

Hospital Care for the Armed Forces Community

Our promise to you

The Armed Forces Covenant says that those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their immediate families (dependants), should face no disadvantage because of their military service.

This means in some cases, special consideration may be appropriate – for example, for those who have been injured or bereaved because of service.

We ask because your service may help us understand your health better.

It does not automatically mean you will be seen quicker, but it may help us provide better care, make appropriate referrals, consider the Covenant properly, and make sure you are not disadvantaged because of your service.

Why it matters to let us know about your service

Telling us you are a veteran or currently serving may help your care because it helps those treating you build a more detailed picture of your health, and if relevant, your family's circumstances.

For families, this usually means immediate family, dependants, partners, carers or bereaved family members where service life is relevant to their health, care or access to services. It does not normally mean wider relatives or adult children solely because a parent or grandparent once served.

Some health conditions may be directly linked to service. Others may not have started in service but may have been made worse by service, training, deployment, injury, noise exposure, stress, trauma or transition back into civilian life.

For example, your current or previous service history may help clinicians better understand the causes of:

- Back, knee, shoulder or other musculoskeletal problems
- Hearing loss or tinnitus
- Chronic pain
- Mental health, anxiety, depression or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Alcohol or substance misuse
- Difficulty accessing care or explaining what is happening
- Concerns about trust, control, crowds, noise or unfamiliar environments
- Family, housing, employment or social pressures after leaving service
- Climate-related issues such as heat, dryness or poor sanitary conditions.

You do not need to prove that everything is service-related. The point is to help healthcare colleagues ask the right questions and understand whether your service history may be relevant to your care.

About priority treatment

The Armed Forces Covenant does not mean veterans or serving members of the forces automatically go to the front of the waiting list for healthcare. It means the hospital will recognise your service, consider whether it is relevant to your health and care, and make sure you are treated fairly and not disadvantaged because of your service.

This means priority treatment is not automatic, is not guaranteed and is only considered where the condition is linked to direct military service, treatment is clinically appropriate, and someone with a higher clinical need is not disadvantaged.

How you can help us

Please tell those involved in your care:

- That you are a veteran or are currently serving
- Whether you think your health problem may be linked to your service
- Whether you think your service may have made an existing condition worse
- If you are already receiving veteran-specific support
- If there are any service-related issues that may affect your care, communication, appointments or discharge
- If your partner, dependant, carer or immediate family member was affected by service life, postings or accompanying you overseas.

Specialist support

Your doctor or consultant may refer or signpost you to one of the specialist veteran pathways. These are designed to support veterans through a wide range of conditions.



OP RESTORE

Specialist NHS care for veterans with physical health needs linked to military service

www.oprestore.nhs.uk



OP NOVA

Criminal justice support for veterans

www.forcesemployment.org.uk/programmes/op-nova/



OP COURAGE

Mental health and wellbeing support for veterans

www.veteranaware.nhs.uk/op-courage



OP FORTITUDE

Tackling homelessness in our veteran communities

www.riverside.org.uk/care-and-support/veterans/opfortitude/