



**Female
Veterans**

TRANSFORMATION
PROGRAMME

SUPPORTING FEMALE VETERANS

A toolkit for services and
organisations

 **THE ARMED FORCES
COVENANT FUND TRUST**
Funded by HM Government


Office for
Veterans' Affairs


**VETERANS'
FOUNDATION**

FOREWORD

'AMBITIOUS. GROUND-BREAKING. SYSTEMIC CHANGE.'

Just a few of the words we used three years ago, to describe the opportunity presented by the Covenant Fund's transformational grants programme. It sought to make grants which would address a 'wicked' problem affecting the armed forces community – making change happen so that after the programme had ended, we could look back and see that the landscape was forever altered for the better.

There can be no doubt that the Women's Royal Army Corps Association has achieved that. As Chief Executive of the Trust and as a female veteran myself, I couldn't be more proud and delighted by how this grant has delivered.

A partnership of the WRACA team and the Cobseo Female Veterans' Cluster Group has underpinned this work, which recognised that female veterans were not well-served in terms of the support they require. Few identify with the term female veteran, and many felt that existing charity and statutory support was designed with their male counterparts in mind.

Setting out to change this with a sharp focus on long-term, systemic change, the team aimed to develop a toolkit that would ensure that the needs of female veterans are firmly embedded in the design and delivery of support services. Through this, the aim was to dilute and – in time – eliminate the many barriers to access which are well documented.



ANNA WRIGHT, CEO,
ARMED FORCES COVENANT FUND TRUST

For me, the success of this trailblazing project is down to the focus on collaboration and co-production throughout. Liza Jarvis, leading the project, has freely admitted that she was stunned to have such a phenomenal response from female veterans – with around 800 becoming involved in shaping how they would like to be supported.

This strong understanding of the female veteran cohort through collaboration with them has allowed the development of this fantastic toolkit which tackles the key themes of mental and physical healthcare, pensions and financial advice, care provision, housing provision, employment services, self-identification as a veteran and combatting loneliness.

I commend this fantastic toolkit to any and all organisations seeking to offer appropriate support to female veterans. I want to encourage my fellow female veterans and male allies to continue to embrace this process and make the UK the best place to be a veteran.

LASTLY, OUR BIGGEST THANKS GO TO ALL
THE FEMALE VETERANS WHO GOT INVOLVED,
GAVE US THEIR VIEWS AND OPINIONS AND
HELPED SHAPE SOMETHING TRULY
TRANSFORMATIONAL FOR THE FUTURE

WHY IS THIS TOOLKIT NEEDED?

Female veterans are not a homogenous group, they are a diverse group of women of different ages, experiences, ethnicities and backgrounds, who often go unrecognised. The majority of female veterans transition to civilian life well and do not need additional support however for those that do, all organisations need to do more to make sure they get the right support at the right time and in the right way.

WHO IS THE TOOLKIT FOR?



HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

The toolkit provides information and resources on how to better support female veterans in our communities across the UK.

Users do not have to read everything – it is designed to be 'dip in and dip out', so you can access the relevant sections when needed.

THE TOOLKIT IS SPLIT INTO 4 SECTIONS

- 1 Identity and Access– Quick reference tools for ALL organisations on how to provide better support
- 2 Approach - For those organisations that come into direct contact with veterans and want to improve and enhance the way they support female veterans
- 3 Specialist - Specific and more detailed recommendations for specialist areas. It contains case studies and good practice examples alongside links to organisations, services or further resources
- 4 Devolved Governments – specific information for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

KEY BENEFITS OF USING THE TOOLKIT INCLUDE:

- ✓ **Recognition** that women also served in the UK Armed Forces, including frontline roles
- ✓ **Recognition of the skills and talents** female veterans have that can benefit a range of organisations
- ✓ **Better outcomes for the female veterans** you support – understanding their needs, how to engage with them and working smarter to get things right the first time
- ✓ **Providing better support for your workforce** by understanding who your workforce is and the skills they bring;
- ✓ **Better reputation of your organisation** – increasing your profile as able to support and engage with female veterans in a way that matters to them;
- ✓ **Improved partnership and collaboration** – Multi disciplinary team working and better able to collaboratively support female veterans quicker,
- ✓ **Increasing your own understanding** and that of your organisation – professional and personal development.



RECOMMENDATIONS

CALL TO ACTION!

Don't make assumptions

Ensure accessibility and flexibility

Allow autonomy

Identify and use the experts

ASK ALL WOMEN 'HAVE YOU EVER SERVED IN THE UK ARMED FORCES'

Less than 31% of women identify with the term 'veteran', which often means they may not be accessing the best possible support. Regardless of gender, age and ethnicity, everyone should be asked the question to identify if they are a veteran, have that information recorded and then decide what, if any, specific support can be offered.

UNDERSTAND THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF FEMALE VETERANS

Most female veterans transition into civilian life well, but for some, additional support is needed. No one veteran is the same and for many women they face intersectionality of a multitude of issues, including very different experiences of the military. However, there are some key themes that many women face, and all organisations should recognise what these are. The Statement of Need is an easily accessible infographic to help you understand this at a glance.

BE AN ALLY TO FEMALE VETERANS

Everyone can be an ally – male, female, organisations and the general public. Allyship means you advocate, celebrate and ensure that female veterans are seen, heard and given the recognition and support they deserve. The Allyship infographic gives you an easy guide on what this means and what you can do



ENSURE YOU COMMUNICATE AND ENGAGE WELL WITH FEMALE VETERANS

You don't always need dedicated communication materials just for female veterans, but in the relevant materials you produce, women should 'see themselves' and understand what is available for them to access. This also relates to the language that you use and the places you promote your services. The Communication Checklist provides a quick overview of the things to think about.

HAVE A PERSON-CENTRED APPROACH

Intersectionality means that all female veterans will have different experiences and different support needs. By having a person centred approach and a 'What matters to you?' conversation, you can identify the right support that will be delivered in a way that ensures the most positive outcomes are achieved. The Person Centred infographic gives you ideas and tips of how to achieve this.

CODESIGN AND COLLABORATE WITH FEMALE VETERANS

Ensure female veterans are involved in the design and delivery and review of support where possible i.e. creating a staff network, a new service or group or their own support plans. Do not be tokenistic and make sure engagement is done in a meaningful and actionable way. As one female veteran said, "Nothing about us, without us!"

CREATE SAFE SPACES FOR FEMALE VETERANS

Safe spaces are dependent on the needs of the individual, sometimes that is the provision of female only spaces or female support workers and sometimes it is about ensuring generic spaces are welcoming to everyone, including female veterans. It may also be about the times your service is available and the type of environments you provide, i.e. the ability to bring children or offer childcare. The toolkit gives you information on how to achieve this.

COLLABORATE AND WORK IN PARTNERSHIP, BOTH AT A LOCAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL TO PROVIDE THE BEST POSSIBLE SUPPORT FOR FEMALE VETERANS

Organisations need to work better together to provide the right support, this includes statutory organisations, charities (military and civilian), and employers. Creating multi-disciplinary environments and ways of working, means you can truly offer a person-centred service, understanding that no-one can be the expert in everything or be the right organisation for every female veteran. To achieve this think about:

- Where are your local and national armed forces experts and how can you build relationships – i.e. Armed Forces Champions
- How can you signpost or refer quickly if appropriate
- Identifying community and peer support options – including setting up staff networks where possible and appropriate. A sense of community and belonging is very important for many veterans – including female veterans. Peer support groups often provide safe spaces for women, particularly if they are designed and led by women with lived experience.

CARRY OUT THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

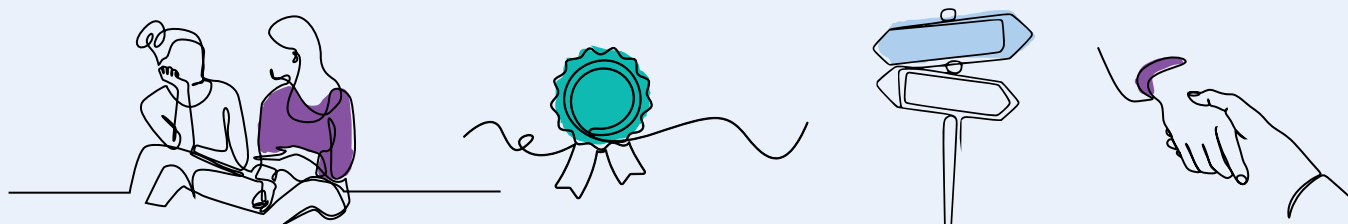
The toolkit provides organisations with the opportunity to conduct a quality improvement exercise by completing the relevant elements of the self-assessment tool. This exercise will help organisations identify where they are now and what they need to put into action to create positive change for the female veterans they support, engage with and employ.



As many women do not identify with the term veteran, one thing all services, organisations and businesses can do is:

Ask every woman

**'HAVE YOU EVER SERVED
IN THE UK ARMED FORCES?'**

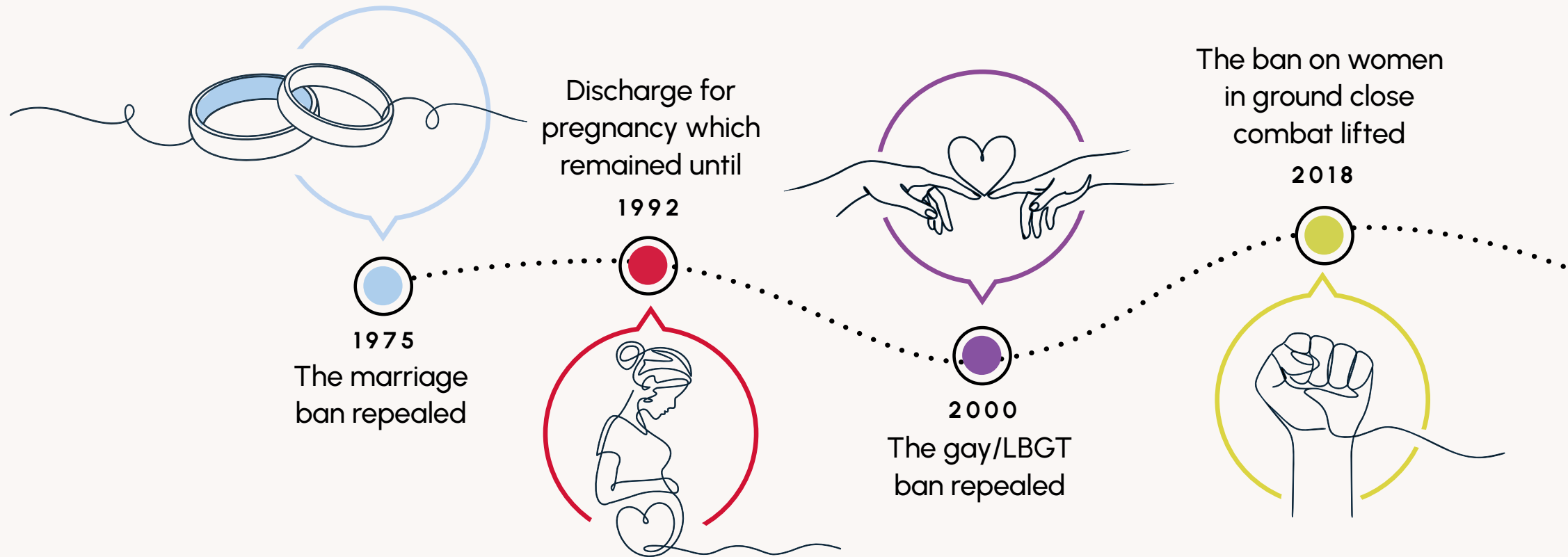


Then recognise, celebrate and signpost to support if needed.

Many women use terms like 'ex-military, ex-armed forces, ex-service woman or nothing at all – which is why it is so important to ask the question.



Women's military service since the end of the Second World War has been impacted by four legislative decisions. All services, organisations and business should be aware that some female veterans may have been affected by these bans



DEVOLVED GOVERNMENTS

KEY RECOMMENDATION

– Be aware of the differences within the Devolved Governments and find local experts if appropriate and necessary

FURTHER RESOURCES

CLICK TO VIEW WHAT POWERS
AND AREAS OF GOVERNMENT
ARE DEVOLVED



Research conducted into the needs of female veterans found the following:

(see references for specific cohorts)

271,973
female veterans within
the UK (excluding
Northern Ireland).

WOMEN SUBJECT TO HISTORIC DISCRIMINATORY POLICIES:

- 1 The Marriage Bar repealed 1975³
- 2 Discharge for pregnancy which remained until 1992
- 3 The Gay Ban repealed in January 2000⁴
- 4 The Ban on Women in Ground Close Combat lifted in 2018.

LESS THAN
31%¹
of women who have
served identify as a
veteran²



53%

female veterans
said their needs are
not met by current
veteran services⁵

Lack of recognition (in
the support sector) that
**WOMEN MAY
HAVE UNIQUE
NEEDS**⁶

Women were disproportionately
affected by the **LGBT Ban**⁷

73% of women...reported witnessing or experiencing sexual
discrimination including rape and sexual assault⁸

82%

of (the general public)
saying they knew 'not very
much' or 'nothing at all'
about female veterans⁸

91%

of female veterans
describing 'some impact
of military service on their
physical or mental health
as a civilian'⁷

27%

female veterans
experience difficulties
finding the right
employment¹¹

ONLY 25%

WOMEN WHO
EXPERIENCE
INAPPROPRIATE/
CRIMINAL BEHAVIOURS
FEEL ABLE TO REPORT
IT AT THE TIME¹⁰

**TRANSITION
SERVICES**
focus on traditionally
male career domains¹³

85%

(of women) reported
feeling that they were
treated differently to their
male counterparts during
their military service¹⁴

LIVED EXPERIENCE QUOTES

'Female Veterans are not treated the same or celebrated the same - adverts are all men. It has got better but there's still work to do. There's lots of charities out there to help, but women still don't see themselves as veterans so won't ask for help even if they need it.'

'When you look at what is available for veterans it's mostly about male veterans'

'Military experience is not always positive from women - it needs to be taken into consideration. People assume my husband is the veteran (he's not!) and not me.'

'My first remembrance parade as a veteran, the Sergeant Major from the marching contingent pointed his pace stick to my chest and said: "You're wearing your medals on the wrong side'

'More recently I've been able to reach veteran communities but only due to social media..... It's me being proactive not services reaching out..... I've only recently felt like I'm back in the military family after 25 years of disconnecting'.

'A family member has recently joined and from what he says, women are still experiencing additional challenges to men'

'We don't need special treatment, but we do need to see representation. How am I supposed to get support from a service that I only see men in? I don't feel I belong.'

1 Dodds and Kiernan, "Hidden Veterans," 295.

2 Godier-McBard, Gillin and Fossey, We Also Served, 104.

3 Lauren Godier-McBard, Nicola Gillin and Matt Fossey, We Also Served:

The Health and Wellbeing of Female Veterans in the UK (Chelmsford: Anglia Ruskin University, 2021), 19.

4 Alison Osborne and Gill McGill, Lost and Found: The LGBT+ Veteran Community and

the Impacts of the Gay Ban (Newcastle: Northumbria University, 2023).

5 HCDC, Sarah Atherton MP, Protecting Those Who Protect Us, 2021

6 Godier-McBard, Gillin and Fossey, "Treat everyone like they're a man", 3969.

7 Hooks, Morgan et al., 'Where are all the Women?', 31.

8 Centre for Military Women's Research, "Public attitudes towards women who have served in the UK Armed

Forces: Findings from a household survey," (Chelmsford: Anglia Ruskin University, 2022), 1-8.

9 Godier-McBard, Gillin and Fossey, We Also Served, 30.

10 No Man's Land, Edwards P, Wright T, Research Study, Forward Assist, 2019

11 Deloitte, Veterans Work: Moving On 2018

12 LGBT Veterans Independent Review, Final Report, Independent Review into the service and experience of LGBT veteran who served prior to 2000, May 2023, 21

13 HCDC, Sarah Atherton MP, Protecting Those Who Protect Us, 2021

14 Godier-McBard, Gillin and Fossey, We Also Served, 27.



*Click this home button through
the document to return to this page*

NAVIGATE THROUGH THIS TOOLKIT



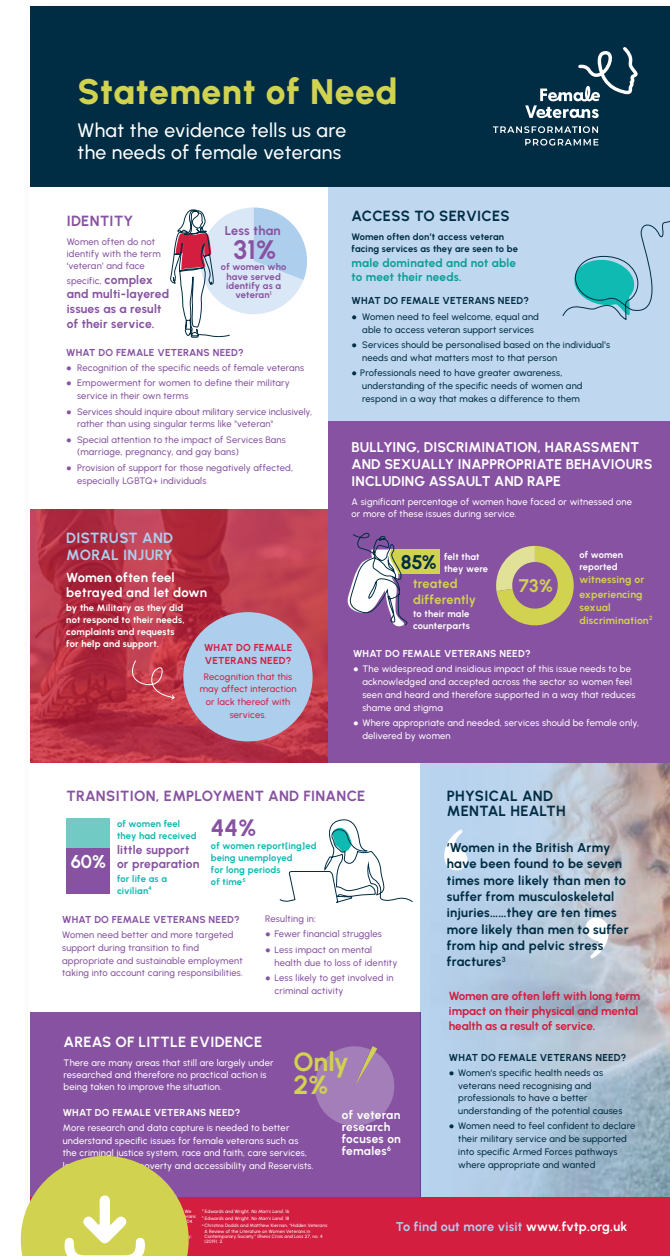
IDENTITY AND ACCESS – WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE FOR THIS?

The research tells us that less than 31% identify as veterans*. They also feel that services can be male dominated, with very little awareness of the needs of female veterans. This was confirmed in the consultation and codesign phase conducted with female veterans and support services, which highlighted that **Awareness, Diversity and Recognition** are the key improvements organisations and businesses need to make to ensure female veterans are able to access what they need, when they need it.

VIEW THE FULL EVIDENCE REVIEW
AND CONSULTATION REPORT

*All references to statistics are available
in the full Evidence Review

Click to download
the infographics



ALLYSHIP - BEING AN ALLY

What is an ally? We can ALL be an ally.

Who is an ally? ANYONE can be an ally to any marginalised group. An ally is someone who champions inclusion and underrepresented groups, whilst not being part of the group themselves.

Below are some real, actionable ways to enable you to be an ally.

EMPATHISE
•
ADVOCATE
•
STAND UP



FURTHER RESOURCES

CLICK TO DOWNLOAD THE BEING AN ALLY FACT SHEET



ALLYSHIP

BFBS's The Culture Colonel's top tips on being a male ally

creative.bfbs.com/top-tips-male-allies-ahead-international-womens-day

At Ease Inclusion & Bench-Mark People Solutions (2x RAF female veterans) run allyship workshops:

ateaseinclusion.co.uk

Inclusive employers quick guide to allyship:

www.inclusiveemployers.co.uk/blog/quick-guide-to-allyship

NOTE - These links were correct at the time of publication, but may be subject to change. These services and organisations are not endorsed or quality assured by FVTP or any of its funders/partners. However you may find them useful for further information.

USEFUL LINKS



Communications checklist

When asking women how services could be improved, communication was one of the most significant issues. This checklist provides some ideas of things you can think about or action to better communicate and engage with female veterans.

Female Veterans
TRANSFORMATION
PROGRAMME



1 Decide what you want to communicate to female veterans

- ☐ Plan your communication campaign to include what you want to communicate, to which groups and how you are going to do this. Remember many female veterans have a lack of awareness of what support is on offer as it's not promoted to them.
- ☐ Identify SMART objectives (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound)
- ☐ Understand your audience by acknowledging the specific needs of female veterans.
- ☐ Veterans are often perceived as male, which can make women feel excluded from services or not welcome. Communication should reflect a commitment to inclusivity and ensure female veterans feel represented and included.
- ☐ Involve female veterans in the design and development of any communication to ensure it is fit for purpose.

2 Remember these top tips:

- ☐ Establish a consistent tone
- ☐ Communicate regularly
- ☐ Be clear and concise
- ☐ Be polite and respectful
- ☐ Be responsive to enquiries. Female veterans tell us they are really bad at asking for help and it often takes a crisis to reach out, so a quick response is essential.

3 Be clear about who is eligible for this service provision.

- ☐ It is especially important if the provision is a female-only space that the definition of female-only is made clear in communications material.

4 Use simple and inclusive language

- ☐ Many women do not identify with the term 'veteran' and therefore use of other terms and language should be used - ex-service, ex-military.
- ☐ Ask the question 'Have you ever served in the British Armed Forces?' to better engage with female veterans.

5 Use inclusive and welcoming imagery

- ☐ Use images of women in both military and non military settings.
- ☐ Consider using a montage of images to show the diversity of the female veteran experience or alternatively use animation or graphics if you need to protect identity.
- ☐ Have images of real women that represent diversity of the female veterans (by age, race, service, rank, sexuality, religion, disabilities, service job roles i.e. combat experience or not and civilian jobs roles, mothers, carers etc).
- ☐ The use of female imagery helps challenge stereotypes and assumptions and therefore increases awareness that women also served.

6 Think about your colour scheme

- ☐ Whilst you may be restricted by your own branding, we recommend using tri-service colours alongside colours not associated with the military.
- ☐ Avoid excessive use of pink, and also khaki (which alienates Navy and RAF communities given its strong association with the Army).

7 Decide what communications channels to use to reach out

- ☐ Recognise that many female veterans use word of mouth to identify suitable and safe services.
- ☐ Consider digital illiteracy especially amongst the older female veteran community.
- ☐ Consider stakeholders outside of the veterans' sector to reach 'hidden' female veteran communities i.e. via sports, arts, faith groups.

8 Review your effectiveness - what works and what doesn't?

- ☐ Ask female veterans to take a look at your draft communications material and provide feedback.



The best communications strategy and materials cannot substitute for a welcoming and inclusive environment, especially in that first interaction with a female veteran.

For more information and links to training and resources to support your planning and upskill your team follow the link to our website www.fvtp.org.uk

WHY ARE COMMUNICATIONS IMPORTANT?

First impressions count – often the first time a female veteran will see your organisation is via your communications, be it on your website, social media or print. If you're struggling to attract women who served, it may be worthwhile revisiting your comms, both written and visuals.

· By explicitly acknowledging their unique military experiences and needs, messaging becomes more relevant and compelling, increasing the likelihood that female veterans will feel comfortable seeking out and engaging with support services.

- Images showing diverse women reinforce intersectional inclusion and provide representations that resonate across different communities.
- Inclusive language, and strong, diverse visuals not only reflect best practice, they make everyone feel seen, valued, and invited
- Images depicting combat scenes won't necessarily be inviting to those who didn't experience direct combat – both women and men.

PLEASE NOTE: This section provides helpful tips, but does not override organisations specific policies and procedures. Please ensure you check your own policy before conducting any communications.

Female Veterans
TRANSFORMATION
PROGRAMME

Female veterans all have specific needs and should be treated as individuals when looking at what support is right for them. Delivering a person centred approach considers female veterans unique needs, strengths, and preferences and allows time and space to create bespoke support together that reflects what matters most to the women, promoting positive outcomes.



1 Have a 'What matters to you?' conversation to help build relationships and identify what would make a difference for the women. Asking questions like:

- “What is important to you/ what do you enjoy doing?”
- “What does a good day look like/ what would you like it to look like?”
- “Who is important to you and how can they help you?”

1 Have a 'What matters to you?' conversation to help build relationships and identify what would make a difference for the women. Asking questions like:

- “What is important to you/ what do you enjoy doing?”
- “What does a good day look like/ what would you like it to look like?”
- “Who is important to you and how can they help you?”

“What is important to you/
what do you enjoy doing?”

“What does a good day look like/
what would you like it to look like?”

“Who is important to you
and how can they help you?”

Understanding the specific needs of female veterans is essential to facilitating these conversations and helping to find the right support

Give women the choice of a female worker if they want one. Remember, some of the issues female veterans face may require female only support i.e. sexually inappropriate behaviour



2 Always work at the women's own pace – some will know quickly what will help and some need more time to work it out

Recognise the diversity of experience of female veterans and their support needs may be very different

Many female veterans tell us they are 'bad at asking for help and only do so in a crisis' so quick responses are essential

2 Always work at the women's own pace – some will know quickly what will help and some need more time to work it out

Recognise the diversity of experience of female veterans and their support needs may be very different

Many female veterans tell us they are 'bad at asking for help and only do so in a crisis' so quick responses are essential

Many female veterans tell us they are 'bad at asking for help and only do so in a crisis' so quick responses are essential

3 Every conversation is a partnership between the organisation and the women to identify what may help

3 Every conversation is a partnership between the organisation and the women to identify what may help

4 Think about all things on offer, from everyday things to groups and community activities and specialist support – remember that for many women it will be a combination of all of these

4 Think about all things on offer, from everyday things to groups and community activities and specialist support – remember that for many women it will be a combination of all of these

4 Think about all things on offer, from everyday things to groups and community activities and specialist support – remember that for many women it will be a combination of all of these

5 Ensure women can easily access activities, with support if needed (assistance with transport or attending with a peer or key worker)

5 Ensure women can easily access activities, with support if needed (assistance with transport or attending with a peer or key worker)



6 Provide/offer training on a person centred approach where needed to build skills and confidence

Offer training on the specific needs of female veterans if needed

6 Provide/offer training on a person centred approach where needed to build skills and confidence

Offer training on the specific needs of female veterans if needed

6 Provide/offer training on a person centred approach where needed to build skills and confidence

Offer training on the specific needs of female veterans if needed

7 Balance clinical and social models of support, incorporating family, friends, and community. Collaborate with other services for comprehensive support, recognising that you don't need to do everything alone

7 Balance clinical and social models of support, incorporating family, friends, and community. Collaborate with other services for comprehensive support, recognising that you don't need to do everything alone

7 Balance clinical and social models of support, incorporating family, friends, and community. Collaborate with other services for comprehensive support, recognising that you don't need to do everything alone

8 Manage risk – plan for unexpected events and identify support for the women or staff member if things don't go to plan

8 Manage risk – plan for unexpected events and identify support for the women or staff member if things don't go to plan

8 Manage risk – plan for unexpected events and identify support for the women or staff member if things don't go to plan

Many female veterans do not ask for help and do not know what might help them, its OK if the plan needs to change.

Many female veterans do not ask for help and do not know what might help them, its OK if the plan needs to change.

Many female veterans do not ask for help and do not know what might help them, its OK if the plan needs to change.

9 Plan regular reviews – what’s working and what’s not. Adjust the plan as needed.

9 Plan regular reviews – what's working and what's not. Adjust the plan as needed.

9 Plan regular reviews – what's working and what's not. Adjust the plan as needed.

9 Plan regular reviews – what's working and what's not. Adjust the plan as needed.



Celebrate and recognise the successes and achievement of female veterans

To find out more visit www.fvtp.org.uk

Female veterans have unique needs and experiences and whilst the majority transition into civilian life well, some require extra support. Where that is the case, they need to be treated as individuals when determining the right support for them.

As with everyone, a person-centred approach considers their specific needs, strengths, and preferences, allowing for tailored support focusing on what matters most to them.

Being person centred is important for everyone, especially female veterans whose experience of military service may have a direct impact on their health and wellbeing needs and how they are effectively supported.

This guide offers some specific hints and tips on a person centred approach for female veterans.

SAFE SPACES OVERVIEW

Providing support and environments which feel 'safe' should be the highest priority to any support service, but determining what this means can be more complicated. This section provides an overview of some of the things you may want or need to think about when providing support to female veterans in a 'safe' way. It is a guide and should not be assumed to take account of all situations, people or types of support that may be required.

This section should be used in conjunction with a review of your organisation's safeguarding policies. Training is also available to gain further insight and knowledge to provide the right support in the right way.

'Safe' is almost always dictated by the person and what makes them feel safe, but it can also be dictated by legislation around issues such as safeguarding and mental capacity, especially when working with vulnerable adults. Some organisations have very specific responsibilities which are set out in law regarding safeguarding, so it is important to ensure you are meeting your responsibilities. The NHS has a very good overview of safeguarding including the current relevant legislation www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/safeguarding-children-young-people-and-adults-at-risk-in-the-nhs/

WHAT IS A 'SAFE SPACE'?

SAFE IS DEFINED IN THE DICTIONARY AS
"NOT IN DANGER OR LIKELY TO BE HARMED"

Therefore, safe spaces mean many different things, but include:

- **The environment**
Thinking about the location, buildings, internal environment and how is it accessed.
Can you offer provision online rather than face to face?
- **The people**
Is there a choice of female worker? Who else attends the support service or space, and what impact might they have on the individual?
Are the staff all trained and able to appropriately support female veterans?
- **Policies**
Do you have safeguarding, confidentiality and consent policies?
What about complaints, whistleblowing or escalation processes if something goes wrong?
- **Access times**
Can people access the support service at different times of the day e.g. when there are fewer people around, or out of working hours?
- **Ability to bring children**
If children can attend, is it safe for them to be with their parents within groups, considering what might they hear and see?
If offering childcare, is it by a trained and insured professional?

Within all of these elements, organisations and services also need to be aware that some people may have faced trauma, for example combat related trauma or issues related to bullying, discrimination and harrassment which can have a long-lasting impact, especially female veterans who may have faced trauma because of their military service.

FURTHER
RESOURCES

CLICK TO DOWNLOAD THE
SAFE SPACES ADDITIONAL
INFORMATION SHEET



CELEBRATE AND RECOGNISE

As we have heard from both the research and female veterans directly, 'women often do not identify with the term 'veteran' and face specific, complex and multi-layered issues as a result of their service'. This is combined with the fact that services often don't recognise that women have served, means that female veterans cannot or do not want to access organisations for support.

We want to make sure women get their due and deserved recognition of service and are celebrated alongside all veterans for the contributions they have made.

Working alongside the OVA we have created a range of targeted resources that raise awareness of female veterans, their specific needs and more importantly their individual diversity. We have included female veterans from all services, backgrounds, including age, rank, length of service, LGBTQ+, disabilities, ethnic minorities and from across the UK, including the Devolved Governments.

These resources are now available for organisations to download and use.

VISIT THE
WEBSITE

CLICK TO VIEW
FURTHER RESOURCES



IMAGES

We have created a range of posters highlighting that women also served (Insert images of some of the posters and create a download link) to raise awareness, recognise service and diversity.

We also have a wide range of images that organisations can access to include in their communications, to access these please email staceydenyer@fvtp.org.uk.



SHORT FILMS

We have a small library of short films that raise awareness of the specific needs of female veterans and how services can look to better support them (Insert links to ours and OVA films).



EDUCATIVE FILM

Working with the Drive Project and TR2 we co-designed an impactful short film, telling the story of female veterans through multiple perspectives and exploring intersectionality. This film will support organisations to identify how they can improve and will form part of a short 'training session' that anyone can access.

Through the wide use of these resources, we aim to create lasting change and ensure that female veterans receive the recognition and support they deserve.



HOW?

Things organisations can do:

- Access the resources to ensure better recognition of female veterans, either as an education tool or a wider awareness raising tool i.e. displaying the posters in your organisation
- Include images of women in your communications materials
- Share the films and resources on social media, websites etc
- Share more positive stories on female veterans in all communication channels – celebrate the achievements of female veterans

WHY?

- To give women confidence that their service is recognised and valued by everyone
- Improve the knowledge and understanding of female veterans to everyone – organisations, employers and the general public



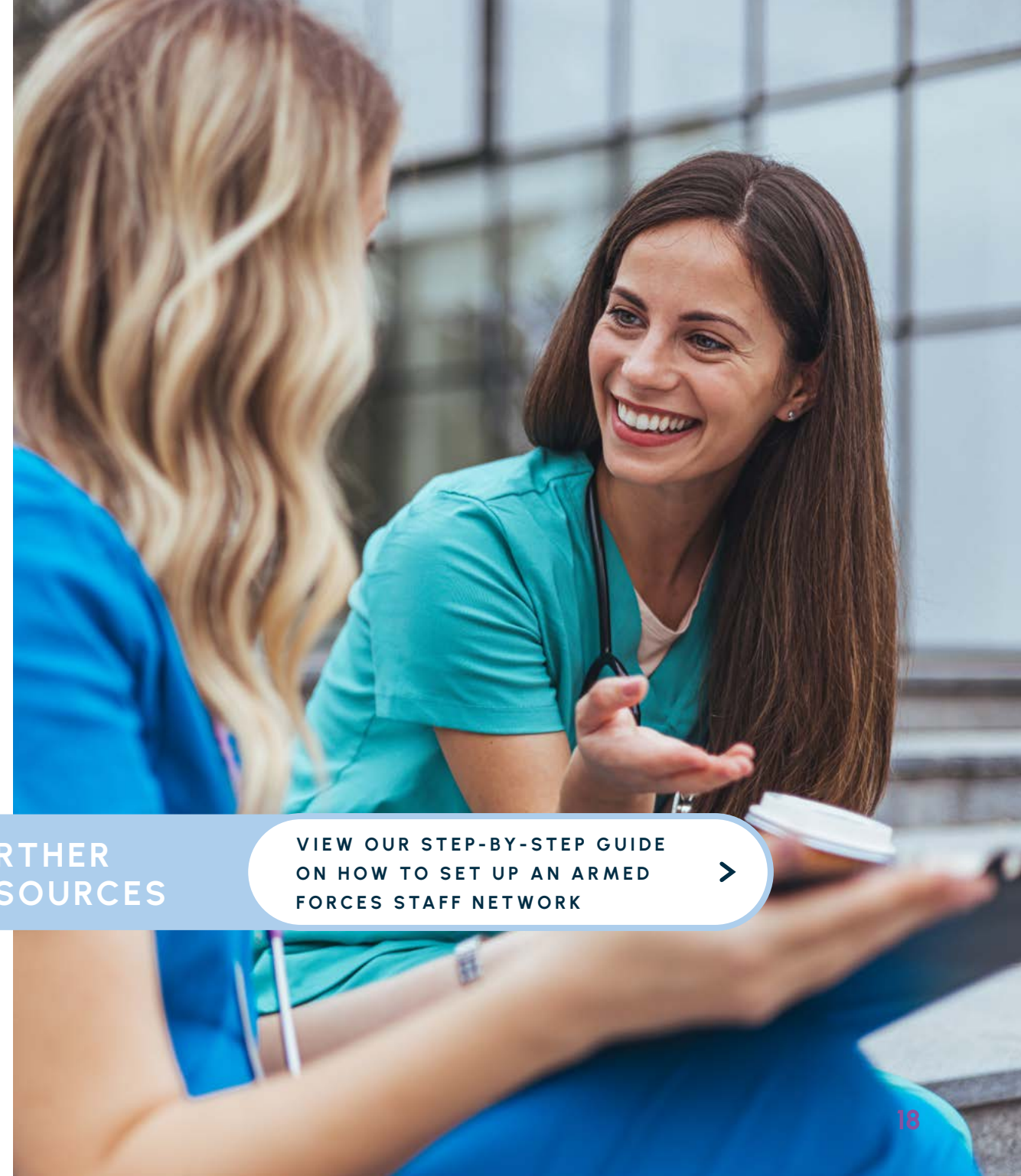
COMMUNITY AND PEER SUPPORT

Community or peer support is a universal offer and something that is widely available. It is based on an individuals' unique skills and experiences and on what matters to them. It is not just about support for specific needs, but also about friendship, camaraderie and a sense of purpose and belonging. It is also about finding the activities that provide consistent support, not just at times of need, so everyone can live healthy, 'ordinary' lives.

Community and peer support can come in many forms:

- Groups i.e. breakfast clubs, social groups
- Physical activity – both as part of a group or individually
- Art and culture
- Everyday activities – dog walking, getting outdoors
- Mindfulness – on your own or as part of group e.g. meditation, yoga
- Age UK
- Pain management groups
- Befriending
- Staff Networks, also known as Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) or Armed Forces communities/workplace communities are a useful tool for providing peer support in the workplace by providing employees with a platform to connect, share experiences, and advocate for positive change

It is also worth exploring social prescribing which is now available in most communities. People can either self-refer or be referred, and the social prescribing link worker can help the person to identify what types of activities would be best for them – <https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/> Some areas also have dedicated Armed Forces Community Social Prescribing programmes and work with all veterans.



FURTHER
RESOURCES

VIEW OUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE
ON HOW TO SET UP AN ARMED
FORCES STAFF NETWORK





SOCIAL PRESCRIBING THAT WORKS FOR THE WHOLE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY

Service provider: Active Plus

A Cornwall-based Community Interest Company, shows how Social Prescribing can transform Veterans' lives. Many Veterans feel disconnected from civilian life and hesitate to seek help. Active Plus employs Veterans and Spouses, creating peer-to-peer support that builds instant trust and understanding.

Social Prescribing Link Workers collaborate, guide, and advocate for the Armed Forces Community. Their team which includes Female Veterans helps service users access community and support services focused on building confidence, reducing isolation, and improving wellbeing.

A Veteran with PTSD described how Active Plus gave her renewed identity, community, and confidence. The model demonstrates how lived experience bridges the gap between services and meaningful engagement. Many Veterans go on to paid or volunteer roles, embodying the idea of "helping ourselves by helping others."



SISTERS IN SERVICE CASE STUDY

Sisters In Service is a peer support network dedicated to the remarkable women who have served in the UK Armed Forces and are now contributing to the health and social care system.

Their mission at Sisters In Service (SIS) is to provide a nurturing and empowering environment where female veterans in healthcare can connect, share experiences, and support each other on their unique paths. This includes Reservists, still serving or previously.

SIS has a specific offer for Service leavers who are transitioning into health and social care roles. For health and social care students they offer practical advice, and for those who may benefit, support from a mentor, as well as coaching for interviews.

They have a peer support scheme where they connect members from the same profession or region, providing opportunities for coaching, career and personal development.

The peer support scheme was developed when one of the founders supported a service leaver who joined the NHS after nearly 20 years in the army. A connection was formed, and Hayley received practical guidance, coaching and support to help with her successful transition journey. This is now being replicated through their official peer support scheme.

Sisters In Service encourages male and female allies to join their network so that they can help signpost to their existing staff networks and contacts in their workplace.

<https://sistersinservice.org.uk/>



COMMUNITY & PEER SUPPORT

Service provider: Female Veterans Alliance.
Stronger together – uniting female veterans across the UK

RAF Veterans Lisa Rawlings and Kelly Farr met by chance through work, discovering they were both Veterans and shared a sense that something was missing for those who had served. They went on to co-found two Veteran support hubs in Wales after seeing firsthand the lack of community and support available to female Veterans compared with their male counterparts. They also identified a significant gender data gap in research and set out to address it.

Their mission remains clear: build community, amplify voices, and drive meaningful change.

Through a series of workshops, they have explored six key themes with female Veterans:

- Community & relationships
- Employment, education & skills
- Finance & debt
- Health & wellbeing
- Veterans & the law
- Making a home in civilian society

Each workshop has informed reports and recommendations shared with local authorities and Government. But they also offer something equally valuable — a safe, understanding space where female Veterans feel heard, seen, and able to be themselves.

Alongside workshops, the FVA has hosted wellbeing retreats with fireside chats, walks, and open conversations, designed to foster community, resilience, and confidence as participants navigate life after service.



COMMUNITY AND PEER SUPPORT

THINGS SERVICES, ORGANISATIONS AND BUSINESSES CAN ALL DO

- ✔ Consider all types of support i.e. community-based activities such as sport & physical activity, arts and culture, volunteering
- ✔ Understand the benefits of peer support and collaboration across services and support groups
- ✔ Identify both military and non-military community-based support to provide the best options for the individual
- ✔ Offer people the opportunity to be a mentor / peer supporter where appropriate
- ✔ Create collaborative relationships with community support providers to facilitate easy referrals
- ✔ Offer both face-to-face and online options for community support
- ✔ Offer support to access relevant and appropriate services, i.e. support worker, help with transport if needed
- ✔ Understand that confidence can be a barrier to female veterans needing to access or reach out to support services or support groups and offer suitable peer support if needed
- ✔ Where possible ensure people with lived experience are co-designing or leading community or peer support groups i.e. female veteran groups led by female veterans
- ✔ Ensure a person-centred approach across all provision
- ✔ Think about both female only and mixed gender groups – some people may not want to attend mixed groups
- ✔ If possible think about setting up your own staff network for veterans



REMEMBER

You do not have to be/shouldn't be the expert in everything!! Find out who your local experts are to provide the best support to female veterans, whilst maintaining your professional boundaries. Use these sections as extra guides when needed

DOWNLOAD THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL



1

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Physical health issues can often be directly related to military service for female veterans, often affecting the female physiology differently to their male counterparts

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Ask ALL women: 'Have you ever served in the UK Armed Forces?'
- Words matter! Choosing the right terminology in your communication when it comes to female veteran events drives participation – remember to have person centred conversations. See Communication and Person Centred sections for hints and tips on how to do this
- Have an awareness and understanding of the impact military service can have on the physical health of female veterans (e.g. specific musculoskeletal issues, combat injuries or trauma – see evidence review for more information)
- If appropriate, attend training to better understand the wider physical health needs of female veterans. See the CPD section for links to where you can find this
- Offer a choice of a female healthcare practitioner where possible
- Understand the Armed Forces Covenant in relation to healthcare
- Be aware of and, if appropriate, refer female veterans to specific support services i.e. Op RESTORE, The NHS commissioned service for veterans who experience physical injuries and illness as a result of their military service.
- Identify your local organisations and services that can support female veterans, including your local Armed Forces Champion within your local NHS Trust



Women serve for shorter lengths of time than men, are more likely to leave early, and are more likely to leave due to ill-health... and significantly more likely to be medically discharged'



'The rate of trauma and overuse lower limb MSK remains two fold higher in women and the rate of hip and pelvic stress fractures is ten fold higher in women ' 3



¹Godier-McBard, Gillin and Fossey, We Also Served, 60
²Edwards and Wright, No Man's Land, 5
³Invisible Women by Caroline Criado-Perez

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE



SAFE SPACES AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING.

Service provider: Blesma

For the first time ever in September 2024, Blesma hosted a weekend exclusively for female veterans, creating a supportive space for ten incredible women to share experiences, build friendships and discuss the unique challenges they face after service.

"The weekend was about getting away, sharing knowledge and talking about issues that were relatable and personal in a safe space." - Female Blesma Member – Spa Weekend

"The weekend made me feel I mattered and cared for." - Female Blesma Member – Spa Weekend

Building on the success of this weekend, the charity has developed a varied female veteran programme, with a mix of online and face to face activities. These have included mindfulness and positive thinking workshops, a series on the menopause, chocolate tasting, gift wrapping, and other crafts experiences and a further wellbeing retreat.

"The design of these activities was to create a safe space for our female veterans to not only enjoy activities together but an opportunity discuss topics that matter to them. This wasn't about creating events that separated members, but recognising a need and becoming more inclusive." - Jess March, Blesma Head of Activities and Events

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Resources for NHS **Armed Forces Champions**.

<https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/armed-forces-champions>

Op RESTORE is specialist NHS care for veterans and service leavers with physical health and wellbeing needs linked to military service (available in England only).

www.nhs.uk/oprestore

Armed Forces Covenant Guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-covenant-supporting-information>

RCGP Veteran Friendly Accreditation <https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/course/view.php?id=803> <https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/case-study/veteran-friendly-accreditation-for-gp-practices/>

VCHA Accreditation <https://veteranaware.nhs.uk/>

Direct support for veterans

NHS Veteran Services: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/personalised-care-for-veterans-and-their-families-information-for-patients-easy-read/>

Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS) is an independent charity providing medical welfare to those who have, and continue to, serve on the frontline.

<https://dmws.org.uk/>

Invictus Games Foundation's We Are Invictus portal – opportunities for Wounded, Injured or Sick Veterans and Serving Personnel (SP). Not all opportunities are sports-related.

<https://weareinvictus.co.uk/#/welcome>

Help for Heroes provide holistic support for veterans and SP and host free activities and events across the UK.

<https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/get-help/>

The Royal British Legion provide holistic support for veterans and SP and have a Recovery Services Team for Wounded, Injured, or Sick (WIS) veterans. <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-support/how-we-help/recovery-services>

The Not Forgotten provides assistance to any WIS veteran, whatever the cause and whenever it arose. <https://thenotforgotten.org/how-we-help/get-our-help/>

Inclusive Minds Hub peer support for those who are neurodifferent, be it from ADHD or Autism, to Multiple Sclerosis or Traumatic Brain Injuries and everything in-between.

<https://www.inclusivemindsuk.com/>

STAFF NETWORKS

radius-networks.org

ateaseinclusion.co.uk

www.inclusiveemployers.co.uk/blog/how-to-set-up-a-staff-network

NOTE - These links were correct at the time of publication, but may be subject to change. These services and organisations are not endorsed or quality assured by FVTP or any of its funders/partners. However you may find them useful for further information.

DOWNLOAD THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL



REMEMBER

You do not have to be/shouldn't be the expert in everything!! Find out who your local experts are to provide the best support to female veterans, whilst maintaining your professional boundaries. Use these sections as extra guides when needed

2

MENTAL HEALTH

Whilst the majority of female veterans experience good mental health... some face issues as a result of their service in the armed forces. Female Veterans are more likely to have experienced bullying, harassment, discrimination, and sexually inappropriate behaviour, including sexual assault and rape³ (see later section), whilst they were serving than their male counterparts. This can result in a multitude of mental health support needs.



50% of respondents reported that they would have benefitted from accessing mental health support during service³



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Ask all women, 'Have you ever served in the UK Armed Forces?'
- Understand the needs of female veterans and the impact military service can have on their mental health (e.g. culture of the military, struggling with a physical or combat injury, recalling traumatic events and experiences, either in person or through communication methods - sexually inappropriate behaviour)
- Have an awareness of the impact of combat on mental health
- If appropriate, undertake training to better understand the wider mental health needs of female veterans, including gambling harms, alcohol and substance misuse, eating disorders.
- Provide the choice of a female practitioner/worker where possible
- Gain an understanding of the Armed Forces Covenant and its implications for your service, organisation or business
- If appropriate, refer women to veteran specific support services i.e. Op COURAGE the NHS mental health

³ Annual Medical Discharges in the UK Regular Armed Forces



Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

CREATING SAFE SPACES WHERE FEMALE VETERANS FEEL SEEN AND HEARD.

**Service provider: NHS Norfolk & Suffolk
Foundation Trust**

Vicki Bailey identified a gap in support for female veterans while studying for her Master's Degree in Military Health and Family Studies. Motivated to address this, she began working as the Veterans Clinical Nurse Specialist within Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust. She launched a co-production group with 14 women veterans across the East of England, whose input was central in shaping a peer-support forum that reflected their needs and experiences.

The result was an online network for female veterans within the two counties. The forum offers a social space to connect, share experiences, and build friendships—welcoming female veterans of all ranks and service lengths.

The forum offers a social space to connect, share experiences, and build friendships—welcoming female veterans of all ranks and service lengths. Building on the forum's success, a weekly stabilisation group will launch on MS Teams in autumn 2025. These online sessions will focus on psychoeducation and mental health strategies tailored to female veterans, addressing issues such as PTSD, anxiety, and moral injury—conditions that affect female veterans differently to male veterans. Female veterans have often reported feeling unheard or dismissed by mainstream services. This project provides a safe, women-only space where they can explore their mental health without judgement, improving confidence to seek help and begin recovery.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mental Health Support for the Veteran

Op COURAGE is the Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service (available in England only).

www.nhs.uk/opcourage

Combat Stress helps those with mental health challenges resulting from their experiences during military service. They have a 24/7 crisis line: 0800 138 1619. combatstress.org.uk

PTSD Resolution supports veterans (and their families) mental health via various therapies; not limited to just PTSD and supportive to those facing alcohol or substance misuse issues as well as those in prison. ptsdresolution.org

Rock 2 Recovery supports veterans (and their families) mental health via change management coaching. www.rock2recovery.co.uk

Mind for eating disorders is one of the UK's largest mental health charities.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/eating-problems/useful-contacts/>

CALM is the Campaign Against Living Miserably who aim to equip everyone with the skills to help prevent suicide. www.thecalmzone.net

Samaritans ensure that there is always someone to listen if people are in a crisis or feeling suicidal. They have a 24/7 crisis line: 116 123 www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/military/samaritans-veterans-app

Beat Eating Disorders are the UK's eating disorder charity who encourage and empower people to get help quickly.

<https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/get-information-and-support/get-help-for-myself/>

Mind Useful Contacts <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/eating-problems/useful-contacts/>

The Forcer Protocol A UK-wide police initiative to help locate and protect serving or ex-service personnel (veterans and reservists) who go missing. <https://forcerprotocol.org/>

Wellbeing Support and Opportunities for Recovery for the Veteran

Invictus Games Foundation's We Are Invictus portal – opportunities for Wounded, Injured or Sick Veterans and Serving Personnel. Not all opportunities are sports-related. weareinvictus.co.uk/#/welcome

Help for Heroes provide holistic support for veterans and host free activities and events across the UK. www.helpforheroes.org.uk/get-help

Royal British Legion provide holistic support for veterans and have a Recovery Services Team for Wounded, Injured, or Sick (WIS) veterans. www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-support/how-we-help/recovery-services

The Warrior Programme enables veterans and their families to manage their emotions and develop resilience, focus and motivation. www.warriorprogramme.org.uk

The Not Forgotten provides assistance to any veteran with a disability, illness or infirmity; whatever the cause and whenever it arose. thenotforgotten.org/how-we-help/get-our-help

Centre for Military Women's Research (CMWR)
Infographic on Veteran Women's Mental Health www.centreformilitarywomensresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/ARU_CMWR_Mnemonic.pdf

CMWR Mental Health Research Summary: www.centreformilitarywomensresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/ARU_CMWR_Summary.pdf

RAF Association Finding it Tough Resilience Training delivered to RAF Veterans, SP, and their families. Royal Air Force Veterans only (can be a veteran of any service if their partner is still serving in the RAF) findingittough.rafa.org.uk

Enhance+ provide Female Veterans Awareness Training in Healthcare veterans.training

Inclusive Minds Hub peer support for those who are neurodifferent, be it from ADHD or Autism, to Multiple Sclerosis or Traumatic Brain Injuries and everything inbetween. www.inclusivemindsuk.com

FIMT Research <https://www.fimt-rc.org/news/20250108-eating-disorders-within-the-uk-armed-forces>

NICE Guideline for Eating Disorders
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng69>

DOWNLOAD THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL



REMEMBER

You do not have to be/shouldn't be the expert in everything!! Find out who your local experts are to provide the best support to female veterans, whilst maintaining your professional boundaries. Use these sections as extra guides when needed

3

BULLYING, HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, AND SEXUALLY INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOURS, INCLUDING SEXUAL ASSAULT AND RAPE

Female veterans are more likely to have experienced bullying, harassment, discrimination, and sexually inappropriate behaviour, including sexual assault and rape, whilst they were serving. This can result in a multitude of mental health conditions post-service.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Listen and validate women, ensure they are taken seriously, and that they are supported in a way that works for them - going at their pace
- Where possible, ensure women have the choice of a female practitioner
- Have person-centred conversations which include the language that the women feels comfortable with i.e. survivor/victim
- Gain awareness of your local support services, where appropriate build partnerships so you can signpost effectively if needed. Remember these issues are often complicated and require multi-agency support
- Where appropriate signpost to specialist support, (i.e. Sexual Assault Referral Centre – SARC or Rape Crisis)
- If you provide groups, think about the provision of 'a safe space' and female only groups
- Become an ally and where appropriate and safe, help to challenge sexually inappropriate language or 'banter', microaggressions, victim-blaming and body-shaming
- Read the safe spaces section of the toolkit, particularly when thinking about safeguarding. Ensure you are aware of your organisations safeguarding policies, including reporting



62% of those surveyed experienced bullying, harassment and discrimination.⁶



In 2021, service women were more than ten times as likely as service men to experience sexual harassment⁷

⁶ House of Commons Defence Committee, Protecting those who protect us, 4
⁷ House of Commons Defence Committee, Protecting those who protect us, 4.



HOLISTIC SUPPORT TO SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE.

**Service provider: Forensic Nurse Advisor (Military),
NHS Sexual Assault Referral Centre, North Yorkshire**

A female veteran patient attended the North Yorkshire Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) following a report of sexual violence perpetrated by her husband. She presented at the SARC accompanied by police to undergo a forensic medical examination as part of a criminal investigation. The woman's veteran status was identified through the SARC's assessment documentation, which includes the question: "Have you or a close family member ever served in the Armed Forces?" reflecting the organisation's commitment to recognising the unique needs of the Armed Forces community.

During the assessment, several risk factors and vulnerabilities were identified, including diagnosed mental health conditions, a recent suicide attempt, domestic abuse, and that she was homeless – sleeping on a friend's sofa. She

was also financially dependent on her husband and unable to work due to her mental health challenges. Consequently, referrals were made to the local Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and domestic abuse support services. The SARC team referred the patient to the Forensic Nurse Advisor (Military) who signposted her to several military-specific support organisations, including Salute Her, The Royal British Legion, and Op COURAGE, with a focus on housing support and mental health services.

She was also informed of regular drop-in sessions at Catterick Garrison that the Forensic Nurse Advisor holds. The patient was previously unaware of many of these services and expressed interest in engaging with them. At a follow up call three weeks later, the patient reported improved wellbeing and ongoing engagement with both the local Community Mental Health Team and domestic abuse services. She had also contacted The Royal British Legion, which had begun offering her practical support.

BULLYING, HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, AND SEXUALLY INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOURS, INCLUDING SEXUAL ASSAULT AND RAPE

For the Service provider

Salute Her advocate for female veterans and SP. They provide various training workshops. www.saluteher.co.uk/workshops

The Survivors Trust delivers training to service providers to promote sensitive and informed responses to survivors. thesurvivorstrust.org/tst-training

Enhance+ provide Female Veterans Awareness Training in Healthcare veterans.training

At Ease Inclusion deliver Active Bystander Training ateaseinclusion.co.uk

Support for the Veteran

Salute Her advocate for female veterans and SP. They provide support to those who experienced bullying, harassment, discrimination and sexually inappropriate behaviours in service. www.saluteher.co.uk

Aurora New Dawn have a specialist armed forces team to support those experiencing domestic abuse, sexual violence and stalking www.aurorand.org.uk/armed-forces

Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs): <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sexual-health/help-after-rape-and-sexual-assault/>

England: www.nhs.uk/.../help-after-rape-and-sexual-assault
Northern Ireland: therowan.hscni.net

Scotland: www.nhsinform.scot/turn-to-sarcs

Wales: executive.nhs.wales/.../netwo.../wsas/access-a-sarc

The Survivors Trust provide advise, guidance, and signposting to support groups for those who have experienced rape and sexual assault thesurvivorstrust.org

Fear Free is a charity working to break the cycle of domestic abuse, sexual violence and stalking www.fearfree.org.uk

Wellbeing Support and Opportunities for Recovery for the Veteran

Royal British Legion provide holistic support for veterans and have a Recovery Services Team for Wounded, Injured, or Sick (WIS) veterans. www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-support/how-we-help/recovery-services

RAF Association Finding it Tough Resilience Training delivered to RAF veterans, SP, and their families. Royal Air Force veterans only (can be a veteran of any service if their partner is still serving in the RAF) findingittough.rafa.org.uk

The Warrior Programme enables individuals to manage their emotions and to develop the resilience, focus and motivation to succeed <https://www.warriorprogramme.org.uk/>



NOTE - These links were correct at the time of publication, but may be subject to change. These services and organisations are not endorsed or quality assured by FVTP or any of its funders/partners. However you may find them useful for further information.

REMEMBER

You do not have to be/shouldn't be the expert in everything!! Find out who your local experts are to provide the best support to female veterans, whilst maintaining your professional boundaries. Use these sections as extra guides when needed

DOWNLOAD THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL



4

ADDICTION

Addiction can be a issue for some female veterans including alcohol abuse, substance abuse and gambling harms

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Identify local and national support services and organisations that you can signpost female veterans to if appropriate
- Have an awareness of risk factors of addiction to alcohol, gambling or substance misuse for female veterans, for example female veterans are more likely to experience mental health problems and more likely to have encountered bullying and sexually inappropriate behaviours than male veterans.
- Be aware of how family members' gambling issues can affect female veterans
- Many women leave the Armed Forces to care, be it for children or other family members - this could leave them feeling isolated and at risk of alcohol abuse, substance abuse, or gambling harms. In addition, this may mean they cannot access services at certain times due to their care-giver role.
- Be aware that isolation after service, especially during the initial transition period is a significant risk factor to addiction
- Think about community and peer support - Peer led, safe spaces are essential to foster belonging and enable long term transformation

8 <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/psychological-medicine/article/abs/mental-health-disorders-and-alcohol-misuse-among-uk-military-veterans-and-the-general-population-a-comparison-study/A7A8AAF82C7AA8B228A340666A1DDE6>



Female veterans show hazardous drinking higher than women in the general population⁸.





Tom Harrison House

TRAUMA-INFORMED RECOVERY FOR FEMALE VETERANS

Service Provider: Tom Harrison House

Tom Harrison House (THH) is a trauma-informed, gender-responsive service that recognises the unique recovery challenges female veterans face—rooted in trauma, isolation, and poor fit with civilian services. THH meets these needs with tailored, veteran-specific support.

Through retreats, weekly online groups, and an 8-week therapeutic programme, THH offers structured, compassionate spaces where female veterans can reconnect, heal, and rebuild trust. Both mixed-gender and women-only settings provide empathy, expert guidance, and vital peer support.

Recovery here is not reduced to abstinence alone. THH fosters identity reconstruction, emotional regulation, and spiritual reconnection. A former participant describes how the programme created a sense of family and purpose that civilian services could not offer, ultimately leading to sobriety, improved family relationships, and personal

growth. She described the programme as being a "lifeline".

"This group truly saved my life. For the first time in a long while, I felt like I belonged. I was accepted for who I am, and I realised I wasn't alone anymore. Recovery, while daunting, became manageable because I had a group of like-minded women beside me—sharing, growing, and healing together."

THH's model proves that when female veterans are offered safe environments tailored to their lived experiences, recovery becomes not just possible, but transformative.

"The THH Female Veterans Support Project has been more than a support system—it's been a catalyst for transformation. I no longer simply survive—I live with purpose and empowerment. As a female veteran, for the first time in a long time, if not ever, I feel seen, supported, and most importantly—like I've found a home."

ADDICTION

For the service provider

Betknowmore 'Battling the Odds' Programme

www.betknowmoreuk.org/training-programmes/training-programme/armed-forces

'Are Recovery Spaces Failing Black Women?'

video: https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=mPzf_udKKDg

'The Unseen Enemy' Gambling Related Harms in the Military

video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_4oBvuOIJc

Icarus Charity provides mental health support for veterans.

www.icaruscharity.org

For the veteran

Alcohol & Substance Misuse

Combat Stress have specialist substance misuse teams to advise on how and where to get help with alcohol or drug problems.

combatstress.org.uk/get-help/how-we-help/substance-misuse

PTSD Resolution can support those with various addictions

ptsdresolution.org

With You offer free armed forces support with drugs, alcohol and mental health

<https://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/what-we-do/drug-and-alcohol-services-for-adults/support-for-the-armed-forces-community>

Drink Aware www.drinkaware.co.uk

Alcoholics Anonymous www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Narcotics Anonymous ukna.org

Recovery Lighthouse is a Rehab Centre which can support people overcoming addiction – they have a specialised Veterans Rehab programme www.recoverylighthouse.com/rehab-treatment/veterans

Broadway Lodge is a Rehab Centre which can support people overcoming addiction. www.broadwaylodge.org.uk

Adfam support those affected by someone else's drinking, drug use, or gambling adfam.org.uk

Tom Harrison House provides a specialist addiction recovery programme for the armed forces community

tomharrisonhouse.org.uk

Gambling Harms

GamStop www.gamstop.co.uk

GamCare www.gamcare.org.uk

Gamble Aware www.gambleaware.org/tools-and-support/support-in-your-area

Veterans Welfare Group & Armed Forces Gambling Support Network

veteranswelfaregroup.co.uk/resources/wellbeing/veterans-gambling-support

Betknowmore New Beginnings, women's only group www.betknowmoreuk.org/support-information/new-beginnings

For Families

Alcohol Change provides a comprehensive list of those providing support for family members of those with harmful drinking habits. alcoholchange.org.uk/alcohol-facts/fact-sheets/a-guide-to-family-support-services

Nacoa provides information, advice and support for everyone affected by a parent's drinking. nacoa.org.uk

The Ripple Pond support the adult family members of WIS veterans and SP

www.theripplepond.org

Betknowmore New Beginnings, women's only group

www.betknowmoreuk.org/support-information/new-beginnings

SMART Veterans Programme a programme that provides training and tools for people who want to change their problematic behaviour, including addiction to drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, gambling, food, shopping, Internet and others. https://smartrecovery.org.uk/smart_veterans/

WithYou a New programme for women requiring help with addiction and recovery <https://covenantfund.org.uk/resources/supporting-veterans-through-addiction-and-recovery/>

Gaming addiction the National Centre for Gaming Disorders <https://www.cnwl.nhs.uk/national-centre-gaming-disorders>



REMEMBER

You do not have to be/shouldn't be the expert in everything!! Find out who your local experts are to provide the best support to female veterans, whilst maintaining your professional boundaries. Use these sections as extra guides when needed

5

EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCE

This section aims to set out the key elements of good practice in delivering support to female veterans around transition, employment and finance.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Be aware of specific issues that affect female veterans and employment/finance:
 - caring responsibilities
 - children and family
 - the need to have flexible and part time options
- If appropriate refer women to appropriate employment support e.g. Forces Employment Charity and NHSE Step into Health
- Improve awareness of career support/training available to female veterans, e.g. Forces Employment Charity.
- Be aware of the impact of legacy policies relating to women's military service on financial and pension eligibility and refer to appropriate services and organisations, i.e. Forces Pension Society
- Be aware why there may be career breaks on CV's due to the gendered labour roles in the home i.e. if you had to move around with a serving partner. Support women to promote the skills they have gained whilst caring into employability skills
- Refer or support with CV writing that is appropriate to female veterans, for example, by helping to translate transferable qualifications.
- If appropriate, provide or undertake education/awareness raising activities for employers on the skills and benefits of employing female veterans.
- Identify local and national providers who can support female veterans with employment and finance
- Actively support and celebrate female veterans to build a stronger, more inclusive community.



Women are more likely to have low self-confidence, under-representation and care giving responsibilities



69% of respondents said their skills and experience [...] were not understood by civilian employers?



44% reported being unemployed for long periods of time¹⁰



A SERVICE BY FEMALE VETERANS, FOR FEMALE VETERANS.

Service Provider: Forces Employment Charity

The Forces Employment Charity (FEC) is dedicated to supporting service leavers, veterans, reservists, and their families in transitioning to civilian employment. One of their standout initiatives is the Military Women Programme, specifically designed to address challenges faced by female veterans.

Recognising that female veterans often encounter distinct barriers – such as, career interruptions due to personal circumstances, care responsibilities, and underrepresentation in male-dominated professions – the Military Women Programme team offer CV writing assistance, interview preparation support, access to skills training, motivation and self-belief coaching, advice on educational opportunities, confidence-building activities, connections to specialised support services and invitations to exclusive events. The team cover the U.K. and overseas to provide tailored support.

Annette Berry, an Army Veteran herself, serves as Lead for the Military Women Programme at FEC. She has been with the charity since 2009 in various roles until 2020 when she

spearheaded the programme. Her work involves regular travel across the UK and engaging with the community to ensure that female veterans receive the support they need.

When asked about common barriers female veterans face in the civilian workforce, she states,

"Quite often, women who have served in the military don't identify as veterans or military women...primarily if they did not serve for long. However, their decision to join the Armed Forces and their commitment to serving the King (or Queen) and the country truly matter. This dedication is far more significant than the length of service or medals earned."

A lack of self-confidence can also be a significant barrier. Women often feel they need to meet 100% of the required skills before considering themselves qualified. Additionally, caring responsibilities—such as raising children or being part of the 'sandwich generation' with children and elderly parents to look after—can significantly impact their ability to work full-time."

Annette's lived experience displays an empathetic and knowledgeable approach, which ensures that veterans, regardless of rank or length of service, have access to the resources they need to succeed.

EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCE

For the service provider

Recruitment Support from Government careersafterservice.campaign.gov.uk/get-recruitment-support-as-an-employer

Claim National Insurance Relief for hiring a veteran www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-national-insurance-contributions-relief-for-veterans-as-an-employer

Armed Forces Covenant www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk

Defence Employer Recognition Scheme www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-employer-recognition-scheme

Recruit via Career Transition Partnership for free www.modctp.co.uk/employers

Support for the Veteran

Step Into Health the NHS programme for supporting those from the armed forces community into employment within healthcare militarystepintohealth.nhs.uk

Transition & Employment

Forces Employment Charity (Op ASCEND) www.forcesemployment.org.uk/programmes/op-ascend

Career Transition Partnership

www.modctp.co.uk/home

The White Ensign Association (Royal Navy / Royal Marines)

www.whiteensign.co.uk

Finance

Forces Pension Society forcespensionsociety.org

Government & Armed Forces Pensions www.gov.uk/guidance/pensions-and-compensation-for-veterans

The Savvy Squaddie is a personal finance channel from a serving member of the armed forces who makes information surrounding money easy to understand. www.youtube.com/@thesavvysquaddie

Career Transition Partnership Finance Workshop

www.modctp.co.uk/home/view-workshop?workshopId=5

Turn 2 Us is a national charity providing practical help to people who are struggling financially. www.turn2us.org.uk

Recruit for Spouse Support for military spouses on employment and careers <https://www.recruitforspouses.co.uk/>

Self-employment

X Forces Enterprise support for starting or growing your own business - <https://x-forces.com/>

Heropreneurs Empowering new entrepreneurs from the extended military community to achieve their business ambitions.

<https://www.heropreneurs.co.uk/>



REMEMBER

You do not have to be/shouldn't be the expert in everything!! Find out who your local experts are to provide the best support to female veterans, whilst maintaining your professional boundaries. Use these sections as extra guides when needed

6

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Housing and homelessness are areas of high need for female veterans but is under researched and current dedicated support is minimal, for example housing options to female veterans/safe options for women and children.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Ask every women 'Have you ever served in in the UK Armed Forces'
- Be aware of female veterans' needs in housing provision, for example accessing housing, mortgage advice, paying bills and rent
- Identify your local Armed Forces Champion and Local Housing Authority contact to help female veterans navigate housing issues
- Be aware the Armed Forces Covenant what it means in order to manage the expectations of female veterans
- Be aware that female veterans are more likely to be without a home but staying with friends and therefore might be classed as 'homeless'
- Ensure accommodation is suitable for the needs of the individuals i.e. do they need female only provision, accommodation for children
- Be aware that Foreign & Commonwealth veterans are unlikely to have local family to fall back on, and might be very isolated



Female veterans have been found to be reluctant to seek support in relation to housing¹¹



Programs that support homeless veterans often fail to take female veterans needs into consideration, such as not providing adequate arrangement for females with children¹²

¹¹ Improving Access to Service Charities for female veterans

¹² Edwards and Wright, Forgotten Women Veterans, 23



BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

Service provider: Walking With The Wounded

An elderly female veteran faced a daily battle that many of her generation know all too well – navigating the housing system whilst dealing with mobility challenges making her current home increasingly unsuitable. After two knee operations, the flight of stairs to her first-floor flat had become problematic, trapping her in a property that no longer met her needs.

Despite being on the council housing list for a considerable period, her repeated applications for ground-floor accommodation had been met with rejection after rejection. The system seemed stacked against her, with her military service – a crucial factor that should have prioritised her case – remaining overlooked and unrecognised.

The breakthrough came through Walking With The Wounded's intervention and advocacy. The charity immediately identified that her veteran status had not been properly acknowledged by the housing department. This was the missing piece of the puzzle – a barrier that had been preventing her from accessing the support she had earned through her service to our country.

Walking With The Wounded immediately guided her back to the council housing officer with the knowledge and documentation needed to ensure her veteran status was formally recorded and recognised. The result was remarkable: within just a few weeks she was allocated a ground-floor property close to her daughter – providing not only the physical accessibility she desperately needed but also the emotional support of being near family.

This case demonstrates the critical importance of ensuring veterans receive the recognition and support they deserve. Too often, administrative oversights or lack of awareness create unnecessary barriers for those who have served our nation; in particular women who have served. When these barriers are removed, life-changing outcomes follow swiftly.

Through Walking With The Wounded's expertise and advocacy, this veteran's housing crisis was not only resolved but transformed into a story of hope and success. Our work continues to break down the barriers that prevent veterans from accessing the support they've earned, one case at a time.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

For the service provider

National Housing Federation www.housing.org.uk

Homeless Link are the national membership charity for organisations working with people who become homeless in England homeless.org.uk

Leave to Remain <https://www.gov.uk/apply-indefinite-leave-to-remain-armed-forces>

Armed Forces Covenant Information

<https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/armed-forces-community/housing/>

Women's Homelessness homeless.org.uk/areas-of-expertise/meeting-diverse-needs/ending-womens-homelessness

Women in Social housing www.wishnetwork.org

Helping Homeless Veterans UK www.hhvuk.org

www.gov.uk/apply-indefinite-leave-to-remain-armed-forces

www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-covenant-supporting-information

Support for the Veteran

Walking with the Wounded support veterans with mental health, employment and wraparound care coordination programmes walkingwiththewounded.org.uk/ask-for-help

Government www.gov.uk/government/collections/find-support-for-veterans-and-their-families

Housing for Women www.hfw.org.uk

Op FORTITUDE is funded by Office for Veteran Affairs (OVA) to deliver a centralised referral pathway into veteran specific supported housing.

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

Haig Housing is a housing provider for ex-service personnel in the UK, with properties across multiple locations

www.haighousing.org.uk

The Stoll Foundation provide affordable housing and support services to enable vulnerably and disabled veterans to lead fulfilling, independent lives. www.stoll.org.uk

NOTE - These links were correct at the time of publication but may be subject to change. These services and organisations are not endorsed or quality assured by FVTP or any of its funders/partners. However you may find them useful for further information.

DOWNLOAD THE SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL



REMEMBER

You do not have to be/shouldn't be the expert in everything!! Find out who your local experts are to provide the best support to female veterans, whilst maintaining your professional boundaries. Use these sections as extra guides when needed

7

LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, AND EVERYONE ELSE WHO DOESN'T IDENTIFY AS CISGENDERED AND/OR HETEROSEXUAL

Homosexuality was decriminalised in UK Law in 1967 but remained a military offence until January 2000. Victims of this policy endured bullying, blackmail, invasive investigations, and even conversion therapy, resulting in long-term emotional and financial hardships. Acknowledging this painful history is crucial for supporting LGBT+ veterans, as their struggles continue to affect them today.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Be aware of the 'Gay Ban' and its adverse impact on female veterans' lives
- Have person-centred conversations and, in turn, use appropriate language for the individual
- Identify local support services and partners who can provide expert support and advice to both your organisation and female veterans
- Promote the use of pronouns amongst staff and beneficiaries and ask: 'How would you like to be addressed?' or: 'What are your pronouns?'
- Have awareness of Fighting with Pride's free kitemark scheme 'Pride in Veterans Standard' and undertake this if possible
- Be aware of your organisation's EDI policy and review if necessary/appropriate
- If appropriate, provide or signpost to specific support to female veterans trying to come to terms with the impact of the bans, for example, by offering women's only LGBT+ events and forums
- We can all be an ally; Visible allies and genuine acceptance are fundamental to ensuring lesbian and bisexual women feel that their sexuality bears no relevance to the way they are treated or their ability to access veteran provisions.



59% of respondents
in the Etherton Report were
from female veterans,
and almost half of these
were forced or compelled
to leave; another statistic
whereby women are
overrepresented¹³

13 LGBT Veterans Independent Review, Final Report, Independent Review into the service and experience of LGBT veteran who served prior to 2000, May 2023. 2



A VIEW FROM A FEMALE VETERAN

Service provider: Women's Royal Army Corps Association: The Servicewomen's Charity

Until 2000, personnel could be dismissed from the UK Armed Forces for being lesbian, gay, or bisexual – widely known as the 'gay ban' – and being transgender was illegal until 1999. This had a particularly devastating effect on female service members, many of whom found support through organisations like the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC) Association later in life.

Legacy issues weren't just that servicewomen were unfairly dismissed, or 'encouraged' to leave, but females thought to be lesbian, or bisexual were denied medals, some had their rank removed, denied their pensions and access to veteran services. In addition, many were bullied, some were forced into psychiatric treatment, some were outed to family who rejected them, some became homeless, some were unable to secure a career after leaving and faced horrendous hardship. Some took their own lives. and some seriously sexually assaulted due to their sexual orientation – or perceived sexual orientation. This has resulted in emotional trauma and a negative impact on mental health and wellbeing for many female veterans who served under the gay ban.

The WRAC Association has recognised the historic hurt caused by the gay ban and have publicly affirmed their commitment to inclusion and restoration. Following the recommendations of Lord Etherton's Independent Review (2003), they have restored berets and cap badges to women dismissed under the ban - via touching, meaningful ceremonies, bringing visibility, validation and healing to a forgotten generation.

"I never imagined this day would come. It's beyond my wildest dreams. I now feel accepted and no longer ashamed of who I am." – WRAC veteran

"The trust placed in us by these veterans as they return to the family after so many years is something we feel very keenly. It is truly our honour and privilege to support these veterans as they come back to the family they should never have lost." – CEO WRAC Association: The Servicewomen's Charity, Paula Rogers

The next steps have demonstrated the remarkable outcomes of this process. All of the women who attended these ceremonies are now members of the WRAC Association, and many have gone on to attend other events and march proudly alongside their peers during Remembrance parades, feeling a full part of this unique sisterhood once more.



LGBT+

For the Service provider

Fighting with Pride – Pride in Veterans Standard
www.fightingwithpride.org.uk/pride-in-veterans-standard

Lord Etherton's Independent Review
lgbtveterans.independent-review.uk/reports/final-report
www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-7x4dEuMyQh

Support for the Veteran

Government support www.gov.uk/government/collections/lgbt-veterans-support-and-next-steps

Fighting with Pride www.fightingwithpride.org.uk/get-support

Operation Equality lgbt.foundation/help/operation-equality-supporting-lgbtq-veterans-and-armed-forces

Wellbeing Support and Opportunities for Recovery for the Veteran

Royal British Legion LGBTQ+ Branch branches.britishlegion.org.uk/branches/lgbtqa

Royal British Legion Recovery Services www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-support/how-we-help/recovery-services

Royal Air Forces Association Finding it Tough Course
findingittough.rafa.org.uk

Clip from Good Morning Britain:
[LGBT Veterans Refuse to Wear Badge](#)

NOTE - These links were correct at the time of publication, but may be subject to change. These services and organisations are not endorsed or quality assured by FVTP or any of its funders/partners. However you may find them useful for further information.



REMEMBER

You do not have to be/shouldn't be the expert in everything!! Find out who your local experts are to provide the best support to female veterans, whilst maintaining your professional boundaries. Use these sections as extra guides when needed

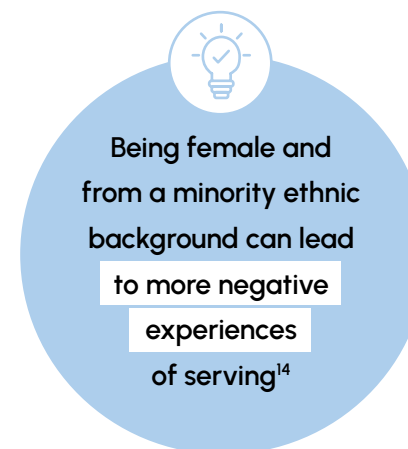
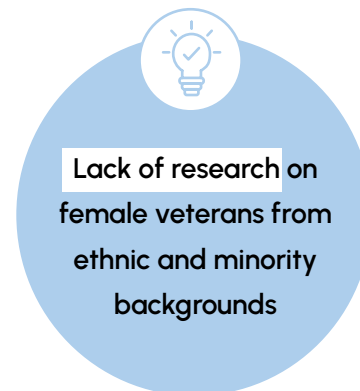
8

ETHNIC DIVERSITY

There is a significant lack of research into the specific needs and lived experiences of female veterans from ethnic minority backgrounds. Although individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds comprise just over 10% of the UK's serving armed forces personnel, sex-disaggregated data is not currently available. However from the research and consultation we have undertaken, the following has been established as good practice:

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Review your equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policies to reflect emerging evidence, lived experiences, and evolving best practice.
- Understand and raise awareness of the specific needs and experiences of female veterans from ethnic minority backgrounds within your organisation
- Use imagery, messaging, and campaigns that visibly reflect ethnically diverse women and are co-designed by those with lived experience, avoiding tokenism
- If appropriate, undertake training or structured dialogue to identify, challenge, and unlearn stereotypes and biases, particularly those relating to race, gender, and military identity
- Recognise cultural diversity among female veterans and tailor approaches accordingly
- Understand that many female veterans from ethnic minorities are more likely than their white counterparts to practice a faith. Respect and accommodate religious and spiritual needs where possible
- Be aware of the immigration challenges faced by Commonwealth female veterans, including barriers to securing Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)
- Understand that female veterans without indefinite leave to remain (ILR) may be at heightened risk of exploitation, including modern slavery, and have safeguarding measures in place
- Actively integrate considerations of culture, religion, race, and ethnicity into safeguarding protocols for female veterans, ensuring culturally competent and trauma-informed care



¹⁴ Edwards, Wright and Honor, No Man's Land 2. (Dudley: Salute Her UK, 2022). 3.



REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Service provider: Royal British Legion

At the Royal British Legion, we believe in fairly and authentically representing the diverse communities we serve. Our visual communications—whether for fundraising, social media, or marketing—reflect the real people who rely on our services, ensuring everyone in the armed forces community feels seen and valued.

How We Do It

We collaborate closely with our Staff Networks, who help provide a platform for individuals from underrepresented groups. Their insights ensure our imagery is genuine, avoiding tokenism by embedding diversity year-round—not just during awareness moments.

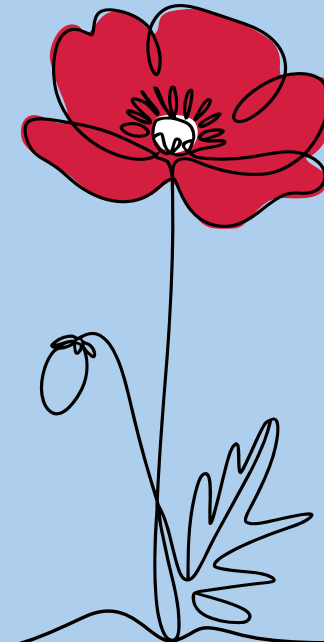
For example:

- At the Invictus Games, we celebrated Team UK's Fijian, Nigerian, and Caribbean competitors, proudly supporting their journeys.
- To promote our Fields of Remembrance, we invited members of our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity Staff Network to participate in a photoshoot, fostering inclusivity in Remembrance spaces to those inside and outside of the organisation.

Why It Matters

Visibility builds trust and belonging—especially for marginalised groups. But we also recognise the risks: public content can sometimes attract harmful comments. That's why we:

- Safeguard those featured, offering guidance and warnings upfront.
- Respond with care, protecting individuals while standing firm against ignorance.





ETHNIC DIVERSITY

For the service provider

Race Equality Matters is a UK collaboration of organisations wanting to achieve race equality in the workplace. They offer training and workshops. www.raceequalitymatters.com

British West India Regiments Heritage Trust www.bwirht.org

Why Are West Indians in this Country?

www.whyarewestindians.co.uk

Understanding Microaggressions <https://hbr.org/2022/05/recognizing-and-responding-to-microaggressions-at-work>

Slavery in the UK

www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/slavery-uk

Applying for indefinite leave to remain (armed forces community)

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-indefinite-leave-to-remain-armed-forces#:~:text=You%20may%20be%20able%20apply,benefits%20if%20you're%20eligible.>

For the Veteran

Royal Commonwealth Ex Services League

www.commonwealthveterans.org.uk

Communities Fiji Britain www.cfb.org.uk/about-us

Commonwealth Veterans & Families Support

Group (Facebook) www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100093983030682&mibextid=ZbWKwL

Maramba (Fijian Women's Alliance)

www.maramaalliance.com

NOTE - These links were correct at the time of publication, but may be subject to change. These services and organisations are not endorsed or quality assured by FVTP or any of its funders/partners. However you may find them useful for further information.



REMEMBER

You do not have to be/shouldn't be the expert in everything!! Find out who your local experts are to provide the best support to female veterans, whilst maintaining your professional boundaries. Use these sections as extra guides when needed

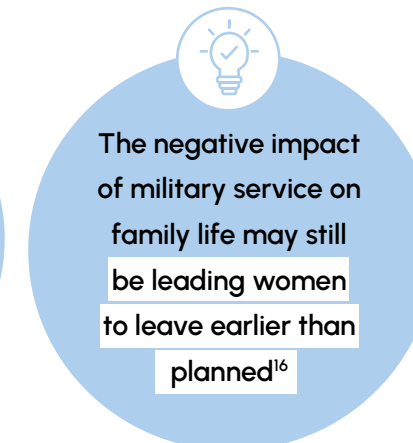
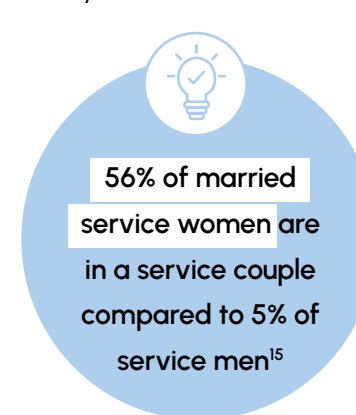
9

FAMILY LIFE

Many female veterans will have families and caring responsibilities. They may have serving partners, children or caring for other family members, all of which need taking into account when offering support. This section also covers issues of bereavement and what support exists or is needed for female veterans who may be facing the loss of a partner, especially if they were serving at the time of their death.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Be aware of the disproportionate impact of caring responsibilities on female veterans (including as a reason for leaving) and their ability to access veteran support
- Recognise that caring is a positive choice for many women, and provide appropriate support for that decision
- Understand that caring duties can be for children, or other family members or friends such as elderly relatives, or a veteran spouse with complex physical and/or mental health conditions.
- Understand that moving into a caring role straight from transition from the forces means the individual is at risk of loneliness and isolation
- Work collaboratively with existing services and organisations to help women navigate services and systems
- If providing support, think about arranging it on weekends so people don't have to take time off work
- Identify local and national support services that you can signpost to if appropriate, particularly for bereavement. For bereavement support services remember the whole family i.e. children too



¹⁵ House of Commons Defence Committee, Protecting those who protect us, 38.

¹⁶ Godier-McBard, Gillin and Fossey, We Also Served, 61.



EMPOWERING FAMILIES LIVING WITH MS.

Service provider: Mutual Support

Mutual Support is a vital lifeline for veterans diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), or supporting a loved one with MS. The 1200 strong group (over 100 of which are female veterans living with MS – and even more are female veterans supporting a partner with MS) offers a uniquely understanding and inclusive network shaped by shared military experience and was founded to address the specific challenges faced by military personnel with MS, from deployments, to medical discharges, applying for benefits and beyond.

What sets Mutual Support apart is its commitment to the whole family. Its fully funded Respite and Wellbeing Weekends are carefully designed to be family-friendly, with dedicated sessions for children, partners, and the individual

living with MS. These weekends not only provide vital information and therapeutic support but also foster a sense of military camaraderie and normality, especially important for those adjusting to life post-service.

Sessions led by professionals give space for children and carers to share experiences and gain confidence, as seen when one young member returned to school and was recognised for his volunteer work. Moments like this illustrate the transformative power of being part of a supportive community; and one that doesn't require members to be out of pocket by sourcing childcare.

Run entirely by volunteers who live with MS themselves, Mutual Support offers empathy, practical assistance, and reassurance. For women navigating both their diagnosis and the unique transitions of military life, this support network is not just helpful—it's empowering, inclusive, and life-affirming.

Mutual Support was presented the 'Family Values' Soldiering on Award in 2023.



FAMILY LIFE

For the service provider:

Carers UK <https://carers.org/>

For the veteran:

Carer's Allowance <https://www.gov.uk/carers-allowance>

Children's Disability Living Allowance <https://www.gov.uk/disability-living-allowance-children>

Navy Families Federation <https://nff.org.uk/>

RAF Families Federation <https://www.raf-ff.org.uk/>

Army Families Federation <https://aff.org.uk/>

Kids supports those with children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities.

<https://www.kids.org.uk/what-we-do/>

For the families:

Beyond the Wire supports those affected by bereavement within the armed forces community. <https://beyondthewire.org.uk/contact-us/>

Scotty's Little Soldiers support bereaved military children.

<https://www.scottyslittlesoldiers.co.uk/>

The Ripple Pond support the adult family members of WIS veterans and SP. <https://www.theripplepond.org/>

Reading Force keeps forces families (both veterans and SP) connected through sharing stories, reading resources and activities. <https://www.readingforce.org.uk/>

Little Troopers support children of those still serving in the armed forces by providing resources – we note many female veterans become dependants upon exiting Service.

<https://www.littletroopers.net/>

Forces Children's Trust support those whose parent has died or sustained life-changing injuries whilst serving, with bereavement counselling, holidays, expeditions and more.

<https://forceschildrenstrust.org.uk/>

Carers UK <https://www.carersuk.org/>

Naval Children's Charity

<https://www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk/>

NOTE - These links were correct at the time of publication, but may be subject to change. These services and organisations are not endorsed or quality assured by FVTP or any of its funders/partners. However you may find them useful for further information.



REMEMBER

You do not have to be/shouldn't be the expert in everything!! Find out who your local experts are to provide the best support to female veterans, whilst maintaining your professional boundaries. Use these sections as extra guides when needed

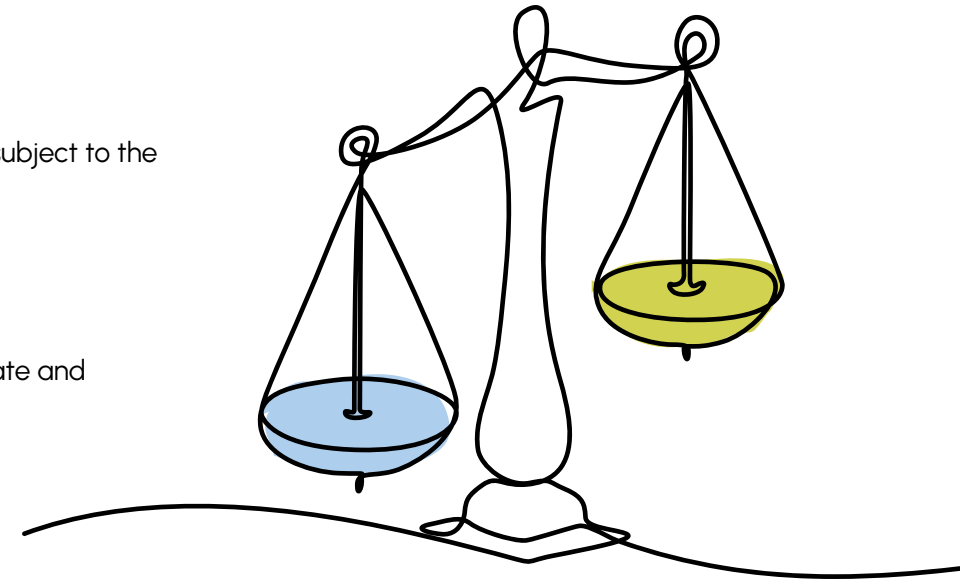
10

THE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND THE LAW

The veteran status of women in the justice system often goes unrecognised and hence their specific needs missed. The research has repeated the importance of striving for visibility for female veterans in the justice system to mobilise the resources and support tailored to address their needs.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- Ask all women: 'Have you ever served in the UK Armed Forces?'
- Be aware that the majority of female veterans in the justice system may not be in custody, but may still be subject to the justice system
- Have an awareness of the differences between military justice system and the civilian justice system
- Professionals who have the right experience.
- Where appropriate, be aware of and understand the 4 primary pathways to compensation and if appropriate and relevant, signpost to experts for advice and support
 - Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS)
 - Claims through the civil courts for negligence.
 - Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme (CICA).
 - War Pension Scheme
- Be aware of the difficulty of navigating these compensation pathways, due to understanding the criteria and the use of complex language and terminology. It is essential to ensure that early advice in all legal processes is gained from professionals who have the right experience.





Op NOVA is the NHS England support service for veterans in the justice system. It provides free support for all veterans regardless of rank, service length or reason for leaving.

Op NOVA understands that many female veterans feel reluctant to disclose their service. Some don't even see themselves as a 'veteran'. Always ask if someone has served in HM Armed Forces and explain that support is available.

For veterans such as Carla, it can be life-changing and life-saving.

Carla's Op NOVA Story:

"I thrived in the military and left as an officer with a stellar track record. No one expected me to struggle. In reality, my world shrank. I lost my identity, purpose, income and independence. I spiralled into a destructive relationship and alcoholism. Looking back, I think my intelligence, perseverance and tolerance -

assets that had served me so well in the military, bound me tighter to my problems. I was sinking but functioning. I felt trapped and lost.

My arrest was my turning point. I was given a leaflet for Op NOVA. I called, and within 24 hours, my road to recovery began. My Op NOVA caseworker, was a former police officer with experience in addiction and domestic abuse. She saved my life. I'm now separated from my partner, sober and taking my next steps in life."

Carla is not alone in her experience.

Always ask if someone has served in the Armed Forces.

Always offer an Op NOVA referral: 0800 917 7299

NOTE: Op NOVA is only available in England. Alternative option below.

Op NOVA is delivered by the Forces Employment Charity. FEC also support veterans in Wales (NOVA Wales) and Scotland (NOVA Scotland). The referral process/contact info is the same for all three services.



THE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND THE LAW

For the service provider

Enhance+ Training for people working with women veterans
<https://veterans.training/>

Creating Future Opportunities for Offenders from the Armed Forces Community <https://www.creatingfutureopportunities.gov.uk/armed-forces-covenant/>

Military Corrective Training Centre provides corrective training for SP sentenced to periods of detention. <https://www.army.mod.uk/learn-and-explore/about-the-army/corps-regiments-and-units/adjutant-generals-corps/provost-branch/military-provost-staff/military-corrective-training-centre/>

For the veteran

Fair Chance Business Alliance enables employers to engage working age adults with criminal records. <https://fairchancealliance.co.uk/>

Bridge of Hope Careers helps those who are overlooked for

employment due to their identity or history – including veterans, those with previous homelessness and those with a criminal record. <https://www.bridgeofhope.careers/support-centre>

Op NOVA supports veterans in the Justice System
<https://www.forcesemployment.org.uk/programmes/op-nova/>

SSAFA supports veterans in the Criminal Justice System and their families, including financial support and travel assistance as well as practical and emotional support. <https://www.ssafa.org.uk/get-help/veterans-in-the-criminal-justice-system/>

Government <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/getting-help-with-criminal-justice-issues-as-a-veteran>

War Pension Scheme <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/war-pension-scheme-wps>

Armed Forces Compensation Scheme <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/armed-forces-compensation-scheme-afcs>

DEVOLVED GOVERNMENTS

The Female Veterans’ Transformation Programme covers the whole of the UK and therefore must include the work and needs of female veterans in the Devolved governments (DGs). Within the DG’s service provision varies in line with local needs and the different ways Health & Care services are governed. It is important that these differences are noted.

- The DG’s are governed in a different way and have their own Veterans’ Commissioner, deliver support services in a different way and are guided by slightly different policies – especially in Northern Ireland.
- Whilst provision exists within Scotland and Wales, this is different to examples such as Op COURAGE which is only NHS Wales.
- Most of the research conducted covers the whole of the UK. However it does not often break down the needs of women and can feel very England-centric.

WALES

The Welsh Senedd has devolved powers for health and social care, setting the Health Care Strategy delivered by NHS Wales. There are seven Local Health Boards, three NHS Trusts and two Special Health Authorities. Veterans are supported via Veterans NHS Wales, which is based in Primary Care to support the Armed Forces Community However Veterans NHS Wales focuses only on service attributable mental health issues (www.veteranswales.co.uk). Wales also offers support to veterans who suffered physical injury as a result of service, through the Veterans Trauma Network (www.veteranswales.co.uk/trauma-clinic). This means that support services for veterans will be delivered differently for people in Wales and this needs to be taken into account when reviewing the future of service provision i.e. not assuming NHSE Veteran provision is available in the same way.

The UK Census does collect information on veterans in Wales and data can be broken down to review Wales-specific information. According to the 2021 census there were 15,952 female veterans in Wales across all age groups but with the highest percentage being in the 65-74 age group <https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/office.for.veterans.affairs/viz/2024-07-29VeteransDataDashboardv2final/Story1>

Further information can be found via the Female Veterans’ Alliance who have conducted various focus groups in Wales, the finding can be found here www.caerphillyveteranshub.org

For more information, particularly for those settling in Wales, go to the Welsh Government "Welcome to Wales" guide: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-06/welcome-to-wales.pdf>

Datganiad o Angen

Yr hyn mae'r dystiolaeth yn ei ddawed wrthym am anghenion cyn-filwyr benywaidd

HUNANIAETH

Yn 2021, oed ym 65 ym 74 ym 75 ym 76 ym 77 ym 78 ym 79 ym 80 ym 81 ym 82 ym 83 ym 84 ym 85 ym 86 ym 87 ym 88 ym 89 ym 90 ym 91 ym 92 ym 93 ym 94 ym 95 ym 96 ym 97 ym 98 ym 99 ym 100

MYNEDIAD AT WASANAETHAU

Yn 2021, oed ym 65 ym 74 ym 75 ym 76 ym 77 ym 78 ym 79 ym 80 ym 81 ym 82 ym 83 ym 84 ym 85 ym 86 ym 87 ym 88 ym 89 ym 90 ym 91 ym 92 ym 93 ym 94 ym 95 ym 96 ym 97 ym 98 ym 99 ym 100

BWLIO, GWAHANIAETHU, AFLONYDDU AC YMDODDADU RHYNGOL, AMHURIOOL YN CYNNWYS YMOSSO A THREISIO

Yn 2021, oed ym 65 ym 74 ym 75 ym 76 ym 77 ym 78 ym 79 ym 80 ym 81 ym 82 ym 83 ym 84 ym 85 ym 86 ym 87 ym 88 ym 89 ym 90 ym 91 ym 92 ym 93 ym 94 ym 95 ym 96 ym 97 ym 98 ym 99 ym 100

DRWGODYBIAETH AC ANAF MDOESOL

Yn 2021, oed ym 65 ym 74 ym 75 ym 76 ym 77 ym 78 ym 79 ym 80 ym 81 ym 82 ym 83 ym 84 ym 85 ym 86 ym 87 ym 88 ym 89 ym 90 ym 91 ym 92 ym 93 ym 94 ym 95 ym 96 ym 97 ym 98 ym 99 ym 100

GADDELL Y LLUOEDD ARFROG, CYFLOGAETH A CHYLLID

Yn 2021, oed ym 65 ym 74 ym 75 ym 76 ym 77 ym 78 ym 79 ym 80 ym 81 ym 82 ym 83 ym 84 ym 85 ym 86 ym 87 ym 88 ym 89 ym 90 ym 91 ym 92 ym 93 ym 94 ym 95 ym 96 ym 97 ym 98 ym 99 ym 100

MEYSYDD LLE NAD GŶS LLAWER O DYSTOLAETH

Yn 2021, oed ym 65 ym 74 ym 75 ym 76 ym 77 ym 78 ym 79 ym 80 ym 81 ym 82 ym 83 ym 84 ym 85 ym 86 ym 87 ym 88 ym 89 ym 90 ym 91 ym 92 ym 93 ym 94 ym 95 ym 96 ym 97 ym 98 ym 99 ym 100

BETH SY'N DDA YM MARN CYN-FILWYR BENYWAIDD

Yn 2021, oed ym 65 ym 74 ym 75 ym 76 ym 77 ym 78 ym 79 ym 80 ym 81 ym 82 ym 83 ym 84 ym 85 ym 86 ym 87 ym 88 ym 89 ym 90 ym 91 ym 92 ym 93 ym 94 ym 95 ym 96 ym 97 ym 98 ym 99 ym 100

RHESTR WIRIO O GYFER GWASANAETHAU A SEFYDLIAETH

Yn 2021, oed ym 65 ym 74 ym 75 ym 76 ym 77 ym 78 ym 79 ym 80 ym 81 ym 82 ym 83 ym 84 ym 85 ym 86 ym 87 ym 88 ym 89 ym 90 ym 91 ym 92 ym 93 ym 94 ym 95 ym 96 ym 97 ym 98 ym 99 ym 100

CYDNABYDDIAETH

Yn 2021, oed ym 65 ym 74 ym 75 ym 76 ym 77 ym 78 ym 79 ym 80 ym 81 ym 82 ym 83 ym 84 ym 85 ym 86 ym 87 ym 88 ym 89 ym 90 ym 91 ym 92 ym 93 ym 94 ym 95 ym 96 ym 97 ym 98 ym 99 ym 100

AMRYWIAETH

Yn 2021, oed ym 65 ym 74 ym 75 ym 76 ym 77 ym 78 ym 79 ym 80 ym 81 ym 82 ym 83 ym 84 ym 85 ym 86 ym 87 ym 88 ym 89 ym 90 ym 91 ym 92 ym 93 ym 94 ym 95 ym 96 ym 97 ym 98 ym 99 ym 100

YMWYBYDDIAETH A CHYFATHREBU

Yn 2021, oed ym 65 ym 74 ym 75 ym 76 ym 77 ym 78 ym 79 ym 80 ym 81 ym 82 ym 83 ym 84 ym 85 ym 86 ym 87 ym 88 ym 89 ym 90 ym 91 ym 92 ym 93 ym 94 ym 95 ym 96 ym 97 ym 98 ym 99 ym 100

CYMORTH

Yn 2021, oed ym 65 ym 74 ym 75 ym 76 ym 77 ym 78 ym 79 ym 80 ym 81 ym 82 ym 83 ym 84 ym 85 ym 86 ym 87 ym 88 ym 89 ym 90 ym 91 ym 92 ym 93 ym 94 ym 95 ym 96 ym 97 ym 98 ym 99 ym 100

AMGYLCHEDD

Yn 2021, oed ym 65 ym 74 ym 75 ym 76 ym 77 ym 78 ym 79 ym 80 ym 81 ym 82 ym 83 ym 84 ym 85 ym 86 ym 87 ym 88 ym 89 ym 90 ym 91 ym 92 ym 93 ym 94 ym 95 ym 96 ym 97 ym 98 ym 99 ym 100

AR-LEIN

Yn 2021, oed ym 65 ym 74 ym 75 ym 76 ym 77 ym 78 ym 79 ym 80 ym 81 ym 82 ym 83 ym 84 ym 85 ym 86 ym 87 ym 88 ym 89 ym 90 ym 91 ym 92 ym 93 ym 94 ym 95 ym 96 ym 97 ym 98 ym 99 ym 100

Beth yw Cynghreirad?

Mae cynghreirad yn rhywun sy'n aros dros gynghreirad a gwisgoedd hysbectolau ddiagonol er nod ydydd yn seiliedu ar grŵp mewn chwrs a sefydlir. Er hyn gael ei anafu bendant ar gyn-filwyr benywaidd sy'n caelwyr cyn-filwyr benywaidd gellir ei gynhyrchu at weithgaredd gynnwys gwybodaeth. A llech chi hysbectol y person hon?

Pwy all fod yn Cynghreirad?

Unhysbectol, Dynion, menywod, cyn-filwyr, diwyddiaid, hyd yn oed yn yr ym gŵp. Fel menywod yn caelwyr menywod, mae cynghreirad yn bwynt.

Does dim ffrmiwla benodol, ond dyma 10 ffordd go iawn o dargos eich cefnogaeth:

1. Gwrandewch a Chredwch: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
2. Heriwch Rhywiol: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
3. Codwch Leisau: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
4. Cefnagwch Arweinyddiaeth: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
5. Ceiswch Ddeall y Gwahaniaethau: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
6. Byddwch yn fentor ac yn nodwyr: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
7. Moderneddych y Traddodiadau: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
8. Hyrwyddwch fannau diogel: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
9. Gofynnwch gwasyltynau i'ch hunan: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
10. Cofiwch: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.

Bod yn Gynghreirad

Dangos Empathi · Eirial · Sefyll o Blaid

Beth yw Cynghreirad?

Mae cynghreirad yn rhywun sy'n aros dros gynghreirad a gwisgoedd hysbectolau ddiagonol er nod ydydd yn seiliedu ar grŵp mewn chwrs a sefydlir. Er hyn gael ei anafu bendant ar gyn-filwyr benywaidd sy'n caelwyr cyn-filwyr benywaidd gellir ei gynhyrchu at weithgaredd gynnwys gwybodaeth. A llech chi hysbectol y person hon?

Pwy all fod yn Cynghreirad?

Unhysbectol, Dynion, menywod, cyn-filwyr, diwyddiaid, hyd yn oed yn yr ym gŵp. Fel menywod yn caelwyr menywod, mae cynghreirad yn bwynt.

Does dim ffrmiwla benodol, ond dyma 10 ffordd go iawn o dargos eich cefnogaeth:

1. Gwrandewch a Chredwch: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
2. Heriwch Rhywiol: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
3. Codwch Leisau: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
4. Cefnagwch Arweinyddiaeth: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
5. Ceiswch Ddeall y Gwahaniaethau: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
6. Byddwch yn fentor ac yn nodwyr: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
7. Moderneddych y Traddodiadau: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
8. Hyrwyddwch fannau diogel: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
9. Gofynnwch gwasyltynau i'ch hunan: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
10. Cofiwch: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.

Rhestr wirio cyfathrebiadau

Par o ffrwyd i ffordd yn gellir gellir gwasanaethu. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.

Penderfynwch beth rydych chi eiddo i gyn-filwyr benywaidd

1. Penderfynwch beth rydych chi eiddo i gyn-filwyr benywaidd: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
2. Cofiwch yn eiddo i gyn-filwyr benywaidd: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
3. Byddwch yn gwlid i'ch eiddo i gyn-filwyr benywaidd: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
4. Penderfynwch beth rydych chi eiddo i gyn-filwyr benywaidd: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
5. Penderfynwch beth rydych chi eiddo i gyn-filwyr benywaidd: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
6. Penderfynwch beth rydych chi eiddo i gyn-filwyr benywaidd: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
7. Penderfynwch beth rydych chi eiddo i gyn-filwyr benywaidd: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
8. Penderfynwch beth rydych chi eiddo i gyn-filwyr benywaidd: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
9. Penderfynwch beth rydych chi eiddo i gyn-filwyr benywaidd: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.
10. Penderfynwch beth rydych chi eiddo i gyn-filwyr benywaidd: Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion. Mae cynghreirad yn ffordd o ddarparu cefnogaeth i ddynion a dynion.

Ni all y strategaeth na'r deunyddiau cyfathrebu gorau hyd yn oed

Our key infographics have been translated into Welsh, you can download them by clicking the download button above.

52

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

**Female Veterans Alliance (FVA), UK-wide CIC**

Female Veterans Alliance is a UK-national CIC delivering advocacy for female veterans including women-only retreats and practice-based workshops across all four nations. In Wales, FVA runs trauma-informed, peer-led sessions that blend outdoor wellbeing (guided walks, paddle boarding, mindfulness) with practical signposting. Warm handovers link participants to Welsh partners (Veterans NHS Wales, Local Authority Armed Forces Champions, Citizens Advice, RBL, pro-bono legal clinics), ensuring named contacts and clear next steps. The portable model complements mainstream provision and sustains engagement via peer-buddy follow-up, helping women veterans feel seen, safe and supported.

FVA is hosting the first ever daytime Glitter Ball in Wales, a women-only, community-building event designed for accessibility (daytime scheduling, affordable travel, caring commitments) so no one leaves without a supportive network and someone who truly “gets” them.



SCOTLAND

The Scottish Parliament makes laws on devolved matters and scrutinises the activities and policies of the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government is committed to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant. Scottish Local Authorities and NHS Boards are signatories to the Armed Forces Covenant.

According to the 2021 census, there are currently 20,573 female veterans in Scotland across all age groups with the highest percentage in the 80+ age group.

The Scottish Government has responsibility for the policy areas that are devolved from Westminster. This includes: the economy, education, health, justice, rural affairs, housing, environment, equal opportunities, consumer advocacy and advice, transport and taxation.

Health: there are 14 geographical health boards and each has a nominated Armed Forces and Veterans Champion. Furthermore there are national Health Boards such as NHS 24 and the Scottish Ambulance Service. In addition, the local planning and delivery of social care is currently the responsibility of 30 Integration Joint Boards (IJBs) – partnerships between the local NHS board and council – as well as one long-standing 'lead agency arrangement' in Highland where the two split services. Scotland has Armed Forces and Veterans Champions in every NHS Health Board and offers dedicated provision around mental and some physical health conditions.

There are some veteran specific support services in Scotland: five health boards (Ayrshire and Arran, Borders, Fife, Lanarkshire and Tayside) have Veterans First Point mental health and wellbeing services (co-funded by the Scottish Government); Greater Glasgow and Clyde has a Veterans Support Service in partnership with DMWS, SSAFA and GP Practices. DMWS is embedded in hospital services in

some Health Boards. (Fife, Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Lanarkshire, Lothian and Tayside)

The Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (SARCS) in Scotland provides essential healthcare and support for individuals who have experienced sexual assault. A dedicated NHS service, it offers a range of support services and is available for those who may not be ready to report to the police or who wish to seek medical help without making an immediate report.

The Scotland wide Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Pathway will provide a consistent and more accessible system of mental health support for veterans across Scotland.

Implementation of a Scottish Veterans In-Service Injury Network is has now been launched which will have some parallels with OP RESTORE.

The emergency services in Scotland have nominated Armed Forces and Veterans Champions.

Local Authorities: Scotland has 32 Local Authorities, each with a nominated Armed Forces and Veterans Champion. Among other things, they have responsibilities for education, housing, social care (via Integration Joint Boards) and Justice Social Work (in place of a nationwide probation system).

Housing: Housing and homeless legislation in Scotland differs to that of the rest of the UK. Notably there is no 'local connection' requirement for homeless people to receive support from a Local Authority. The Housing (Scotland) Bill is in passage through the Scottish Parliament. It will introduce an 'ask and act' duty on social landlords and bodies, such as health boards and the police, to ask about a person's housing situation and act to avoid them becoming homeless wherever possible. It also reforms provision for people threatened with



homelessness up to six months ahead and includes provisions for tenants experiencing domestic abuse.

Implementation of the Scottish Veterans Homelessness Prevention Pathway is underway with joint action between the Scottish Government, military charities and Local Authorities.

Justice: Everyone who is arrested by Police Scotland is asked whether they have served in the UK Armed Forces. The same question is asked on reception into prison custody, however Justice Social Work (equivalent to probation services) do not routinely identify veteran status. HMP Stirling is Scotland's national facility for remand and convicted young and adult women. Data from the Scottish Prison Service indicates that the number of veteran women in prison in Scotland is usually in low single figures. Women are more likely to receive non-custodial disposals (where there is little identification of veterans).

Social Security: While the UK DWP delivers out of work benefits, Social Security Scotland delivers a range of devolved benefits that differ from the rest of the UK. This includes benefits for people on low incomes, disabled people, carers, young people entering the workplace and help for people to heat their homes.

Additional support for Scotland

Safe Spaces Guidance

Trauma informed practice toolkit - www.gov.scot/publications/trauma-informed-practice-toolkit-scotland/

Community Support & social prescribing

[Scottish Community Link Worker Network](#)



Scottish Social Prescribing Network - SSPN

Gambling Harms

RCA Trust – Gambling Support for Veterans, Battling the Odds

LGBT+

Support for Older LGBT+ Veterans in Scotland

Scotland specific services include:

Army Benevolent Fund Scotland <https://armybenevolentfund.org/regions/scotland/>

Age Scotland Unforgotten Forces <https://www.agescotland.org.uk/how-we-help/ex-armed-forces/unforgotten-forces>

Bravehound <https://www.bravehound.co.uk/>

CAPS Veterans Collective Advocacy <https://capsadvocacy.org/collective-advocacy/veterans-collective-advocacy/>

Erskine Ears2Hear <https://www.erskine.org.uk/news/ears-2-hear-at-erskine-activity-centre>

Erskine <https://www.erskine.org.uk/>

Forces Children Scotland <https://forceschildrenscotland.org.uk/>

Glasgow Helping Heroes (SSAFA) <https://www.ssafa.org.uk/get-help/glasgow-helping-heroes/our-projects/>

Housing Options Scotland (Military Matters) <https://housingoptionsscotland.org.uk/services/>

Lothians Veterans Centre <https://www.lvc.scot/>

Nova Scotland <https://www.forcesemployment.org.uk/programmes/nova-scotland/>

Op Cairngorms <https://opcairngorms.org/>

Poppyscotland <https://www.poppyscotland.org.uk/>

Royal British Legion Scotland <https://www.legionscotland.org.uk/>

SACRO Veterans Mentoring Service <https://www.sacro.org.uk/services/justice/mentoring>

Scottish Action for Mental Health (SAMH) <https://www.samh.org.uk/>

Scottish Veterans Residences <https://www.svronline.org/>

Scotland's Veterans Wellbeing Alliance <https://svwa.org.uk/>

Scottish Veterans Commissioner
<https://www.scottishveteranscommissioner.org/>

Shared Parenting Scotland <https://www.sharedparenting.scot/>

Sight Scotland Veterans <https://sightscotland.org.uk/veterans/how-we-can-help/our-centres/linburn-centre>

Thistle Foundation <https://www.thistle.org.uk/support-for-veterans>

Vector 24 <https://vector24.co.uk/>

Veterans Chaplaincy Scotland <https://vcscotland.org/>

Veterans Housing Scotland <https://www.vhscot.org.uk/>

Veterans Scotland <https://veteransscotland.org.uk/>

Veterans Tribe Scotland <https://www.veterantribescotland.co.uk/>

Community Veterans Support: provision of dedicated support for all veterans in Scotland, based in Glasgow <https://www.communityveteranssupport.org.uk/>

Female Veterans' Scotland Facebook Group. A dedicated social media page for female veterans living in Scotland <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1120826640143773/>

Stand Easy Productions, a community theatre company and charity based in Scotland, we use creative activities to improve the well-being and resilience of our participants, increase confidence and bring people together to have fun <https://www.standeasyproductions.org/>

NOTE - These links were correct at the time of publication, but may be subject to change. These services and organisations are not endorsed or quality assured by FVTP or any of its funders/partners. However you may find them useful for further information.





Lothians Veterans Centre – Female Veterans Work

We are a drop-in centre in Dalkeith, just outside Edinburgh, that provides life-changing and lifesaving, holistic, person-centred advice and support to veterans and families in the Lothians and beyond for a wide range of issues, not least challenges associated with service and transition into civilian life particularly amongst those who have suffered and/or been disadvantaged as a result of service. We ensure our support is accessible to everyone in the Veterans' Community including underrepresented groups such as female veterans as we recognise that female veterans are less likely to access support than their male counterparts or identify as veterans. In order to ensure our support is attractive to female veterans, we facilitate regular female veterans' drop-ins where ex-servicewomen can come together in a safe, protected, welcoming space to meet other ex-servicewomen and access a gateway for them to get any advice and support they may need from us and/or our partner organisations. We also facilitate other female veterans' events and activities such as networking and social events, and outdoor and sporting event/activities. The specific and unique

needs of female veterans are built into the design and delivery of our support and that support is borne out of feedback from female veterans so they can benefit from the same opportunities as male veterans and are no longer marginalised or inhibited from accessing support due to issues such as gender and/or sexual orientation. To overcome barriers, we also provide transport or costs towards transport, women can bring children if they have no childcare and we provide food and drinks.

Through our drop-in centre, female veterans can access a Veterans' Community where they can meet likeminded people with shared experiences to form connections and regain a sense of identity and belonging. They also have access to things such as practical and peer support; 1:1 advice and support for health and wellbeing, mental health, social isolation, housing/homelessness, employment, education/training, volunteering, benefits and finances; a Warm Hub offering free Wi-Fi, TV, digital access, hot drinks and food; free food and toiletry parcels; hardship payments for those in crisis; free social and sporting activities, events and trips; a weekly Bacon Roll Morning; and a weekly social event for Veterans and families aged 50+. We are also a proactive partner in Scotland's Veterans Wellbeing Alliance which is a consortium of organisations that support veterans throughout Scotland to live well and thrive.

We are seeing more and more female veterans throughout Scotland engaging with us as they find safety, understanding, empathy, compassion and a sense of belonging in our female-only spaces and because there are other areas in Scotland that have little to no support for them. With that in mind, we remain committed to working with other organisations to share best practice on how to support the specific needs of female veterans, ensuring that support is sustainable to combat the inequalities in health and social care that have affected female veterans for so long.

NORTHERN IRELAND

The Northern Ireland Assembly were given devolved powers as part of the Good Friday Agreement. The Department of Health has overall responsibility for health and social care and it is delivered through the Health and Social Care Board which is made up of five Health Trusts. However, there are current issues with exceptionally long waiting lists in Northern Ireland which affect the general population and in turn those veterans who we know are more prone to certain physical and mental health issues such as musculoskeletal injuries. "Available information suggests waiting list performance levels are significantly worse in Northern Ireland compared with the other UK regions."¹⁹

The prevailing political sensitivities of the Troubles make Northern Ireland a more complex environment to be a veteran with many still unwilling or unconfident to make known their veteran status for fear of retributions '...continuing issues female veterans in Northern Ireland face with disclosing their veteran status'²⁰ This brings further challenge to the provision for veterans in Northern Ireland. Nonetheless, 2023 saw the launch of the Veterans' Welfare Service (NI) which offers practical help, welfare advice and medical services for veterans of all three services, particularly around mental health and some physical health conditions (MSK, pain management etc). This MoD-delivered service is supplemented by the work of third sector organisations, especially the service charity sector, which offer veteran specific programmes of support not otherwise available through the statutory sector. The Northern Ireland Veterans' Health and Wellbeing Study explored the support services and experiences of veterans acknowledging the particular complexities of the issues faced by veteran in Northern Ireland but also recognising the need for more research with female veterans.²¹ Consequently there is an over-

reliance on the charity sector to offer support services for veterans in NI, which is often reliant on short-term funding and not sustainable.

The Northern Ireland Veterans Support Office (NIVSO) that opened in 2017, closed in June 2024 due to an evolution in service provision. The NIVSO was originally established at a time when veterans outside of the Home Service Regiments—Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR) and Royal Irish (Home Service), had limited access to dedicated welfare support services. Since then, significant developments have improved the landscape of veteran provision in Northern Ireland.

These include:

- The establishment of the Northern Ireland Veterans Commissioner's Office through the New Decade, New Approach agreement in 2020.
- The transition of the UDR and Royal Irish Aftercare Service to a tri-service model in October 2023, ensuring support is available to all veterans, regardless of service branch.
- The creation of a dedicated Northern Ireland post within the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) to promote and represent the interests of NI veterans at a UK level as of October 2024.
- As a result, veterans in Northern Ireland now benefit from a fairer, more inclusive, and balanced system of support, with consistent and accessible points of entry for assistance.

DMWS has recently completed delivery of an OVA-funded 18-month project, specifically aimed at supporting veterans on physical health waiting lists and navigating healthcare pathways. More funding has since been allocated through the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund for extended support services. While the NIVSO is no longer operational due to structural and evolutionary changes, its core mission

of identifying service gaps and coordinating enhanced capacity is now embedded across other existing structures.

The Veterans Commissioner for Northern Ireland continues to advocate for the needs and interests of all veterans living in Northern Ireland.

Further Resources for Northern Ireland

<https://www.nivco.co.uk/where-to-get-help/>

Veterans Welfare Service NI <https://aftercareservice.org/>

The Serving & Ex-Serving Women's Network – provides support for women in Northern Ireland <https://cw-ni.co.uk/>

Podcasts

Once a Warrior, Life Beyond the Uniform.

<https://www.nivco.co.uk/podcasts/>

YouTube Video

Breaking Barriers.- Jen Robinson, co-founder of the Serving and Ex-Serving Women's Network, who sat down with the Commissioner for a powerful and insightful conversation.

https://youtu.be/BkGTJekPg_0?si=YebAotuJ9ITSUiKc

19. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-67057748> The Audit Office Oct 2023

20. Moira Bailey, Rita Phillips and Zoe Morrison, Improving access to service charities for female veterans, Aberdeen: Robert Gordon University, 2023) 34

21. Cherie Armour, Emma Walker, Bethany Waterhouse-Bradley, Matthew Hall, Jana Ross, Northern Ireland Veterans Health and Wellbeing Study: Current and Future Needs of Veterans in Northern Ireland. (Coleraine: Ulster University, 2017).

WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE



The Serving and Ex Serving Women's Network in Northern Ireland

Inspired by our own journeys', at the end of 2022 a small group of ex-serving women came together to create the Serving and Ex Serving Women's Network in NI (also known as the SESWN). Our vision is to nurture a network that connects service women, currently serving or retired and living in Northern Ireland. Through connection and shared experience, we aim to build a support system that ensures that no service woman struggles alone within her personal or professional community.

In reality this means that we advocate, organise activity and host a monthly pop-up hub for serving and ex serving women across Northern Ireland. To find out more, join us on social media or to get in touch go to www.cw-ni.co.uk

MORE TRAINING AND CPD

We recognise that some services organisations or businesses may want/need to do additional training, education or continuous professional development (CPD) with regard to understanding female veterans. This section provides you with some links if you want to know more. From podcasts, to short films through to actual training, this is an overview of what is out there that might help.

TRAINING

Combat Stress

Via the Enhance Programme Combat Stress have developed three different training programmes, two of which are open to support services and organisations to help them learn more about female veterans. The resources are **FREE** and the first course is 15 minutes online guided learning, so completely accessible to any service organisation or business <https://veterans.training/>

Military Human Training

These training sessions provide all services, organisations and businesses with a detailed understanding of the armed forces, including military culture, ethos, values, sense of belonging and transition to civilian life. This training will also include a new module on female veterans, which will be launched in late in 2025 <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/courses/professional-and-short-courses/military-human/>. The course flyer can be found here [MH CPD Flyer link](#) and the link to the person centered approach here [MH CPD Person Centred Approach link](#)

VCHA NTEP The National Armed Forces Training and Education Programme (NAFTEP) is being delivered across England, with a dedicated VCHA trainer for each region. Our Regional Trainers play a vital role by working both within and beyond the NHS to improve care for the Armed Forces community.

CONFERENCES

The Centre for Military Women's Research (CMWR) hold a bi-annual conference, which looks at all elements of female military experience and shares the most recent research in this area. It is also a great networking and learning opportunity, hearing from experts in the field <https://www.centreformilitarywomensresearch.com/>

FILMS & PODCASTS

Legasee have a vast library of films of women who have served in the Women's Royal Army Corps (WRAC), covering all manner of subjects including historic terms of service, women who were trailblazers in their field and much more <https://www.legasee.org.uk/project/women-of-the-army-1949-92/>

For a good overview of the issues faced by female veterans, listen to Ali Brown on the RCGP Podcast. This is less than 30 minutes and gives a comprehensive overview for anyone who wants to know more <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/nhs-care-of-female-armed-forces-veterans/id1398882781?i=1000559472836>

Insert NHS Armed Forces Health Podcast

A six part series about how to access the range of NHS services available to the armed forces https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLM9SsyZesWUjMICd5AK4u_AIU5AEZ8LgAj

NOTE - These links were correct at the time of publication, but may be subject to change. These services and organisations are not endorsed or quality assured by FVTP or any of its funders/partners. However you may find them useful for further information.

DEFINITIONS

Service Leaver

A Service Leaver is defined as someone who is either transitioning out of or has already left HM armed forces.

Tri-service

Tri service means an organisation, service or provision that supports people from all 3 services – Army, Navy and RAF

Transition

Transitioning is the emotional, physical, and practical adjustment that members of the Armed Forces Community will go through when leaving service and living in civilian society.

Discharge

Termination of service from the Armed Forces. There are a variety of reasons people may leave: end of contract (time served), administrative (including discharge upon marriage or childbirth), redundancy, at the individual's request, medical, disciplinary (which previously included those charged for being homosexual under the 'gay ban').

Armed Forces Covenant Duty

The Armed Forces Covenant Duty is a legal obligation on certain public bodies to pay due regard to the Covenant principles when exercising certain functions.

PTSD

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a mental health condition caused by a traumatic experience.

Veteran

The Ministry of Defence defines a veteran as anyone who has served for at least one day in HM armed forces (Regular or Reserve), or Merchant Mariners who have served on legally defined military operations. This includes those who served in the Royal Navy, Army, Royal Air Force, or Royal Marines, as well as Merchant Navy personnel who supported military operations. It is also important to recognise that the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) are included within the Merchant Navy.

Social Prescribing

Social Prescribing connects people with non-medical support in their community to address social, emotional, and practical needs affecting their health and wellbeing.

Cobseo

Cobseo is the Confederation of Service Charities for England and Wales, which provides a single point of contact for interaction with Government, including local government and the Devolved Governments; with the Royal Household; with the private sector; and, of course, with other members of the armed forces community.

Veterans Scotland

Veterans Scotland is an association of over 90 organisations committed to enhancing the welfare and well-being of Scotland's veterans by coordinating support across areas like health, housing, employment, and remembrance.

Cisgender

A person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex registered for them at birth.

SP

Serving Personnel – those who are still serving in HM armed forces. Many female veterans may have a partner who is still serving.

WIS

Wounded, injured, or sick. Many veterans don't identify with the term disabled, instead preferring the term WIS.



HISTORIC TERMS OF SERVICE

What we all need to remember and why some women may not identify as 'veterans'

There are many reasons women don't identify as a veteran or why their military experience has not been a positive one, as the rest of this toolkit will discuss. However, it is also important to note that women's military service since the end of the Second World War has been impacted by the continued enforcement of four legislative decisions.

- The Marriage Bar repealed 1975²²
- Discharge for pregnancy which remained until 1992
- The Gay Ban repealed in January 2000²³
- The Ban on Women in Ground Close Combat lifted in 2018.

Whilst all of these bans have now been lifted, there are still a significant percentage of female veterans who have been affected and whose careers ended in an untimely and often unfair manner, alongside many of the other issues women still face today.

The research (taken from the FVTP Evidence Review) demonstrates that the female veteran experience is not the same for everyone and is influenced by a myriad of intersectional characteristics including ethnicity, religion, sexuality, age, class, rank, amongst others.

One of the specific ways this diversity of experience manifests is in relation to the way in which individual servicewomen were impacted by the various employment bans, resulting in servicewomen having to have abortions or leave if they became pregnant, and having to leave if they got married or were identified as LGBTQ+. -. The impact of these bans on wellbeing after service life is hugely significant for many women, affecting mental health with depression, anxiety, low

confidence and self-esteem with COBSEO attributing 'increased suicide rates found in older women veterans'²⁴ to 'the impact of bans on pregnancy and homosexuality'. Research with LGBTQ+ active-duty service members and veterans has identified 'poor mental health and wellbeing [...] including increased suicidality, substance use, poor physical health, vulnerability to sexual assault, and lack of emotional and social support'²⁵. Many women in the LGBTQ+ community also faced sexual assault which has gone unreported or unpunished due to the gay ban '...the Ban enabled male and sometimes female personnel...to commit sexual assaults and harassment...and escape disclosure by threatening to report the victim as a homosexual... the Ban itself was used as a means of blackmail against victims of predatory sexual conduct'.²⁶ Interestingly the recent LGBT Veterans' Independent Review (The Etherton Report)²⁷ received 59% of its responses from women (666), the only record of lived experience for this community. 44% of female respondents indicated they were forced or compelled to leave, which demonstrates that once again women are disproportionately affected by this issue.

22. Lauren Godier-McBard, Nicola Gillin and Matt Fossey, *We Also Served: The Health and Wellbeing of Female Veterans in the UK* (Chelmsford: Anglia Ruskin University, 2021), 19.

23. Alison Osborne and Gill McGill, *Lost and Found: The LGBT+ Veteran Community and the Impacts of the Gay Ban* (Newcastle: Northumbria University, 2023)

24. House of Commons Defence Committee, *Protecting those who protect us*, 72.

25. Osborne and McGill, *Lost and Found*.

26. LGBT Veterans Independent Review, *Final Report, Independent Review into the service and experience of LGBT veteran who served prior to 2000*, May 2023, 53

27. LGBT Veterans Independent Review, *Final Report, Independent Review into the service and experience of LGBT veteran who served prior to 2000*, May 2023, 21



LASTLY, OUR BIGGEST THANKS GO TO ALL
THE FEMALE VETERANS WHO HAVE SERVED
OUR COUNTRY AND HAVE GOT INVOLVED,
GAVE US THEIR VIEWS AND OPINIONS
AND HELPED SHAPE SOMETHING TRULY
TRANSFORMATIONAL FOR THE FUTURE



Thanks also go to the WRAC Association for hosting the programme