

# How to become a Veteran Aware hospital

September 2017

Veteran Aware hospitals are exemplars of the best care for veterans in the NHS. They are accredited by the Veterans Covenant Hospital Alliance (VCHA), a group of over 20 NHS acute hospitals that have volunteered to drive improvements in NHS care for people who serve or have served in the UK Armed Forces and their families, in line with the Armed Forces Covenant.

To be accredited as a 'Veteran Aware hospital', NHS hospitals will complete a short annual report, demonstrating their commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and showcasing examples of good practice in care for veterans.

## **In hospital**

Veteran Aware hospitals:

- make information, including a leaflet and posters, available to veterans and their families explaining what to expect
- train staff to be aware of veterans' needs, that they should not face disadvantage and that special consideration is appropriate in some cases
- inform staff if a veteran or their GP has told the hospital they have served in the Armed Forces
- ensure veterans and their partners who have moved as a result of Armed Forces service do not lose their place on any waiting list
- signpost to extra services that might be provided to the Armed Forces community by a charity or service organisation in the hospital.

## **After a hospital stay**

Veteran Aware hospitals look into what services are available in their locality and which patients would benefit from being referred to these services. These could include:

- NHS England's Transition, Intervention and Liaison (TILs) mental health service for Armed Forces personnel approaching discharge and veterans
- recovery and welfare services for veterans provided by service charities and organisations either in local centres or through staff embedded in NHS providers
- rehabilitation services provided by service charities and organisations
- prosthetics through services at the enhanced 'Murrison' disablement support centres
- support from Veterans UK on service-related financial and/or benefit claims.

## **The Veterans' Gateway and further support**

There are many service charities and organisations. The Veterans' Gateway is a first point of contact for veterans and their families, putting them in touch with the organisations best placed to help with the information, advice and support they need – from healthcare and housing to employability, finances, personal relationships and more.

It provides information, advice and support by phone (0808 802 1212), text (81212), online at [www.veteransgateway.org.uk](http://www.veteransgateway.org.uk), live chat and email.

## **Employing veterans and reservists in the NHS**

The NHS can benefit significantly from the skills and experience veterans and reservists bring from their military training and service. Veteran Aware hospitals support the employment of veterans and reservists in the NHS workforce and will be involved either in the 'Employer Recognition Scheme' or the 'Step Into Health' scheme.

Find out more about careers for veterans and reservists in the NHS at [www.militarystepintohealth.nhs.uk](http://www.militarystepintohealth.nhs.uk)

## **What is the Armed Forces Covenant?**

The NHS is committed to the Armed Forces Covenant, which is a promise by the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served in the UK Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly.

The Armed Forces Covenant has two key principles:

1. The Armed Forces community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services
2. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

Veterans and their families should not be disadvantaged from accessing appropriate health services, for example, if they are on a waiting list and are moving.

The NHS always prioritises people with the most urgent clinical need first, but after that should ensure that armed forces service related injuries receive timely treatment.

## **Call to action**

If you would like to become a Veteran Aware hospital and be awarded the VCHA kite mark, contact [e.nickell@nhs.net](mailto:e.nickell@nhs.net)

**0300 123 2257**

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