

## RCGP Veteran Friendly Accreditation Scheme January 2025 newsletter



Happy new Year!

Thank you for all your support you give to the healthcare of Veterans in your practice.

### **Excellent Veterans project**

Atlantic Medical Group (Penzance) is accredited by the Royal College of General Practitioners as Veteran Friendly. They were keen to improve the care of Veterans in their practice. They recently sent a **batch text** to all patients aged over 18 with the following message:

*Hi (patient name),*

*Atlantic Medical Group is accredited by the Royal College of General Practitioners as Veteran Friendly in recognition of the support we give to our former servicemen and servicewomen from all three services. We always strive to keep our records up to date.*

*If you have ever served in HM Forces, either Regular or Reserve, even for just a short period, please complete this questionnaire:*

The questionnaire asked:

- **NHS Number**
- **Have you ever served in HM Forces?**
- **Details of Service (optional)**
- **Any comments?**

There were 200 replies:

- 25 (12.5%) were female.
- 66% of responses were not coded as Veterans.

The practice found this a very easy, and worthwhile exercise. Many more Veterans were identified and now will be coded. Other practices are encouraged to conduct the same exercise. Thank you to Atlantic Medical Group for sharing this project which has improved the healthcare of Veterans in their practice.

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The **RCGP Veteran Friendly Accreditation** programme now has **4116** accredited RCGP Veteran Friendly Practices which is 65.9% of all NHS GP Practices in England. In addition, 1,273 / 1,285 PCNs (99.1%) have at least one practice accredited as Veteran Friendly.

These figures are excellent with so many GP Practices now accredited as Veterans Friendly. However, in April and May 2024, Healthwatch Wakefield conducted a piece of engagement with Veterans across the Wakefield District. The aim was to find out how much Veterans and their families knew about specialist services, and their experience of using these services. Although this was a small survey (about 75 respondents), this engagement revealed a very low awareness and understanding of the Veteran specific pathways and accreditations, with most respondents not having heard of them. The survey questions if practices could do more to

make sure that their Veteran patients are aware of accreditation? Similarly, are all staff aware of the RCGP Veteran Friendly Accreditation?

Details of Healthwatch Wakefield survey at:

[20241011\\_Wakefield-Veterans-Report-Serving-those-who-have-served.pdf](#)



## Op Restore

The Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service is an NHS service that supports individuals who have served in, or are leaving, the UK Armed Forces. The physical condition needs to be attributable to the time in Service but may present after becoming a Veteran.

Op Restore is hosted by Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust.

### Facts about the Service:

- On average, the service receives 31 referrals a month
- Average age of Veterans is 52 years
- 86% of referrals are for a musculoskeletal condition
- 91% of referrals are male
- 38% of referrals are from RCGP Veteran Friendly GP practices.

All referrals into Op RESTORE need to be agreed by a clinician at the Veteran's GP practice – either through signature on the referral form or having been reviewed and sent from the GP practice email address, along with a copy of the summary care record and relevant recent clinical correspondence regarding the physical health need. The referral form and service details can be found at [https://www.imperial.nhs.uk/our-services/op\\_restore](https://www.imperial.nhs.uk/our-services/op_restore) or via emailing Op RESTORE ([imperial.oprestore@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.oprestore@nhs.net)). The form is also available on Ardens Documents.

It is important that the GP practice sends the correct supporting information from the Veteran's record. The service-related physical health need should always be stated clearly on the referral form to enable Op Restore team to process the referral appropriately.

Waiting times for appointments and subsequent treatments are in line with the NHS Trust to which the Veteran has been referred.

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## RCGP Veteran Friendly scheme reminder

Many practices have been accredited for three years or more. However, there is no need for a formal reaccreditation process. What we ask is if the clinical / operational scheme leads change, please confirm the name and work email address of your clinical (and where applicable, operational lead) are correct to [Veterans@rcgp.org.uk](mailto:Veterans@rcgp.org.uk)

## **RCGP and CQC**

On Saturday 30 November 2024, the RCGP's governing UK Council voted to call for a temporary pause of routine CQC inspections, and for an end to the one-word rating system currently used in CQC reports. Considering RCGP's current stance on CQC inspections we will indefinitely be pausing the requirement for practices with a CQC status below 'good' to provide an improvement / CQC plan with the RCGP project team. This is a fluid situation, and we will update you if this changes.

## **E learning**

After some delays, our new eLearning *is likely to be available* from Feb 2025. There's no need to contact us about, we will be in touch with further information as this becomes available.

## **Share your experience as a Veteran friendly practice**

We would love to hear about your experience of being a Veteran friendly practice and any interesting case studies you might have, and with your permission, to share them to other practices in the newsletter. If you would like to tell us your experience, please complete the [Veteran Friendly Practice case study \(rcgp-news.com\)](https://rcgp-news.com/veteran-friendly-practice-case-study)

Also, we always like hearing about any practice projects that improve Veterans health care such as the project by Atlantic Medical Group. Please feel free to share any bright ideas!

## **Help please**

Please spread the word to raise the profile of this important initiative to neighbouring practices and all your contacts. Should you require any further information or resources, please contact us at:

[Veterans@rcgp.org.uk](mailto:Veterans@rcgp.org.uk)

**Brigadier (Retd) RG Simpson FRCGP and Dr ER Brookes MRCGP**  
**RCGP Veterans Champions**  
**January 2024**