



Military Personnel (Serving, Reservists & Ex-Serving)

Practice Guidelines

Warwickshire and West Mercia CRC

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Introduction

Over the past 5 years, military personnel in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) have been subject to increased media attention. This document outlines the background to working with military personnel and provides practitioners with practice guidelines on identification, recording, assessment, top tips, the importance of onward referrals to other relevant support services and opportunities for further reading.

Background

In January 2014 the Justice Minister announced a package of measures to identify and support veterans when entering and leaving prison. The emphasis was on early interventions, better coordination of veteran specific services and tailored through the gate support.

The number of veterans within the criminal justice estate ranges between 3.5% and 9.1%. Veterans within English and Welsh prisons are sentenced for a wide range of offences but the most common are for violence against the person (including domestic abuse), sexual offences and drugs.

The needs of military personnel have been identified as:

Mental health - depression and suicide, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), adjustment and identity issues

Substance misuse - evidence suggests military personnel were less likely to report drug use

Physical health - military personnel are likely to have greater physical health problems and disability

Accommodation needs - military personnel are less likely to report accommodation needs

Education needs - evidence suggests that military personnel may be more likely to have qualifications than other prisoners; however, those with lower educational levels were predictive of violent offending for this group

Whilst the needs of military personnel look similar to our other service users, it is the root cause of these issues that need to be identified, confirmed and addressed accordingly. Please note that some of these issues may have been present prior to enlistment and so it is the skills of the practitioner that are needed to unpick these.

To date there has been a variety of reports undertaken to identify the various issues and needs relating this cohort. In addition to the needs identified above it has been noted that the recording and flagging of military personnel status has been poor, yet this is a significant factor in engaging with and referring on those within the CJS; providing they understand why we are recording such and for what purpose. Information sharing with other organisations is critical in ensuring that an individual is supported to successfully reintegrate into civilian life alongside increasing desistance from crime.

It is important to differentiate between the three sectors of the Armed Forces; these are the British Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. It is important because there are substantial differences inherent within the various cultures and as such different issues may be present within different services and those who have served within them. Practitioners do not need to experts in these cultures as the expectation will be to ask questions and develop a personalised approach.

Given the above it is therefore essential that CRCs develop and progress their work with military personnel to ensure that we are not only meeting the needs of our service users but we are applying best practice in order to promote their journey of desistance from crime.

Practice Guidelines - Statement of Intention

It is WWM CRC's responsibility to 'ask the question' regarding a service users military status as outlined in induction paperwork. This will enable us as a service to clearly identify military personnel, record this within our systems and flag appropriately to others, where relevant. It is also important that we establish and confirm an individuals military status because it unlocks a variety of pre-existing support services which can aide a practitioner in sentence plan formulation and provide access to interventions and resources that are already geared to work with this particular cohort; therefore lessening the burden on practitioners and enabling a holistic approach to rehabilitation.

It is CRC good practice that military personnel are not defined by their military status. It is therefore essential that practitioners consider whether the individual's experience of military life is an underpinning criminogenic factor of their offending behaviour; and/or a factor in determining the welfare provision required; and/or simply a feature of their previous employment history. Practitioners need to pay special attention to ensuring that when detailing a military personnel's history they are applying a level of analysis as opposed to just narrative. In this way we would expect assessments to detail not only features of their service history and experiences but also an analytical assessment on the relevance of this, if any, to their offending behaviour.

It is also CRC good practice to support individuals to accept responsibility not only for their offending behaviour but for their own journey of desistance. In the same way that alcohol is not an excuse for committing domestic abuse, experience of serving in the armed forces is similarly not an excuse for offending behaviour, as such a clear analysis will be vital in ensuring that we support individuals to take responsibility and ownership for their behaviour and actions.

Practice Guidelines

All practitioners are required to adhere to the following guidelines:

Identification - Questions regarding military status must be asked and all details recorded onto nDelius. *Ideally this should take place at the earliest contact with the service user. Verification of these details can be obtained by notifying the Remember Veterans Criminal Justice Project (telephone 02476 348 227).*

Recording - The military status of individuals will need entering in the personal details section of n-Delius.

Assessment - It is critical that an individual's service history is considered within their assessment of both risk and needs. This in turn will enable practitioners to determine whether or not their service history represents an underpinning criminogenic factor.

Aspects of Assessment:

- Information collection regarding their service history (please note that this is a potted history as opposed to an in-depth description of their military experiences, which they may be unwilling to provide particularly if they have experienced traumatic service).
- Should the individual still be serving in the military (either full time or as a reservist) then contact should be made with their Commanding Officer.
- Is this information pertinent or relevant to their offending behaviour i.e. is it an underpinning factor?
- If it is relevant then in what way does this need to be factored into sentence plan formulation (consider if they need referral to a specific intervention or if programme staff need to be made aware of their experiences etc).
- Sense check your assessment; whilst it is important to note the possible traumatic situations that they may have experienced, this does not impact on their understanding of 'right or wrong' and as such should not be used to excuse offending behaviour. That said, acknowledging the needs of individuals and the possible trauma experienced is critical in empowering an individual to lead a crime free life whilst addressing any additional needs.

- Is there any additional resource required to aid resettlement and rehabilitation, e.g. in relation to substance misuse, finances, accommodation or welfare, and if so identify the relevant providing organisation.

Whilst elements of a service user's military experience may feature in the various sections of OASys, practitioners are required to place the facts and analysis of their military service in the ETE section of OASys. This allows consistency and an ability for the CRC to collate data.

A checklist summarising these points is attached to this guidance.

Top Tips

- Remember you don't need to be an expert or have experienced military life to be able to assess and successfully supervise individuals who have. All practitioners have a wealth of transferrable engagement and assessment skills that enable them to work with any individual to identify criminogenic factors, formulate sentence plans and deliver interventions.
- Answers to questions pertaining to their service number and rank should roll off their tongue, so any hesitation then it's probably not the truth.
- Analyse don't tell a story.
- Utilise the current existing provision where necessary. There are a wealth of organisations geared to provide support for military personnel.
- Be aware of specific flash points which pertain to military personnel. These include the week leading up to, and the week after Remembrance Sunday, plus Christmas, which are peaks for suicide and self-harm amongst military personnel. Bonfire night may also cause some anxieties.
- On occasion military personnel may state that they are unable to disclose their service record due to it being of a sensitive nature. This is not an issue as our current providers of military record checks are able to utilise training codes to identify any individuals involved in potentially sensitive operations; and whilst the details of these will not be disclosed they can confirm or deny such attempts at secrecy.
- Irrespective of whether their military service is an underpinning factor of their offending behaviour, it is our responsibility as an organisation to inform all our service users of potential support services available to them in order to enhance their opportunities and social capital.
- As with all service users the ability to effectively manage a crisis and look forward rather than backwards is intrinsic in successful case management. Some individuals will have experienced significant trauma; however, managing this through appropriate channels, and ensuring supervision time is forward looking, is key.
- You may query the importance of establishing and verifying an individual's service record; however, not only is this vital in ensuring access to relevant services but should a service record be fabricated we would want to question this and investigate possible reasons why.
- As with any other service user, military personnel may use language which is unfamiliar to the practitioner, never be afraid to ask them to explain as they are the experts.
- Practitioners need to be aware that values and norms that are often established within civilian life can often be reversed whilst serving in the military and some of these may need to be challenged and reinforced. For example, in the Armed Forces whilst not condoned, assaults can occur as a means of dealing with disputes/disagreements amongst other personnel and often a blind eye is turned, whereas theft is considered a significant breach of trust.
- The use of peer mentors can be effective in empowering individuals to integrate successfully into civilian life; however, it is important to note that careful matching of peer mentors is vital. This is for two reasons; ranking may still play a part in civilian life as it did in the military and may impact upon their willingness to disclose; links with other military support need to be forward looking and avoid further entrenchment.

Support Services

Remember Veterans Referral Helpline 02476 348 227

Funded by the Armed Forces Covenant to increase awareness of veterans in contact with the criminal justice system and provide practical assistance across Shropshire, Telford, Worcestershire Herefordshire and Warwickshire.

SSAFA – 0800 731 4880

An Armed Forces charity, formerly known as Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association, is a UK charity that provides lifelong support to serving men and women and veterans from the British Armed Forces and their families or dependents.

The Royal British Legion (RBL) – 0808 802 8080

Is a British charity providing financial, social and emotional support to members and veterans of the British Armed Forces, their families and dependants.

Combat Stress - 0800 138 1619

Is a registered charity in the United Kingdom offering residential and community treatment to former members of the British Armed Forces suffering from a range of mental health conditions including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Combat Stress provides treatment for all Veterans suffering with mental illness free of charge.

Information Sharing

As with all service users there will be a need to share information with other organisations. Practitioners are aware of the guidelines around the sharing of information and the current induction paperwork offers opportunities for permission to be given by the service user. When sharing information about military personnel it is vital to include their service number, Regiment and current military status.

Further Reading

The needs of ex-service personnel in the criminal justice system: a rapid evidence assessment: Clare Lyne and Daniel Packham Ministry of Justice
Ministry of Justice Analytical Series 2014.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389855/the-needs-of-ex-service-personnel-in-the-cjs-rapid-evidence-assessment.pdf

The needs of ex-service personnel in the criminal justice system: Evidence from two surveys

Jessica Kelly

Ministry of Justice

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389856/the-needs-of-ex-service-personnel-in-the-cjs-analytical-summary.pdf

An exploration of the Veteran Cohort within Durham Tees Valley Probation Trust. Managing military identity within the Criminal Justice System, ideas for the future.

Andrea Macdonald Probation Officer

<http://probationchiefs.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/An-exploration-of-the-veteran-cohort-by-Andrea-MacDonald.pdf>

UK veterans and the criminal justice system, The Royal British Legion.

http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/media/31583/LitRev_UKVetsCrimJustice.pdf



CRC Ex- Armed Forces Personnel (Veteran) Checklist



Attention Offender Managers! Is anyone on your caseload a Military Veteran? Did you know they can access specialist support?

- **Remember to ask the question**....."Have you ever been a member of the regular or reservist armed forces?"
- **Record it on n-Delius!** (Offender Index, Personal Circumstances, add service history)
- **Refer** where appropriate to the Criminal Justice Referral Service and Helpline (02476 348227) for specialist support and signposting
- **Contact** your local Remember Veterans Champion for further information, advice and guidance
- **Incorporate** all of this into your risk management plan

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served, and their families, are treated fairly and without disadvantage due to their military service.

Remember Veterans is funded by the Armed Forces Covenant to raise awareness of ex-Armed Forces Personnel in the Criminal Justice System and link them into services available to them.

Have you asked the relevant questions relating to military experience at induction and details of their service number and Regiment documented?	
Have you notified the Remember Veterans Criminal Justice Project?	
Have you documented this within nDelius?	
If confirmed have the relevant details been documented within the personal details section on nDelius?	
Have you conducted an assessment of risk and needs?	
Have you been analytical?	
Is the analysis documented within the ETE section of OASys (or equivalent)?	
Have you pulled through the needs of the individual into the sentence plan?	
Has the sentence plan been discussed, developed and agreed with the individual?	
Is there a need for additional support services?	
Is the individual aware of the various support they are entitled to as military personnel?	