

Briefing

July 2021

Armed Forces healthcare briefing and latest updates on COVID-19

This monthly brief is intended to keep you up-to-date on the provision of NHS services for the Armed Forces community, as well as latest information and guidance relating to COVID-19.

COVID-19 updates

Recent and upcoming changes in England from 19 July 2021

England moves to Step 4 of the roadmap from 19 July 2021. Everyone should be cautious whilst managing the risks as cases of COVID-19 remain high. Find out what will change and what you should do to [protect yourself and others](#).

Limits on social contact will end, meaning there will be no restrictions on indoor or outdoor gatherings. Face coverings will no longer be legally required in shops, schools, hospitality, or on public transport, although guidance will be in place to suggest where people might choose to wear one.

The successful NHS vaccination programme is weakening the link between cases and hospitalisations. As a result of the four-week delay to the final step of the roadmap, the vaccination programme has saved thousands more lives by vaccinating millions of people. Over 79 million vaccine doses have now been administered in the UK; every adult has now been offered at least one dose, and 64% of adults have received two doses.

COVID-19 vaccination

All adults aged 18 or over can now get vaccinated against COVID-19. You do not need to wait to be contacted by the NHS.

If you have been contacted but not booked your appointments, you're still eligible and can book them anytime.

The COVID-19 vaccines currently available are given in two doses. You usually have the second dose 8 to 12 weeks after the first dose.

To get your vaccines you can:

- [book your COVID-19 vaccination](#) appointments online for an appointment at a vaccination centre or pharmacy
- wait to be contacted by your GP surgery and book your appointments with them.

New guidance – potential booster vaccine programme

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), at the request of the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, has considered the options and timings of a [COVID-19 booster programme](#) for autumn and winter 2021 to 2022.

The precautionary advice published is interim and may be subject to substantial change before being finalised.

Health and wellbeing updates

Health and Care Bill introduced to Parliament

The Health and Care Bill has now been introduced to Parliament moving us forward another step on our journey towards strong integrated care systems (ICSs) in every part of England. A total of 42 ICSs cover the whole of the country, bringing together all parts of the NHS with local authorities and other care partners to plan and deliver joined up services and improve population health. They have been in development for several years with health and care leaders across England pioneering how they best work.

Collaboration between the NHS, local authorities and care providers has accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, including through adoption of new technologies to deliver better care. The Bill includes proposals to put ICSs on a statutory footing. Each would include an Integrated Care Board - an organisation responsible for NHS functions and budgets - and an Integrated Care Partnership - a statutory committee bringing together all partners to work on strategy.

These would support local delivery and the join up of care for local populations - including social care, mental health, primary care, public health and other services. Clinicians, carers and the full range of care professionals would be empowered to operate collaboratively, with a key priority being to tackle health inequalities across the country. Further information on ICSs is available [here](#).

Celebrating and supporting the LGBT+ veterans community

The Armed Forces team at NHS England and NHS Improvement are celebrating and supporting our LGBT+ veterans community as an extension to Pride month in June. Featured in the latest issue of [Civvy Street](#) magazine is Craig Jones, Co-Chief Executive of the LGBT+ military charity Fighting with Pride, who explains how he and his colleagues are working with the NHS to support the LGBT+ veteran community. Visit the [website](#) and [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts to find out more and share the article.

Please share our social media quote card (attached) with your networks. Suggested copy to accompany the graphics is below:

Supporting and celebrating the Armed Forces and LGBT+ communities.
#OpCOURAGE and #FightingWithPride are working together to support the LGBT+ veteran community. www.nhs.uk/opcourage

Ex Forces in Business - Champion of Women Award

NHS England and NHS Improvement Armed Forces Patient and Public Voice Group member, Caroline Paige, was awarded the 'Champion of Women Award', in recognition of her business CazTac at the recent [Ex Forces in Business Awards](#).

She secured the judges' vote for her incredibly important personal journey, as well as the hugely impactful role she has taken on globally, as a role model and mentor for the trans community. What she has done to further diversity and gender equality is truly inspirational, genuinely changing attitudes and culture within the Armed Forces to ensure those who are

faced with the same challenges do not need to suffer as much and can call for support. She is highly committed to advocating, promoting and supporting others to overcome barriers.

Richard Hatch and Verity Geere from BFBS the Forces Station, [spoke to Caroline Paige](#) a week before the awards ceremony.

Caroline said; *"It means so much to me because it recognises the diversity of veterans and that minority groups, including women and LGBT+ personnel not only serve with pride through exemplary careers, but their capabilities, skills, values and experience are equally valuable outside the Armed Forces and in all manner of business applications. I was tremendously privileged to be shortlisted amongst so many amazing women and feel proud and honoured to have been selected for this award."*

More from Armed Forces Week...

Armed Forces week took place in June, and across the country, NHS services for veterans were promoted to the Armed Forces community and beyond. Below are some of the new podcasts, videos and articles of interest which were issued since our recent special edition briefing.

Mental health services for veterans – Hampshire and Isle of Wight

As part of the activity to mark Armed Forces, Week Solent NHS Trust has released a new podcast series with five instalments where you can hear real life stories, examine the range of support available and learn more about the experiences of our veterans.

[Listen to the podcast series](#) and please share them across your social media.

Op COURAGE in the Midlands

For Armed Forces Day, the Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust Veterans Team released a series of videos with a message for veterans struggling with their mental health - Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service, is here to support you. Please watch the videos and share with your networks:

- [Stephen's story and experiences of the High Intensity Service](#)
- [Stephen's mental health experiences as a veteran](#)
- [Veterans Team video](#)
- [Veterans Champions video](#)

Shining a spotlight on Ben

As part of Armed Forces Week, Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust released an [article featuring Ben](#), a reservist who works as a Veterans Mental Health Practitioner for the Midlands and East Op COURAGE service.

New veteran friendly accredited practice podcast series

The RCGP have released two podcasts for GPs and primary health care professionals, to raise awareness of the issues facing service families and the impact this can have on their health, wellbeing and access to NHS primary care services. Listen to the new podcasts and please share with your networks:

- [General practice and the care of families of serving personnel - part 1](#)
- [General practice and the care of families of serving personnel – part 2](#)

Applications invited for role of Independent Chair of the Contact Group

Contact Group is currently inviting applications for the role of [Independent Chair](#). Applications are now invited from individuals interested in taking up this important voluntary role sitting at the heart of UK military mental health policy, treatment and research, from April

2022. The Chair-designate will be appointed by members in December 2021 to enable a three month induction starting in early 2022.

‘Ask How I Am’ campaign

National Voices and Centre for Mental Health have [launched a new campaign](#), **#AskHowIAm**, calling for a greater focus on compassionate care for people with long-term conditions. The campaign aims to give health professionals the time and the skills to ask people how they are and to ensure they get the right support when needed. For more information contact Andy Bell, Deputy Chief Executive at Centre for Mental Health on andy.bell@centreformentalhealth.org.uk