part of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. The Trust had set itself ambitions to improve their services for the Armed Forces Community and create an inclusive and supportive environment for military personnel, veterans, and their families.

Addressing these challenges required collaboration between healthcare providers, policymakers, and external stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Defence, and military charities. Included within this group of volunteers from within the Trust – Grace Henderson – was a veteran who had prematurely had to leave the armed forces and had joined MFT on a Business Manager Degree Apprenticeship.

Having become an Armed Forces Champion, Grace completed her degree in healthcare in the Armed Forces and was intrinsic in the Trust achieving the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Accreditation and building relationships with a number of local and national military charities in 2021.

As part of the work Grace completed, she successfully applied to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund, receiving funding (£120,000) that facilitated the creation of a dedicated Veterans Integrated Hospital Care Programme Manager, a position she commenced in December 2021.

(Whilst initially managed under Corporate Operations, the position was transferred to Corporate Workforce in April 2023.)

Through the dedicated Veterans Integrated Hospital Care Programme Manager and the Covenant Funding the Trust has successfully improved the care to armed forces personnel and veterans who are patients in MFT hospitals. At the same time the Trust increased its support for the employment of armed forces veterans, all resulting in the Trust achieving the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Accreditation in 2022.

Through the programme of work the Achievements to date include:

- The first NHS organisation within the Northwest to be awarded Veteran Aware one-year-reaccreditation status in April 2022, following initial accreditation in 2021.
- The first NHS organisation to be awarded the Veterans in Pride standard, as part of Charity Fighting with Pride 2023.
- Negotiated the provision of 10 days Special Paid Leave for Reserve Forces employees.
- Negotiated the provision of 5 days Special Paid Leave for Cadet Force Adult Volunteers employees.
- Signed up to, and advertised MFT career opportunities, through Career Transition Partnership (CTP), the official provider of resettlement within the Ministry of Defence.
- Signed up to, and advertise MFT career opportunities, through Forces Families Jobs which supports family members of currently serving UK military personnel access employment and volunteer opportunities.
- Signed up to Step into Health (SiH) and registered a profile with the initiative which supports members of the Armed Forces community to connect to NHS organisations to arrange training opportunities, clinical and general work placements, insight days and receive application support.

•Partnered with Walking with the Wounded's Employment Programme, and collaborative working, with Poppy Factory and Groundwork to support Veterans into NHS Employment.

•Established a route within Hive at all 10-hospital sites to identify members of the Armed Forces Community, currently identifying 10,000 patients' admission and discharges at MFT to date (see appendix one):

- § Regular / Reserve Forces Personnel
- § Partners /Spouses of Regular / Reserve Forces Personnel
- § Children / Dependents between the ages of 0-18 of Regular / Reserve Forces Personnel
- § Veterans.

•Led a national improvement alongside NHS Employers and the Electronic Staff Record team (ESR), to see the inclusion of two new fields: Cadet Force Adult Volunteer (CFAV) and Armed Forces family member so that all NHS organisations can record their armed forces employees.

•Supported and arranged annual events, such as Remembrance Services within the Trust and, delivered our second Armed Forces Day Event.

•Supported over 30 Veteran patients within the Manchester Royal Infirmary between Jan-Feb 2023 during a pilot, supporting patients with complex needs, vulnerabilities, and illnesses/injuries because of their service to improve discharge pathways and patient outcomes.

•Offer clinical placements to service personnel wanting to practice within MFT, e.g., MoD Nurses and Combat Medical Technicians.

In furtherance of the support to the Armed Forces community MFT has shared our experiences regionally and nationally positively influencing many other healthcare organisations including supporting the GM ICB to achieve its accreditation.

Future Proposal

The Armed Forces Covenant Funding has ceased and there is no current option for additional funds and Grace Henderson has now left the position of Veterans Integrated Hospital Care Programme Manager. It is proposed that MFT continues its commitment to supporting our armed forces community.

To do this it is proposed that the programme oversight will pass to the Group Director of Corporate Workforce, Nick Bailey. He will work with the Armed Forces Staff Network to monitor progress against our own ten commitments to maintaining Gold Accreditation and Veteran Aware Status (see Appendix 1 for full details). The commitments can be summarised as follows.

- Re-affirm our Commitments to the Covenant
- Legislation, Policies and Processes
- Health and Wellbeing for Armed Forces Community – Staff
- Health and Wellbeing for Armed Forces Community – Patients
- Maintain Armed Forces Data
- Armed Forces Community Awareness
- Attraction, Recruitment and Retention
- Supporting the MoD with Healthcare Training
- Collaboration with the MoD
- Celebrating and Recognising our Armed Forces Community

SOUTH TYNESIDE AND SUNDERLAND NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

The STSFT Trust Comms team have produced some videos Highlighting support available from AFHL and the work with veteran organisations in community (<https://youtu.be/6mFSPZmnVfc>) and another detailing the experience of veteran and reservist staff working within the trust (<https://youtu.be/iIPhbaHvmFc>). The videos were released on the Trust's media channels during remembrance weekend.

The Children's wards put together a display with hand crafted poppies and an explanation of Remembrance Day which was displayed in the main concourse at Sunderland Royal Hospital along with information packs and leaflets for veteran patients. The Display and information table was well received by staff, patients and visitors alike.

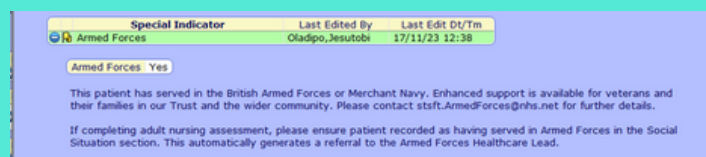
Local veteran support organisation NAAFI Break South Tyneside held a stand on the Tuesday of Remembrance Week in the main entrance of South Tyneside District Hospital promoting the support available to veterans in the area as well as giving out hand crafted poppies to promote the support and recognition of the armed forces community.



The annual staff Armed Forces Veterans and Reservist lunch was held during Remembrance week and was attended by the Trust's Chief Executive, Ken Bremner, MBE with invites extended to representatives of locally based military units as well as local veteran organisations Veterans In Crisis Sunderland and NAAFI Break South Tyneside.

The event provided an additional platform to identify more veterans working within the Trust with the aim of building on the success of the event to start an informal Armed Forces Staff network in the New Year.

On 20th September the new veteran identification flag went live on the system. The AFHL can add this to veterans electronic notes following agreement with the veteran and it means there is increased visibility of the patient's status as a veteran, improved notification of subsequent admissions to AFHL and awareness for staff and contact details for the AFHL. The flag has already resulted in referrals being made to specialist veteran mental health organisations and SSAFA by the AFHL following contact by specialist teams as a direct result of flagging



The Moodle learning module on the armed forces community is now live within the trust's suite of optional learning and several staff have completed the module receiving a veteran aware badge upon completion. Additionally, training has been delivered to the OT department in the trust on support available for veterans from the AFHL and how this can support their work with veterans particularly around discharge from hospital. Further training sessions have been arranged with student nurses as well as the specialist dementia centre in the Trust which will be delivered in the New Year.

As of 10th October, The AFHL has been in post at STSFT for a year.

- Key achievements in this time include
 - oOver 588 veterans visited on the ward or contacts
 - o220 Veterans flagged
 - oCloser working with veteran organisations and direct contact can be made both ways. Enhanced reputation of trust with local armed forces community
 - oArmed forces community learning module on e-learning suite
 - oMandatory inpatient question on armed forces service status
 - oPosters for veteran support on all wards at acute sites
 - oDedicated armed forces email inbox
 - oSuccessful revalidation of Veteran Aware status at 1 year review
 - oSilver at English Veteran Awards in Employer of the Year category
 - oVeteran volunteer specification produced
 - oToiletries available for veteran inpatients following regular donations secured by AFHL
 - oCreation of support packs, Available in key clinical areas
 - oTrust Customer Service team award as part of Patient Experience Team
 - oVeteran Support Website
 - oEmployment and volunteering website for veterans and reservists

AIREDALE NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



How sad, the last Bulletin! Reflecting on the previous bulletins shows how far we have all come in such a short time and the impact we have all had on so many of the Armed Forces Community. I am sure lives have been saved, Veterans have felt more supported, and Hospitals have gained knowledge and are using the correct care pathways, financially. It also raises the question of what support will be available to Veterans entering Hospital and staff requesting help once the project has ended? My personal feeling is that the Armed Forces Advocate role is still very much needed, to ensure that hospitals continue to comply with the Armed Forces Covenant and Act, ensuring the Veteran community receives the NHS service they deserve. However, I'm reassured to know that some Armed Forces Advocates have now been able to secure ongoing funding.

I have observed and learnt so much from other Advocates working creatively, raising the profile of the project, of veterans and of the Armed Forces Covenant. All the Advocates (and Armed Forces Healthcare Lead) have shown the dedication expected from the Armed Forces Community, always going above and beyond.

Having joined quite late into the project, I still have the 'luxury' of 10 months funding remaining, but we have so much more to do. At Airedale Hospital we are now looking at several options as a business plan moving forward; including community work or broadening the role to cover other local Trusts. We are also looking at a buddy system, which was trialled during Remembrance Day. Porters who had previously served were asked to transport Veterans to a service in the Hospital Chapel. One porter found he had served in the same highland regiment as a Veteran patient he was transporting. They immediately built a fantastic rapport naming people they had both served with making it a memorable day for both.

There is also a plan to recruit volunteers who would be able to spend time, listening to the amazing stories of our Veterans. In my role I have found this to be one of the most valuable interventions that can be offered.

This time of year can be particularly difficult for many Veterans with Bonfire Night and Armistice Day. For example I received a phone call from a local

regimental association expressing concern for a Veteran known to me who was struggling and sleeping in local woods during bonfire night. Following a few calls, a multi-agency approach was launched, with Police and Local Authority involved. We were able to offer immediate accommodation and OpCourage are now supporting him. Although not within the remit of the AFA role, without rapid intervention, the outcome could have been fatal. He is now receiving the best possible support.

In another case, following a call from OpCourage, we were able to support a Veteran who refused to attend his local Hospital and had concerning health issues following a fall during Remembrance. OpCourage brought him in and I was able to sort out a quiet room with ED for his arrival and sat with him. Some great joined up working.

With the role of AFA becoming more widely recognised I received several invitations to networking meetings and Armistice events around West Yorkshire representing Airedale and the NHS, finally spending a total of 8 minutes in respectful silence. We held a weeklong information event during Remembrance week in the Trust, with invited guests from 212 Field Hospital (Leeds Reserves Unit), Men of Worth Project "research local people who served the country in wartime" and Royal British Legion.

We have had several achievements in the past few months including successful VCHA Veteran Aware reaccréditation. The Trust's ERS Silver Award Revalidation was successful. I received the English Veterans bronze award for Inspiration of the Year. In addition, I was also nominated for Celebrate as One: Bradford District and Craven Health and Care Partnership Awards Tackling inequalities - meeting the needs of our communities.

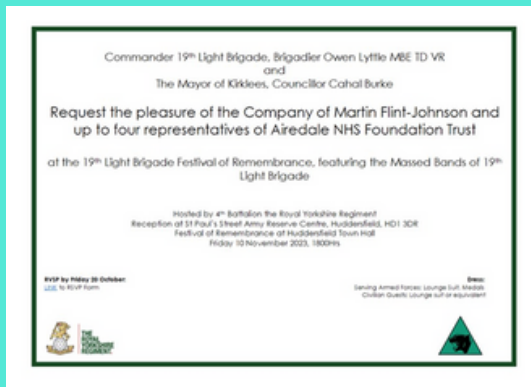


Photo of Del, one of our porters

Photo of Tom Tugendhat MP Minister of State (Minister for Security) when he visited Keighley.



AIREDALE NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



Speaking as a Veteran, I would like to thank all who have been involved in the project to bring it alive. Firstly, my manager Kathryn Hooper (Airedale Armed Forces Lead) for employing me and the backing of senior management and staff at Airedale who have supported this project throughout. Secondly, if it was not for the University of Chester and the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, this pilot project would not have materialised. It has provided an opportunity to identify and highlight a necessity of "Supporting Armed Forces in Acute Hospital Settings" and long may this role continue. Thank you.

Over the past 12 months –

- 600+ Trust staff have received Veteran Aware and Armed Forces Covenant/Act Training
- 180+ Veterans visited within ANHSFT and 120+ Veteran information packs.
- Identified and made 7 Safeguarding referrals.
- Advocated for 6 Complaints from Veterans referred to PALS
- Supported 8 Veterans to refer to OpRestore
- Supported 9 Veterans to refer to OpCourage
- Supported 2 Veterans to refer to OpFortitude (Veteran housing support).
- Supported 1 Serving Soldier to refer to OpCommunity
- Successful applied for £8,500 + charitable funding for Housing, furniture, adaptations, and a specialist bed (at no cost to NHS or Local Authority).



Photo of Bradford Lord Mayor and Fiona Mattison, BTHFT Armed Forces Champion.



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 2500 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 79% capture rate upon admission with staff training ongoing in order to further increase this rate.

The AFA have been busy supporting all those veterans in need that access our services as well as ongoing community relation work to aid and educate those who may not require the immediate support available.

We attended the families day at HQ ARRC, accompanied by one of our armed forces champions Caitlin, a registered nurse within the trust. The day was a great success in both making connections with such a large and diverse group of serving members and their families along with other primary care providers and services available in the county for the armed forces community. It is relationships like these that allow the reach of the AFA to extend so much further than the adult inpatient setting and into all facets of the armed forces community within the county.



Armistice Day was remembered on Friday 10th November this year with a service in both of the trusts' hospitals. It is always heart-warming to see such a strong turnout of staff, visitors and patients during a busy period and acknowledging the sacrifice of our armed forces. The CEO of the trust, Deborah Lee, laid the wreath in Gloucestershire Royal Hospital and veteran inpatients across the trust were given cards thanking them for their service by the ward staff and AFA.



Alongside the commemorative work in November the AFA were pleased to be invited to the VCHA South West Regional Conference, held in Taunton Rugby Club. It is reassuring, and of great benefit to all, to see and experience all of the hard work and effort that is ongoing in order to support our veterans, as well as the wider armed forces community, accessing NHS services and the changes and challenges in the future.

The AFA continue to see an increasing number of veterans who have complex needs. It is thanks to the close links forged with external resources, county and local councils, local military establishments, other health care providers in the county as well as military charities, over the last 18 months 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 referrals to local organisations and charities that help veterans in the community.

Staff training and education is ongoing with the corporate trust induction educating new staff members on the Armed Forces Covenant and the AFA providing bespoke education in both the acute and support areas of the trust. 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. This assistance is helping, where possible, to reduce the length of stay in the acute setting for veterans in addition to enhancing the patient experience.

Despite the uncertainty of the role continuing post project 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 correct and full support needed and available. The AFA are looking forward to expanding the reach and benefits of the service over the coming months and years within Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

FRIMLEY HEALTH NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



Another steady period of growth has seen the trust formally receive the Gold Employer Recognition Status at a ceremony held on HMS Victory at Portsmouth's historic dockyards, accompanying the Armed Forces Lead were Matt Joint, Director Of People, and Mark Leppine Williams, head of security, portering, and a former RSM of The Military Hospital here at Frimley.

Our reach and work continues to grow with a regular established briefing on the workplace induction package for all new military staff plus regular staff updates through communications. During the build up the remembrance Sunday a poppy appeal was launched in 20 departments of the trust and a small service was held in the hospital chapel. In addition to this The Armed Forces Lead, Kerry Gospel, was invited to the official march past at this year's Cenotaph parade.

We have engaged with Scotty's Helpers to provide support to maternity patients and those with children admitted when the service partners are deployed and extended our patient experience team to include quarterly updates and structured briefing to key staff to raise awareness of veteran healthcare requirements. Our volunteer services manager has agreed to accompany the Armed Forces Lead at breakfast clubs in order to recruit from the veteran community which will not only strengthen the awareness but provide meaningful activities for veterans and support all patients in the trust.

There are still a number of challenges to be addressed as the data capture time constraints at ward level are challenging when the hospital is running at full speed and recently we had to declare the hospital closed due to pressures but the desire and appetite to continue supporting Veterans and their dependants continues and we strive to embed it into the trust culture.

Other than that it is business as usual and recovering from a broken ankle!



SCOTLAND –
DEFENCE MEDICAL
WELFARE SERVICES

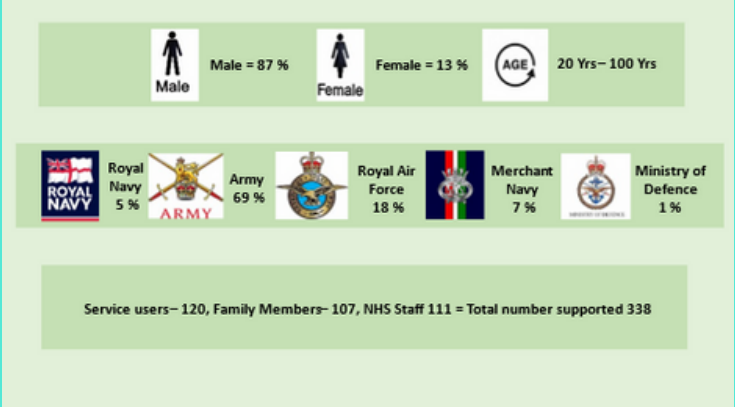


NHS Lothian

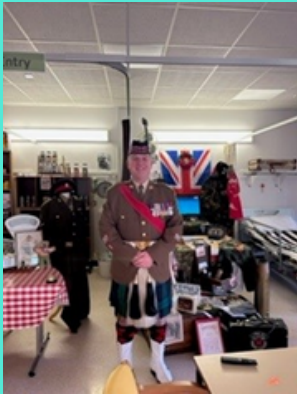
NHS Lothian in partnership with Defence Medical Welfare Service

Within NHS Lothian our project continues to support the armed forces community not only in an acute hospital setting but also in the community. With the addition of Welfare Officer Brian Brown who we introduced in the last e-bulletin we have been able to expand our coverage and he has hit the ground running.

We are finding that the most common issues with our Service Users are General Health, General Wellbeing, Mental Health, and Social Isolation. In the image below you will be able to see a breakdown of Gender, Age Range and Service of those we have supported alongside number of family members and staff who also received support. (April 22 – Oct 23)



As we head into the Winter months, we recently held a Remembrance event within St John's Hospital in Livingston. It was a privilege to be there both representing DMWS and the Acute Hospital Project but also be in uniform as a reserve soldier. This event allowed Hospital staff and Veterans to come together and commemorate those who paid the ultimate sacrifice and for our veteran patients to meet and talk about their military service and the memories they have, especially those with dementia/Alzheimer's. As always, the support from Hospital Staff was superb, from clinical staff to catering and support staff. Some of the staff who attended are not only veterans themselves, but some are serving Reserve Soldiers. This event has resulted in the Site Director who himself is a Veteran looking to start a Veterans support group for those Hospital staff who have served or are still serving.



We continue to strive to improve veteran identification, and this is always an ongoing process. As a result of our work with the TRAK Care (Patient tracking) Team clinical staff now have the facility to refer veterans directly to DMWS for support using TRAK Care. The process is very simple, and the engineers have provided a solution that is easy for staff to use and navigate. This is currently being trialled in a few wards within the Western General Hospital before rolling out across NHS Lothian. The next stage of this process is to have a reporting function that will allow data to be extracted from TRAK Care that will identify trends regarding type of admission, age, and response rate to give some examples. This function will allow us to not only improve service delivery but also provide valuable information for NHS Lothian.

As a result of our continuing engagement within each site we are now receiving referrals from a variety of sources such as ward staff, consultants, Physios and OTs as well as community mental health teams.

As we look forward to 2024 our focus is now on sustainability of the project as we continually witness the difference it makes to those we support and engage with.

SCOTLAND – DEFENCE MEDICAL WELFARE SERVICES



NHS GREATER GLASGOW AND CLYDE

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde in partnership with Defence Medical Welfare Service

Thanks to the funding from this AFCFT project and a partnership with Defence Medical Welfare Service, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has provided additional welfare support to 145 veterans and 335 wider beneficiaries (families and NHS staff). We have also been able to take forward several initiatives, which will have long term benefits for veterans and other members of the Armed Forces Community using NHSGGC's secondary care services.

Education

Working with the Scottish Government and NHS Highland, the NHSGGC/DMWS partnership has created a new eLearning resource for NHS Scotland staff: The Armed Forces and Veterans' Recognition Scheme – Secondary Care Learning Programme. This will be available on the Turas eLearning platform from December 2023. The package consists of three modules; M1 provides information about the Armed Forces Community, the Armed Forces Covenant and the impact of service life on health and wellbeing, M2 provides guidance on how to identify patients with an armed forces background and how to record this information in patient records, and M3 focuses on case studies and the practical implication of the legislative duty.

This is a positive step forward in upskilling all NHS Scotland staff.



Identification

From 4 December, asking 'Have you or a close family member ever served in the Armed Forces?' will become an integral part of the registration process for patients using NHSGGC's secondary care services. Improvements have been made to the patient data management systems TrakCare and EMISweb to capture this information. Crucially both changes come with the ability to generate and interrogate data. This will have multiple benefits in addition to equipping clinical staff with the information they need to ensure the patient is treated in accordance with the Covenant Duty.

The Impact of DMWS Welfare Support

The heart of this project has been to test the benefits of providing additional welfare support to veterans in NHSGGC's hospitals, with the aim of improving health and wellbeing outcomes. Not all 145 veterans we supported were within acute care, approximately 46 were under primary care. The nature of Scotland's integrated healthcare system means that we have received referrals from General Practice and Health and Social Care Partnership colleagues; and we have accommodated these wherever possible. The table below shows data collected from 118 closed cases. This sample demonstrates the kind of positive impact this DMWS service is having, it has been life changing for some.

Primary Care		Nos of SU's	% of All SU's
Reduced time taken by GP for social care and wellbeing issues		24	29%
Implemented early intervention support		12	14%
Other		4	5%
Eliminated unnecessary attendance at hospital/IMD		4	5%
Reduced unnecessary appointments with GP		4	5%
Total No. of SU's with a Primary Care Outcome		38	46%
Secondary Care		Nos of SU's	% of All SU's
Reduced anxiety/stress about health care/treatment		43	44%
Improved experience of health care		37	38%
Obtained support from 3rd sector reducing need for NHS services		30	31%
Improved interaction between SU and/or SU Family and Healthcare Professionals		17	18%
Contributed to improved discharge plan		16	16%
Other/Comments		6	6%
Reduced likelihood of NHS Mental Health Crisis Intervention		6	6%
Reduced the likelihood of hospital re-admission		4	4%
Reduced DNAs at hospital		3	3%
Reduced frequent or future unnecessary admissions to hospital		3	3%
Reduced Delayed Transfer of Care (length of stay)		2	2%
Improved patient condition through WIO interaction		2	2%
Total No. of SU's with a Secondary Care Outcome		89	82%
Social Isolation		Nos of SU's	% of All SU's
Reduced Social Isolation		32	37%
Enabled access to Community based Activities		10	11%
Other/Comments		10	11%
Enabled support from Buddy/Companion Services		5	6%
Accessed Home from Hospital/Home based practical support		4	5%
Reduced Social Isolation whilst in hospital e.g. visiting SU and facilitating family visits		4	5%
Total No. of SU's with a Social Isolation Outcome		52	60%
Independent Living		Nos of SU's	% of All SU's
Other		27	33%
Secured Alternative Suitable Accommodation		7	9%
Secured funding for mobility aids		3	4%
Enabled Independent Living - SU remained in/discharged to their own home		2	2%
Secured eligible and previously unclaimed benefits		2	2%
Secured funding for housing adaptations		1	1%
Secured funding from specialist organisation for care home fees alternative to LA funds		1	1%
Secured Respite Placement		1	1%
Enabled access for mobility aids and housing adaptations		1	1%
Supported SU to maintain or improve suitable accommodation		1	1%
Utilised specialist Housing Provision alternative to LA housing		1	1%
Total No. of SU's with an Independent Living Outcome		40	49%

In addition to the positive impact of emotional support, improving outcomes has been achieved through effective partnership-working to solve practical issues. The photo opposite shows Mr Andrew McLelland, a 56-year-old Army veteran, who was under the care of Glasgow's QEUH. DMWS Welfare Officer Samantha Wilkie supported Mr McLelland through his discharge from hospital and into a cottage at Erskine's Veterans Village. Erskine has been caring for Scotland's veterans since 1916 and has provided Mr McLelland with accommodation, which is more suitable to his needs. Fares4Free, another veterans' charity, provided safe transport to his new home on 20 November 2023.



It is outcomes like this, which allowed the Health Board's Armed Forces and Veterans Champion Julie Murray, to successfully bid for sustainability funding from the NHSGGC Healthcare Charity Committee. This funding will be used to establish an NHSGGC Veterans Support Service, to continue the partnership with DMWS and keep improving the health and wellbeing of our veteran patients.

BETSI CADWALADR UNIVERSITY HEALTH BOARD



Defence Employer Recognition Scheme – Gold Award Reaccreditation

Following completion of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS) re-accreditation programme, BCUHB is proud to announce that the Health Board has revalidated and has been awarded the Gold Award.



BCUHB – Fighting with Pride: PiVS Award

In efforts to support LGBT+ Veterans, serving personnel and their families across the Health Board, BCUHB has joined Fighting with Pride Charity, and is proud to announce that we have achieved the Pride in Veterans Standard (PiVS). This means that BCUHB warmly welcomes LGBT+ Veterans, serving personnel and their families, ensure all staff, volunteers and members have an awareness of the different challenges faced by LGBT+ people, in particular, those who were impacted by the Armed Forces “gay ban”.

The Health Board has a clear understanding of the needs of LGBT+ Veterans, serving personnel and their families and tailor services/support to meet their needs and understands that for some LGBT+ Veterans, their experiences have impacted their mental health, so ensure any in this area is tailored to their specific needs.

Ultimately, in order to support the Armed Forces Community and in particular, the LGBT+ group within this cohort, BCUHB will strive to promote inclusion, dignity and respect for LGBT+ people in everything that we do, and we recognise the different groups within the LGBT+ community and understand their needs may be different!



Armistice Day – 2023

This week, BCUHB Staff and patients came together to pay tribute and commemorate the service and sacrifice of British and Commonwealth Armed Forces community, alongside members of civilian services. As a Health Board, BCUHB remembered, the vital role played by AFC and the emergency services and those who have lost their lives as a result of conflict or terrorism.

Led by the Chaplaincy Services, Executive Board Members and key personnel of the BCUHB's Hospital Management Teams, Hospital sites across North Wales held Armistice Services and paid respects to all the fallen heroes by taking part in a national two-minute silence. This opportunity provided BCUHB Staff, Partners and Patients with a physical reminder of all those who have served and sacrificed, with British and Commonwealth soldiers, sailors, airmen and women represented, together with members of the emergency services and civilians, ensuring that no-one is forgotten.



Taking the Armed Forces in the Acute Hospital Setting Programme Forward – BCUHB

A business case, which seeks approval for revenue investment for the retention of a dedicated Armed Forces Covenant & Veteran Healthcare Collaborative Lead role, has been submitted, to ensure continuation of the work within the North Wales Veteran Healthcare Collaborative, supporting the Armed Forces Community within Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) and across North Wales. The business case was supported by twelve letters of endorsement from key appointments and Organisations throughout the UK Veterans' arena, including the Veterans' Commissioner for Wales, SSAFA, RBL, Local MPs and MS, Woodys Lodge, and Help4Heroes amongst others.

CARDIFF AND VALE UNIVERSITY HEALTH BOARD



We held our first AF staff coffee morning on the 7th of September.

Which has helped to grow our Service Champions Network.

CAVUHB re-signed the Armed Forces Covenant on the 8th of September to pledge their commitment to the Armed Forces Community by upholding the AF Covenant Duty.



Remembrance:

For Remembrance we linked up with RBL to get a series of Poppy Boxes across the Health Board. The children from Noah's Ark Children's Hospital made us Poppies for our displays.

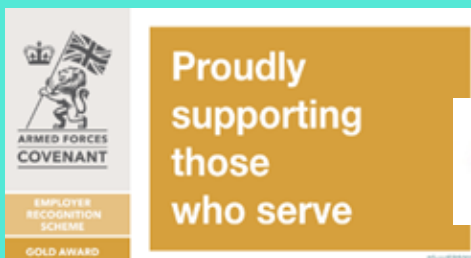
We organised a tour of the commonwealth war graves at the cemetery locally to our main site on the 9th and then ran a series of coffee and breakfast mornings for both our AF staff and patients on the 10th. Followed by a remembrance service on the ward with the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership from Welsh Government in attendance.



Veteran Identification:

Our 'Have you ever served in the British Armed Forces?' became a mandated question across our inpatient wards from the 4th of October. It is a recorded as part of the patient demographics section.

Our Poppy magnets are currently being piloted in our elderly care wards and day surgery unit.



We successfully achieved our VCHA veteran aware reaccreditation. Along with our ERS Gold renewal.

Looking ahead, our plans going forward include:

- Further IT roll out for A&E and Outpatient systems
- 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 Coffee Mornings for Cardiff & Vale Staff



MILTON KEYNES UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



In 2022, MKUH started from zero with no Armed Forces accreditation, awards, staff network or workstreams. There were only 4 staff at the short Armistice commemoration back in 2021 so it was amazing to see over 60 staff and veteran patients assembled in the courtyard on Friday 10th November for a service lead by the chaplaincy and the AFA. Lines from Flanders Fields were read out by members of the Armed Forces Staff Network, and we were pleased to be joined by a serving Royal Navy commander who contacted us via Step Into Health and also RBL and Walking with the Wounded, our Op Courage provider. CEO, Chief Medical Officer and many other members of the SLT attended.

Then followed a refreshments and networking session with poppy themes cakes before a staff training session. A local veteran then delivered a moving lived experience presentation with Q&A. Blind Veterans delivered a staff training session showing how best to support those with sight loss.

Posters with QR codes encouraging veterans to request an information pack and a visit from the AFA and veteran volunteers have been placed round the trust as we await mandatory question inclusion on the PAS. This has really helped with patient identification already.

The AFA monthly GP practice staff training sessions are ongoing with more local surgeries becoming 'veteran friendly' accredited as a direct result, helping to ensure a more seamless referral process from primary to secondary care. Neighbouring ICBs have asked the AFA to share best practice around training and strategy. MKUH organised a city-wide awareness campaign in the run up to Armistice to encourage veterans to declare their status to their GP surgery and even provided a downloadable suggested letter template.

A recent patient story and wider workstream update was delivered to Trust Board with very positive feedback. Presentations are regularly made at the Patient and Family experience board and the AFA is embedded with the Trusts Inclusion Leadership Council, Underrepresented Communities board, EDI forum locally and regionally as well as the Engagement Board and local Civil military Partnership Board. The AFA still delivers at every Trust Induction session ensuring every new starter, from volunteers through to governors and directors, are made aware of the work and the Moodle e-learning.



**Poppy Themed
Cup Cakes at
Networking event**



**Staff from MKUH
receive the Gold
Award in
Portsmouth (Sept
2023)**

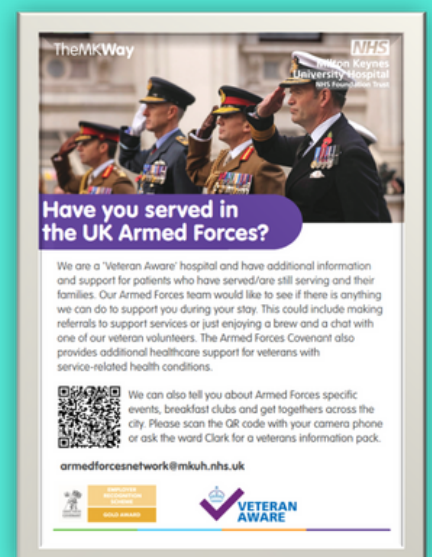


**We were joined by
over 60 members
of staff, patients
and stakeholders.**

**Posters
encouraging
veterans to request
support**



**The AFA with the
team of Veteran
Volunteers**



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>



Kate Salem BSc MRes

Kate is the Senior Researcher at the Westminster Centre for Research in Veterans. With a background in Psychology, Kate is experienced in conducting mixed-methods research and has led on multiple research projects related to health and well-being in the Armed Forces Community. Kate is also the wife of an Army veteran and is completing her PhD which explores mental health and help-seeking in the Armed Forces Community, with a particular focus on the impact of veterans' mental health experiences upon their partners.

Further Information:

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



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>

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Westminster Centre for
Research in Veterans



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 19th October 2023 with a presentation from Dr Victoria Williamson. The next webinar will take place on 7th December 2023.

Places can be booked via:

<https://www1.chester.ac.uk/events/armed-forces-community-research-international-webinar-series?list=8443>

Westminster Centre for
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University of
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

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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