

Improving health and wellbeing support for armed forces families in England, September 2020

The NHS is listening to armed forces families and progressing plans to launch a questionnaire and series of virtual events to explore how it can improve health and wellbeing support for serving, reserve and veteran families in England.

Whilst most armed forces families enjoy healthy lives, the unique circumstances of military life can cause pressures for some and affect an individual's health and wellbeing. This is in addition to moving home every few years, which can make accessing the NHS difficult. We want to help change this, so armed forces families are able to access local NHS services easily in all parts of England. We also want to ensure that they can get care and support from clinicians and people who understand their health and wellbeing needs.

Our questionnaire and virtual events will provide an opportunity for people and organisations to share their views on how we can do this. As part of this, we would like to explore whether setting up armed forces family support networks would help. There are already some very effective support networks in parts of England, which focus on improving armed forces families' experiences of health services. Existing networks have received positive feedback and undertake the following:

- Act as a point of contact for armed forces families and carers, offering support to help navigate the NHS.
- Work with armed forces families and carers to understand the issues they experience in accessing and using health services and how these can be addressed.
- Deliver training and share information with healthcare and other professionals to help them better understand the health needs of armed forces families.
- Work with armed forces families to make sure that information and training materials are reflective of military life.
- Train up armed forces champions who work with the NHS to support people with military backgrounds and their families when accessing and using NHS services.

Sharing your views

Anyone can share their views, however, we are particularly keen to hear from serving, reserve and veteran families, people who are serving in or who have served in the British armed forces (regular and reserves) and organisations working with or supporting the armed forces community. Responses will be treated in confidence and help us to improve the care and support we offer to armed forces families in England.

The questionnaire will launch this autumn, with further information to be shared once it goes live. This will include details on virtual events. For further information or to register to receive updates, please email england.armedforceshealth@nhs.net