

Veterans: NHS Mental Health Services

Mental illness is common and can affect anyone, including serving and ex-members of the armed forces and their families.

While some people cope by getting support from their family and friends, or by getting help with other issues in their lives, others need clinical care and treatment, which could be from the NHS, support groups or charities.

Although it's completely normal to experience anxiety or depression after traumatic events, this can be tough to deal with.

Furthermore, the culture of the armed forces can make seeking help for a mental health problem appear difficult.

Some people may not experience some of these symptoms until a few years after leaving the armed forces.

They may also delay seeking help for a number of reasons, such as thinking that they can cope, fear of criticism, or feeling that NHS therapists won't understand. Read more about the [symptoms of depression](#).

NHS support and treatment

If you think you, or your partner or spouse, may be experiencing mental health difficulties, you can get expert help from the NHS Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS) or the NHS Veterans' Mental Health Complex Treatment Service (CTS).

Both of these services are available across England and are provided by specialists in mental health who have an expert understanding of the armed forces.

They'll also help to manage your care and support across other organisations. Families and carers can find it hard to cope when their loved ones aren't well, so, where appropriate, help may be provided for them, too.

NHS Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS)

This is a dedicated local-community-based service for veterans and those transitioning out of the armed forces with a discharge date.

The service provides a range of treatment, from recognising the early signs of mental health problems and providing access to early support, to therapeutic treatment for complex mental health difficulties and psychological trauma.

Where appropriate, help is also provided for other needs that may affect mental health and wellbeing – for example, with housing, finances, employment, social support and reducing alcohol consumption.

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NHS Veterans' Mental Health Complex Treatment Service (CTS)

This is an enhanced local-community-based service for ex-service personnel who have military-related complex mental health problems that haven't improved with earlier care and treatment.

The service provides intensive care and treatment including, but not limited to, support for drug and alcohol misuse, physical health, employment, housing, relationships and finances, as well as occupational and trauma-focused therapies.

Accessing NHS mental health care for veterans

To access these services, you need to go through the TILS. This can be done by contacting the service directly, or by asking your GP or a military charity to refer you. To contact the service directly:

- in the north of England, call 0191 441 5974 or email vwals@nhs.net
- in the Midlands or east of England, call 0300 323 0137 or email mevs.mhm@nhs.net
- in London or the southeast of England, call 020 3317 6818 or email cim-tr.veteranstilservice-lse@nhs.net
- in the southwest of England, call 0300 365 0300 or email sc.veterans@nhs.net

To access these services, you must:

- be a resident in England
- have served in the UK armed forces for a full day
- 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 acceptable form of proof of eligibility

Upon receipt of referral, patients will be offered an initial face-to-face assessment within 2 weeks and, where appropriate, a first clinical appointment 2 weeks after that.

[Find out more about mental health care services for veterans \(PDF, 472kb\)](#)

Register with a GP

It's important to register with an NHS GP and tell them you have served in the armed forces so, where appropriate, you can access these and other dedicated services for veterans.

To ensure you're getting the best care and treatment as a veteran, read [top tips for veterans: how to get the most from your GP \(PDF, 85kb\)](#).

There are also many charities that provide great services, advice and support for veterans, reservists and family members. Similar services exist in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

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Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Some individuals suffering with mental health issues may develop [post-traumatic stress disorder \(PTSD\)](#).

Symptoms can include:

- being constantly anxious
- being unable to relax
- vividly re-experiencing a traumatic event
- avoiding anything that might trigger distressing memories or feelings
- becoming socially isolated

PTSD can lead to problems in relationships and at work, including irritability, anger and substance misuse, particularly [alcohol](#).

While some symptoms, such as nightmares, are normal in the weeks following a traumatic event, symptoms that last longer than this can indicate a problem. Should this happen to you, it's important to seek the advice of your GP as soon as possible.

If you haven't already done so, register with a GP, tell them you served and are a veteran, and bring to their attention any health problems relating to your time in the armed forces.

Sourced from:

<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/military-healthcare/priority-nhs-treatment-for-veterans/>

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