



Defence Medical Welfare Service

A guide for Health Care Professionals,
Organisations and Support Workers



Supporting the Frontline



Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS) is an independent charity providing medical welfare to those who have, and continue to, operate on the frontline. We place trained professional welfare officers in locations throughout the UK to deliver much-needed additional support for those who are on the clinical pathway.

Whether it is a new or pre-existing issue, our service is for anyone undergoing treatment for a health-related condition. With a focus on both physical and mental health, our welfare staff can be found in hospitals, veteran hubs, and community outreach programmes throughout the UK.

At DMWS, we take a holistic, non-clinical approach to healthcare. Our goal is to remove the environmental, economic, and social obstacles that stand in the way of recovery. This can speed up discharge from hospital, help patients recover more quickly, and reduce the likelihood of readmission or the need for onward referral. Our expertise lies in our early intervention and assessment of patient

needs outside the clinical treatment pathway, allowing health care providers to focus on their core work.

Our services are designed to be delivered in partnership with the NHS, with welfare officers embedded directly within hospital settings. We work hand-in-hand with healthcare professionals to better coordinate our support services and provide context and insight into the unique challenges faced by the Armed Forces community.

The knowledge, expertise, and local networks of the DMWS welfare team enable appropriate referrals to localised services in both the statutory and third sectors. DMWS can access a broad range of third sector services and support to address the concerns of the service user and their families, reducing the burden on health and local authority services.

Our free service is for anyone who has committed their lives to serve their community and country, including Armed Forces personnel, reservists, veterans and their families, police officers, and other frontline services.

What are the benefits of using DMWS?

Working with DMWS offers more than just benefits to patients and their families. It has broader benefits for related organisations and health care providers.

- Saving money by reducing hospital length-of stay through fostering positive engagement and sourcing external support
- Helping to tackle Delayed Transfer of Care issues by providing additional options for transitional care and thereby reducing 'bed-blocking'
- Reducing 'Did Not Attend' (DNAs) rates by accompanying patients to appointments
- Freeing up clinical staff to concentrate on their core duties by dealing with non-medical issues
- Assist with the patients discharge plan and mobilising additional veteran and families specific resources in the community often reducing the LOS by 1-2 days or greater
- Working closely with other third sector and statutory organisations to improve support at home provision which in turn can reduce the risk of re-admission and help the patient build self-reliance
- Helping to reduce the risk of complaints or litigation by acting as a professional intermediary and resolving issues as they arise
- Delivering a positive patient experience leading to improved feedback for health care partners
- Through engagement and advocacy our Welfare Officers can help towards securing accreditations such as the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme and Veteran Aware

By working directly in hospital settings our Welfare Officers can assist both primary and secondary NHS services to demonstrate 'due regard to the principles of the Covenant'; a requirement of the new Covenant Duty which places a legal obligation on statutory functions in healthcare.





How do we help?

Patients arrive in clinical or medical settings with a range of support needs. Where our service is established, our staff will work alongside health care providers to assess, identify, and address the social care, wellbeing and welfare needs of the patient and their family.

- Making an independent and impartial early assessment of the patients' needs
- Visiting patients in hospital and providing clinic and outpatient appointment support
- Liaison between the workplace, the NHS, service providers and the patient
- Offering a confidential and impartial 'Listening Ear' service, encouraging engagement
- Signposting and supported referrals for patients to other statutory, voluntary, community organisations and services
- Recognising issues that may be affecting a patient's wellbeing such as debt, housing, family breakdown and substance misuse
- Identifying possible safeguarding issues of the individual and/or family members
- Liaising with and supporting family members
- Accompanying families to critical care and specialist units
- Supporting the bereaved and terminally ill
- Resolving conflict and managing patient and family expectations

How to refer a patient for DMWS support


If you have a patient or member of the patient's family who needs our help, please contact us using any of the methods below. We will then ask the team operating in your area to contact you to discuss how they can help.

When you get in touch with us it would be helpful if you have some, if not all, the following information available:

- Name and contact details of person referred
- Front Line Service worked in (Army, Navy, Police Force etc)
- Hospital & ward admitted to/clinic location
- Time admitted/time of appointment
- Details of their next of kin

Our support line is open Monday to Friday from 9.00am – 5.00pm.

If you need to reach us out of office hours, please leave a message and a member of our team will contact as soon as possible the next working day.

 **0800 999 3697**

 **referrals@dmws.org.uk**

 **www.dmws.org.uk**



Op RESTORE

The Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service

Op RESTORE is an NHS service that provides specialist care and treatment to veterans who have physical health problems as a result of their time in the Armed Forces. Op RESTORE supports veterans with service attributable physical health conditions, regardless of how long they served for and when they left the Armed Forces.

Op RESTORE consists of twelve NHS Veterans Trauma centres and four specialist units. These contain both military and civilian medical experts who can assist veteran patients with their physical service-related health problem.

For a patient to qualify for an Op RESTORE referral, they will need to be a veteran. A veteran is anyone who has served a minimum of one day in Her Majesty's Armed Forces, whether regular or reserve. The patient must also be entitled to routine NHS medical care (meet residency requirements), and the injury will need to be a result of their service. A GP can refer a patient even if they were not medically discharged.



Op RESTORE can support patients by:

- Providing personalised treatment within the NHS
- Treating patients through military and civilian clinicians who understand the military environment and specialise in the type of physical health problems they have
- Helping families and carers of veterans with physical health problems access appropriate support services

Op RESTORE will continue to only accept GP referrals; GPs can obtain a referral form by emailing imperial.oprestore@nhs.net

Op COURAGE

The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service

Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service is the new overarching name for the Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS), Veteran's Mental Health Complex Treatment Service (CTS) and Veterans' Mental Health High Intensity Service (HIS). The name has been developed to make it easier for veterans, their families and those leaving the military to find help.



Op COURAGE is for service leavers, reservists, veterans and their families, who can contact the service directly, or ask a GP, charity or someone else, such as a family member or friend, to refer them. To receive support patients must be able to provide their military service number and be registered with their local GP practice.

Op COURAGE can support patients by:

- Supporting with intensive emergency care and treatment if patients are in a crisis
- Helping transition from military to civilian life by providing mental health care with Defence Medical Services (DMS)
- Supporting armed forces families affected by mental health problems, including help with access to local services

- Help recognise and treat early signs of mental health problems as well as more advanced mental health conditions and psychological trauma
- Help to access other NHS mental health services if required, such as finding an NHS psychological therapies service (IAPT) and eating disorder services
- Help contacting charities and local organisations who can support wider health and wellbeing needs, such as housing, relationships, finances, employment, drug and alcohol misuse and social support.

Further information, including contact details for the service in your region, visit <https://nhs.uk/opcourage>





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