

Armed Forces stakeholder brief

August 2023

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

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

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

With 5 July 2023 marking the 75th birthday of the NHS, we were delighted that in the same week the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA) announced that 75% of trusts across England are now Veteran Aware accredited. Thank you to all colleagues from the VCHA and accredited NHS trusts for their dedication to support improved care for the Armed Forces community. Our next brief will be in September, in the meantime, we hope you manage to take some well earned rest this summer.



LGBT veterans independent review publication

The [report into the treatment of LGBT service personnel](#) prior to lifting the ban in 2000 on gay people serving in the British Armed Forces has been published. The review, chaired by Lord Etherton, examined the lived experience of personnel and made subsequent recommendations to the government.

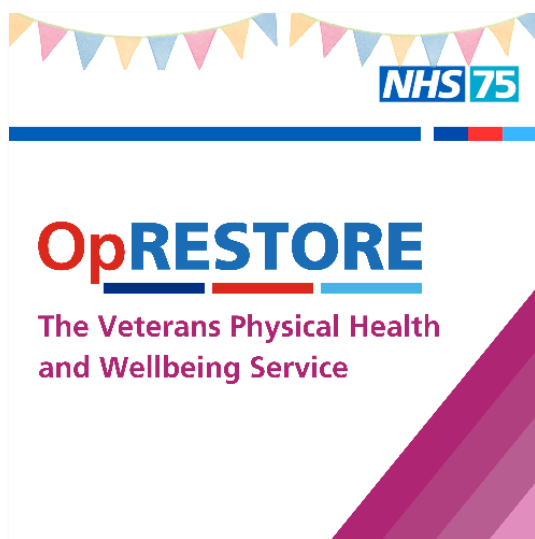
We recognise that the publication of this report may be upsetting and for some may trigger past memories and experience. Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service is available for any veterans or reservists who are affected by the publication of this report. Details can be found at www.nhs.uk/opcourage.

Additionally, sexual assault referral centres (SARCs) offer medical, practical and emotional support to anyone who has been raped sexually assaulted or abused. They have specially trained doctors, nurses and support workers who provide a safe space and dedicated care. Help is available 24 hours a day for everyone, whether the incident was recent or non-recent. Individuals can contact their nearest SARC to make an appointment. Further information is available at www.nhs.uk/sarcs

Op RESTORE: The Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service

The Veterans Trauma Network (VTN) is now called Op RESTORE: The Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service. This brings the service in line with the following NHS services in England, providing a recognisable suite of services for the Armed Forces community:

- Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service
- Op NOVA: Supporting Veterans in the Justice System
- Op COMMUNITY: Armed Forces Community Support



The decision to rename the VTN, Op RESTORE, was informed by engagement with veterans, providers and charities, with the aim of supporting improved access to and awareness of this service. Whilst there are some things that the NHS will not be able to restore in full, we aim to support veterans restore their health and quality of life as best we can.

Op RESTORE is a service for anyone who has served at least one day in the UK Armed Forces and, as a result of their service, acquired a significant, lasting physical illness or injury. Op RESTORE will continue to accept only GP

referrals; GPs can obtain a referral form by emailing imperial.oprestore@nhs.net

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

Op COMMUNITY, Armed Forces Community Support

Following a robust engagement exercise with service users and providers on an appropriate name for the single point of contact service for Armed Forces families, this is now called **Op COMMUNITY: Armed Forces Community Support**.

This model of care navigation for those in the wider Armed Forces community seeks to ensure individuals and families are able to access NHS services without disadvantage. This is particularly important for mobile service families and those transitioning from military to civilian life. Op COMMUNITY is being piloted in the following areas and can be contacted using the details below:

NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board (ICB) and NHS Kent & Medway ICB

- T: 01273 403693
- E: afn.admin@nhs.net
- W: www.armedforcesnetwork.org

NHS Hertfordshire & West Essex ICB

- T: 07908 209 912
- E: HWE.AFCfamiliesveterans@nhs.net

NHS Humber and North Yorkshire ICB

- T: 01609 765315
- E: hnyicb-ny.spocmilitaryfamilies@nhs.net

NHS Dorset ICB

- T: 01202 584428
- E: dhc.dorset.veterans@nhs.net

NHS Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland ICB

- T: 0116 2256858

NHS North Central London ICB

- T: 0800 999 3697
- E: velliott@dmws.org.uk

Details for Op COMMUNITY in NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB as well as NHS Bath and NE Somerset, Swindon & Wiltshire ICB will be forthcoming.

Veteran services: Op FORTITUDE and Operation Stirling

Op FORTITUDE

Veterans across the UK will have access to Op FORTITUDE, a new dedicated referral pathway for homeless veterans, including those sleeping on the streets.

The hotline is part of a two-year £8.55 million programme to fulfil the Government's pledge to end veteran rough sleeping. The Veterans' Strategy Action Plan 2022-24 sets out the intention to achieve this within the current Parliament, but thanks to new funding this is set to be achieved ahead of schedule.

The housing hotline, delivered by Riverside group, will give homeless veterans a single point of contact to get them the help they need. Op FORTITUDE staff will refer callers to a network of support, including housing providers, charities and local authorities. The programme aims to support 1,300 veterans over two years across almost 60 housing complexes, ranging from apartment blocks to shared houses.

Projects delivered by nine housing providers will support veterans to thrive in civilian life. Wraparound services include specialist medical care, connections with local communities and the tools they need to get jobs.

All nine projects will be ready to take Op FORTITUDE referrals by September 2023, expanding the pathway's network of housing providers from 10 to 14. This includes plugging into a network of 650 homes across Scotland with Veteran Homes Scotland, as well as a brand new consortium of housing across the North West of England.

Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and the organisations working with them are encouraged to contact the Op FORTITUDE hotline from Monday 3 July 2023 on 0800 952 0774 or through a secure web portal at riv.org.uk/opfortitude.

Further information can be found at www.riverside.org.uk/care-and-support/veterans/.

Operation Stirling

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

Before 12 January 2000, there was a ban on LGBT+ personnel serving in the British Armed Forces – those who did sign up were forced to hide their identity. Because of the ban, thousands of LGBT+ service personnel were removed or forced to leave service. For some, this meant not only losing their jobs, but also friends and family, as well as access to pensions that they'd earned while serving the country.

Operation Sterling will provide telephone based support, advice and casework to older LGBT+ veterans through Age UK's Advice Line; combining the expertise of Age UK together with the expert knowledge of Fighting With Pride. Operation Stirling will be able to help older LGBT+ veterans access financial support, housing options and social care.

LGBT+ veterans who served in the Armed Forces who would like to access Operation Sterling's specialised support, can do so by visiting the Fighting With Pride website to start the referral process.

[Begin the referral process on the Fighting With Pride website](#)

Armed Forces Day activity



Shehan Hettiaratchy, National Clinical Director for Op RESTORE, Beth Lambert, National Service Manager for Op RESTORE, Dr Jonathan Leach National Clinical I Director for Armed Forces and Guy Benson, Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance Team Leader, spoke at the Armed Forces Day National Event in Falmouth on 22 June 2023.

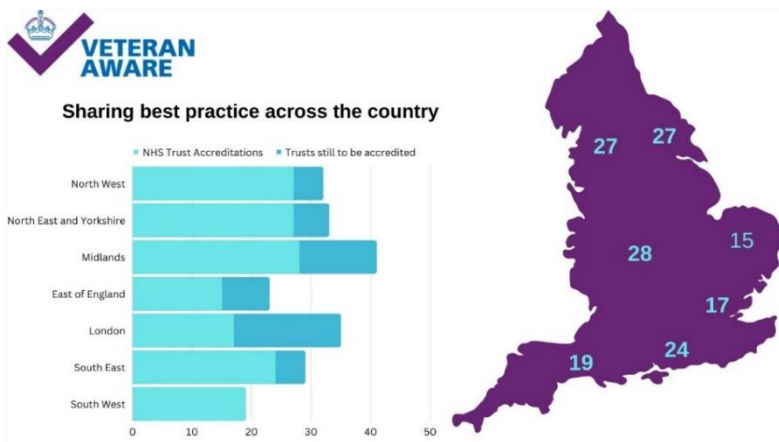
The event, hosted by Cornwall Council, highlighted health and wellbeing, protected characteristics and building a life in the community for veterans and was attended by military charities, NHS, Police and individuals and organisations supporting veterans.

Latest veteran aware/friendly accreditations

Please see below for the current number of accreditations.

Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) veteran friendly	2,256 GP practices accredited
Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA) veteran aware	157 NHS trusts accredited

Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA)



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

Accredited trusts can be found [here](#).

Upcoming events

14 September 2023 [Armed Forces Covenant in the Community Conference](#) Newcastle

MOD conference with the theme of the conference is 'Preventing Disadvantage'. May be of interest to those delivering services to the Armed Forces Community.

20 September 2023 [Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance National Best Practice Conference Tickets, Wed 20 Sep 2023 at 10:00 | Eventbrite](#) London

Annual conference of VCHA for NHS trusts and those with an interest in veteran healthcare.

Engagement opportunities

Bravo Victor (approved by Northumbria University ethics board)

[Head injuries \(TBI\) and Health Outcomes Survey](#)

Civilians and veterans are welcome to take part as are people living with or without disability.