

# Views and Experiences of Using Mental Health Services: Feedback from Veterans in Norfolk and Suffolk

April 2016

WE DID

*A veteran is defined by the British Government as anybody who has served one day in HM Armed Forces (as a regular or reserve).*

## Why did we do this project?

- Veterans are recognised as an under-represented group.
- The vast majority of men and women leaving the Armed Forces do very well in Civvy St; however, a significant minority struggle badly with life outside the wire.
- These veterans tend to have very poor outcomes, especially when it comes to mental health and alcohol and they may have particular needs that are not being met by existing services.

## What did we do?

- We interviewed 30 veterans from Norfolk and Suffolk who had used or tried to use local NHS mental health services since 2012, to find out more about how veterans experience and would like to experience these services.
- 29 interviews were recorded (with informed consent) for analysis, translating to over 30 hours of data.
- Verbal data was then transcribed and Template Analysis was conducted to identify key themes.
- We also looked for ways to work with key stakeholders to improve services for local veterans and ensure that national obligations towards veterans were being met in Norfolk and Suffolk.

**Outcome:** Enabled veterans and professionals from Norfolk to contribute to a national review of mental health services for veterans by chairing a meeting with commissioners from NHS England.

**Outcome:** Produced an information resource about local support for veterans. Helped produce a protocol supporting GPs better identify, code and treat veterans. Shared these resources with all GPs in Norfolk as well as other professionals.

**Outcome:** Worked with Ministry of Defence and Health Education East of England to organise four Veteran Healthcare Conferences, providing specific training for 200 (1 in 4) GP students across the East of England. Feedback was very positive and all delegates said they have changed their practice. We have received examples of this already.

**Outcome:** Contributed to a campaign to end the injustice faced by War Pensioners, which led to Norfolk County Council's decision to formally disregard the national guidelines and stop the discrepancy between different compensation schemes, meaning that about 100 of our most vulnerable veterans will no longer have to pay over the odds for their social care.

