

# Supporting access to services for Military Veterans

May 2018



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# Introduction

## Glossary

Acronyms are used throughout this report, for ease of reading the following glossary is provided:

<b>RAFA</b>	The Royal Air Forces Association
<b>SSAFA</b>	Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association
<b>WRAF</b>	Women's Royal Air Force
<b>RFEA</b>	Regular Forces Employment Association
<b>PTSD</b>	Post-traumatic stress disorder
<b>CEOP</b>	Child Exploitation and Online Protection
<b>PALS</b>	Patient Advice and Liaison Service

## Project representatives

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## Project background

During its work Healthwatch Lancashire and Healthwatch Blackpool have made connections with organisations working with military veterans in Lancashire, such as The Royal British Legion. It came to light that one of the biggest issues that military veterans face with regards to health and social care services is access to services that are designed specifically for this community. It appeared that GPs may not have the necessary knowledge of NHS services, charities and third sector organisations in order to appropriately signpost military veterans to services that will improve their mental and physical wellbeing. Instead, veterans often find that GPs will rely on alternatives such as medication, which are not always favourable to this community. It was also highlighted that this community often struggle to make the first step in attending their GP and are often not even identified by the GP as a military veteran.

Local Healthwatch identified a need to explore these issues further and have incorporated project work with 'seldom heard' communities into their 2017-18 work plan. Undertaking this project has enabled Healthwatch to give military veterans a voice.

## Local statistics

We know there are a significant number of military veterans residing in Lancashire.

*"In the year [April 2014] to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015, the total number of individuals in receipt of either a pension or compensation under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme, War Pension Scheme or Armed Forces Compensation Scheme was 9,125 in the 14-authority Lancashire area."*

[www.lancashire.gov.uk](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk) - July 2016

Whilst the Lancashire County Council information does make reference to the potential impacts of military service, this is related specifically to offending behaviours and there is no information regarding health inequalities. NHS England states:

*“The Armed Forces community comprises current serving personnel, their families, and military veterans and their families; Reservists are considered serving personnel when mobilised or training, and veterans when not carrying out military duties. Whilst many aspects of health need are the same as other members of society, there are sometimes significant differences from other patients and particularly conditions attributable to life in the services and the overall impact of military life upon the family. These differences are sometimes reflected in the way in which healthcare is delivered, the range and types of services and the long-term impact upon the patient and their family.”*

[www.e-lfh.org.uk](http://www.e-lfh.org.uk) - January 2018

*“When servicemen and women leave the armed forces, their healthcare is the responsibility of the NHS. It is highly important for continuing healthcare that you register with an NHS GP and remember to tell them you've served. Telling the GP practice about your veteran status will trigger the transfer of your full medical documentation from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to your GP and enable you to benefit from veteran-specific services, like prosthetics and mental health.”*

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) - January 2018

Lancashire County Council cites the following as local support for veterans:

*“The Royal British Legion has various branches throughout the county. Lancashire is home to a central government Veterans UK site at Norcross, on the outskirts of Thornton Cleveleys.*

*The armed forces covenant sets out the relationship between the nation, the state and the armed forces. Lancashire County Council announced in November 2013 that it had approved its armed forces covenant.*

*The county council has implemented a scheme to recruit local ex-service personnel to become part of the ‘Mentoring in Schools’ programme.*

*A corporate covenant is a voluntary pledge from businesses and charitable organisations who wish to demonstrate their support for the armed forces community. The list includes a number of local and national organisations. These include British Aerospace and Rolls Royce that have an important presence in Lancashire as part of the local aerospace industry. United Utilities is also on the list and has a major presence in the Lancashire-14 area.”*

[www.lancashire.gov.uk](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk) - July 2016

## Methodology

Healthwatch Lancashire and Healthwatch Blackpool completed engagement activities between September and December 2017. Healthwatch endeavoured to engage with military veterans, their families and staff/volunteers who support veterans in a professional capacity.

Healthwatch Lancashire and Healthwatch Blackpool conducted Pop Up activities at the following locations:

- Veteran's Breakfast Club, Leyland - 2<sup>nd</sup> September
- Royal British Legion stand, Chorley Hospital - 25<sup>th</sup> September
- Veteran's Breakfast Club, Leyland - 4<sup>th</sup> September
- Blind Veterans UK drop-in session, RAFA Wings Centre, Preston - 22<sup>nd</sup> November
- Veterans Day, Clitheroe - 5<sup>th</sup> December
- Blind Veterans UK drop-in session, RAFA Wings Centre, Preston - 13<sup>th</sup> December

An online campaign was also launched to enable members of the military veteran community to have their say if they were unable to attend engagement sessions or would prefer to do so later.

We reached out to GP surgeries across Lancashire to see what was in place to support their military veteran patients and received minimal responses, these can be found within the main body of the report.

In total, we spoke to 63 people.

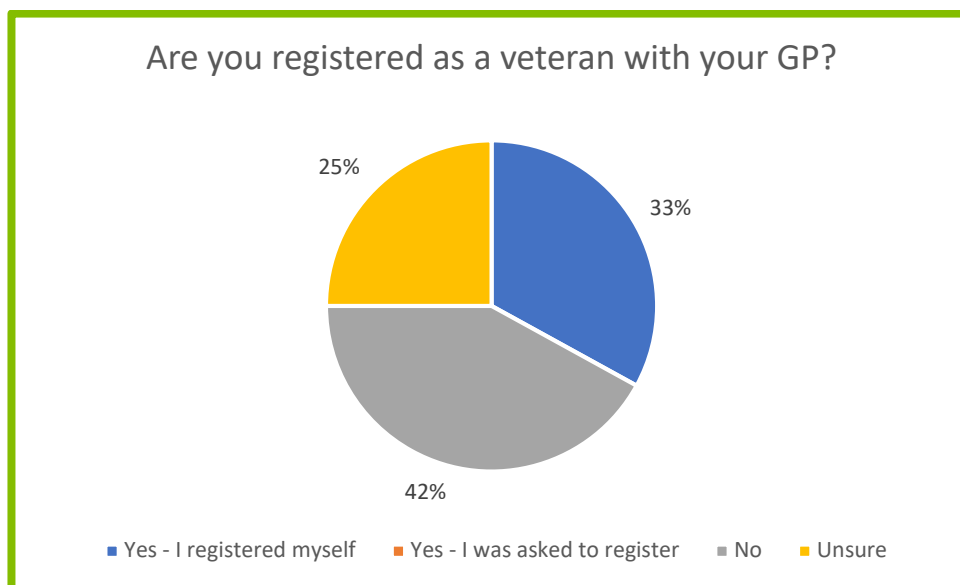
# Summary of results

- The majority of military veterans told us that they are not sure whether their GP knows they are a military veteran, or that their GP definitely does not know they are a military veteran (67%). Of the remaining 33% of military veterans who are registered as such, all made the decision to register themselves without prompt from surgery staff.
- We also spoke to relatives and family members as well as those who support military veterans in a professional capacity. 86% of those who support military veterans said they felt it is important that military veterans are registered as such with their GP. A small percentage (14%) said they were unsure, however, nobody said they felt it wasn't important at all.
- The majority of military veterans told us that their GP does not or are unsure whether their GP has access to their medical records (60%). A further 15% told us that their GP only has partial access, which means a quarter of the military veterans we spoke to know that their GP has full access to their medical records.
- Only 6% of the military veterans we spoke to were confident that their GP is knowledgeable about military veteran specific services in their area. Of the 46% who said they were unsure, many told us this is because they felt they had never had to ask.
- Nearly half of people who support military veterans said they did not feel that GPs are knowledgeable about military veteran specific services in their area.
- The results show that an average of 13% of military veterans we spoke to are accessing military veteran specific services. Most notably, over half (64%) of military veterans had never heard of or accessed the NHS Military Veterans Service.
- The service that is most accessed by the military veterans we spoke to is the local Veterans Breakfast Clubs (41%). The two most commonly heard of services were SSAFA (82%) and the Royal British Legion (70%).
- Just over half of the military veterans we spoke to (51%) told us they felt there are barriers for military veterans accessing health care services. The most commonly mentioned barrier was lack of communication and awareness of military veteran specific issues (33%).
- The majority of people who support military veterans (67%) said they felt there are barriers for military veterans accessing health care. The most commonly mentioned themes were accessibility (31%) and cultural issues (23%).
- When we asked military veterans how they feel these barriers can be overcome, the most common response was to introduce more training and education in military veteran specific issues (32%).
- The most common responses from people who support military veterans were better management of existing health care services (25%) and promotion of military veteran specific services (25%).
- When we asked military veterans if there was anything else that would improve their access to health care, the most common responses were access to more information on military veteran services and for medical professionals to be more informed around veteran services (24%). Half (50%) of those who support military veterans said there should be access to more information on military veteran services.
- We asked military veterans what kind of tool could be created to encourage military veterans to register as such with their GPs. The most common responses were a poster in reception (35%), a leaflet or a booklet (20%) and online support or an app (18%).

- Those who support military veterans suggested a poster in reception, a leaflet or booklet or phone support (29% each).

## Results: From the perspective of a military veteran

### 1. Are you registered as a military veteran with your GP? (48 answered)



The majority of military veterans told us that they are not registered or are unsure whether their GP knows they are a military veteran (67%). Of the 33% of military veterans who are registered as such with their GP, all made the decision to register themselves.

#### Comments:

*"I should hope my GP knows I'm a veteran after all these years."*

*"It feels like a 'bank' GP service, I never see the same GP twice."*

*"I intend to register myself soon."*

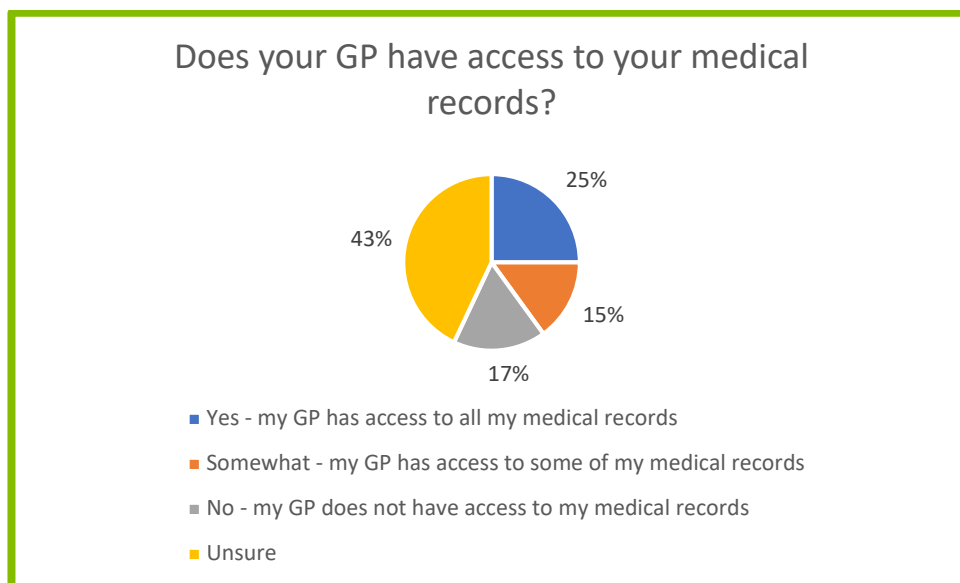
*"It might make a difference if they knew, it's very difficult to get an appointment these days."*

*"My GP recently bought a poppy off me, so I don't know whether they know or not, it's not so important to me you see."*

*"I saw a poster in my surgery and registered myself. The receptionist didn't understand the relevance of it."*

*"Sometimes there's a code that comes up when my GP is looking at my records but half the time it's not there and I have to explain again. I can hardly ever get an appointment anyway, I've currently been waiting eight weeks."*

## 2. Does your GP have access to your medical records (i.e. have they been obtained from the Ministry of Defence)? (48 answered)



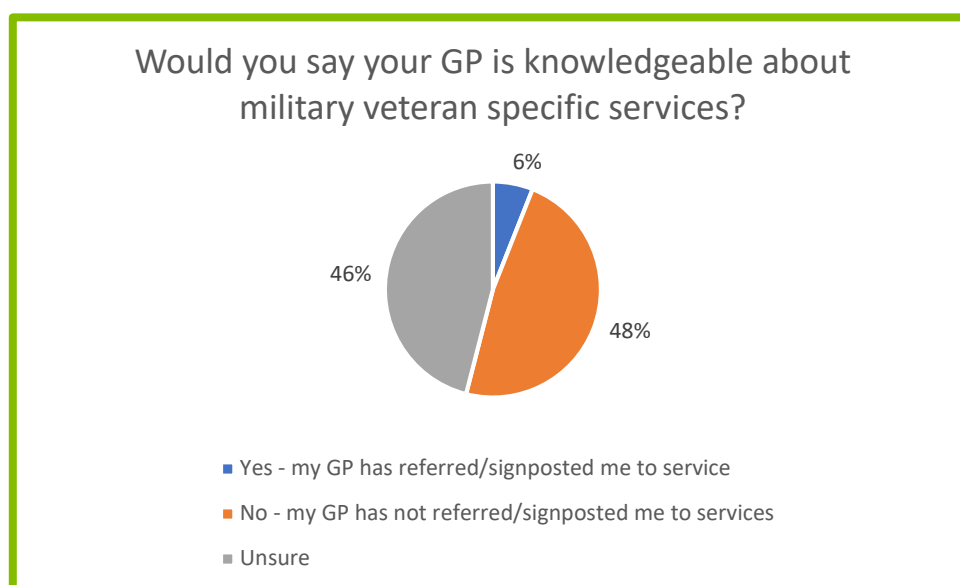
The majority of military veterans told us that their GP does not have access to, or they are unsure whether their GP has access to their medical records (60%). A further 15% told us their GP only has partial access which means a quarter of the military veterans we spoke to know that their GP has full access to their medical records.

### Comments:

*"I don't think any medical records from my time in WRAF will have been kept - it's 53 years since I left the force."*

*"As far as I know there's been no problems with my medical records."*

## 3. Would you say your GP is knowledgeable about military veteran specific services in your area? (48 answered)





Only 6% of military veterans that we spoke to were confident that their GP is knowledgeable about military veteran specific services in their area. Of the 46% who were unsure whether this is the case, some military veterans told us that the occasion has never arisen for them to ask their GP about this.

### **Positive comments:**

*"My GP has been very good with support and understanding."  
"I am aware of the services available."*

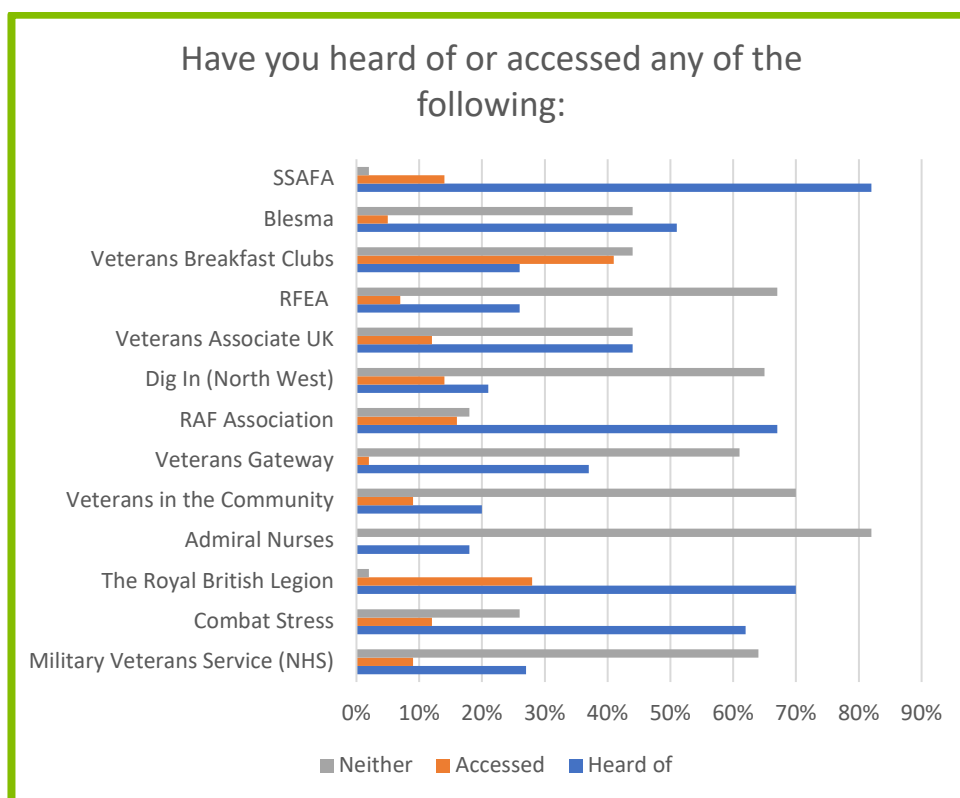
### **Negative comments:**

*"He [My GP] is not knowledgeable about services, he doesn't know anything."  
"I'm not happy with my GP at the moment anyway, it's too long of a story to get into now, but I ended up in hospital because they weren't listening to me."  
"Following a complaint to the practice regarding misinformation presented to me about priority treatment, the practice has stated they will be more proactive in disseminating info to veterans."  
"My GP has no knowledge whatsoever."  
"My GP is not at all knowledgeable. I mentioned my veteran status and it didn't make a blind bit of difference to anything."  
"The GP is not knowledgeable and has no records, possibly doesn't even know I'm a veteran. They build up people's hopes with false information, there needs to be better understanding of military veterans and the administration around their treatment. I've been "fast tracked" before and ended up waiting four plus weeks."*

### **Other comments:**

*"The occasion has never arisen to ask the GP."  
"I had already been signposted while still in service and still attend those clinics etc."  
"I wouldn't know if the GP was knowledgeable as I've never had to ask."  
"I'm not sure, I've never really had any problems, but we've never talked about it."*

#### 4. Have you heard of or accessed any of the following services? (48 answered)



A further breakdown of these results can be found in Appendix 1 on 43.

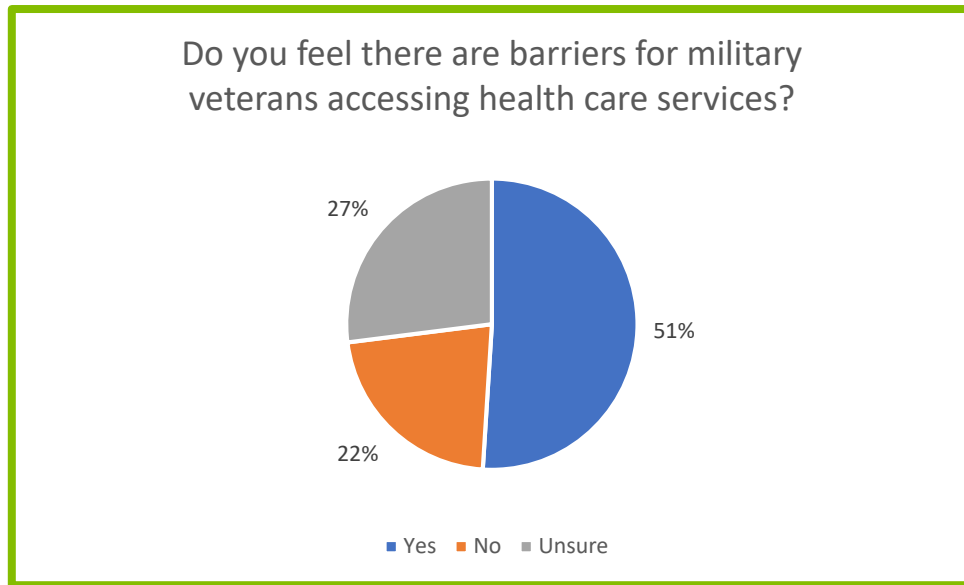
The results show that an average of 13% of the military veterans we spoke to are accessing military veteran specific services. 44% had neither heard of or accessed any of these services. Most notably, over half (64%) of military veterans had neither heard of or accessed the NHS Military Veterans Service.

The service that most accessed by military veterans we spoke to is the local Veteran's Breakfast Clubs (41% of military veterans we spoke to had accessed these).

The two most commonly heard of services were SSAFA (82%) and The Royal British Legion (70%).

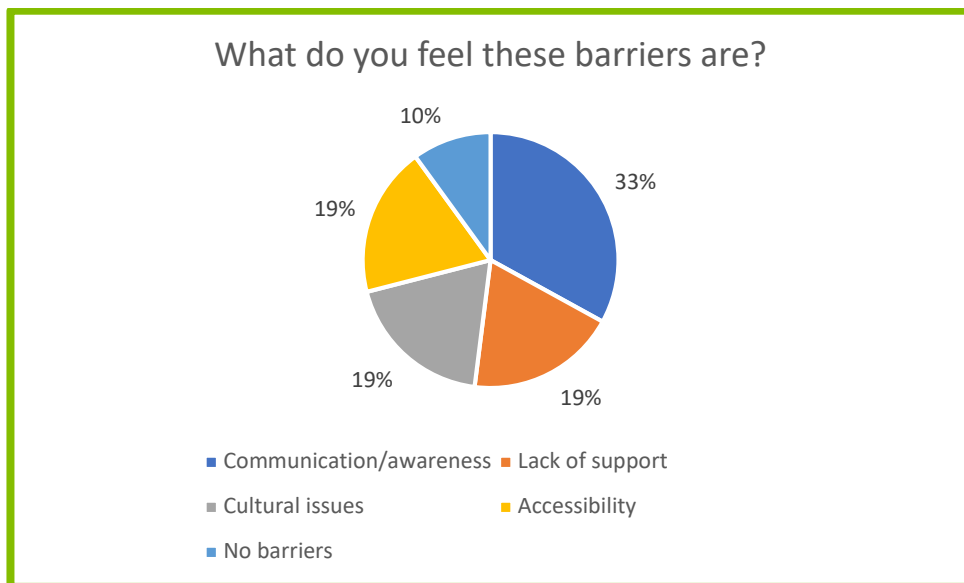
More information about these services (including contact details) can be found in the Directory section of this report.

## 5. Do you feel that there are barriers for military veterans accessing health care services? (49 answered)



Just over half of military veterans we spoke to (51%) told us they felt there are barriers for military veterans accessing health care services.

**We asked:** If you feel comfortable to, please tell us what you feel these barriers are? (21 answered)



In summary, when asked what barriers military veterans feel there are to accessing health care services the most commonly occurring themes are:

- Communication and awareness (33%)
- Lack of support (19%)
- Cultural issues (19%)
- Accessibility (19%)

10% of the respondents said they did not feel there were any barriers.

## Comments:

### Communication and awareness

*"I went to see my regular GP and he said my spine was crushed, so he sent me for an x-ray. The doctor that did the x-ray said my problem was nothing to do with my spine. Eventually a third doctor came out to see me at home and diagnosed me with septicaemia. I had poison in my body and it took three doctors ten days to find it, I ended up in Burnley hospital over it, why did that have to happen?"*

*"One GP did not believe me when I said that we carried 40 lb of medical kit as well as personal kit when I saw him reference severe back pain as a paramedic for 35 years' service that was the least of my problems (war disabled)."*

*"Simply by not knowing about services."*

*"I fell off the NHS Mental Health radar, I was diagnosed with PTSD but within six months I was no longer receiving any help from NHS, the local mental health services seemed to be overwhelmed with their case load, and as I did not kick up a fuss, I just stopped receiving any support."*

*"Health services are just completely unaware. Medical professionals don't know anything, otherwise they'd be telling me about these services, not Healthwatch. I feel like we're insignificant compared to the USA, they look after their veterans there, we forget about ours here."*

*"I think there is a knowledge barrier - not knowing where to go or who to ask."*

*"Just not knowing about available services can be a barrier in itself. Also, homeless veterans don't receive postal notifications."*

### Lack of support

*"I feel that the services are there, but we are expected to go find the right one and access it ourselves. It has already taken months/years for a veteran to admit that they need help, build the confidence to go to the doctor, so to then be told to go find and attend support groups elsewhere is a kick in the teeth and the veteran then gives up. I am currently in this state, as the doctor hasn't really helped, and I don't think that some services are the right ones, that you have to jump through hoops to receive any support at all, or that I am not as bad as others that may need the help."*

*"Army doctors and the treatment you receive while you're serving is the best - if you ask anyone in the forces to attend an army hospital you'd have no problems because they know the treatment they get there is second to none."*

*"I really don't feel veteran experiences are taken into account by the medical profession. I have had treatment for depression and attended group sessions for a number of weeks. Staff never once picked up on my military service despite me mentioning my service regularly. I felt out of place in a room full of depressed civvies, which did me more harm than good."*

*"I had to pay for a private psychiatrist for a medication review as there was a 12+month waiting list on the NHS."*

### Cultural issues

*"Soldiers don't like to complain or look weak so they don't fully say what's really wrong, and we don't push to get what we need, we get passed off quite quickly."*

*"I think the barriers are mainly due to a culture issue. Veterans not asking for help as they are too embarrassed and feel they need to be 'tough'."*

*“Trust and stigma are attached when asking for help - ‘Man up’. Some don’t know where to look. Networking is best way forward.”*

*“Prejudice against veterans from some elements of the community. Lack of knowledge about specific health issues which affect veterans.”*

### Accessibility

*“I don’t use a computer, but my wife does, and she finds it hard to book appointments on behalf of someone else. It’s hard to get down to the GP as it is because of my visual impairment, it’s a bus ride away you see. If I don’t have my white stick with me at the time, then the reception has no idea about my visual impairment.”*

*“Many services are freely available, but some specialised services are hard to obtain as I know from my own experience.”*

*“Reservists have difficulty accessing medical centres and other facilities. This is a combination of: lack of knowledge on behalf of the reserve, limited access to regular medical facilities, lack of catering for reservists - tend to get pointed at the NHS.”*

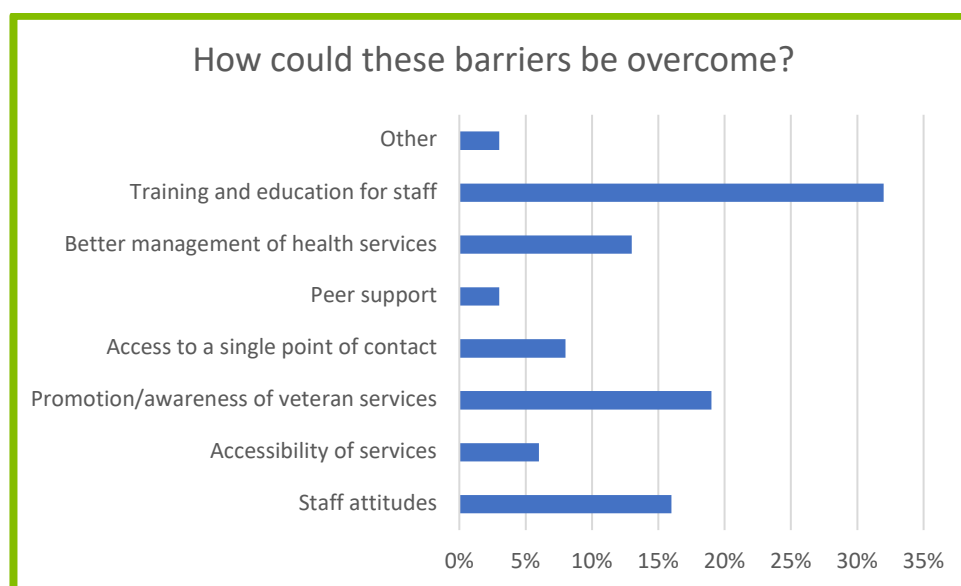
*“Budgets and lack of staff - the cuts mean the staff just aren’t available. The mental health side in particular is atrocious, I believe only 1% of budget goes into our mental health treatment. There’s also a knowledge barrier.”*

### No barriers

*“No, only because I never use them really.”*

*“It doesn’t bother me telling people I’m a veteran, I wear my badges out and about.”*

## 6. What do you think would help military veterans to overcome any barriers whilst accessing health care services? (33 answered)



The most commonly occurring themes are:

- Other (3%)
- Training and education for staff (32%)
- Better management of health care services (13%)

- Peer support (3%)
- Access to a single point of contact (8%)
- Promotion and awareness of available military veteran services (19%)
- Accessibility of services (6%)
- Staff attitudes (16%)

## Comments:

### Staff attitudes

*"Make it known they care."*

*"Staff that understand what we may have seen/done and how that may affect us. Not being treated like second class citizens after what we have already been through."*

*"A better understanding of the military by NHS staff."*

*"It would help if people understood us as individuals that have worked in high risk remote areas and we feel uncomfortable in civilian settings."*

*"Medical staff understanding their backgrounds and what they may have experienced."*

### Accessibility

*"Easier access."*

*"My GP comes out to see me when I need them, I can't go out on my own now."*

### Promotion of available military veteran services

*"I've never heard of them [services listed on survey] so maybe more advertisement campaigns."*

*"There needs to be more awareness of services - it's about getting the word out there. Coming to Breakfast Club opened my eyes to a few more things."*

*"More awareness and normalising of mental health support. I think there are many options for veterans to access support although there are lots who are not registered with GPs."*

*"To understand what services are available."*

*"GPs being made aware of these services and also the veterans being made aware through publicity in the media etc."*

*"Better awareness of available services."*

### Single point of contact

*"Specific point of contact/representative at local surgery/clinic."*

*"A single point of contact. There are so many charities and other organisations involved in welfare."*

*"Central organisation should distribute the information and there should be contact from other organisations themselves."*

### Peer support

*"Meet other veterans, i.e. breakfast club, support hub and open up. Talk to other veterans and trust civvies."*

### Management of services

*"Having someone more senior in charge of hospital staff, like a matron."*

*"For the NHS to be proactive and ask veterans if they'd like an appointment."*

*"Key workers when they leave the service specifically assigned to individuals."*

"Local groups giving information out about other support groups."

### Training and education

"More education for health care professionals and staff."

"Doctors understanding veteran's services and where to signpost."

"Attending lectures at the 'TA FIELD HOSPITAL' on forces injuries."

"Trained staff who get more than a five-minute PowerPoint brief on veterans."

"More information given to all health care professionals. My GP did not know what a war disabled deaf service man was."

"Knowledgeable medical staff."

"Greater awareness by both medical staff and veterans."

"Trained sign posters - veterans with a health background who could bridge the gap between veterans and health professionals and support people to access services."

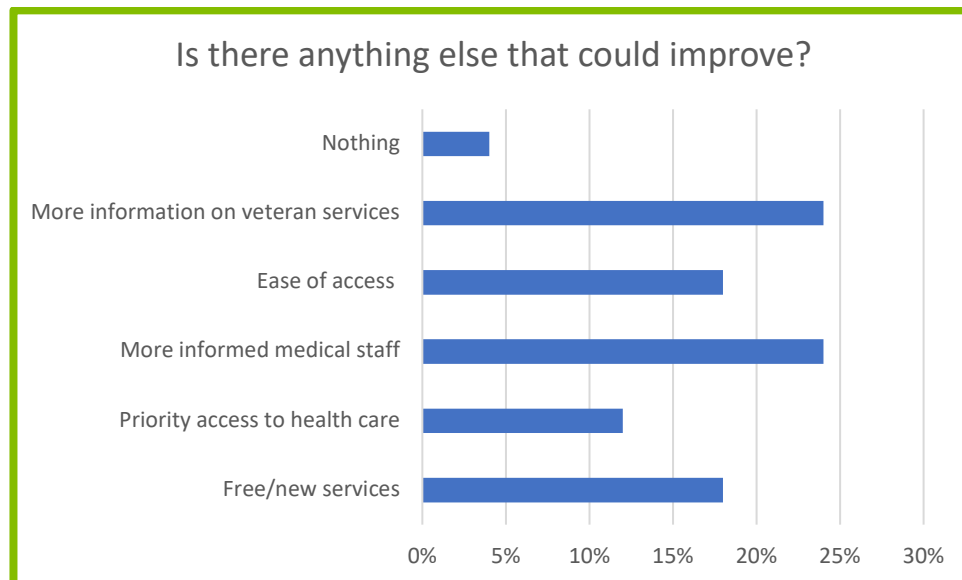
"More funding and training for NHS staff who will be working with veterans."

"It starts with policies then filters down to training - to start with it's got to come from the GP surgery itself."

### Other

"I think it's more on the side of the army, it's their responsibility to inform you of what's out there before you leave."

## 7. Is there anything else you feel would improve access to health care for military veterans? (17 answered)



In summary, when we asked military veterans if there was anything else that could improve their access to health care, the most commonly occurring themes are:

- Nothing (4%)
- More information on military veteran services (24%)
- Ease of access (18%)
- More informed medical staff (24%)
- Priority access (12%)
- Free/new services (18%)

## Free/new services

*"Free dental care."*

*"Bring back military hospitals."*

*"Establishment of a Veterans' Administration, similar to that in the US, where veterans could be treated by people we might trust."*

## Priority access

*"Use of the Defence Discount Card or other form of ID to access services more quickly."*

*"To prioritise veterans for combat injuries."*

## More informed medical staff

*"Making GPs more knowledgeable about specialist services for veterans."*

*"Maybe a short induction as to how the NHS differs to Armed Forces medical services when each veteran registers with a local practice or GP."*

*"GPs should be more aware of information and organisations and pass this on, it should be readily available."*

*"The receptionists should have a small card they can ask you to fill in when they're asking what you need your appointment for, some people don't feel comfortable telling the receptionist or at least in front of other patients, it would help with patient confidentiality."*

## Ease of access

*"Online GP registration."*

*"Someone with a 'scoobies' as a point of contact."*

*"Ask that one question - are you a veteran of HM Forces? Advertise services for veterans. The veteran himself or herself needs to ask for help and take that one step forward."*

## More information about military veteran services

*"More information easily and readily available i.e. dedicated information racks in hospitals and surgeries."*

*"More awareness before veterans leave the service."*

*"More awareness - I couldn't tell you what half of those services you've just listed did, what's the point of having them if nobody knows about them?"*

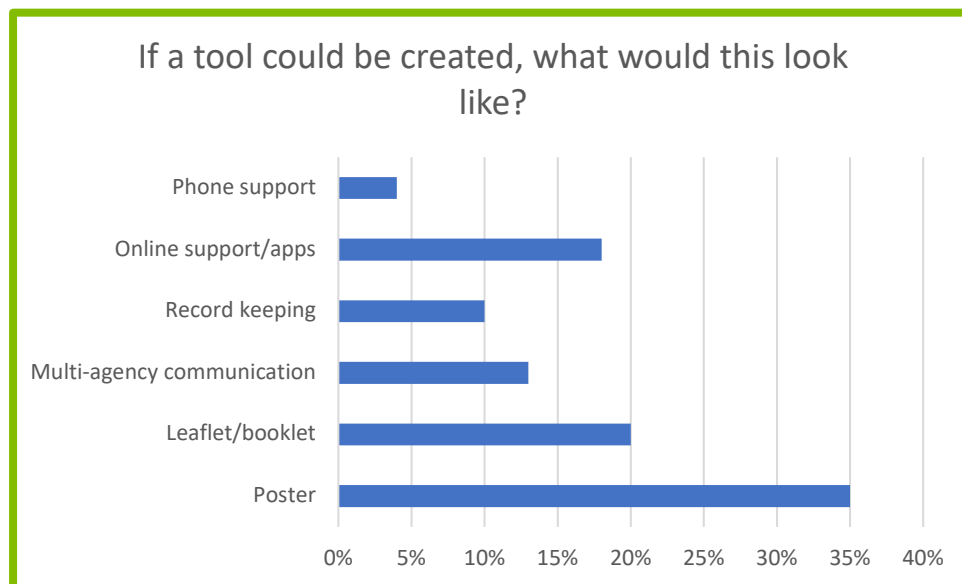
*"Just more information."*

## Nothing

*"I am happy with the service. My GP is great."*



**8. If a tool could be created to support military veterans accessing GP services, what would this look like? (e.g. a leaflet that details military veteran services in your area, or a poster on reception that encourages me to register as a military veteran etc.) (32 answered)**



In summary, when asked military veterans what kind of tool could improve their access to health care, the most commonly occurring themes are:

- Phone support (4%)
- Online support/apps (18%)
- Record keeping (10%)
- Multi-agency communication (13%)
- Leaflet/booklet (20%)
- Poster (35%)

### Poster

*"Display a veteran's badge image on poster."*

*"Posters in GP receptions and in chemists."*

*"A poster."*

*"Posters in waiting rooms and clinics."*

*"A poster would encourage more people."*

*"Putting a poster up in reception in a really prominent position. A lot of veterans are too proud to say something."*

*"A universal sign such as the vets pin badge on literature to easily identify vet related information."*

*"Poster."*

*"Our local practice has a big poster and a banner behind reception. They signpost GP support."*

*"Posters."*

*"Just simple posters to say are you a veteran of HM Forces and do you need any help or support? Don't be afraid to ask."*

*"Posters."*

"A poster would help because it shows we can ask, if the GP doesn't know about services we just won't bother. In fact, it can make you feel worse."

"A poster on reception that encourages people to register as a veteran."

### Leaflets/booklets

"Leaflets would be useful."

"A booklet."

"Leaflets in every GP surgery."

"More leaflets, tv adverts. I've never heard of these help veteran's campaigns."

"There should be a dedicated rack on the wall for veteran's services. For the cost of it, something like that would really help get the word out."

"Leaflets on open display in hospitals /GP surgeries."

"Yes, a leaflet."

"Leaflets of organisations and services available. If GPs are unaware of services available and therefore not able to pass information on, then why bother registering as a veteran?"

### Multi-agency communication

"It would also be useful to send the details of all known veterans registered at the surgery to the local Royal British Legion and SSAFA branches, so that they can make contact and overlook their welfare."

"Something similar to the survey we are currently undertaking on this site but aimed specifically at service leavers."

"Nobody at the Legion Clubs I used to go to know about Byng House [Royal British Legion facility], if nobody knows about it it's no good."

"Specific key workers: veterans contacted, and families contacted upon leaving the service."

"Another option, which would probably take a bit more work, would be for the Ministry of Defence and all NHS records to be connected, then everyone has access to everything they need."

### Record keeping

"When logging into surgery via fingerprint sign in add a button for vets or have the receptionist to ask. Start at the beginning and identify who we are and how many."

"Just make sure it's on your medical records."

"There's that many leaflets in the doctor's surgery you wouldn't know where to look. I think there should be a button on the self-check in machine where you can identify as a veteran as you're coming in for your appointment, that takes all the hassle out for the staff working on the desks as well."

"A registration form in the GP practice at reception."

### Online support/apps

"An app that signposts to services, link people to The Big White Wall."

"A simple app to register without attending an appointment."

"A dedicated information page on NHS website."

"A single button on a web page which will take you to a centralised library of support available. Similar in principle to the CEOP button and the civil service job website - so you can search by region, issue etc."

"A page like the gateway."

"An app."

"Signs in the GP and more information on websites."

### Phone support

## Case Study

### Military Veteran, West Lancashire

"I have a story about my experience with my GP. I went to see my GP and I knew it would involve surgery. They examined me and confirmed I would need surgery, so I said 'okay, I'm planning to go on a veteran's reunion trip next year and given the waiting times for surgery now is it likely that I will be okay to go?'. The GP said, 'no problem', because as a veteran I would get priority treatment and the whole thing would be over and done within three weeks.

I told the GP I didn't think it was that simple, as I thought you only got priority treatment for conditions or issues arising as a result of something that happened during your service. The GP told me I was wrong as they had looked into it. I went home and looked into it on the NHS website which confirmed my original thoughts.

I asked to speak to the Practice Manager and was refused on the grounds that they don't allow patients to speak to the Practice Manager. I explained to the receptionist that it could have been life or death and they wouldn't know about it, I mean, I suffered from anxiety for a long time after I served but there's no way to tell if it was as a result of my service. I was eventually given the offer of speaking to the Practice Manager... in three weeks' time. I told them I was expecting better and ended up speaking to another receptionist who asked if it was a complaint I wanted to make, after 50 minutes of explaining why it wasn't a complaint the receptionist said they would see what they could do.

I then received a letter from Royal Preston Hospital with an appointment for three months later. A few days after this, I received a phone call from PALS who said they had booked me an appointment at a private hospital (Renacres in Southport) within the week and that they would cancel the RPH appointment on my behalf. However, when I got to the hospital in Southport the consultant told me he couldn't carry out the treatment because they didn't have the necessary facilities. I now have an appointment next week at Southport Hospital, around four months after the GP originally confirmed I needed surgery.

Hesketh Bank practice moved to Tarleton recently as the GP there resigned, the company who took over seem to run many practices in Ormskirk - I get the impression that whoever is running it is doing so by their own rules rather than NHS rules. For example, I usually get an invitation for the flu jab because of my heart condition. This year my letter never arrived so I went in to ask about it, they told me there would be no letters this year as 'it is not practice' anymore. They had a list of clinics on the wall, two of which had already passed, so I booked onto the third one. When I turned up I was told there was no clinic that day! Luckily, they told me they would see who was available to do it anyway. It's chaos. There are two GPs allocated to my practice, when I asked to have the name of my designated GP I was told that neither of the GPs have a patient list, now, given that they moved in in August I'd have thought that would be a priority, I've still not heard anything (it is now November). I know they should have access to my army medical records but I'm not sure if they do. It was me who asked if I was registered as a veteran and I wasn't, so I asked them to do it there and then.

It's so frustrating when the GP gives you the wrong information! You feel like you are being fobbed off, but you can't say anything or question them because they're the ones who are supposed to know what they're doing, and there's no way of checking up on it.

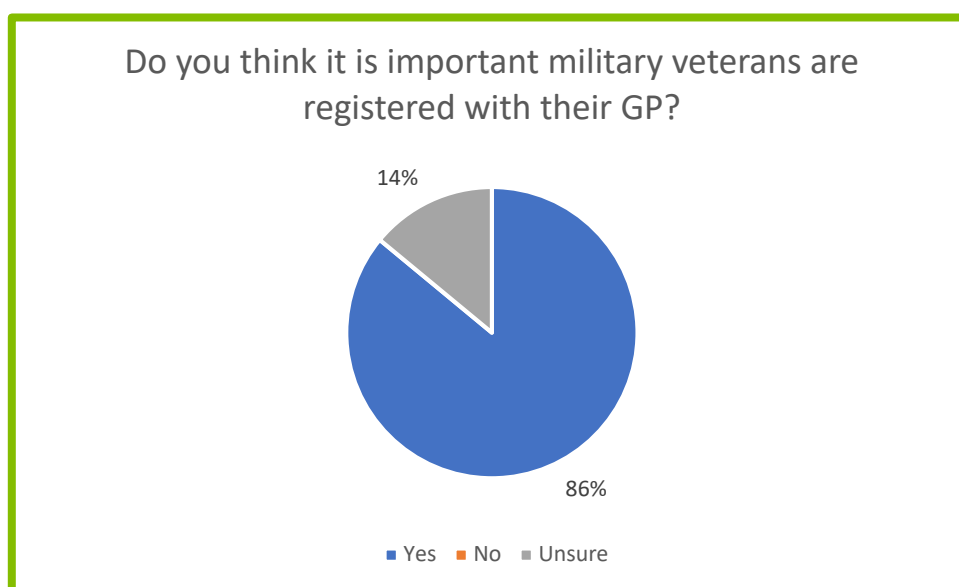
A PALS officer once asked me how they could improve things, I said they should raise the issue of veterans in their meetings and discuss it, e.g. bring my GP up to date with the correct information.

The receptionists should have a small card they can ask you to fill in when they're asking what you need your appointment for, some people don't feel comfortable telling the receptionist or at least in front of other patients, it would help with patient confidentiality.

There should be a dedicated rack on the wall for veteran's services. For the cost of it, something like that would really help get the word out."

# Results: From the perspective of someone who supports military veterans

## 1. Do you think it is important that the military veteran/s you support are registered as a military veteran with their GP? (14 people answered)



The vast majority of people we spoke to (86%) said they felt it is important that military veterans are registered as such with their GP. A small percentage (14%) said they were unsure, however, nobody said they felt it was not important at all.

### Comments from those who said yes:

*"Veterans are generally reluctant to make themselves known as they don't like publicity if receiving priority treatment."*

*"Veterans have more medical needs and it's harder to get to the real problems."*

*"I do think it's important because they could have had a bad psychological experience and the doctor wouldn't know. My husband had lots of problems getting hold of his medical records, when they started to look for them they were apparently in a Porto cabin full of asbestos, so they couldn't access them."*

*"Because some of their health needs have come about due to their service."*

*"My brother in law suffers from alcohol related dementia, so it is very important that his GP has all the necessary details."*

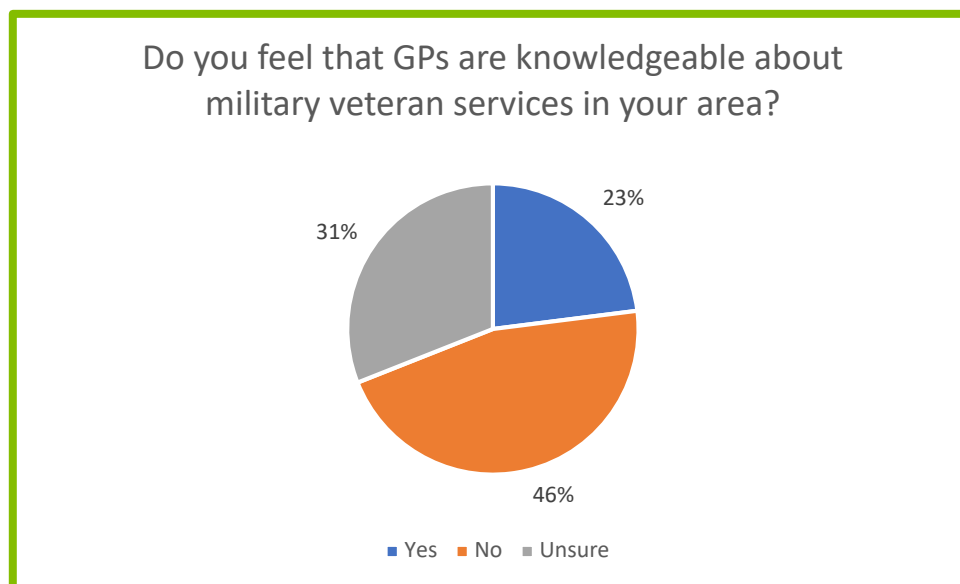
*"I live in Horwich so use Bolton and Chorley services, we always have to tell Bolton, but Chorley always ask. Been with our GP for 20+ years and been asked once."*

### Comments from those who said unsure:

*"My husband doesn't go to the doctors very often."*

*"My late husband was a veteran, I don't know if he was registered as a veteran with the surgery but they knew him very well regardless. Riverside Medical Centre are absolutely wonderful."*

## **2. Do you feel that GPs are knowledgeable about military veteran specific services in your area? (13 answered)**



Nearly half (46%) of people we spoke to said they did not feel that GPs are knowledgeable about military veteran specific services in their area. Around a quarter (23%) told us they feel their GPs are knowledgeable.

### **Comments from those who said yes:**

*"Ours was, they directed us to the Legion and Admiral Nurses, who were a lifesaver when my husband was ill. Admiral nurses supported me when I felt my husband needed nursing care and the residential home he was in weren't listening, they helped me to prove he had dementia, they were just wonderful. They've also got me into doing poppy work and other activities and help me out with the electrics in my house and things."*

*"The GP referred my brother in law to Admiral Nurses, who have subsequently put him in touch with alcohol misuse services. His support provider is also increasing the care package now."*

### **Comments from those who said no:**

*"The GP only found out he was a veteran when he was registered as blind, that's when they told us about Blind Veterans UK. He's got a text reader now." [Father]*

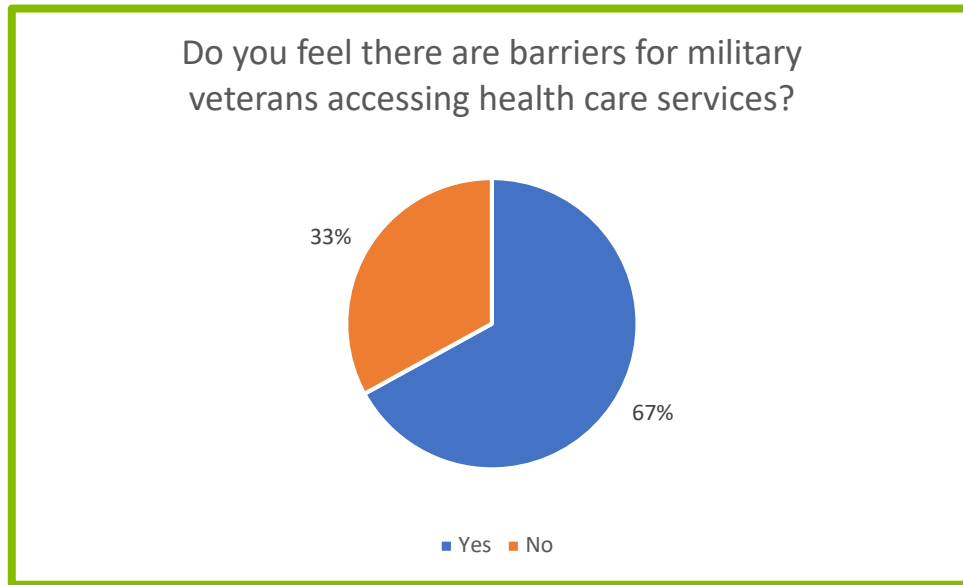
*"But that's not always their fault. It can be confusing, ever changing and sometimes occupied by local mavericks who are less interested in evidence-based practice and more interested in righting perceived wrongs."*

*"The GP had nothing more to offer when Combat Stress couldn't help, we had to research Military Veterans Service ourselves."*

### **Comments from those who said unsure:**

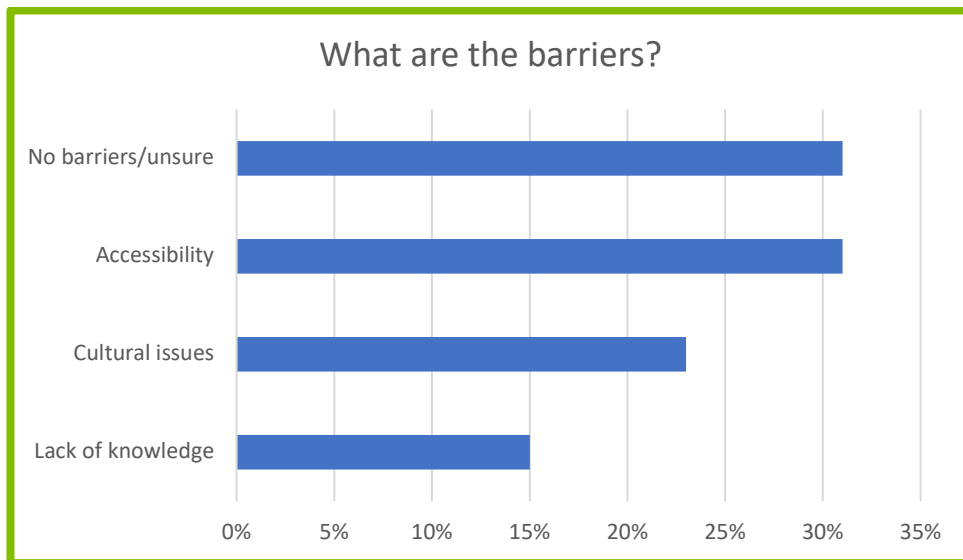
*"My husband's appointments were mainly for health-related issues so it never came up."*

### 3. Do you feel that there are barriers for military veterans accessing health care services? (12 answered)



The majority of people we spoke to (67%) said they felt there are barriers for military veterans accessing health care services.

**We asked:** If you feel comfortable to, please tell us what you feel these barriers are? (13 answered)



In summary, when we asked people who support military veterans what barriers they feel there are for military veterans accessing health care services the most commonly occurring themes are:

- No barriers/unsure (31%)
- Accessibility (31%)
- Cultural issues (23%)
- Lack of knowledge of available services (15%)

## Lack of knowledge

*"Doctors are unsure where to signpost."*

*"I'm not sure really, there weren't so much with my husband because they were very good, but I can imagine it's harder for the younger generation now, people just don't realise how bad shell shock is. My husband's GP had no idea he had shell shock, it wasn't until the Legion came along and recognised it that anything was done, it can affect your whole family."*

## Cultural issues

*"Due to the position of GPs e.g. in authority, soldiers don't feel able to say 'I want you to do more'."*

*"There is also a strong sense of pride and self-reliance which affects veterans. Making them less likely to ask for assistance."*

*"They are often told that they are just depressed this makes them feel weak."*

## Accessibility

*"Travel is a big issue, from where we live in Leyland the bus routes are horrendous. Luckily, I still drive, but even then, there's horrendous trouble finding parking in places like Chorley. I end up having to book all of his appointments either before or after rush hour, and that's not always convenient." "Social workers don't want to know because my husband isn't registered blind. We found out about Blind Veterans UK from going to Galloways."*

*"My husband can't get his toe nails cut anywhere because he's not diabetic, it means we have to pay for the service from Age UK."*

*"I was a full-time carer for my late husband. There are definitely barriers if they don't have a carer - transport is a big problem. My husband and I both had a mobility scooter, I still struggle with mine. If it hadn't been for me he wouldn't have gone to appointments, to be honest I don't know how he would have managed if I had died first. He was registered deaf and blind, so he wouldn't have heard of or read about anything without the help of a carer to find the information out. The hospital (Royal Preston Hospital) referred him to Galloways for a Sightseekers course which is great, but he just wouldn't have been able to do that without support. We also struggled when we couldn't get the consultant at Royal Preston to sign my husband onto the blind register, because of the lack of staff there was never a consultant in on the day. It took four to six months to get him on, and eventually managed to get access to some equipment from Blind Veterans UK but he died before it arrived. He would have benefited from it so much sooner if the consultant had signed."*

## No barriers/unsure

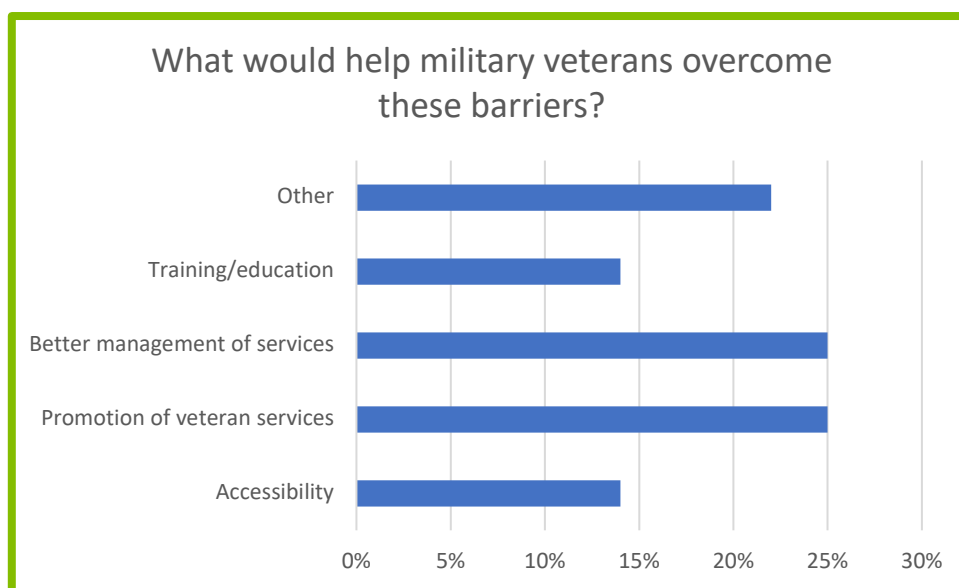
*"Not any more, it's getting a lot better. There are awareness posters in the GP (in Great Eccleston) so it is getting better known."*

*"Unsure."*

*"Unsure."*

*"I'm unsure, not for him but there could be for other people, it varies." [Father]*

#### 4. What do you feel would help military veterans overcome any barriers to accessing health care services? (8 answered)



In summary, when we asked people who support military veterans how they feel barriers to accessing health care services can be overcome, the most commonly occurring themes are:

- Training and education (14%)
- Better management of services (25%)
- Promotion of veteran specific services (25%)
- Accessibility (14%)
- Other (22%)

#### Accessibility

*"Consider appointment times. My husband had an appointment through at Royal Preston Hospital for 9am. How on earth are we supposed to get there on time when public transport is so bad and its rush hour?"*

#### Promotion of services

*"Advertising."*

*"Correct signposting."*

#### Better management of services

*"The biggest problem we have faced with my brother in law is social services. Despite involvement from Admiral Nurses and paramedics from where he has suffered accidents it has been very slow from social services. It's been going on for months and he's only just been assigned a social worker, what will happen now I have no idea."*

*"I think it should come from the GP in the first instance, I've had to ring up and explain before that my husband wasn't able to get on a bus to go and collect his pills and they've had to explain to me how they can help. There's lots of information at Royal Preston Hospital for the visually impaired but he still wasn't able to read it, they'd be better off making signs for sighted people as well so we can see and pass that information on."*



## Training and education

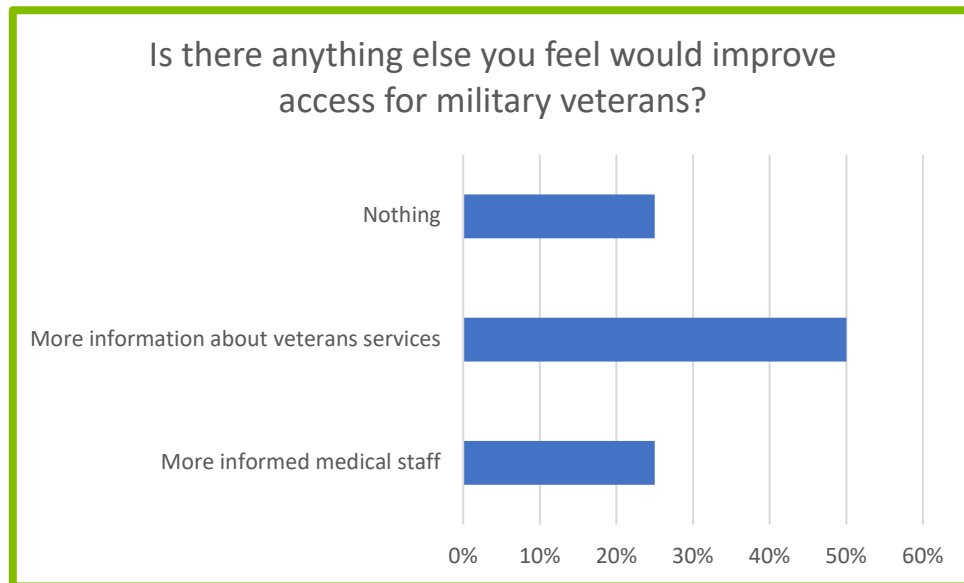
*"Doctors getting specialised briefs."*

## Other

*"It depends what their situation is."*

*"I couldn't say, we get a pretty good service at our GP surgery in Chorley."*

### 5. Is there anything else you feel would improve health care access for military veterans? (4 answered)



In summary, when asked people who support military veterans if there was anything else that could improve their access to health care, the most commonly occurring themes are:

- More information about military veteran's services (50%)
- More informed medical staff (25%)
- Nothing (25%)

### Comments:

#### More informed medical staff

*"GPs need to be more aware of potential shell shock - they never knew my husband was shell shocked, so they need to be asking."*

#### More information about veteran's services

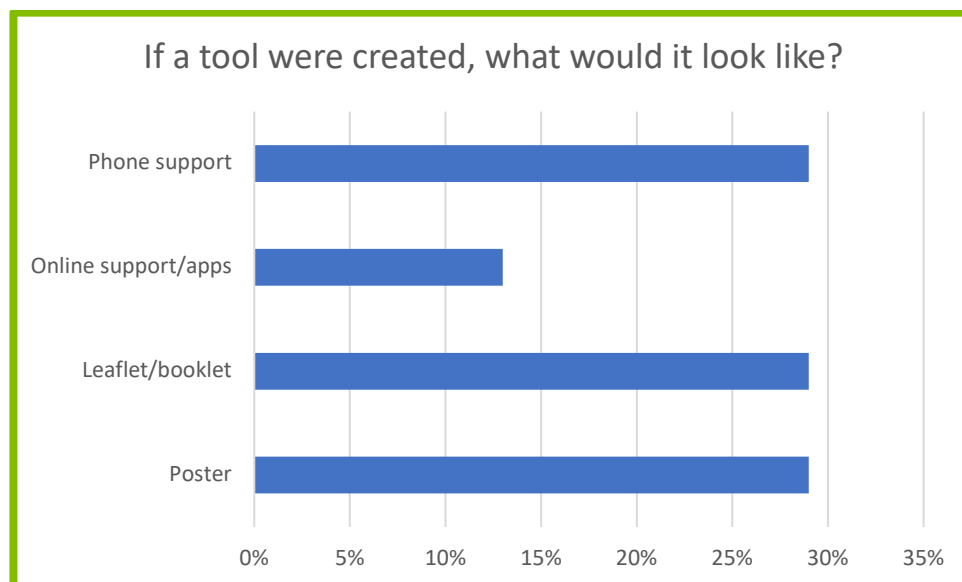
*"Just make it simpler to get information."*

*"I've been thinking to myself that I'd like to start swimming, but I don't know how to go about it myself, so I imagine it would be more difficult for someone who is blind or deaf."*

#### Nothing

*"Nothing off the top of my head."*

**6. If a tool were created to support military veterans accessing GPs services, what would this look like? E.g. a leaflet detailing military veteran services in your area/a poster in reception that encourages military veterans to register their status. (6 answered)**



In summary, when we asked people who support military veterans what kind of tool could improve their access to health care, the most commonly occurring themes are:

- Phone support (29%)
- Online support/apps (13%)
- Leaflet/booklet (29%)
- Poster (29%)

### Comments:

#### Poster

*"I was okay supporting my husband because of Admiral Nurses. The nurse who supported me actually goes to the same GP as me, so I think that's how the surgery are aware of it. Admiral Nurses had only just started then as well so I think I got lucky. My husband wouldn't accept any help, he wouldn't talk about the army and didn't know about anything that was going on, he didn't even claim his army pension until he was 72 because he didn't know about it, I feel like he missed out on so much. When I picked up that phone to Admiral nurses and the way she spoke to me gave me the confidence to carry on, if that first point of contact hadn't been so good I wouldn't have had anyone - I don't think that nurse realised what an impact she had. There should be big posters in more places, really big ones, as lots of older people can't see and so they would need to stand out."*

*"A poster would be good, if Blind Veterans UK had a poster I think they would get a lot more members."*

#### Leaflet/booklet

*"Leaflets."*

*"A leaflet to take away and a military specialist in every surgery."*

## Online support/apps

*"An app."*

## Phone support

*"A centralised specialist call centre."*

*"Leaflets are good for sighted people, I think it would be better for the GP to make contact and actually give that reassurance over the phone."*

# Responses from GPs

As part of this project, Healthwatch Lancashire and Healthwatch Blackpool reached out to GPs that we had visited either through Patient Engagement Days or our ability to engage under our Enter and View programme. We wanted to know what GPs across Lancashire are currently doing to support their military veteran community, in the interests of sharing good practice.

We aimed to identify how GP surgeries are supporting military veterans to access their service, how they support military veterans via signposting and whether there are any planned improvements.

Out of 25 surgeries we contacted, only three responded (12% response rate). These responses can be found below.

## Queensway Medical Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde

*"We took part in the 'Finding the Forgotten' - Military veterans mental health research project for Chester University with Colonel (Retd) AP Finnegan."*

This consisted of:

- A 6ft Stand in reception (still present)
- All staff asking patients on telephone/reception area/clinical appointments if they were veterans
- Text message was sent to all patients we held mobile numbers for - asking them to text back the word Veteran which would code their records.
- Information added to practice Website
- Advertisement board in surgery (still present) detailing help available for veterans
- All clinical staff undertook online training HEE Training at: <http://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/nhs-healthcare-for-the-armed-forces>
- Advertising on TV screen in surgery asking for identification of military veterans and what services are available (still present)
- Addition of a Read Code 13Ji. (code for Military Veteran) to the significant active problem list on the medical records and an alert on family members to ensure this information was available to clinicians.
- Anonymised report to the College detailing veterans age, gender and relationship status (married, single etc.). Desirable information is Mental Health diagnosis; specifically, depression, anxiety, alcohol, PTSD, and dementia.

- Our figures were taken before the campaign and after:  
Our figures went from 17 patients found at our initial submission and two months later we had recorded 177 patients (16.6.2017)

### **The Elms Medical Practice, Ormskirk**

How do you support military veterans to access the surgery? i.e. is there a flagging system to identify veterans, are there posters/information available in the waiting room?

*“On our registration forms we have a section asking if the person registering is an ex-military personnel. We also have posters and leaflets in the waiting rooms.”*

How do you support military veterans when signposting to veteran specific services? i.e. staff training/experience, links with veteran services in your area, posters/information available in the surgery?

*“We have posters and leaflets with information on but if I’m honest there is not a lot of information out there that has been supplied to GP surgeries.”*

Is there anything you would like to/are currently looking at to improve access for the veteran community?

*“Anything extra we can do to identify these personnel would be a great improvement. As an ex-military child, it is a cause that hits me, and I understand how they find it hard to readjust to civilian life so anything extra we can do at The Elms we would be more than happy to do.”*

### **Fleetwood Surgery, Fleetwood**

How do you support military veterans to access the surgery? i.e. is there a flagging system to identify veterans, are there posters/information available in the waiting room?

*“Any military veterans we are aware of have it read-coded on their records and a warning flagged up. When sending referrals, we put a note at the top of the referral that patient is a military veteran.”*

How do you support military veterans when signposting to veteran specific services? i.e. staff training/experience, links with veteran services in your area, posters/information available in the surgery?

*“I don’t think we do to be honest.”*

Is there anything you would like to/are currently looking at to improve access for the veteran community?

*“No.”*

Although we received minimal responses, Healthwatch will endeavour to maximise the impact of this report by sharing the findings with all the GP surgeries that were contacted and will highlight the Directory section of this report, which aims to support all services with signposting.

# Conclusion

Our findings show that the majority of military veterans are not registered as such with their GP, and a high percentage do not feel confident in their GPs ability to signpost them appropriately should they require military veteran specific services.

An average of 13% of military veterans we spoke to are accessing military veteran services, including a high percentage having never heard of or accessed the NHS service. Of the services we considered, peer support groups such as the Veteran's Breakfast Clubs appeared to be the most popular.

The majority of military veterans and people who support military veterans told us there are barriers for military veterans accessing health care, mainly due to a lack of awareness and understanding around military veterans, as well as cultural issues such as pride and stigma around appearing weak. The most commonly suggested ways to overcome these barriers include more training and education for professionals as well as more promotion of military veteran services. Many people also told us that access to more information on these services would also help improve health care for military veterans.

We asked the military veteran community what kind of tool they think would encourage military veterans to register their status with the GP, the most common suggestion was to have a poster in the surgery's reception.

Despite minimal responses from GP surgeries regarding the work they already do to support their military veteran communities, there does appear to be some significant differences in their approaches, from full involvement with university research schemes to almost no additional support, training or guidance.

Part of this report is formed as a directory in the hope that those from the military veteran community who are reading will be enabled to explore a range of military veteran services in the North West.

## Next steps

This report will be sent to:

- NHS Military Veterans Service (Lancashire Care Foundation Trust)
- Each local Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS England
- NHS Improvements
- Each Local Delivery Plan Lead by area

This report will also be shared with organisations that we have worked with on this project as well as the GP surgeries that were contacted.

Healthwatch will continue to attend local Clinical Commissioning Group Patient Forums to confirm and challenge any actions and responses made to this report.

Healthwatch will continue to represent the voice of seldom or never heard communities such as the veteran community and involve them in future programmes of work. Healthwatch will further consider the findings from this project to inform more specific projects in the future.

# Provider responses

## **Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**

*Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust would like to thank Health watch Lancashire & Blackpool for their Supporting access to services for Military Veterans report April 2018*

*The Trust signed the Military Covenant on 30 January 2018 highlighting the commitment of the Trust.*

*To increase awareness amongst staff and service user's posters designed by NHS Employers (NHSE) and Health Education England (HEE) have been laminated and are being distributed to Wards and Outpatient Departments.*

*The Trust currently holds the Bronze Award of the Employers Recognition Scheme and in March submitted evidence and application form to be considered for the Silver Award. The results of this submission will be known in June 2018.*

*The HEE have put together a presentation pack including slides and an information pack for staff to help raise their awareness of how to assist and support current service personnel and Veterans. Gay Jackson from HEE gave a presentation at Ground Round in May 2016 to highlight the work that is being done by the NHS and to give staff information on how to signpost current and ex-service personnel who require further support.*

*The Trust has an Armed Forces Champion who links in with local organisations such as the Royal British Legion (RBL), Soldier, Sailors and Air Force Association (SSAFA), and Fylde Ex-Service Liaison Committee (FESLC) in order to improve how the Trust supports current and ex-service personnel. The Trust's Armed Forces Champion works with the Armed Forces Champion from Blackpool Borough Council, Fleetwood Town Football Community Trust and Blackpool Football Club Community Trust to promote services, support mechanisms, health and fitness schemes to the local armed forces community.*

# Directory

## Chorley and District Ex Services Association



The Association was started in 2002 to bring together the men and women residing in Chorley and the surrounding districts, who served in the Armed forces and/or the Merchant Navy, or who are related to personnel who served. The membership also extends to any affiliation to a member of the Armed forces or Merchant Navy, e.g. relatives, friends or those who have a serious affirmation to the above.

The members meet on the second Wednesday of each month for an informal lunch and get together to discuss all manner of subjects. There is a formal members meeting on the last Wednesday of the month where more serious discussions of items such as members' welfare, organisation of trips for members and organisation of the association.

There are several trips organised by the Welfare Officer that all members are entitled to participate in. Costs for the trips are subsidised from funds raised entirely by the members of the association.

Annually a formal Christmas Lunch is arranged for the members and relatives that is regularly attended by senior civic and parliamentary dignitaries for the district.

<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://cadesa.co.uk/index.html">http://cadesa.co.uk/index.html</a>
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:secretary@cadesa.co.uk">secretary@cadesa.co.uk</a>
<b>Write to:</b>	The Secretary C&DESA 49a Hodder Avenue Chorley PR7 3PB
<b>Telephone:</b>	01257 233281

## The Royal British Legion - Lancashire



The Royal British Legion is the nation's leading Armed Forces charity providing care and support to all members of the British Armed Forces past and present and their families. It is also the national Custodian of Remembrance and safeguards the Military Covenant between the nation and its Armed Forces. It is best known for the annual Poppy Appeal and its emblem the red poppy.

Visit [www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk) for details of our national initiatives.

We are here to administer and support the delivery of welfare services and the membership and fundraising activities of the Legion's branches and clubs throughout Lancashire. Membership of The Royal British Legion is available to all adults, not just members or ex-members of the forces and we always welcome new members.

<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://counties.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/lancashire">http://counties.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/lancashire</a>
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:jmcnamara@britishlegion.org.uk">jmcnamara@britishlegion.org.uk</a>
<b>Write to:</b>	The Royal British Legion PO Box 718 Wigan Lancashire WN1 9PQ
<b>Telephone:</b>	0808 802 8080

## Blind Veterans UK



We help blind ex-Service men and women lead independent and fulfilling lives by supporting them with our in-depth expertise, experience and full range of services. We give veterans much-needed support to adjust to sight loss, overcome the challenges of blindness and enjoy daily life. Our charity has been offering physical and emotional support to vision-impaired veterans since 1915.

<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.blindveteransuk.org.uk">www.blindveteransuk.org.uk</a>
<b>Telephone:</b>	0800 389 7979



## Veterans Breakfast Clubs - Leyland



**Veterans Café**

Veterans of any age and their families welcome

1st and 3rd Saturday of every month

10am – 1pm

Roccoco Coffee Lounge,  
Chapel Brow, Leyland

For further information tel: 01772 625546

Veterans Café supported by:

**SOUTH**  
**SHIELDS**

Partners of Charity Services

**BAE SYSTEMS**

Welcome to the Leyland Veterans Breakfast Club. We are a group of veterans & serving members of Her Majesty's Armed Forces, & like other Veteran's Breakfast Clubs around the country, & overseas our ethos is mutual support; it works because we all have a similar humor & outlook, & the social life we now enjoy is like our service days.

<b>Website:</b>	<a href="https://afvbc.co.uk/">https://afvbc.co.uk/</a>
<b>Telephone:</b>	01772 625526

## Veterans in Communities



Veterans in Communities (VIC) is an East Lancashire based Armed Forces charity that's works across Rossendale, Pendle, Burnley, Hyndburn, Ribble, Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale. VIC supports those who have served in any of the branches of the armed forces, emergency services and their families who have or are having difficulties with returning to 'Civvy Street'.

We offer a range of activities which are run by veterans or retired members of the emergency services. The range of activities include; walking, horticulture, allotments, social trips, helping the local community with small projects, training opportunities, outreach in local areas, art groups, craft groups, and a Singing Group.

<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.vic.org.uk">www.vic.org.uk</a>
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:info@vic.org.uk">info@vic.org.uk</a>
<b>Write to:</b>	12 Bury Road Haslingden Rossendale East Lancashire BB4 5PL
<b>Telephone:</b>	01706 833180

## Dig In North West



Dig In North West is a team. Our team is made up of people from the military community - both serving and veteran, and our families. We are here to support each other through challenging times and celebrate good times. We are based in a walled garden within a local park although there is no public access to our site. However, this is about much more than gardening. The idea is simple - people get together and do something practical that benefits both themselves and serves others - and maybe also helps a team-mate through a tough time. You can come here to garden; growing plants in the greenhouse for us to sell, or food in the garden to share with the group. You can learn a new practical skill such as carpentry, photography or stonemasonry. You can go fishing or out on various trips. Or you can come and just relax with others who have served - sharing some tea, toast and a chat.

**Website:**

[www.diginnorthwest.org](http://www.diginnorthwest.org)

**Email:**

[info@diginnorthwest.org](mailto:info@diginnorthwest.org)

**Write to:**

The Dig In North West Garden  
Ashton Park Walled Garden  
Off Pedders Lane  
Preston,  
Lancashire,  
PR2 1HR

**Telephone:**

01772 735558 or 07810128019

## **Military Veterans Service - Lancashire Care Foundation Trust**



We provide mental health support to ex-service personnel for conditions including depression, alcohol and substance misuse, anger problems and post-traumatic stress disorder. Some people who have served in the armed forces say that they can experience emotional difficulties and find it hard to ask for help. This may be because of difficult experiences or simply adjusting to civilian life.

Our expert team is overseen by a Consultant Clinical Psychologist and includes clinical psychologists, specialist psychological wellbeing practitioners and case managers who all understand armed forces culture. Some of our staff are veterans themselves and others have family members in the forces. Veterans have told us this makes a big difference in giving them confidence that the service can help them.

Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust previously delivered the service across the North West as part of a pilot and has helped over 1,000 veterans with a range of mental health problems. Lancashire Care is working in partnership with Pennine Care to deliver the service to veterans in living in Lancashire.

You can refer yourself online via our simple [online referral form](#).

<b>Website:</b>	<a href="https://www.lancashirecare.nhs.uk/military-veterans-mental-health-services">https://www.lancashirecare.nhs.uk/military-veterans-mental-health-services</a>
<b>Email:</b>	mviapt.enquiries.nw@nhs.net
<b>Telephone:</b>	0300 323 0707

## Combat Stress



For almost a century, we've helped former servicemen and women deal with issues like trauma, anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Find out about our history and origins.

Our employees are based around the UK in regional community teams, at our treatment centres and at our head office. You can find out more about us, as well as our patron, president and trustees and celebrity ambassadors.

Our research ensures that we are delivering the best possible services for our veterans. We are committed to publishing our research in external peer-reviewed academic journals to contribute to the advancement of the veteran mental health field.

If you're currently serving, or have served in the UK Armed Forces, you can call our 24-Hour Helpline to talk about your mental health.

<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.combatstress.org.uk">www.combatstress.org.uk</a>
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:helpline@combatstress.org.uk">helpline@combatstress.org.uk</a>
<b>Telephone:</b>	<a href="tel:08001381619">0800 138 1619</a> or <a href="tel:07537404719">07537 404 719</a>

## SSAFA - Lancashire



SSAFA provides lifelong support to anyone who is currently serving or has ever served in the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, the British Army or the Royal Air Force.

We're ready to help you and your family, whenever and wherever you need us.

**Website:**

<https://www.ssafa.org.uk/lancashire>

**Write to:**

SSAFA  
4 St Dunstan's Hill  
London  
EC3R 8AD.

**Telephone:**

0800 731 4880

## Lancashire Age UK Veterans Service



This valuable service gives up to 12 weeks support for older veterans born before 1950, providing information and advice, practical support at home, access to social events and opportunities to become more active.

Funded from the Aged Veterans Fund, funded by the Chancellor using LIBOR funds. Tailored practical support for older veterans born before 1950 living in Lancashire.

**Website:**

[www.ageuklancs.org.uk](http://www.ageuklancs.org.uk)

**Telephone:**

0300 303 1234

## Admiral Nurses



The Royal British Legion Admiral Nursing service is a community dementia nurse service which offers specialist support, information and advice for the carers of people with dementia.

Admiral Nurses are mental health nurses specialising in dementia care. The service aims to help family carers gain the necessary skills, to assist with care for people with dementia and promote positive approaches in living with dementia and improving quality of life. The service has been developed in partnership with Dementia UK, a national charity which promotes and develops Admiral Nurses.

To qualify for this service the carer or person with dementia need to be a beneficiary of The Royal British Legion. The service is only available to those meeting the Legion's eligibility criteria. In brief, this includes anyone who has served in the UK Armed Forces for at least seven days as a Regular or Reservist (including National Service), their families, and carers. This includes widows, widowers, cohabiting partners or civil partners.

**Telephone:**

01257 244698

## Veterans Gateway



There is a huge network of organisations supporting the Armed Forces community, so finding the right one for your needs can be tricky. We make it quick and easy by being your first point of contact for whatever support you need, whether you are based in the UK or abroad.

Many of our team are veterans themselves so they understand the issues that people face after leaving the Armed Forces. They work with people on a one-to-one basis, connecting them with the right support as soon as possible.

**Website:**

<https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk/>

**Telephone:**

0808 802 1212 or text 81212



**Wings  
Centre  
Preston  
(RAF  
Association)**



In March 2016 the Royal Air Forces Association started a befriending scheme to provide one to one support for those in need of companionship. The Wings Centre will offer a group setting to get involved with the association and aims to offer a safe meeting place for our members and beneficiaries to come along and share experiences whilst building new friendships. We will develop a rolling programme of facilitated activities and events reflecting the desires of the local community; making the Wings Centre a hive of activity for those interested in the Armed Forces community.

It links nicely to our befriending scheme, offering support to those who need it or link to the Association via a group setting. Our activities and events are open to the wider public and will act as a bridge between the Armed Forces community and the people of Preston.

<b>Website:</b>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/pg/prestonwingscentre/services/">https://www.facebook.com/pg/prestonwingscentre/services/</a>
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:ian.barber@rafa.org.uk">ian.barber@rafa.org.uk</a>
<b>Write to:</b>	82-83 Fishergate Preston PR1 2NJ
<b>Telephone:</b>	0808 802 1212 or text 81212

## Veterans Association UK



The Veterans Association UK (VAUK) is a registered charity committed to helping veterans and serving military and their families with housing, mental health and social welfare issues. We also provide our services to UK emergency services veterans - ex Police, Fire, Ambulance, RNLI and Mountain Rescue services.

Our services are provided largely by a nationwide network of volunteers, that spans the country from Cornwall to the far north of Scotland! Our services are free to access and all our coordinators are fully trained.

<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://veteransassociationuk.co.uk/">http://veteransassociationuk.co.uk/</a>
<b>Write to:</b>	Unit N2, The Balcony Accrington Market
<b>Telephone:</b>	07713 329903

## Blesma



Blesma, The Limbless Veterans, is an Armed Forces charity dedicated to assisting serving and ex-Service men and women who have suffered life-changing limb loss or the use of a limb, an eye or sight. We support these men and women in their communities throughout the UK.

<b>Website:</b>	<a href="https://blesma.org/">https://blesma.org/</a>
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:ChadwellHeath@blesma.org">ChadwellHeath@blesma.org</a>
<b>Write to:</b>	Blesma, The Limbless Veterans Frankland Moore House 185-187 High Road Chadwell Heath, Romford Essex
<b>Telephone:</b>	020 8590 1124

**RFEA**



We provide employability and employment support to working age veterans in the UK. Current estimates are that one million working age veterans live in the UK. We know that unemployment rates for working age veterans are higher than for civilians.

We support veterans through life including those who have served for a short time and are in the 18-24 year old age range, through to older veterans. The over 50's are increasingly recognised as facing greater challenges in finding employment.

Our work includes early intervention, supporting veterans to find a new job, often when they have not succeeded in finding jobs through general civilian support. We prevent working age veterans from becoming long-term unemployed so that they can sustain an income and provide a stable life for themselves and their families. We increasingly work with those who are unemployed, who face higher barriers to employment and have a longer journey back to work. To do this, we link with welfare, healthcare and housing charities as well as working with veterans in the criminal justice sector.

**Website:**

<https://www.rfea.org.uk/>

## College for Military Veterans and Emergency Services



The College for Military Veterans and Emergency Services (CMVES), often referred to simply as 'the College', help people make a smooth transition from life in the uniformed services to civilian life.

The College is the outcome of many years' work with both Regular and Reservist Armed Forces personnel, the Veteran Community and military families. We guide and advise men and women who are planning to leave military service, be that through medical discharge, redundancy or choice. We provide the same service for the military Veteran community, emergency service personnel and their families.

<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.cmves.org.uk/">http://www.cmves.org.uk/</a>
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:info@cmves.org.uk">info@cmves.org.uk</a>
<b>Write to:</b>	Kirkham Building Bhailok Street Kirkham Street Preston PR1 7AD
<b>Telephone:</b>	01772 894039

## Lancashire Aden Veterans Association



We in the Association extend a warm welcome to all Servicemen and Servicewomen, their partners and their children. If you or your close family served with the Armed Forces, the support agencies, or one of the many civilian organisations who operated within Aden or The Protectorate you are eligible to become a member.

<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.adenveterans.org.uk/">http://www.adenveterans.org.uk/</a>
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:lionman498@gmail.com">lionman498@gmail.com</a>
<b>Telephone:</b>	01257 410598 or 07886351461

## Stand Easy



We are a charity, founded in 2015, that aims to treat veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) with acupuncture. We have had outstanding success in treating PTSD with acupuncture - more than 90% of the veterans we have treated report that their symptoms have dramatically improved, if not ceased entirely. We are unique amongst all the charities treating veterans in that:

There is no waiting list. We will see you as soon as possible. There is no need to talk about the traumatic events which caused the PTSD, if you do not wish to.

Our treatment protocol is fast and it is effective - often, only one acupuncture session is needed for the veteran to feel transformed, although most veterans come for, on average, 10 sessions. Treatment is completely free to veterans.

**Website:**

[www.standeasy.org.uk](http://www.standeasy.org.uk)

**Email:**

[mail@standeasy.org.uk](mailto:mail@standeasy.org.uk)

**Telephone:**

01603 666 546

## Blue Apples Heroes



Blue Apple Heroes supports the armed forces community, and their families, past and present from all conflicts.

How do we do this in a practical realistic way?

By meeting with veterans and their families in their own home.

We look at what their needs are, and then we work on a plan how best to support them. This might be anything from housing, to assisting them with counselling, employment, or just day to day living.

If combat stress is an issue, we can refer on to local NHS IAPTS and Combat Stress. Whilst having treatment BAH can support during and after treatment 365 days of the year.

Drop In Centre and Garden Centre Facilities

Our drop in centre is open Monday-Thursday 09.30-16.00. and closes at 15.30 on Fridays. Here were we can offer arts and crafts on a daily basis, Veterans only room, Training room and drop in coffee shop. We also have a garden centre, where veterans go and learn about social horticulture therapy.

**Website:** <http://www.blueappleveterans.org.uk/index.html>

**Email:** [marksmith@blueappleheroes.org.uk](mailto:marksmith@blueappleheroes.org.uk) or  
[denisemith@blueappleheroes.org.uk](mailto:denisemith@blueappleheroes.org.uk)

**Write to:**  
32-34 Buttermarket St  
Warrington,  
Cheshire,  
WA1 2LL

**Telephone:** 01925 657947

## The Big White Wall



Big White Wall is an online mental health and wellbeing service offering self-help programmes, creative outlets and a community that cares. When you're dealing with everyday stressors or major life events, we'll help you get through it. At the heart of Big White Wall is its community of members, who support, help each other and share what's troubling them in a safe and anonymous environment. The site is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year - no need to wait until morning, the next business day or for a doctors' appointment. You can find support simply by logging on.

To ensure safety and anonymity, the site is monitored by clinically trained 'Wall Guides', who are online 24/7. We know that finding help when you're distressed can be hard, so our Wall Guides are also there to help you feel welcome and guide you on how to get the most from our services.

Big White Wall is available to all UK service personnel, veterans and family members thanks to support from NHS England, Ministry of Defence and Help for Heroes. Big White Wall is proud to be a member of Contact Armed Forces, a charity partner of Heads Together, led by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and HRH Prince Harry.

**Website:**

<https://www.bigwhitewall.com/>

**Email:**

[theteam@bigwhitewall.com](mailto:theteam@bigwhitewall.com)

## Fleetwood Town Football Club



Fleetwood Town FC Community Trust will engage with ex-military personnel/serving personnel, their spouses and children on a health/wellbeing/fitness programme in the area.

We will endeavour to incorporate some social inclusion activities, nutritional advice, team-working and some personal goal setting to improve their overall wellbeing. We will work with individuals who can come together as a group or with already established groups that just need some diversity or help/advice. A range of different advisory sessions will be delivered each week, after the sporting activities, beneficiaries will be signposted to the relevant agencies for additional support if required.

**Website:**

[Dave.Whitworth@fleetwoodtownfc.com](mailto:Dave.Whitworth@fleetwoodtownfc.com)

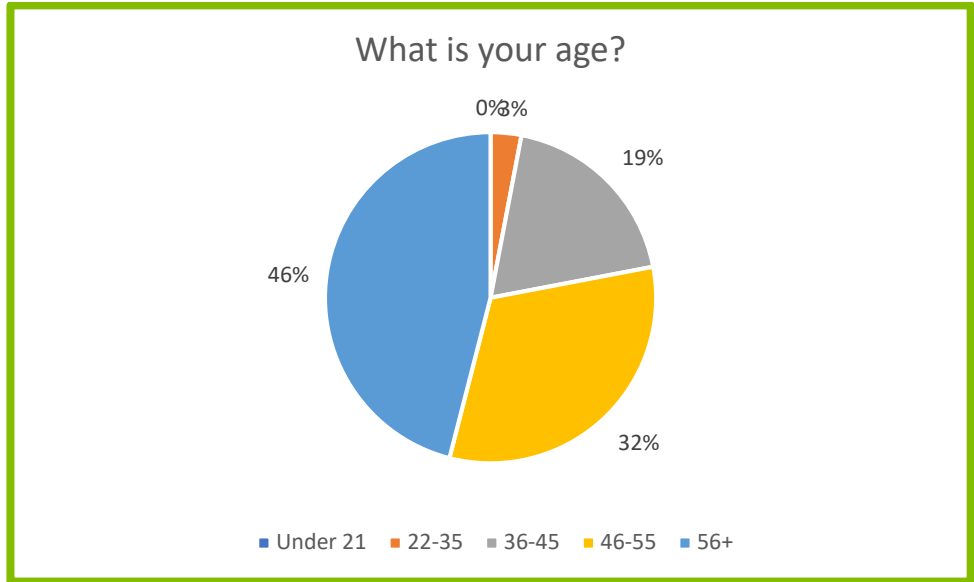
**Telephone:**

01253 208442 or 07825698506

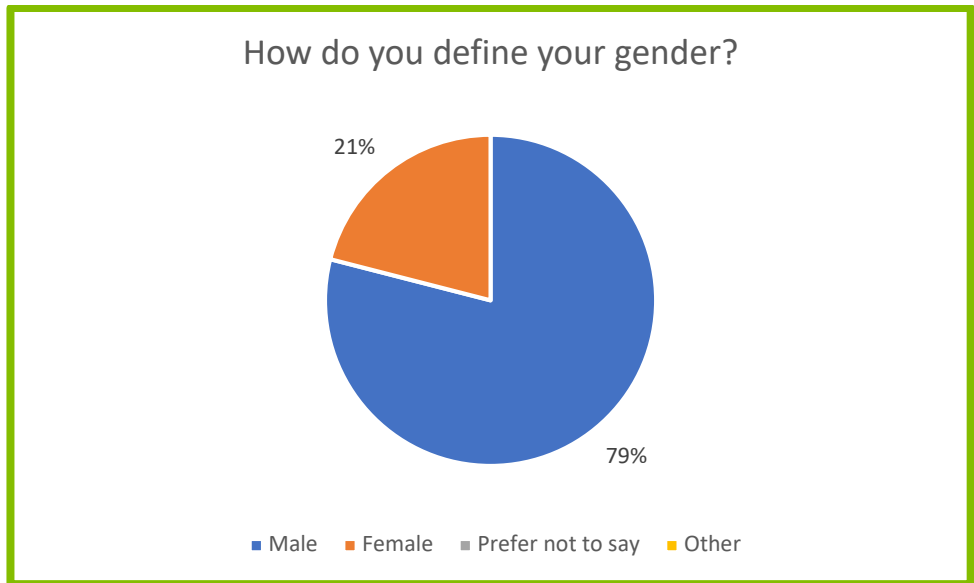


# Demographics

## What is your age?



## How do you define your gender?



## Is your gender the same as the one listed on your original birth certificate?

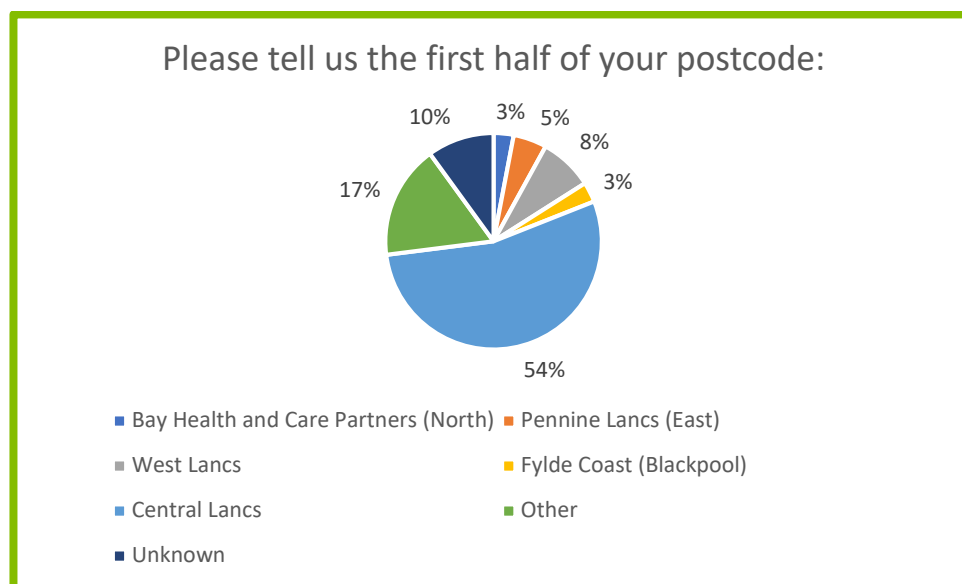
Yes	100%
No	0%

## What is your ethnicity?

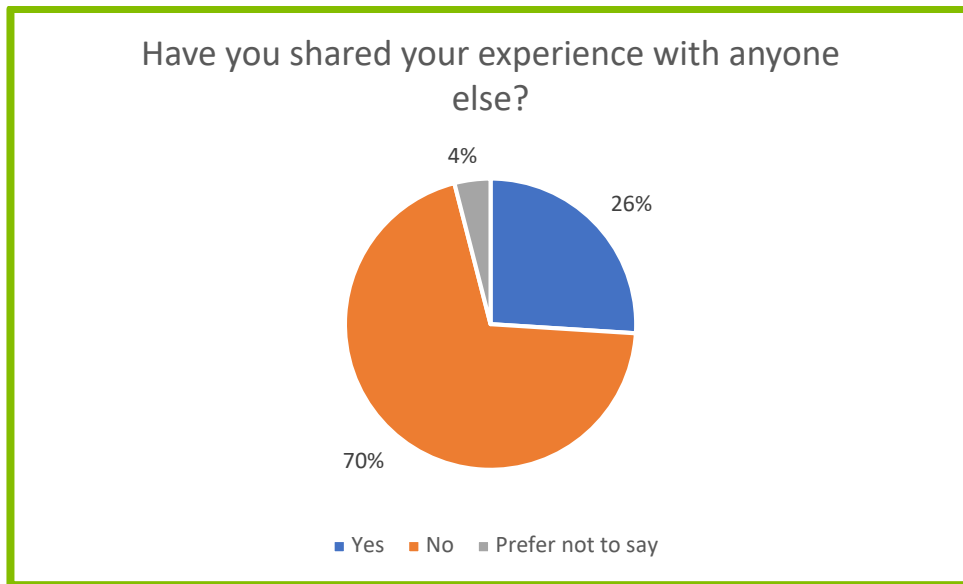
We asked all respondents how they describe their ethnicity - 100% of respondents told us they describe their ethnicity as 'White British'.

## Please tell us the first half of your postcode:

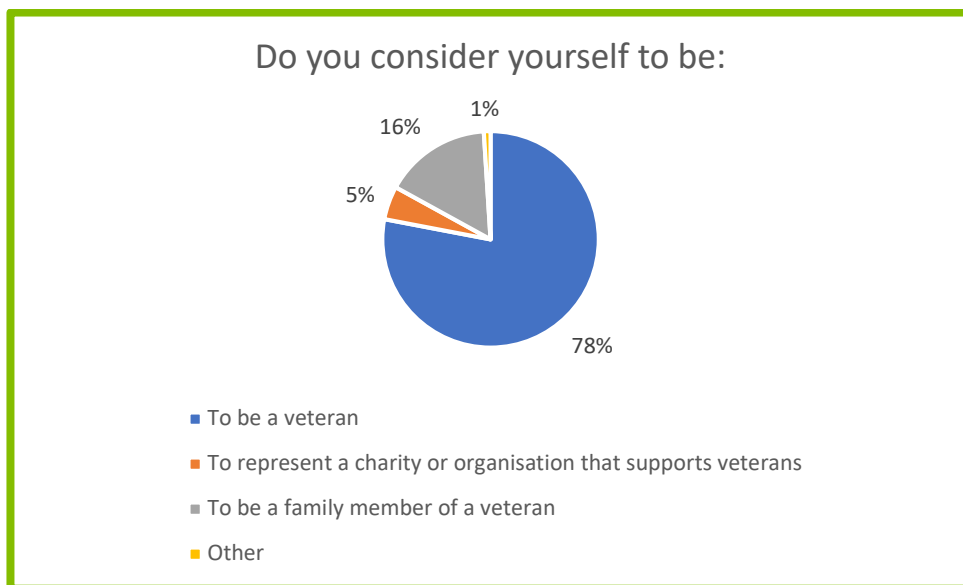
*For ease of reading, postcodes have been filtered by Local Delivery Plan (or LDP) area. For more information on LDPs, please see Appendix 2 on 44.*



## Have you shared your experience with anyone else?



## Do you consider yourself to be:



Other:

*"I am a veteran and I work for a service charity."*

# Appendix 1

	Heard of	Accessed	Neither
Military Veterans Service (NHS)	27%	9%	64%
Combat Stress	62%	12%	26%
The Royal British Legion	70%	28%	2%
Admiral Nurses	18%	0%	82%
Veterans in the Community	20%	9%	70%
Veterans Gateway	37%	2%	61%
RAF Association	67%	16%	18%
Dig In (North West)	21%	14%	65%
Veterans Association UK	44%	12%	44%
RFEA - The Forces Employment Charity	26%	7%	67%
Veterans Breakfast Clubs	26%	41%	33%
Blesma	51%	5%	44%
SSAFA	82%	16%	2%

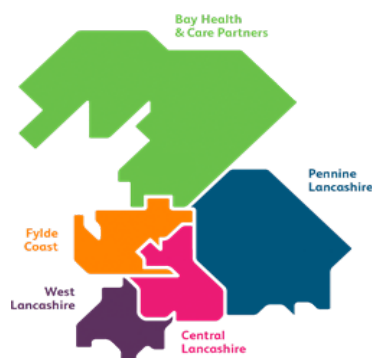
# Appendix 2

## Reference for the reader - STP and ICPs explained

Throughout this report, we refer to Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) areas. The five ICPs operate as part of the Healthier Lancashire and South Cumbria Sustainability and Transformation Partnership also known as the STP. The STP is a group of organisations including Local Healthwatch who work together to improve health and care in our region. For more information [www.lancshiresouthcumbria.org.uk](http://www.lancshiresouthcumbria.org.uk).

Information in this report is provided to organisations within the STP to ensure that the public voice is used to influence change in service improvement and redesign.

## Map of Integrated Care Partnership areas



Below are the ICP areas in Lancashire:

- **Bay Health & Care Partners:** Lancaster and Morecambe
- **Pennine Lancashire:** Burnley, Pendle, Rossendale, Hyndburn, Ribble Valley and Blackburn with Darwen
- **Central Lancashire:** Preston, Chorley and South Ribble
- **West Lancashire:** Ormskirk and Skelmersdale
- **Fylde Coast:** Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre

# healthwatch Lancashire

**Visit:** [www.healthwatchlancashire.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchlancashire.co.uk) **Call:** 01524 239100  
**Twitter:** @HW\_Lancashire **Facebook:** @lancshealthwatch