

**REPORT TO THE TRUST BOARD - PUBLIC**

**20 May 2021**

<b>Title</b>	Veterans Awareness Accreditation and ELFT commitment to the National Armed Forces Covenant Legislation.
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<b>Accountable Executive Director</b>	Dr Paul Gilluley, Chief Medical Officer

**Purpose of the report**

This report sets out the Trust wide approach to ensuring its services meet the unique needs of UK Armed Forces Veterans and their families through compliance with national standards set out by the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA).  
This will also ensure that the Trust meets the new legislative duty when the Armed Forces Bill 2020 is passed through Parliament.

**Summary of key issues**

- A need for a consistent, Trust wide approach to meeting the VCHA Standards and achieving and maintaining Veterans Aware Accreditation.
- Ability to demonstrate that the Trust have considered the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant when making decisions as outlined in the Armed Forces Bill 2020.
- Commitment to meet Gold Standard status with the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS).

**Strategic priorities this paper supports (please check box including brief statement)**

Improved population health outcomes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This proposal supports the Trusts commitment to improve health outcomes for Veterans and their families. This will also include providing employment and development opportunities.
Improved experience of care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Improved staff experience	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Improved value	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This will improve local population health outcomes and the experience of care provided to our Veterans. Staff will be informed and empowered to provide appropriate care

**Committees/meetings where this item has been considered**

Date	
26.04.21	Quality Assurance Committee

**Implications**

Equality Analysis	Positive. Adheres to the equality statements as outlined in the Armed Forces Covenant.
Risk and Assurance	Positive. Provides assurance and reduces risk of non- compliance to legislation and enables the organisation to evidence the improvements / developments.
Service User/Carer/Staff	Positive. Enables improved experience of employment and treatment for service users and staff.
Financial	Cost implications for supporting the employment of Veteran's Champions and sourcing appropriate training
Quality	Positive.

## **1. Introduction**

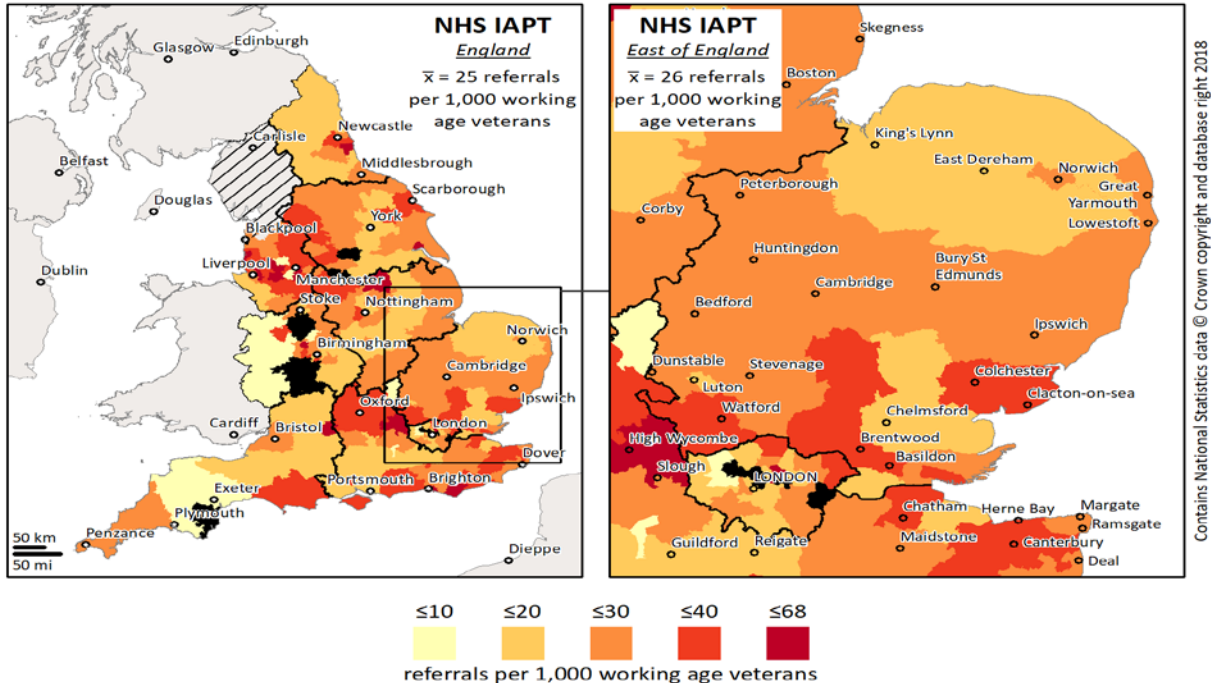
- a. A UK Armed Forces Veteran is defined as any individual aged 16+ who have previously served at least one day in the UK Armed Forces.
- b. In 2017 there were an estimated 2.4 million UK Armed forces Veterans in Great Britain making up an estimated 5% of households.
- c. The Armed Forces Covenant / Veterans Covenant sets out the relationship between the nation, the government and the armed forces. It recognises that the whole nation has a moral obligation to current and previous members of the armed forces and their families and it establishes how they should expect to be treated. *The Covenants 2 principles are; the armed forces community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens and should enjoy the same standard of, and access to, healthcare as that received by any other UK citizen in the area they live. Veterans receive their healthcare from the NHS, and should receive priority treatment where it relates to a condition which results from their service in the Armed Forces, subject to clinical need.*
- d. The Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA) was established following the implementation of the Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT) programme, which is now part of the NHS Improvement in partnership with the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital and the Chavasse Report.
- e. The VCHA is a group of healthcare providers who have volunteered to develop, share and drive the implementation of best practice that will improve the care of UK Armed Forces Veterans, in line with the commitments set out in the Armed Forces Covenant.
- f. ELFT made a commitment to join the VCHA and become a Veterans Aware Organisation. All Alliance members make a commitment to the two underlying principles of the Armed Forces Covenant.
- g. As a member of the VCHA the Trust must adhere to and provide evidence of compliance to the standards. Once accreditation is awarded the Trust will be recognised as 'Veteran Aware' and can display the Veteran Aware Kite mark.

## **2. Veteran Population Health Statistics**

- a. When staff leave the Armed Forces, their healthcare transfers from the military to the NHS.
- b. Many veterans report developing mental health problems after leaving service: such as difficulty in making the transition to civilian life, marital problems, and loss of family and social support networks. Younger veterans are at a high risk of suicide in the first two years after leaving service. Veterans are also vulnerable to social exclusion, homelessness and alcohol misuse (mentalhealth.org.uk / armed forces and mental health 2020).
- c. The Armed Forces Covenant Fund (2020) commissioned research into the needs of Veterans throughout the UK. The research looked at what services were being visited by Veterans on the Veterans Gateway online and mobile directory. During 2020, the Veterans' Gateway online and mobile directory of services attracted **20,523** individual searches for services (1278 classed as null).
- d. Results show that Mental Wellbeing (more explicitly accessing support for mental health issues and searching for a specific organisation) was the most searched domain followed by housing (homelessness), employment and finances.

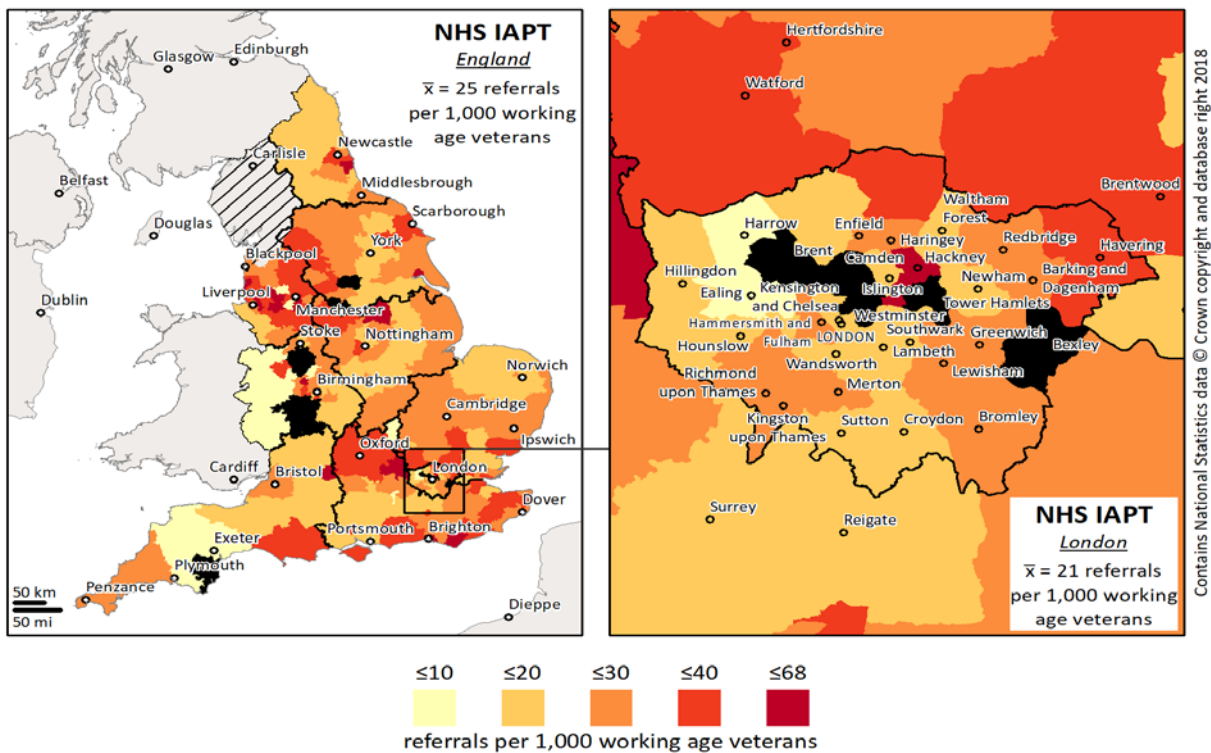
e. It must be noted that the data was collated during the Coronavirus Pandemic which may have influenced the particular areas of need.

The maps below shows the veterans' rates of access to mental health treatment for the NHS IAPT service (2017-18).



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### **3. Progress so far**

- a. The identification of designated Veterans Champions to lead on the implementation of the action plan. This must consist of both a clinical champion and a management champion who will work together and is referred to as a Champion Dyad.
- b. Dr Paul Gilluley is the designated Management lead and Jane Kelly the designated Clinical lead.
- c. In line with the Trusts commitment to co-production from the very beginning the ELFT Veterans Alliance group was established with the voice of Veterans and their families being central to the development of our action plan and development. List of members can be found in Appendix 1 which also includes both NHS and voluntary sector members.
- d. Signed commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.

### **4. ELFT as a Gold Standard Employer of Veterans/ Reservists and Cadets**

- a. Veterans are more than their CV. Veterans have a wide range of skills and experience which could make them ideal employees in the NHS, such as being goal orientated team players, performing well under pressure, help boost morale, have an incredible work ethic, are natural leaders and decision makers and being health and safety orientated
- b. The Trust commitment to supporting the Armed Forces / Veterans community as an employer.
  - The Trust has signed up to the national initiatives that support the employment of veterans and reservists in the NHS workforce
  - To ensure any HR policies reflect this commitment and that we have in place a process to monitor the number of veterans who apply for and recruited into posts within the Trust (viaTRAC).
  - To ensure that the Trust complies with the rights our staff who are reservists with regards to training/ mobilisation commitments.
  - ELFT have registered with Step into Health ([www.militarystepintohealth.nhs.uk](http://www.militarystepintohealth.nhs.uk)) who provides a dedicated pathway for the Armed forces community to access career opportunities within the NHS.
  - ELFT have registered with the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (DERS)(<https://gov.uk/government/publications/defence-employer-recognition>) The Trust Recruitment Working Party are working towards Gold Standard Accreditation with the DERS – more information in Appendix 2
  - The Trust have registered with REED who advertise and promote jobs/ posts open to the armed forces community / veterans.

### **5. ELFT as a Veterans Aware Organisation**

- a. Ensure that relevant staff in the Trust are trained and educated in the unique strengths and needs of Veterans. In ELFT this is being undertaken via the Veterans Alliance group and the Recovery Colleges. All awareness training is being coproduced from its design, delivery and evaluation with the armed forces communities and our partners.
- b. Raising awareness within the Trust and sharing key information about the armed forces community and what services are available. The development of a Communication Strategy and a Veterans Alliance Website.
- c. To ensure that all staff have access to the Forces Connect App and the Veterans Gateway App both nationally recognised digital platforms that show local and national available services across all life domains.

- d. Displaying our commitment to the public and encouraging people to make their veteran status known – ensuring that we record the demographic under additional personal information on RIO. Currently across all ELFT services that use RIO as their clinical information platform only 42 of our service user population are defined as a UK Veteran.

## **6. Improving the Care Pathways for Veterans**

- a. The NHS provides the following veterans mental health services:
  - Veterans Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS)
  - Veterans Mental Health Complex Treatment Service (CTS)
  - Veterans Mental Health High Intensity Service (HIS)
- b. For London Sites the above services are provided by Camden and Islington Mental Health Trust who are commissioned to provide Pan London TILS, CTS and the newly developed HIS service ([cim-tr.veterantilservice-lse@mhs.net](mailto:cim-tr.veterantilservice-lse@mhs.net)).
- c. For Bedford and Luton the above services are provided by Midlands and East Veterans Service – North Essex and East Anglia Hub ([mevs.mhm@nhs.net](mailto:mevs.mhm@nhs.net))
- d. ELFT has made a commitment to work in partnership with these services to ensure care pathways are seamless and robust, where a single assessment process can be adopted.

## **7. Benefits of gaining VCHA accreditation**

- a. Enhance the reputation of the Trust as being 'Veteran Aware' and complying with the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant.
- b. Enhancing the reputation of the Trust as an employer who meets the DERS Gold standard increasing our staff population with those with a greater skill base and experience.
- c. Meet the proposed legislation – Armed Forces Bill that is due before Parliament
- d. Improving both health outcomes and positive experience for our Veterans and their families
- e. Being part of the national body of VCHA organisations and having access to resources, training and promotional materials.

## Appendix 1: Members of ELFT Veterans Alliance Group

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Dr Paul Gilluley	Chief Medical Officer / Veterans Management Lead	ELFT
Jane Kelly	Clinical Lead for Recovery / Veterans	ELFT
Sheila O'Connell	Informatics lead / Lighthouse Manager	ELFT
Amy Bagshaw	Recovery College Manager Hackney	ELFT
Tony Isles	Recovery College Manager Luton	ELFT
Glenn Mitchell	Deputy Head of Communications and Engagement	ELFT
Simran Khinder	Recovery College Manager Bedford	ELFT
John Rowlands	Veteran	Bedford
Miriam Grover	Principal Cognitive Psychotherapist and Safeguarding Adults Manager for SPS	ELFT
Glynis Freeman	Veterans wife / Champion	Bedford
Emma la Blanc	Employability Consultant	The Poppy Factory London
Glenda Kundishora	Resourcing Manager	ELFT
Dr Uttom Chowdhury	Consultant Psychiatrist Dunstable CAMHS	ELFT
John Phillips	Co-ordinator Project Nova / Veteran	Project Nova Bedfordshire and Herefordshire
Leon Culloty	Trainee Psychologist / Veteran	ELFT
Sharon Dean	Veterans wife / Champion	Bedford
Claire Robertson	Senior Admin / Bedfordshire Community Health Services / Veterans Community	ELFT
Debbie Buck	Lead for Nurse Development Bedford	ELFT
Karen Weir	Operational Lead – Liaison and Diversion Scheme – Luton	ELFT
Keiron Coombs	Employability Consultant East of England	The Poppy Factory
Kanja Sandy	Temporary Staffing Manager / Veteran	ELFT
Anna-Marie Tipping	London Regional Lead – VCHA	Getting it Right First Time
Darryl Springer	General Manager – Specialist Addictions Service	ELFT
Susanna Fagg	Advice and Information Officer – South East Midlands Team	The British Legion
Carlos Santos	QI Advisor	ELFT
Steven Maguire	Advice and Information Officer – London	The British Legion
Sara Mcclurg	Senior Staff Nurse – Recovery College Bedford – Veterans Lead	ELFT
Penny Pope	Case Officer	The British Legion
Andrew Trathen	Consultant in Public Health Hackney	LBH

## **Appendix 2**

### **Defence Employment Recognition Scheme**

#### **About the scheme**

The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) encourages employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same. The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

#### **Bronze award**

- are self-nominated by employers who pledge to support the armed forces, including existing or prospective employees who are members of the community
- must have signed the Armed Forces Covenant
- promote being armed forces-friendly and are open to employing reservists, armed forces veterans (including the wounded, injured and sick), cadet instructors and military spouses/partners
- receive an electronic certificate and logos to display on their website, stationery and other collateral

#### **Silver award**

- must have signed the Armed Forces Covenant
- the employer must have already stated their intent to be supportive by using the ERS website to register at the Bronze level
- the employer must proactively demonstrate that service personnel/armed forces community are not unfairly disadvantaged as part of their recruiting and selection processes
- Employers should employ at least one individual from the AFC category that the nomination emphasises. For example, an employer nominated for support to the Reserves must employ at least one Reservist. In exceptional circumstances where there is outstanding generic support for the Armed Forces community and/or the size or business model of the organisation makes employment of such an individual impossible, the organisation can be considered for the award where they do not employ someone from the AFC category
- The employer must actively ensure that their workforce is aware of their positive policies towards defence people issues. For example, an employer nominated for support to the Reserves must have an internally publicised and positive HR policy on Reserves
- Within the context of Reserves the employer must have demonstrated support to mobilisations or have a framework in place. They must demonstrate support to training by providing at least 5 days' additional unpaid/paid leave (wherever possible not to Reservist employees' financial disadvantage)
- the employer must not have been the subject of any negative PR or media activity

#### **Gold award**

- Must have signed the Armed Forces Covenant
- Employers must have an existing relationship with their National Account Manager/REED/appropriate defence representative
- The employer must already be demonstrating support by holding a valid ERS Silver Award. Employers that do not hold a valid ERS Silver Award cannot progress to the Gold level
- The employer must proactively demonstrate their forces-friendly credentials as part of their recruiting and selection processes. Where possible, they should be engaged with [Career Transition Partnership](#) (CTP) in the recruitment of service leavers and have registered for the [Forces Families Jobs](#) (FFJ) portal

- Employers should employ at least one individual from the AFC category that the nomination emphasises. For example, an employer nominated for support to the Reserves must employ at least one Reservist. In exceptional circumstances where there is outstanding generic support for the Armed Forces community and/or the size or business model of the organisation makes employment of such an individual impossible, the organisation can be considered for the award where they do not employ someone from the AFC category
- The employer must actively ensure that their workforce is aware of their positive policies towards defence people issues. For example, an employer nominated for support to the Reserves must have an internally publicised and positive human resources policy on Reserves
- the employer must be an exemplar within their market sector, advocating support to defence people issues to partner organisations, suppliers and customers with tangible positive results
- Within the context of Reserves the employer must have demonstrated support to mobilisations or have a framework in place. They must provide at least 10 days' additional leave for training, fully paid, to the Reservist employee
- the employer must not have been the subject of any negative public relations or media activity

### **Nomination and award process**

- Employers can sign up themselves for each award.
- Nominations will be validated to determine the level of defence personnel employment within the nominated organisation and to check that the organisation has signed the Armed Forces Covenant.
- Once the nomination has been validated it will be considered by a selection board at national level for gold awards and regional level for silver awards. The selection boards will be a panel chaired by a senior military officer and they will consider each nomination against the award criteria. Organisations selected for gold and silver awards will be formally notified in writing and invited to the relevant award event