



Armed Forces veteran friendly accredited GP practice

Veteran Friendly GP Practice

This Practice is a Royal College of General Practitioners Armed Forces Veteran Friendly Accredited GP Practice

If you are an armed forces veteran please let us know!

This means that, as part of the health commitments of the Armed Forces Covenant, we have a dedicated clinician who has a specialist knowledge of military related health conditions and veteran specific health services. This is important in helping ex-forces personnel to get the best care and treatment.

What is a veteran?

A veteran is someone who has served in the British Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve) for at least one day. Veterans also include any member of the Merchant Marine who has served in a war zone. This includes crew from convoys in World War 2 and more recently in the Falklands conflict and Gulf Wars.

There are around 4.5m veterans in the UK. About 18,000 service people move back into civilian life every year and whilst most of these individuals have similar levels of health to the general population, around 2,000 leave on medical grounds. The top reasons for medical discharge are for issues relating to back, knees, mental health and hearing.

What does this mean for me?

When servicemen and women leave the armed forces, their healthcare is the responsibility of the NHS. All veterans are entitled to priority access to NHS care for any condition as long as it's related to their service, regardless of whether or not they receive a war pension. Veterans are encouraged to tell their GP about their veteran status in order to benefit from priority treatment if appropriate. Health related issues for veterans can manifest in a number of ways.

Veterans' mental health services

This is a dedicated out-patient service for serving personnel approaching discharge from the Armed Forces and veterans who are experiencing mental health difficulties. The TILS provides a range of treatment, from recognising the early signs of mental health problems and providing access to early support, to therapeutic treatment for complex mental health difficulties and psychological trauma. Help may also be provided with housing, employment, alcohol misuse and social support.

The service comprises three elements:

Transition: service for those in transition, leaving the armed forces

The service works with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to offer mental health support for Armed Forces personnel approaching discharge.

Intervention: service for veterans with complex presentation

Service personnel approaching discharge and veterans will have an assessment within two weeks of a receipt of referral. Where appropriate, the TILS will aim to see patients two weeks after this. This will be with a clinician who has an expert understanding of Armed Forces life and culture. They may also be supported by a care coordinator who will liaise with other services and organisations to ensure a coordinated approach to their care.

Liaison: general service for veterans

Intervention: service for veterans with complex presentation Patients who do not have complex presentations, yet would benefit from NHS care, will be referred into local mainstream NHS mental health services where they will receive treatment and support. If an assessment finds that an individual has significant mental health difficulties that are service related and have not improved with previous treatment, they will be referred to their local CTS.

5 Top Tips for Veterans

1. It is important to register with a GP, rather than wait until you need treatment. Visit the [NHS website](#) to find details of GP practices in your local area.
2. If you've recently left the forces, it is important to give your GP the paperwork that your military medical centre gave you, including any medical records. This will help to make sure your military health record transfers to your NHS health record. This will also give your GP information on your health and ensure that any ongoing care and treatment is continued.
3. Regardless of when you left the military, tell your GP that you've served in the UK Armed Forces. This will help your GP to better understand any military related health conditions that you may have and ensure that you are referred, where appropriate, to dedicated services for veterans. This includes the specialist mental and physical health services, Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service and the Veterans Trauma Network.

- **When using these services, 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.
 - Work closely with a range of organisations and charities, including military charities, to support your wider health and wellbeing needs.
4. With your agreement, it can sometimes be helpful for your doctor to refer you to Armed Forces charities, such as SSAFA, the Royal British Legion, Combat Stress or Help for Heroes. They can often offer significant help and support, even if they do not all deliver healthcare.
 5. You may be worried about sharing information about your time in the Armed Forces. Please note that the NHS is bound by a confidentiality code of practice to ensure GPs, nurses and other people working within the NHS deliver a confidential service bound by law.

There are a number of charities and organisations that provide support to veterans and their families, some of these are:

- Big White Wall
- Reserve Forces Act 1996
- Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen Families Association (SSAFA Forces Help)
- The Royal British Legion
- Veterans UK
- Combat Stress 24-hour helpline
- Reserves Mental Health Programme
- Military of Defence – Legacy health
- King's Centre for Military Health Research publications

For families

- Armed Forces Covenant Reports
- Army Families Federation
- Confederation of Service Charities (COBSEO)
- Home Start
- Naval Families Federations

- [NHS UK Armed Forces Health page](#)
- [NHS England Armed Forces Commissioning](#)
- [RAF Families Federation](#)
- [SSAFA](#)
- [Supporting the health and wellbeing of Military families](#)
- [The Royal British Legion](#)
- [Little Troopers \(free therapy programmes for military children, support at home and school\)](#)