

Briefing

September 2021

Armed Forces healthcare briefing and latest updates on COVID-19

This monthly 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

Young people aged 12 to 15 to be offered a COVID-19 vaccine

- All children aged 12 to 15 will be offered a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Parents and guardians will get a letter with information about when the vaccine will be offered.
- Most children will be given their vaccine at school.

Some children are being offered two doses of the vaccine if either:

- they live with someone who is more likely to get infections (such as someone who has HIV, has had a transplant or is having certain treatments for cancer, lupus or rheumatoid arthritis); or
- they have a condition that means they're at high risk from COVID-19

Conditions that mean your child may be at high risk and can get vaccinated are:

- a severe problem with the brain or nerves, such as cerebral palsy
- Down's syndrome
- severe or multiple learning disabilities (or they're on the learning disability register)
- a condition that means they're more likely to get infections (such as some genetic conditions or types of cancer)

If your child is eligible for two doses of the vaccine, you'll be contacted by a local NHS service such as their GP surgery to arrange their appointments.

[Find out more about COVID-19 vaccination for children and young people on GOV.UK](#)



COVID-19 booster vaccine

The NHS is offering a [booster vaccine dose](#) to people most at risk from COVID-19 who have already had two doses of the vaccine.

Protection given by the COVID-19 vaccine decreases over time. A booster dose helps give longer-term protection against getting seriously ill from COVID-19.

Roll out will be to the same priority groups as previously. This means care home residents, health and social care workers, people aged over 50, those aged 16 to 49 years with underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk of severe COVID-19, adult carers, and adult household contacts of immunosuppressed individuals will be prioritised.

The NHS will let you know when it's your turn to have a booster dose. It's important not to contact the NHS for one before then.

Health and wellbeing updates

Veterans' mental health services to receive £2.7 million boost

Last month the UK Government [announced £2.7 million](#) for veterans mental health services. Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said: "Our serving armed forces and veterans represent the very best of us, with recent events in Afghanistan yet another reminder of their dedication and sacrifice.

[Op COURAGE](#) already provides excellent support for veterans' mental health, but I know there is more we can do to get the right care and treatment to those who have given up so much to protect us.

This new funding will ensure support is in place where it is needed most, recognising the unique challenges veterans face."

World Suicide Prevention Day

Friday 10 September marked World Suicide Prevention Day and this year the theme was 'Creating Hope Through Action'.

Jo Jukes, Anthony Muckell and Rob Shenton from the NHS England and NHS Improvement, Armed Forces Patient and Public Voice Group shared their stories and messages of hope and support with the Armed Forces Community.

Jo Jukes, Widow of Army Veteran and Charity Ambassador said, ***"The key theme of World Suicide Prevention Day is to offer hope to those who are struggling with poor mental health, as well as those who have been affected by suicide."***

To keep this message of support going throughout September, you can share it by [retweeting](#) from our new Twitter account, [@NHSArmedForces](#)

Anthony Muckell, Royal Marine veteran, shared [a video](#) detailing his experience, produced for the London Op COURAGE service. He is also supporting a new project with Prison Radio to reach out to veterans in the criminal justice system who may be struggling with their mental health and wellbeing.

Rob Shenton, Army veteran who served for 25 years, shares his story this month in [Civvy Street Magazine](#) as part of a regular series of articles on NHS services for veterans. He also

shared his message of support for World Suicide Prevention Day through social media and said; **“If you are struggling with your mental fitness, get to Op COURAGE”**. Rob’s quote card is attached to this month’s briefing, which you are encouraged to share widely via your social media accounts.

Can you help the Office for Veterans’ Affairs?

The Office for Veterans’ Affairs (OVA) is looking for Armed Forces veterans to be the face of its communications materials. They want to show photos of real veterans - empowering images that focus on the individual - which reflect the diversity of veterans working in the public sector, particularly the NHS.

Veterans from across the UK are being sought to take part in a portrait photoshoot and optional short case study interview to capture their story. The final images won’t include names or personal information, but will be used across OVA communications channels, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and print media.

Those selected will take part in a professional photoshoot in London in October 2021. Expenses for the day will be covered for those attending.

If you’re interested in taking part, please email felicity.cooke@cabinetoffice.gov.uk by Thursday 30 September with the following:

- Name and current role
- A brief description of your time in the Armed Forces: your role, when/where you served, and what being a veteran means to you (no more than 300 words)
- A clear photo of yourself: this can be attached in any accessible format

For an informal chat about the project or more information, please contact felicity.cooke@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Research study, LGBT+ veterans mental health and wellbeing

Understanding barriers and facilitators of mental health and wellbeing help-seeking behaviour in UK Armed Forces veterans who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans or other identities (LGBT+), is a study which seeks to understand what makes it difficult for, and what helps LGBT+ UK Armed Forces Veterans to ask for support with their mental health or general wellbeing.

To take part, individuals need to identify as LGBT+ and be a UK Armed Forces veteran who has experienced mental health difficulties or general psychological wellbeing (current or in the past). Individuals do not need to have sought professional help or engaged with services previously to take part.

For more information and to take part, visit this [information page](#).

NEW: Integrated Care Twitter account

A new NHS England and NHS Improvement, [Integrated Care Twitter](#) account launched in late August, signposting to resources and news about integrated care to support the development of health and care systems in England. Please follow the account @IntegratedNHS and share your best practice and news.

Armed Forces Community Research International Webinar Series

The seventh session of the Armed Forces Community Research International Webinar Series is taking place at 4.00pm on Thursday 30 September 2021. Speakers Dr Peter Carter

and Dr Craig Hooper will be talking about life after the military and transitioning into civilian life. For more information visit the webinar [Eventbrite page](#).