

# Armed Forces briefing

05 August 2022

## Health and Care Act 2022

1 July 2022 marked an important milestone for the NHS, as the 42 integrated care systems (ICSs) gained a statutory footing under the [Health and Care Act 2022](#). ICSs are now legally underpinned by an NHS integrated care board and an integrated care partnership, whose task is to drive the delivery of better, more efficient and joined-up care for patients, improvements in physical and mental health, and reductions in inequalities among the communities they serve.

Whilst these changes are significant, health services for Armed Forces serving personnel and those registered with a defence medical practice and a number of specialised services for veterans will remain nationally commissioned through the single NHS England Armed Forces team. This arrangement is reflected in the national partnership agreement with the MOD, which is currently being refreshed for publication. At a local system level, integrated care boards are responsible for commissioning the majority of healthcare for veterans and families registered with NHS GP practices and are expected to give due regard to the health and social care needs of the Armed Forces community in the planning and commissioning of services, with areas for their consideration set out in the [Armed Forces Forward View](#).

For more information on these changes, please see this [brief](#) from NHS Confederation.

## NHS England and NHS Improvement merger

[NHS England and NHS Improvement have now merged to become one single organisation](#).

This is the final stage to formally bring the organisations together to create one legal entity called NHS England. NHS Improvement, and the two organisations within it, Monitor and the NHS Trust Development Authority, no longer exist, and are all now legally part of one NHS England. This is part of a wider programme of work to bring together Health Education England, NHS Digital and NHS England into a new single organisation united in focus and purpose. In consolidating the considerable expertise, knowledge and experience across each organisation, we are best placed to tackle the formidable set of challenges facing the NHS and deliver even better results for our patients, colleagues and wider communities.

## Monkeypox guidance

There has been a recent increase in cases of monkeypox in the UK, as well as other parts of the world where it has not been seen before. For information on monkeypox and what to do if you have symptoms, visit the [NHS website](#).

## The NHS Armed Forces Health Podcast: Episode 01

A new podcast series, led by the NHS England Armed Forces Patient and Public Voice (AFPPV) Group, is a new resource for the Armed Forces community to support them understand and navigate the NHS.

There are six episodes in all, taking the listener on a journey through the different aspects of the NHS. Guests include members of the AFPPV Group, as well as NHS clinicians and staff.

The first episode of the podcast is now available and explores the role of the AFPPV Group with its Chair, Nicky Murdoch MBE, along with Kate Davies CBE, NHS England Director of Health and Justice, Armed Forces and Sexual Assault Services Commissioning and Tom Fox, AFPPV Group member and veteran. Listen [here](#) (available on all major podcast platforms).

## Views are sought to help inform a new service to support veterans in the criminal justice system

NHS England is seeking views on proposals for a new service that will provide care and support for veterans at risk of being in prison, who are in prison or who have been released from prison.

To help inform plans for this service, which is due to launch across England from April 2023, a number of virtual focus groups are taking place throughout August. These will provide the opportunity to discuss the proposed service and share your views on what health and wellbeing support is important for veterans in the criminal justice system.

If you have lived experience of this area or work with veterans who are at risk of going to prison or who are in or have been to prison, we encourage you to have your say. To take part in a focus group or to complete a short survey, please email [england.armedforceshealth@nhs.net](mailto:england.armedforceshealth@nhs.net) for more information.

We would be grateful if you could promote this opportunity via your networks.

## Veteran friendly GP accreditation uptake

We are delighted to confirm that there are now over 1,500 veteran friendly accredited GP practices across England. This is over 21% of GP practices, with more signing up all the time. Accrediting GP practices as veteran friendly is a commitment set out in the Office for Veterans' Affairs - [Veterans Strategy Action Plan](#), the [NHS Long Term Plan](#) and the [NHS Armed Forces Forward View](#), with work progressing to ensure that every Primary Care Network has a veteran friendly accredited GP practice by 31 March 2023.

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) veteran-friendly practice accreditation programme is designed to help GP practices provide better care for veterans. The programme is supported by NHS England who are working closely with RCGP colleagues to encourage practices to sign up.

For practices to be accredited as veteran friendly, they must provide evidence that they are supportive of veterans' healthcare and work towards improving identification and understanding of veteran's needs, in addition to referring to dedicated veteran services and priority treatment where appropriate. The RCGP veteran accreditation programme helps fulfil the NHS commitment towards the Armed Forces Covenant, whereby veterans should face no disadvantage because of their military service. Accreditation lasts for three years, and practices must commit to the following:

1. Ask patients registering with the surgery if they have ever served in the British Armed Forces.
2. Code it on the GP computer system using the term 'Military Veteran'.
3. Have a clinical lead on veterans in the surgery.
4. This clinical lead is asked to stay up-to-date with the latest training, knowledge and thinking.
5. Eligible practices should have a CQC 'good' rating or higher.

## Ministerial visits to NHS services for veterans

In June, Minister Steve Barclay visited the Op COURAGE service hosted by the Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust to find out more about the care and support provided for veterans. Local Op COURAGE service lead, Alice Salford from *Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust* said *'they were proud to attend and bring their long-standing credibility, expert knowledge and integrity in this area of work.'*

Following the visit and on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day, the minister met with a number of NHS England Armed Forces leads and London Op COURAGE clinicians to thank them for their work in this area and learn more about veterans with PTSD. See this [link](#) for a short video from Dr Jonathan Leach, NHS England Associate Medical Director for Armed Forces and Veterans Health who attended the meeting:

Late in July, the first veteran friendly GP accredited practice in Cornwall welcomed Veterans Minister Johnny Mercer for a visit. The minister met with practice staff and veteran social prescribers and patients to find out about the excellent work they are doing to support those who have served. The minister was very impressed with the work of practice staff and veteran social prescribers, who he said are delivering a service that 'is better than gold standard'. See [here](#) for associated media coverage.

## NHS Armed Forces Network: You're not alone video

The Sussex and Kent and Medway Armed Forces Network is a multi-organisational group comprising local members from the NHS, including mental and physical health clinicians, Ministry of Defence, Armed Forces Reservists, the Royal British Legion, SSAFA and other interested charities and organisations. To help raise awareness of the mental health support available to veterans, they teamed up with Taff and Johnno from On Parade, who have made a video that looks at life challenges after leaving the military. Click on the below link to watch Taff and Johnno's interview with former Royal Marine, Anthony Muckle.

[Watch the video - "You're Not Alone" - The NHS Armed Forces Network \(AFN\)](#)

## LGBT Veterans Independent Review

An independent review, chaired by Lord Etherton, has been launched to examine the effect that the pre-2000 ban on homosexuality in the UK Armed Forces has had on LGBT veterans. The review will seek to better understand the experience of LGBT veterans who served in the UK Armed Forces between 1967 and 2000.

To inform the Review, a [Call for Evidence](#) has been issued, with testimonies sought from:

- LGBT veterans who served from 1967 to 2000
- those who also served in this period and witnessed the treatment of LGBT Service personnel
- those involved in delivering the ban
- friends and families of LGBT veterans who are for one reason or another not able to give evidence
- academics who work in this area
- organisations who work in this area.

To find out more, visit [here](#).