

Briefing

January 2022

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.

Focus on COVID-19

Booster dose of the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine

Everyone aged 16 and over who had a second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine at least three months ago can get a booster dose.

Some children aged 12 to 15 are eligible for a booster dose if either:

- they live with someone who has a weakened immune system (such as someone who has HIV, has had a transplant or is having certain treatments for cancer, lupus or rheumatoid arthritis)
- they have a condition that means they're at high risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19

Conditions that mean they may be at high risk 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)

How to book your booster

If you're eligible, you can get a booster dose at least three months after you had your second dose.

If you're aged 16 or over you can:

- book a vaccination appointment online for an appointment at a vaccination centre or pharmacy
- go to a walk-in vaccination site to get vaccinated without needing an appointment
- wait to be contacted by a local NHS service such as a GP surgery and book an appointment with them



Follow us on Twitter @NHSArmedForces

Eligible children aged 12 to 15 can go to a walk-in vaccination site or wait to be contacted by a local NHS service.

A [guide to booster vaccination](#) provides more information on the booster dose for eligible individuals.

New coronavirus resources

New resources are now available to download from the Public Health England [Resource Centre](#) new materials to support communications include:

- [Covid-19 Vaccine](#) pregnancy social media assets
- [Community Testing](#) toolkit, leaflets and social media statics
- [Schools and Colleges](#) toolkit and social media assets

Front line healthcare staff to confirm COVID-19 vaccination status

The Health and Social Care Act 2008 Regulations 2021 made on 22 July 2021 requires those working or deployed in a CQC registered building (one which provides accommodation together with nursing or personal care) in England to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. These regulations that came into force initially from 9 November 2021, now apply equally across the public (NHS) and independent sectors and will come into force on 1 April 2022.

It will be a mandatory requirement for any staff who may have direct, face-to-face contact with service users, including individuals working in non-clinical roles who enter areas which are utilised for the provision of a CQC-regulated activity as part of their role, to have had their first and second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

To be compliant you must have already had your first and second dose or be arranging your first dose by 1 February 2022.

If you have medical exemption you can phone the NHS COVID Pass service on 119 to ask for an NHS COVID Pass medical exemptions application form, which will be processed accordingly via your GP or a clinician approving exemption.

Health and wellbeing updates

New Veterans' Strategy Action Plan: 2022 to 2024

The [Veterans' Strategy Action Plan](#) launched on 19 January 2022 and includes more than 60 commitments to help veterans with employment and healthcare. The plan contains five focal points for success:

1. delivering a step-change in support for veterans and their families
2. maximising veteran employability as the key to positive life outcomes
3. listening, learning and addressing with compassion the historic hurt or disadvantage that sections of the veteran community have experienced
4. dealing with historic operations, recognising that these continue to impact on veterans
5. making sure veterans receive the same high standard of support, across the whole UK

NHS Chief Executive Officer Amanda Pritchard said:

“Our Armed Forces personnel are an immense source of pride for our country but veterans and their families need access to NHS support that is considerate of their unique circumstances.

In line with our long term plan, the NHS is investing an additional £18 million to make our health services more accessible and ensure GP surgeries and hospitals are even more veteran friendly so that veterans and their families get the services they need, closer to home, which we know they want.”

Free online resource launched offers training to help support veterans.

A new free online module for clinical staff to learn more about the Armed Forces community has been launched by the University of Chester. The University's [Westminster Centre for Research in Veterans](#) is hosting the free online resource on its website.

The '[Introduction to the Armed Forces Community](#)' educational module was supported by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, Health Education England and the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust.

The programme is delivered in six chapters to educate nurses, healthcare practitioners and others interested personnel to deliver the optimum care to military veterans and their families through an understanding and insight into the Armed Forces community.

The six chapters cover areas such as the common physical and mental health issues impacting on veterans and their families and signpost the help available. The module also contains a series of animated videos following the Johnson family members through their life and explores the struggles they face, which mirror those of many veterans and their families.

This free initiative can be accessed as a complete module or each chapter can be viewed as a stand-alone repository of information for anyone looking for specific information.

Campaign to promote mental health services

On Monday 17 January, NHS England and NHS Improvement launched a campaign to promote NHS mental health services, encouraging anyone experiencing feelings, such as anxiety or depression, to seek help through talking therapies.

The campaign is promoting self-referral through [nhs.uk/help](#), but also notes that you can be referred to talking therapies through your GP practice.

Whilst the campaign focuses on mainstream mental health services, Op COURAGE remains available to Service leavers, reservists, veterans and their families, who are encouraged to seek help if struggling with their mental health. To find out more visit [www.nhs.uk/opcourage](#)

NHS x Invictus Games Foundation

Starting from 26 January 2022, the NHS and Invictus Games Foundation are launching a four-part series of live online sessions for NHS people.

Looking after your physical health is key to supporting your overall health and wellbeing, including your mental health. The four sessions will be hosted by veterans to address some of the key and most challenging issues being faced by the NHS workforce because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Attached to this briefing is the series schedule with sign up links.