

Veterans' mental health services to receive £2.7 million boost

- Additional mental health services to be rolled out to veterans through Op COURAGE
- Support will be tailored to those dealing with complex mental or physical trauma or alcohol and substance misuse
- Dedicated care co-ordinators will be appointed to reduce suicide rates

Armed Forces veterans, including those who served in Afghanistan, will benefit from additional mental health support backed by £2.7 million for Op COURAGE – the Veterans' Mental Health and Wellbeing Service.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid has today (31 August) announced an expansion of services to support those experiencing complex mental and/or physical trauma, or alcohol and substance misuse.

Dedicated care co-ordinators will be appointed to act as a single point of contact to better support veterans with complex mental and physical trauma. They will help them to navigate the health and care system, consult with health and care professionals, with the ultimate aim of reducing suicide rates within the veteran community.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Our serving Armed Forces and veterans represent the very best of us, with recent events in Afghanistan yet another reminder of their dedication and sacrifice.

Op COURAGE already provides excellent support for veterans' mental health, but I know there is more we can do to get the right care and treatment to those who have given up so much to protect us.

This new funding will ensure support is in place where it is needed most, recognising the unique challenges veterans face.

This additional funding builds on the significant mental health support provided by NHS England in recognition of the unique needs of veterans and the challenges they face, including through the Veterans' Trauma Network and Op COURAGE which has already received over 16,000 referrals to date.

It is estimated 38,000 members of the Armed Forces community, including veterans, suffer from alcohol and substance misuse. The funding will ensure dedicated substance misuse services are integrated as part of Op COURAGE, making it as easy as possible to access support.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

The campaign in Afghanistan was incredibly challenging but our personnel displayed the highest levels of bravery and professionalism whilst securing the rights and freedoms of millions.

Many of our people experienced things they will never forget, and we remain committed to supporting this veteran community through Op COURAGE. We are forever indebted to the heroics and sacrifice of our service personnel and veterans, and pledge to ensure they receive any support they need.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Leo Docherty said:

This targeted increase of support will help those veterans who may be struggling, particularly in light of recent events in Afghanistan.

For those who served in Afghanistan, and for all former service personnel, mental health support is available through Op Courage.

I urge any veteran to access this specialist support.

Background

If you are struggling as a result of the recent events in Afghanistan, there is support available across the United Kingdom for veterans and those affected:

- In England, veterans and their families in England can get specialist help from the NHS Op COURAGE service.
- In Wales, you can reach out to Veteran Therapists in each Local Health Board through Veteran Wales.
- In Scotland, veterans can access veteran-led mental health and welfare support through Veterans First Point, part of NHS Scotland.
- In Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Veterans' Support Office links individual veterans, veterans' groups, statutory and non-statutory bodies, and charities supporting veterans.
- Anyone in the UK or overseas can also contact the Veterans' Gateway helpline on 0808 802 1212, or visit the website for advice and

signposting to further support, including for families and the bereaved.