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Howden Medical Centre is proud to be an Armed Forces veteran friendly accredited GP practice. As part of the Armed Forces Covenant, we have a clinical lead for veteran health. They have a comprehensive understanding of the Armed Forces, health conditions linked to service and will provide dedicated support for veterans. Across England, there are over 1000 veteran friendly accredited GP Practices to help ensure that patients who are ex Armed Forces get the best possible care. The NHS has a duty to support the health commitments of the Armed Forces Covenant. This means that veterans will get priority treatment for any medical condition which has been caused by service, subject to clinical need.

A veteran is someone who has served in the British Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve) for at least one day. Veterans also include any member of the Merchant Marine who has served in a war zone. This includes crew from convoys in World War 2 and more recently in the Falklands conflict and Gulf Wars.

Being accredited by the Royal College of General Practitioners means that we can better identify and treat veterans, refer them, where appropriate, to dedicated NHS services (such as the Veterans’ Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison service (TILS), the Veterans’ Mental Health Complex Treatment Service (CTS) and the Veterans Trauma Network) and capture better data to improve future health provision.

About 18,000 service people move back into civilian life every year and whilst most of these individuals have similar levels of health to the general population, around 2,000 leave on medical grounds. The top reasons for medical discharge are for issues relating to back, knees, mental health, and hearing.

**If you are a veteran, please let your GP know.**

How to get the most from your GP

1. It is important to register with a GP, rather than wait until you need treatment. Visit the NHS website at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk/) to find details of GP practices in your local area.
2. If you’ve recently left the forces, it is important to give your GP the paperwork that your military medical centre gave you, including any medical records. This will help to make sure your military health record transfers to your NHS health record. This will also give your GP information on your health and ensure that any ongoing care and treatment is continued.
3. Regardless of when you left the military, tell your GP that you’ve served in the UK Armed Forces. This will help your GP to better understand any military related health conditions that you may have and ensure that you are referred, where appropriate, to dedicated services for veterans.  
   This includes the specialist mental and physical health services, Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service and the Veterans Trauma Network.  
   When using these services, you will be able to speak to people who:
   * understand the Armed Forces and military life
   * are either from the Armed Forces community or highly experienced in working with serving personnel, reservists, veterans, and their families
   * will work with you to make sure you get the right type of specialist care, support, and treatment
   * work closely with a range of organisations and charities, including military charities, to support your wider health and wellbeing needs.
4. With your agreement, it can sometimes be helpful for your doctor to refer you to Armed Forces charities, such as SSAFA, the Royal British Legion, Combat Stress or Help for Heroes. They can often offer significant help and support, even if they do not all deliver healthcare.
5. You may be worried about sharing information about your time in the Armed Forces. Please note that the NHS is bound by a confidentiality code of practice to ensure GPs, nurses and other people working within the NHS deliver a confidential service bound by law.



