

Briefing

19 March 2021

Armed Forces healthcare briefing and latest updates on COVID-19

This fortnightly brief is intended to keep you up-to-date on the provision of NHS services for the Armed Forces community, as well as latest information and guidance relating to COVID-19.

COVID-19 updates

[COVID-19 vaccination check before you share](#)

The vaccine programme is continuing at pace, in line with the recommendations from the [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation](#). Many people are optimistic about the vaccine and intend to get it when they are offered it – particularly among those who are in the priority groups. Among the minority who are less sure about the vaccine, there are some common themes around hesitancy. It is important that we address the concerns of commonly hesitant groups and avoid repeating, reminding, or spreading false vaccine information.

Materials have been produced to [tackle false vaccine information](#) and a toolkit is now available including videos, infographics and quote cards which can be [downloaded here](#).

Armed Forces community information

[Health Service Journal \(HSJ\) 2020 winners announced](#)

The winners for the [Military and Civilian partnership awards](#) were announced on Wednesday night.

Congratulations to the **winner, Mesothelioma UK**. Liz Darlison, Head of Services at Mesothelioma UK said, *“Mesothelioma UK’s ‘Supporting our Armed Forces’ project team is delighted to be crowned as winners for the Military and Civilian Health Partnership Award at the 2020 HSJ Awards, recognising an outstanding contribution to healthcare. Each and every organisation in this award category should be applauded for their healthcare achievements”*.

Congratulations on being ‘**Highly Commended**’ go to **Camden and Islington Foundation Trust and Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust** for the Veterans’ Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS) and Veterans’ Mental Health Complex

Treatment Service (CTS), London and South East and the Veterans' Mental Health High Intensity Service (HIS) in London.

Dr Sue Ferrier, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, Partnership Lead for the TILS and CTS, and Clinical Chair of the Camden and Islington Veterans Work Stream, said, *"Our team and our service user group are absolutely delighted to have been recognised for our work over the past year. It means a great deal to us to be appreciated in this way and we're confident that the positive impact of this award will help to create a long-lasting legacy"*.

All eight finalists in this category are listed below, with congratulations to all:

- **Humankind, Smart Recovery UK and The British Army** - Mil-Smart
- **King Edward VII's Hospital** - Veteran Specific Pain Management Programme (PMP)
- **Nottinghamshire Healthcare FT** - REGROUP Criminal Justice System whole care pathway in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire
- **Portsmouth Hospitals University Trust** - Armed Forces Covenant Lead Nurse for Portsmouth and the surrounding areas
- **Royal College of General Practitioners** - Veteran friendly NHS GP practices
- **Togetherall, Ministry of Defence and NHS England** - Low cost, high quality, maximum value: Providing a safe and effective online mental health resource to the UK Armed Forces population

Healthcare for the Armed Forces community: a forward view to 2022

The recently launched [Healthcare for the Armed Forces community: a forward view to 2022](#) set out nine health and wellbeing commitments, which have been informed by the views and experiences of the Armed Forces community. Each commitment provides information on what the NHS will do, in partnership with the MOD, the Office for Veterans' Affairs, Armed Forces charities and other organisations, to improve the care and support delivered to this population. Please see attached for the nine commitments.

Female veterans: Survey on women's health

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) are seeking your views to help inform the development of the Government's Women's Health Strategy. The DHSC is collecting data on women's health via a short online survey, importantly the survey includes a question around the health of **women veterans**. Please take part in this [short survey](#) to make your voice heard.

Step into Health – jobs you probably don't think about in the NHS

The 'Our NHS and the Armed Forces Conference' took place this week celebrating the partnership between the NHS and the Armed Forces. In support of the event, an article was published on Forces.net ['Jobs You Probably Don't Think About In The NHS'](#).

With over 350 different roles available in a wide variety of areas in the NHS, the [Step into Health](#) programme can connect members of the Armed Forces community to NHS organisations to set up training opportunities, clinical and general work placements and insight days. The programme also provides a dedicated pathway into a career in the NHS, including support with job applications.

Unpaid carers in the Armed Forces community – do you need better support?

The Royal British Legion and Poppyscotland would like to hear about the experiences of being a carer and the impact it has on your life. Do you need better support? If so, what do you need?

Research has shown that members of the ex-Service community are almost twice as likely to have a caring responsibility for a family member, friend or neighbour when compared to the adult population of England and Wales (23% v 12%). That's almost 990,000 people.

They have launched [a survey](#) which should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. This survey closes on Monday 5 April 2021.

Armed forces community (veterans) question for Census 2021

Changes to the 2021 Census means that after careful consideration based on evidence from research and stakeholder engagement, the [Office of National Statistics](#) (ONS) will collect, for the first time, information on past service in the UK Armed Forces which will help service providers and others to support veterans.

A need to understand the size and characteristics of the Armed Forces community was identified during consultation. The main need identified by central and local Government and charities that work with veterans and their families, such as the Royal British Legion, was to meet their commitments under the [Armed Forces Covenant](#).

Veterans UK Customer Satisfaction Survey 2021

Veterans UK (part of Defence Business Services) aim to improve the services they deliver and are asking people who use them on how they can do better.

Responses to a short survey, along with Customer Service Excellence (CSE) and complaints feedback, will shape a customer satisfaction action plan and build on their Vision "to support UK Defence customers with outstanding service every time".

[The survey](#) will take no more than 10 minutes to complete. Your responses will be completely confidential, and all data is handled in line with Ministry of Defence policy.

Supporting those who have experienced assault and abuse

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Call for Evidence

On 12 March, the Government reopened its [Call for Evidence](#) to inform new strategies to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls. Everyone aged 16 or over and regardless of gender is welcome to contribute to the call for evidence; you do not have to have experienced violence or abuse to take part. This consultation closes at 11:45pm on 26 March 2021.

You can participate in the call for evidence by [completing the public survey](#), which is also available in [British Sign Language](#) and [Easy Read format](#). You can send responses to VAWGStrategy2021@homeoffice.gov.uk.

Sexual Assault Referral Centres: specialist services for the victims of sexual assault and abuse

Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) are specialist medical and forensic services providing free of charge, non-judgmental advice and support for anyone (women, men, young people and children) who has been raped or sexually assaulted.

SARCs are comfortable environments, providing a safe and private space for interviews and forensic examinations, and some may also offer sexual health and counselling services.

Specialist staff are trained to help regardless of when or where the incident happened and will help the victim/ survivor make informed decisions about what they want to do next.

SARCs remain open during the COVID-19 pandemic, with services provided in person or remotely (over the phone or via video conference) depending on a person's needs. To find a SARC near you please visit the [NHS website](#). Please also see the Government [webpage on sexual violence and abuse](#).