

# Health and care services for veterans

There are a number of dedicated services and initiatives to support the health and wellbeing needs of the Armed Forces community. This information for veterans, service leavers, and non-mobilised reservists includes Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service, and Op RESTORE: The Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service.

Information is correct at November 2024.

## Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service

Op COURAGE is an NHS mental health specialist service designed to help serving personnel due to leave the military, reservists, armed forces veterans and their families. **Individuals can self-refer or ask someone else**, such as a GP, charity, family member or friend to do this for them.

Mental health problems are common and can affect anyone, including veterans, serving personnel, reservists and their families. It's important to get help and support if you or someone you know has mental health problems.

### How Op COURAGE can help

Op COURAGE can help you and your family with a range of support and treatment, including:

- Helping you transition from military to civilian life by providing mental health care with Defence Medical Services (DMS).
- Helping you recognise and treat early signs of mental health problems, as well as more advanced mental health conditions and psychological trauma.
- Providing support and treatment for substance misuse and addictions.
- helping you to access other NHS mental health services if you need them, such as finding an NHS talking therapies service and eating disorder services.
- Liaising with charities and local organisations to support your wider health and wellbeing needs, such as help with housing, relationships, finances and employment.
- Supporting armed forces families affected by mental health problems, including helping them to access local services.

### Who will I speak to?

Op COURAGE is an NHS service supported by trained professionals who are from, or have experience of working with, the Armed Forces community. This service can help if you're finding life difficult after leaving the military. Working together with Armed Forces charities, Op COURAGE will help you get the right type of specialist care, support and treatment for your specific needs.

### Who Op COURAGE can help

To receive help and support from Op COURAGE, you must:

- Be a resident in England and have served in the UK armed forces for a full day.
- Be registered with a GP surgery in England or be willing and eligible to register with a GP.
- Provide your military service number.

It does not matter how long ago you left the armed forces or how long you served for. You can contact Op COURAGE even if you left many years ago.

You can also contact Op COURAGE if you're still serving but have a discharge date.

## **Contacting Op COURAGE**

You can contact the service in many ways, including:

- Directly getting in touch yourself, or through a family member or friend.
- Asking a GP or other healthcare representative to refer you.
- Asking a charity to refer you.

The service will arrange for you to have an assessment, to make sure you get the right care and support.

It's important to contact the Op COURAGE service for your local area. This allows them to give you the best support they can provide. For the North of England, call 0300 373 3332 or email [OpCourageNORTH@cntw.nhs.uk](mailto:OpCourageNORTH@cntw.nhs.uk). Find more information on their website and by searching for: [Op COURAGE for the North of England](#).

## **Reserves Mental Health Programme**

The Reserves Mental Health Programme is a Ministry of Defence (MOD) specialist service that provides mental health assessments and treatment advice for reservists. It works closely with the NHS and DMS to provide appropriate treatment. Referrals for reservists are by their NHS GP or DPHC GP for their parent unit. Self-referral will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

## **GOV.UK: Support for war veterans**

Find out about legacy health, recognition, return to civilian life, support from the voluntary sector, commemoration and payment schemes at [www.gov.uk/guidance/support-for-war-veterans#the-veterans-and-reserves-mental-health-programme](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/support-for-war-veterans#the-veterans-and-reserves-mental-health-programme).

## **Support from charities and other mental health services**

If you want help from a charity, you can go to the NHS website at [www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services](https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services) and find local or specific mental health charities or get help from armed forces specific charities.

## **Combat Stress**

If you need to talk to someone, Combat Stress has a dedicated mental health support helpline for veterans and their families. This provides confidential advice and support and is free to call for veterans, family members and carers. The helpline number is 0800 138 1619, and it's available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Find out more at [combatstress.org.uk](https://combatstress.org.uk).

## **Togetherall**

Togetherall is a mental health support service that provides anonymous, round-the-clock online support with trained counsellors; a supportive community, including forums for safe conversation; free resources to help you improve your mental health. Find out more at [togetherall.com](https://togetherall.com).

All armed forces serving personnel, reservists, veterans and their families can access these services at any time.

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

Op RESTORE: The Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service is an NHS service providing specialist care and treatment to veterans who have physical health problems as a result of their time in the armed forces.

It works alongside Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service.

### How Op RESTORE can support you

Op RESTORE can support you by:

- Providing personalised treatment within the NHS.
- Treating you through military and civilian clinicians who understand the military environment and specialise in the type of physical health problems you have.
- Helping families and carers of veterans with physical health problems access appropriate support services.
- Working closely with many organisations, including GP surgeries, specialist NHS services, and military and non-military charities.

### Who Op RESTORE can help

Op RESTORE can support you:

- If you have a physical health problem of any type or severity.
- If your physical health problem is a result of your time in service.
- If you live and are registered with a GP practice in England.
- No matter when your physical health problem first appeared.
- No matter when you left the armed forces.

### Accessing Op RESTORE

A GP can refer you to Op RESTORE by emailing [imperial.oprestore@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.oprestore@nhs.net).

You can be referred even if you were not medically discharged.

## Other information

### The Armed Forces Covenant

The Armed Forces Covenant reflects the moral obligation that exists between the Armed Forces and society. The Covenant commits that: the Armed Forces community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services; and special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially those who have given the most such as the injured or bereaved.

### Veterans Prosthetics Panel

Veterans who have Service attributable limb loss can access funding for high-quality prosthetics. The Veterans Prosthetics Panel provides funding on a named veteran basis to NHS Disablement Service Centres (DSCs) to ensure that veterans who have Service-related limb loss can access high quality prosthetics regardless of which DSC they attend. DSCs are required to make applications on behalf of veterans, which must be accompanied by proof of Service attributable limb loss. GPs can make referrals to DSC through the normal referral process.

### **Blesma**

Blesma offer advice and support to veterans who have lost a limb, the use of a limb, an eye or use of sight during military service. They work closely with NHS and MOD services for disabled veterans and can refer you to useful services. They also offer advice on financial benefits and support, as well as helping you find appropriate community groups. Find out more at: [blesma.org](https://blesma.org).

### **Blind Veterans UK**

Veterans with sight loss can get help and support from Blind Veterans UK. They offer a range of support, including rehabilitation services, practical advice and emotional support. Find out more at: [www.blindveterans.org.uk](https://www.blindveterans.org.uk).

### **Veteran friendly GP practice accreditation**

The Royal College of General Practitioners veteran friendly practice accreditation programme is designed to help GP practices provide better care for veterans. Practices must provide evidence that they are supportive of veterans' healthcare and work towards improving identification and understanding of their needs, in addition to referral to dedicated veteran services and treatments where appropriate.

To become accredited, practices must commit to:

- Asking patients registering with the surgery if they have ever served in the British Armed Forces.
- Coding veterans on the GP computer system using the term 'Military Veteran'.
- Having a clinical lead on veterans in the surgery.
- The lead keeping up to date with the latest training, knowledge and thinking, and be available to provide advice to colleagues, and to support veterans directly when needed.
- Have a CQC 'good' rating or higher.

### **Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance – veteran aware accreditation for NHS trusts**

The Alliance is a group of NHS trusts that have volunteered to be exemplars of the best care and support to the Armed Forces community. Veteran Aware accreditation aims to improve the quality and experience of care for the whole Armed Forces community by identifying them at the earliest opportunity, acknowledging their Service, and understand how it may impact their health and how their needs can be best met. Locally South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, The Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust, and Yorkshire Ambulance Service, are accredited.

## **Q. Have you been asked if you are a veteran?**



We are your local health and social care champion for Wakefield District. From Airedale to South Kirkby, Overton to Knottingley, and everywhere in between, we make sure NHS and Social Care leaders hear your voice and use your feedback to improve care.

We can give you advice and information, signpost you to support, help you find services, and help you if you want to make a complaint. If you would like to get in touch please do.

Call us on 01924 787379, text us on 07885 913396, email [enquiries@healthwatchwakefield.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@healthwatchwakefield.co.uk), or use the 'contact us' form on our website [www.healthwatchwakefield.co.uk](https://www.healthwatchwakefield.co.uk).