

## **Mental health support for veterans**

A specialist service for ex-armed forces; veterans; families/carers and service personnel who are approaching discharge, to support and recognise the early signs of mental health problems

Information for patients



## **For veterans**

Improved NHS veterans' mental health services are available across England. If you are experiencing mental health difficulties, these services can provide a range of treatment and support regardless of when you left the armed forces. This includes recognising the early signs of mental health issues and providing access to early treatment and support, as well as treatment for complex mental health difficulties and psychological trauma. Patients can also be helped with employment, finance, reduction in substance misuse or other addictive behaviours, housing, and social support.

### **To access these services, you must meet the following criteria:**

- be resident in England
- have served in the UK armed forces for a full day (or be a family member/carer who is experiencing difficulties relating to time and experiences of Military service)
- be registered with a GP practice in England or be willing to register with a GP
- be able to provide your military service number or another form of acceptable proof of eligibility.

If you meet these criteria, you can self-refer or request referral via a health care professional or service charity.

Once we receive your referral a qualified OpCourage clinician will assess your referral. You will then be offered a first appointment within one working day to determine an onward plan of care. Appointments are available via telephone, video/online, or face to face.

## **Do you need help?**

To find out more, speak to a health care professional or service charity or use the contact details below to get in contact with your local service.

The North of England region has a single point of contact for ease.

### **Regional Single point of contact:**

Tel: **0300 373 33 32**

Email: [opcourageNORTH@cntw.nhs.uk](mailto:opcourageNORTH@cntw.nhs.uk)

**The phone line is operational 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**

From 8am-8pm this will be directed to an OpCourage team member, out of hours this will be overseen by staff from Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW).

Once your case is allocated to a regional team the direct service contact details will be provided to you for continued contact and liaison.

## For armed forces personnel approaching discharge

Armed forces personnel approaching discharge can now get treatment and support at NHS veterans' mental health services across England and thereafter into their civilian life, whether this is months or years later. If you are experiencing mental health issues, these services can provide a range of treatment and support in close liaison with Defence Medical Services (DMS). This includes recognising the early signs of mental health issues and providing access to early treatment and support, as well as treatment for complex mental health difficulties and psychological trauma. Patients can also be helped with employment, finance, reduction in substance misuse or other addictive behaviours, housing, and social support.

### To access these services whilst you are still in the armed forces, you must meet the following criteria:

- be a resident in England
- have an identified or diagnosed mental health illness / disorder; **and**
- have a discharge date from the Ministry of Defence (MOD) or be found to be unfit for continued military service by their medical board; **or**
- have been identified by the Departments of Community Mental Health as requiring follow on psychiatric care on discharge from the MOD; **or**
- have had their pre-release medical and been identified by their DMS GP as requiring mental health transition support; **or**
- have had a pre-release medical before they self-refer.

Once we receive your referral, you will be offered an initial assessment within two weeks and where appropriate a first clinical appointment two weeks thereafter. Appointments are available via telephone, video/online or face to face.

## Do you need help?

To find out more, speak to your DMS GP or use the information below to get in contact with your local service.

### Regional Single point of contact:

Tel: **0300 373 33 32**

Email: **[opcourageNORTH@cntw.nhs.uk](mailto:opcourageNORTH@cntw.nhs.uk)**

## Further information

Information on the service can be found on the Veteran and Armed forces healthcare pages of the NHS website.

**[www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/armed-forces-community/](http://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/armed-forces-community/)**



## Other services for veterans

### Combat Stress, the UK's leading charity for veterans' mental health

If you have served or are currently serving in the UK Armed Forces, you can call the free Combat Stress' 24-hour mental health helplines. A team of specially-trained professionals are available day and night to provide free confidential advice and support.

- **Veterans and their families, friends and carers**

**Tel:** 0800 138 1619

- You can also text on 07537 173683 and email [helpline@combatstress.org.uk](mailto:helpline@combatstress.org.uk)
- Standard charges may apply for texts, please check with your provider.

- **Serving personnel and their families**

**Tel:** 0800 323 4444

**Website:** <https://combatstress.org.uk/>

### MOD Military Mental Health Helpline (Combat Stress)

For serving personnel and their families.

A 24-hour helpline service for serving troops and their families. This helpline is operated by Combat Stress.

**Tel:** 0800 323 4444 (24/7)

### Royal British Legion (RBL)

The Royal British Legion helps members of the Royal Navy, British Army, Royal Air Force, veterans, and their families. Support starts after one day of service and continues through life, long after service is over for dependents and carers too.

**Tel:** 0808 802 8080 (8am-8pm, 7 days a week)

**Website:** <https://combatstress.org.uk/>

## **Samaritans**

The Samaritans are available around the clock – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. No matter what you're going through, you can call. You don't have to be suicidal.

**Tel:** 116 123 for free, any time, on any phone

**Website:** <https://www.samaritans.org/>

## **SSAFA – The Armed Forces Charity**

SSAFA provides practical, emotional, and financial support for those who serve or have served.

**Tel:** 0800 260 6767 (9am-5pm, Monday to Friday)

**Website:** <https://www.ssafa.org.uk/>

## **Togetherall**

Togetherall is a safe, online community where people support each other anonymously to improve mental health and wellbeing.

All armed forces personnel, veterans, and their families (16+) also have free access.

**Website:** <https://v2.togetherall.com>

## **Veterans Trauma Network (VTN)**

Despite the name “trauma”, VTN deals with all physical health problems in veterans as a result of their time in service - from recurrent heat illness to problems after limb loss, from traumatic brain injury to service-related fertility issues. VTN are closely linked to Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service and charities such as BLESMA and Blind

Veterans UK so can offer comprehensive care focused around your needs.



Ask your GP to refer you to the VTN at England.  
**england.veteranstraumanetwork@nhs.net**

**Website:** <https://bit.ly/43YkfU2>

### **Veterans UK**

The MOD's Veterans UK helpline can provide support with many issues including benefits, housing and welfare.

**Tel:** 0808 191 4218 (8am-5pm, Monday to Friday)

**Website:** [www.gov.uk/guidance/veterans-uk-contact-us](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/veterans-uk-contact-us)

### **Veterans' Gateway**

The Veterans' Gateway is a useful point of contact for whatever support you need. It's available 24/7 and can signpost you to relevant services.

Many of the team are veterans themselves so understand the issues people face after leaving the armed forces.

**Tel:** 0808 802 1212 (24/7)

**Website:** [www.veteransgateway.org.uk](http://www.veteransgateway.org.uk)

### **Walking with the Wounded**

Walking with the wounded (WWTW) delivers employment, mental health, care coordination and volunteering programmes in collaboration with the NHS. WWTW's purpose is to get those who served, and their families, whether mentally, socially, or physically wounded, back on their feet and making a positive contribution once more. We believe that those who served, deserve.

**Tel:** 01263 863 900 (9am-5pm, Monday to Friday)

**Website:** <https://walkingwiththewounded.org.uk/>

## Contact us

For more information about our service, contact OpCourage: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service on Tel: **0300 373 33 32** or email **[opcourageNORTH@cntw.nhs.uk](mailto:opcourageNORTH@cntw.nhs.uk)**

For further information on OpCourage: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service, visit **[www.nhs.uk/opcourage](http://www.nhs.uk/opcourage)**

For more information on NHS services for veterans, visit the NHS website at **[www.nhs.uk/armedforceshealth](http://www.nhs.uk/armedforceshealth)**

## For further information

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

visit **[www.nhs.uk/opcourage](http://www.nhs.uk/opcourage)** or scan the QR code





This information can be made available in a range of formats on request (eg Braille, audio, larger print, BSL or other languages). Please contact the Patient Information Centre Tel: 0191 246 7288



## **North of England Team**

Service provided by:

**Cumbria, Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust**

**Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust**

**Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust**

**Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust**

**Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust**

**Walking With The Wounded**

**Combat Stress**