

Briefing

6 November 2020

Armed forces health – COVID-19

The NHS has a duty to deliver on a number of health commitments for the armed forces community (service personnel (regular and reserves), veterans and their families), to meet the obligations of the [Armed Forces Covenant](#) and principle four of the [NHS Constitution](#). Our priority during COVID-19 is to ensure that those who require NHS services can access them as easily and safely as possible.

We will be sending out this briefing fortnightly to keep you up-to-date with the provision of NHS services for the armed forces community, as well as latest information and guidance relating to the pandemic.

The months ahead will undoubtedly be tough, but some comfort can be taken from the extensive planning that has already been done. Learning from wave 1 will enable us to respond more effectively to wave 2. The current situation is a once in a generation experience that will define the NHS for years to come

Thank you for your continued support.

Latest updates and resources

[A message from Kate Davies CBE, Director of Armed Forces, Health & Justice and Sexual Assault Services:](#)

As we go back into a national lockdown, with the latest guidance being for everyone to stay home where possible, the team and I would like to offer our huge thanks and support for all you are doing to support our armed forces serving personnel, veterans, reservists and families. I would also like to acknowledge the extreme difficulties colleagues and organisations are experiencing right now. I hope that you, your families and your colleagues are all keeping safe and well and that you continue to take care during this second national lockdown.

As Remembrance Sunday (8 November) and Armistice day (11 November) approach, I acknowledge that many planned Remembrance events around the country are affected by the current nationwide lockdown. I was very proud to be invited to the Poppy Field Remembrance event, but unfortunately due to the lockdown, this event instead took place as a closed ceremony with the Chair of the Poppy Factory, Secretary of State and Lord Lieutenant.

This is a key time of remembrance for the country and plans remain in place for 11 November, 11am, to observe a 2-minute silence, with some people planning to do this at home, out on their doorsteps or in gardens and outdoor spaces. I would encourage you to consider the [COVID-19 safe activities](#) you could do to mark Remembrance.

Care and support for the armed forces community during COVID-19

Remembrance Sunday

One of our excellent Armed Forces Patient and Public Voice Group representatives, Tom Fox, has been chosen to be one of the 30 representatives marching on Sunday past the Cenotaph. He is representing SSAFA & COBSEO and has been in touch to say he wants everyone to know as a veteran with lived experience he is very much there in support of the armed forces and for the NHS.

Nicky Murdoch, Chair of the Armed Forces Patient and Public Voice Group and armed forces veteran stated, "Tom will be representing so many veterans who are unable to attend at this vitally important Remembrance event. I am delighted that Tom, a member of our national Armed Forces Patient and Public Voice Group, has been invited to take part in this important event."

Remembrance Day on-line showing of the Shell Shock play

Armed Forces Networks: Sussex and Kent & Medway, in conjunction with Shell Shock Media CIC, Changing Minds – Changing Lives and SSAFA, will be hosting an on-line adaptation of the award winning Shell Shock play starring Tim Marriott. The play depicts one veteran's experience of trauma and mental ill health and the impact of this on their return to civilian life. This on-line adaptation has been specially developed in view of the current pandemic and to ensure that the armed forces community are aware of how to access support and the range of services available.

The performance will take place on Wednesday 11 November via MS Teams from 14:00 to 16:00 and you can book your free place via [Eventbrite](#).

Is someone in your family serving in the armed forces?

Don't miss the chance to tell us what support you need as a family through the NHS armed forces families engagement questionnaire via this link:

<https://www.engage.england.nhs.uk/survey/health-and-wellbeing-support-armed-forces-families/> which will close on 30 November 2020.

It's also important for organisations and those working with armed forces families to complete the survey and to also promote the survey to families that they work with.

- Share our posts on the [@NHSEngland](#) Twitter account and retweet using the hashtag **#forcesfamilies**
- Hold a focus group, which you can either run yourself using the suggested focus group session plan, agenda and feedback template (available [here](#)) or you can request a supported session by contacting nelcsu.armedforcesfamilies@nhs.net.
- We are particularly keen to hear from organisations who support the children and young people of people who are in / have been in the armed forces. If you can help us reach young voices, please contact carrie.fleming@nhs.net