Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Armed Forces & Veteran Aware

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Patient Information: Armed Forces & Veteran Aware

June 2024

Here at Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS FT, we are proud to be a Veteran Aware hospital. Please let a member of staff know if you, or your spouse/partner, serve or have ever served in the UK Armed Forces so that we can best support your care needs.

Being flagged as a veteran in your NHS medical notes will help ensure you are able to access specific veterans' health services, such as those for mental health, hearing loss, limb amputation, and wheelchairs. All veterans are entitled to priority access to NHS care (including hospital, primary, or community care) for conditions associated with their time in the armed forces (service-related). However, this is always subject to clinical need and does not entitle you to jump the queue ahead of someone with a higher clinical need.

Improving Care for Veterans Across the NHS

Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS FT is a member of the Veterans Covenant Hospital Alliance, sharing and driving best practice in NHS care for people who serve or have served in the UK armed forces and their families, in line with the Armed Forces Covenant.

Meet Our Armed Forces Navigator: Joanne Lee

What You Can Expect in This Hospital

- We support the health commitments of the Armed Forces Covenant.
- We are committed to ensuring no disadvantage and giving special consideration where appropriate.
- We have educated and trained all relevant staff to identify and respond to veterans' needs.
- We also support the UK armed forces community as an employer.

The Veterans' Gateway is the recommended first point of contact for veterans and their families. It provides information, advice, and support by phone (0808 802 1212), text

(81212), and online at www.veteransgateway.org.uk.

What Other Support is Available?

There are many service charities and organisations. The Veterans' Gateway is an ideal first point of contact for veterans and their families. Here at Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS FT, we will put you in touch with the organisations best placed to help with the information, advice, and support – from healthcare and housing to employability, finances, and personal relationships.

We work with a range of extra services for the armed forces community and will let you know of and refer you to any that could benefit you, including:

- **Wigan Armed Forces HQ** – Provides a multi-functional facility for the recreational, rehabilitation, training, and support needs of serving and former service personnel and their families. Please contact: 01942 821293 or online at www.wigan.gov.uk
- **The Royal British Legion** – Providing practical, emotional, and financial support to all members of the British armed forces past and present, and their families. If you have a query, please call: 0808 802 8080 or local area branch by email: manchester@britishlegion.org.uk
- **Combat Stress** - Veterans' mental health charity that provides treatment for ex-service personnel suffering from mental ill-health. Visit www.combatstress.org.uk or call 0800 138 1619
- **Defence Medical Welfare Service** – Working with the MOD and other charitable partners to provide practical and emotional support to Armed Forces Families when they are in hospital, rehabilitation, or recovery centres. North West contact centre 07715 436671 or online at www.dmws.org.uk
- **Op Courage** – For armed forces personnel approaching discharge and veterans. Providing a range of treatment, from access to early support to therapeutic treatment for complex mental health difficulties and psychological trauma. Please contact: 0300 323 0707

How Could You Get Involved in the NHS?

The NHS can benefit significantly from the skills and experience you bring from your military training and service. Veteran Aware hospitals support the employment of veterans and reservists in the NHS workforce and will be involved either in the 'Employer Recognition Scheme' or the 'Step Into Health' scheme. Find out more about careers for veterans and

reservists in the NHS at www.militarystepintohealth.nhs.uk.

Armed Forces Covenant

The NHS is committed to the Armed Forces Covenant, which is a promise by the nation that those who serve or who have served in the UK armed forces, and their families, will be treated fairly. It has two key principles:

- The armed forces community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services.
- Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

You and your families should not be at a disadvantage in accessing appropriate health services; for example, if you are on a waiting list and are moving. The NHS always prioritises people with the most urgent clinical need. At the same time, we must recognise your health and social needs and act on them. We are working to make sure this happens.

To learn more about the Veterans Covenant Hospital Alliance and what it means for NHS hospitals to be Veteran Aware, please visit: Veteran Aware Hospitals.

We are committed to consistently and continually learning from our patients and their families to improve care for all. If you have any feedback or suggestions, please contact:

Joanne Lee
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For more information on NHS healthcare for veterans, visit the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk and search for ‘veteran’.



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