

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

The NHS has launched a questionnaire and series of online events and focus groups to explore how it can improve health and wellbeing support for the families of serving personnel, reservists and veterans 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 that armed forces families are able to access NHS services more easily across England. We also want to ensure that those families caring for individuals injured in service get the care and support they need from clinicians and people who understand the armed forces.

Our questionnaire and online events 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 families 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 the NHS, whilst recognising the different health needs of serving, reserve and veteran families. Existing networks have received positive feedback and undertake the following to help armed forces families get the right care and support:

- Act as a point of contact for armed forces families.
- Work with armed forces families to understand and address the challenges and issues they experience in getting good health care.
- Work with armed forces families to ensure their health needs are reflected in training materials and courses for health care and other professionals.
- Train up champions and leaders who work with the NHS to support armed forces families when accessing and using NHS services.

Sharing your views

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

To access the questionnaire, please visit <https://www.engage.england.nhs.uk/survey/health-and-wellbeing-support-armed-forces-families>

For further information, including details of online events or to request a copy of the engagement toolkit, please email nelcsu.armedforcesfamilies@nhs.net. The deadline for responding is 30 November 2020.