



Briefing

June 2021

Special edition Armed Forces healthcare briefing

This special edition brief is intended to keep you up-to-date on the provision of NHS services for the Armed Forces community and activity during Armed Forces Week.

Health and wellbeing updates

Armed Forces Week 2021

NHS England and NHS Improvement are raising awareness of Armed Forces healthcare services during Armed Forces week from Monday 21 June 2022.

Thank you to NHS staff and Armed Forces colleagues

Dr Jonathan Leach, Medical Director for COVID-19 Immunisation and Associate Medical Director for Armed Forces and Veterans Health, NHS England and NHS Improvement, shares a thank you message to staff and military colleagues this Armed Forces week.

“I’m immensely grateful to military colleagues, who have been working on the delivery of the COVID vaccine for the benefit of our patients and country.”

Kate Davies CBE - Director of Health and Justice, Armed Forces and Sexual Assault Services Commissioning, shares her thanks too:

“Armed Forces Day is a time to recognise and support the Armed Forces community, from serving personnel to Service families, veterans and cadets. The NHS works with Armed Forces charities, organisations and networks to better understand and support the needs of this community as part of our nine commitments in: [Healthcare for the Armed Forces community: a forward view](#) which forms part of the NHS Long Term Plan to improve healthcare for veterans.”

Become an RCGP Veteran-friendly accredited practice

If your GP practice is not yet accredited, show your support by signing up to the RCGP veteran-friendly accreditation programme.

There are an estimated 2.4 million veterans in the UK, some of whom have complex needs. There are veteran-specific NHS services tailored towards this potentially vulnerable patient group. Veterans may also be entitled to priority treatment for conditions related to military service.

Becoming a veteran friendly accredited practice is a simple on-line process and helps to raise awareness, improve understanding and better equip and facilitate GPs in their duty of care to veterans.

Further information on accreditation and signing up can be found [here](#).

For expressions of interest please contact veterans@rcgp.org.uk

Celebrating Pride Month and the LGBT+ veteran community

Craig Jones, founder and Co-Chief Executive of the LGBT+ military charity Fighting with Pride, explains in the upcoming July edition of Civvy Street how the NHS and Fighting with Pride are working together to support the LGBT+ veteran community. In recognition of Pride Month and Armed Forces Week, he shares this message with the Armed Forces community:

“Caroline Paige and I are proud to lead the charity Fighting with Pride, which, with the support of NHS England and NHS Improvement, and Trusts across the UK, is raising awareness in hundreds of organisations of the support needs of all minority veterans. We are one military family and that family grows more inclusive day by day.”

Visit the [Fighting with Pride](#) website for more information.

Action Mesothelioma Day event planned to raise awareness of asbestos-related cancer

The UK Mesothelioma Alliance (UKMA) and ActionMeso will host Action Meso Day, a national event to raise awareness of mesothelioma and the dangers of asbestos. This year, Action Meso Day will be a virtual event, held on Friday 2 July and hosted by broadcaster, academic, and mesothelioma patient, Kate Williams. The event will include panel discussions, clinical trials updates, expert insights and patient stories for anyone affected by and new to mesothelioma.

The national event will be held from 12.30pm to 1.30pm. ActionMeso supporters, including support groups and charities, will be hosting their own activities before or after the main event.

Patients, family members, friends, carers, local dignitaries, healthcare professionals, asbestos removal companies, law firms and anyone interested in mesothelioma and the dangers of asbestos are invited to join the event.

Registration is free at <https://actionmeso.org/amd21/> and the hashtag #ActionMeso will be used on social media platforms.

We Also Served: The Health and Well-being of Female Veterans in the UK

The Confederation of Service Charities Female Veteran Cluster, in conjunction with the Veterans and Families Institute for Military Social Research (VFI) Anglia Ruskin, will launch a new report, “We Also Served: The Health and Well-being of Female Veterans in the UK” on 22 June, 9.30-11.00pm.

Supported by an interactive webinar, Dr Lauren Godier-McBard (Senior Research Fellow and Women and Equalities Lead, Veterans and Families Institute for Military Social Research) will present the findings of the project, exploring the factors impacting on UK female veteran’s health and well-being. This will be followed by reflections from representatives of Cobseo, NHS England and NHS Improvement, the Office for Veterans’ Affairs, and the Ministry of Defence on the significance of this research, and a Q&A panel session, where the audience can submit questions.

Following the launch event, the full report will be available for download and the link circulated on the day. [Please click here to register](#)

Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service

The first call for help takes courage. If you or someone you know is struggling with their mental health or wellbeing, expert help is available from Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service.

If you're due to leave the Armed Forces, just left the Armed Forces or left many years ago, Op COURAGE is here to help. You will be able to speak to people who:

- understand the Armed Forces and military life
- are either from the Armed Forces community or highly experienced in
- working with Serving personnel, Reservists, Veterans and their families
- will work with you to make sure you get the right type of specialist care, support, and treatment.

The service can be contacted directly by yourself or you can ask your GP, a charity or someone else, such as a family member or friend, to do this on your behalf.

What will happen when you contact Op COURAGE

To make sure you get the right care and support, you will first have an assessment by someone who understands the specific needs of the Armed Forces community.

The service offers a range of treatment, which includes:

- working with Defence Medical Services to make sure you get mental health care and support as you transition from the military to civilian life
- recognising the early signs of mental health problems and providing care and treatment for this
- therapeutic treatment for more advanced mental health conditions and psychological trauma
- intensive emergency care and treatment if you're in a crisis
- helping you to access other NHS services if needed, such as 'Improving access to psychological therapies' (IAPT) and eating disorder services
- working with charities and local organisations to support you with your wider health and wellbeing needs, such as housing, relationships, finances, employment, drug and alcohol misuse and social support.

For more information, visit the NHS website at www.nhs.uk/opcourage

Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service is the new name for the Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS), Veterans' Mental Health Complex Treatment Service (CTS) and Veterans' Mental Health High Intensity Service (HIS). The new name has been developed following feedback from veterans and their families to make it easier for those leaving the military and veterans to find help.