



Remember Veterans is a project funded by the Covenant Fund's Large Grant scheme. With a focus on developing a strategic response across the criminal justice areas of Warwickshire and West Mercia the project aims to help improve support and outcomes for veterans engaged in the criminal justice system.

The project's key aims are:

- To develop an exemplar model of a joined-up strategy that delivers improvements in the services provided to offender veterans which can be adopted by other criminal justice areas
- To develop robust identification processes for veterans who have offended, at each stage of the criminal justice system, with appropriate and timely information sharing and referral routes into other service provision as required
- To develop a structured partnership between criminal justice agencies and the various UK military charities and providers of support within West Mercia and Warwickshire, ensuring there is a veterans' voice at a strategic level within the criminal justice system
- To develop the capacity of the voluntary sector to engage with and work alongside criminal justice professionals

The project is led by the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia on behalf of the criminal justice agencies in Warwickshire and West Mercia and has three main delivery partners, Ubique Partnerships Ltd, YSS and the Veterans Contact Point Charity.



1. Introduction

This workbook is aimed at practitioners working in and alongside criminal justice organisations and who are either new in post or who have not had the opportunity to attend one of the project's briefing events. The workbook provides an overview of veterans in the criminal justice system, some of the common issues they face and some useful websites which might help you in your work. This short introduction session will help you begin to develop a better understanding about veterans in the criminal justice system. A further workbook on becoming a Veterans' Champion is available if you want to learn more.

A short quiz is available at the back of this workbook to help you consolidate your learning.

2. Who is a veteran?

In the UK a veteran is:

- Anyone who has served in HM Armed Forces, regular or reserve including National Servicemen
- Veterans need not have served overseas or in conflict
- Merchant Mariners who have seen duty in military operations are also veterans
- Veterans can be any age from 16 to over 100 years old

The official UK government definition for a veteran is the most inclusive of any country. Everyone who has performed military service for at least one day and drawn a day's pay is termed a veteran. Their dependents may also qualify for certain benefits as part of the ex-service community.

NB. Different military charities have their own criteria for whom they will support. For some there is a minimum service qualification or restrictions to supporting Veterans from specific conflicts. Unless you are making a referral via the **Remember Veteran's Helpline** (02476 348227) you will need to check the criteria before making a direct referral.

3. Where are the veterans in the criminal justice system?

The criminal justice system covers England and Wales and is one of the major public services. Agencies such as the Police, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Courts, Youth Offending Teams, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies work together to deliver criminal justice. The sector is supported by a wide range of service providers from the VCSE and private sector, as well as other statutory organisations.

Veterans can be found within each stage of the criminal justice system with significant numbers being identified in prison or serving their sentence within the community. You will also find that there are veterans that work within criminal justice as Policemen and women, Prison Officers, Probation Officers etc. They can be a valuable resource to draw upon to support veteran offenders.

“I’d been in the Navy and did a couple of different jobs before joining Probation. My first job was working in a probation hostel and I was surprised to find a couple of ex forces guys in there. They were not the easiest of residents for the other staff but I found I could more easily relate to them and work with the positive experiences they’d had whilst in the forces.”

4. Doesn’t the government have a responsibility to help those who serve and those who have served in the military?

Yes. The Government has set out its responsibilities for serving military, their families and those who have previously served in a Covenant:

- The Armed Forces Covenant sets out the obligation that the Government, the Nation and the Armed Forces Community – those who serve, whether Regular or Reserve, veterans and their families – have to one another.
- The Covenant key principles are that veterans should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services; and that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given the most such as the injured and the bereaved. The Covenant belongs to the whole Nation, and it is not just for the government to deliver. Local authorities, local communities, public services, businesses, charities, individuals and the Armed Forces themselves have a role to play.

If you work for the Police, Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service or Community Rehabilitation company there are policies and procedures that have been established to recognise the commitment to the Covenant.

5. Why is it important to identify if someone has served in the military – shouldn’t we be treating people equally?

The whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

The Armed Forces Covenant.

The Covenant is in place to ensure that servicemen and women and veterans are not treated less favorably than other citizens. However, an important element of case working in the criminal justice system is understanding someone’s background and experiences. A veteran’s service in the armed forces may be relevant to any planned interventions you may be considering.

Veterans who have health related problems, both physical and mental, can be a priority for treatment in the NHS and it’s important that you are aware of this.

Veterans are also entitled to apply for support from military charities like the Royal British Legion, SSAFA, Combat Stress etc. The support from military charities can be wide ranging

and can include support with issues such as debt relief, accommodation, employment, mental health, physical health, assessment of service pensions, training, peer support, opportunities for volunteering etc.

Veterans are eligible to apply for support but are not necessarily guaranteed to receive it. Each charity, depending on criteria, will assess individual applications. Avoid building up the expectations of the veteran you are referring for support. Sometimes a refusal from a charity to provide support can be disappointing and impact negatively on the veteran. If an application for support is turned down, the decision with reasons will be provided to the individual.

6. I've heard that some veterans don't like to talk about their past. Why?

Many veterans will consciously choose not to disclose their military service to the police, courts, probation or prison. There are many reasons for this. For some it may be a matter of pride and a feeling of loss of status and low self-worth associated with their criminal offences. For others it may be a suspicion of authority or fear of being treated differently and singled out by others, particularly in prison. Some may have served in the armed forces or reserves many years ago or had only undertaken a short period of service and don't identify themselves as being a veteran. Many veterans who have seen active service are unlikely to discuss their experiences with 'civvies' as they don't think they understand or have empathy with them.

Many veterans who experience difficulties are less likely to be open to others about their experiences and feelings and this will include partners, close relatives and friends. Their training has instilled pride and discipline within them and this can present barriers to engagement as they may find it difficult to talk about the difficulties they face and problems they experience.

When you ask someone the question '**Have you ever served in any of the UK Armed Forces as a Regular or Reservist?**' they will likely want to know why you are asking and what you will do with the information. You will need to be able to explain why it's important for them to disclose the information and how it could be of benefit for them to do so.

7. What should I do when someone tells me they've served in the armed forces?

In an interview or when providing support, it is important to show interest in what is being said. Ask questions such as:

- Who did you serve with - Navy, Army, Royal Air Forces (RAF)?
- What Regiment to you service with?
- What trade did you have?
- Where did you serve?
- How long did you serve for?
- What have you done since leaving?

Refrain from asking too challenging a question such as did you shoot anyone? Or did you kill anyone? That is unless relevant to investigation or the planning of interventions e.g. referral to mental health services.

It may be relevant to ask about service in any conflicts/theatres of war such as **Northern Ireland, The Falklands, Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan**, as active service may have affected the veteran's mental or physical wellbeing.

As with other casework, you will need to record the information on your own organisation's data management systems.

If it's likely that you are going to refer to a service charity now or in the future, you should capture information that the military charities require to verify an individual's service record. This information will be required by military charities who will verify their service before providing any financial support or funded services. Information required includes basic personal details and service information:

- Address and contact details
- Names (surname and forenames in full) details of any changes to names e.g. married name
- Date of Birth
- National Insurance Number
- Service number
- Date of enlistment
- Date of discharge
- Details of Reservist service after finishing full time service
- Service/regiment/corps on enlistment
- Service/regiment/corps on discharge

They will be required to sign a declaration of their service when applying to military charities for support.

8. Are veterans more likely to offend?

No. According to Gov.UK the estimates of the numbers of veterans in prisons and within the probation caseload vary. An official estimate from 2009 suggest that former Armed Forces personnel (veterans) comprise around 3.5 per cent of the prison population (2,820) and around the same percentage of offenders on licence (5,860) in the community. Other studies have suggested much higher numbers. Some prisons having a particularly high concentration of veterans within their population.

Whilst there is a degree of dispute about the true number of veterans in the criminal justice system they do form a significant number. As an identifiable group they should have their needs planned for.

9. What are the main issues faced by veterans in the criminal justice system?

As with all service users it is important to look at the underlying issues that veterans experience which may contribute to offending behaviors. Whilst the issues that affect veterans are similar to those faced by other offenders, there is evidence to suggest that there are some that veterans may be more likely to experience:

- Mental health - with higher rates of depression and inclination to suicidal thoughts and attempts
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder - a factor that can contribute to offending behavior and is more prevalent amongst veterans and may be linked to increased tendency to violent actions
- Problems with identity - veterans are more likely to experience problems stemming from difficulties adjusting to civilian life and may experience social isolation and crisis about their identity.

Veteran offenders are also likely to experience problems in relation to physical health, alcohol and substance misuse, debt, accommodation, relationships and employment.

10. Sources of Support for veterans (Ex-Armed Forces Personnel)

In addition to existing support that may be available within your own organisation, for example a Veterans Champion, there is a wide range of additional support available to Armed Forces Veterans or their family.

You may already be aware of The Royal British Legion, Sailors Soldiers, Air Force Families Association (SSAFA), Help 4 Heroes, Combat Stress, Walking with the Wounded etc. Each charity has its own remit, and some are actively engaged supporting criminal justice agencies, for example, SSAFA caseworkers providing an in-reach service to prisons.

In Warwickshire and West Mercia, Remember Veterans has trained over 150 practitioners to act as Veterans' Champions across a range of organisations. The project has also established a referral helpline specifically for practitioners working in and alongside criminal justice. Details of the helpline and the work of the Remember Veterans project can be found at www.remember-veterans.com

A full list of Military Charities and Military Organisations that provide support can be found on the Cobseo (Confederation of Service Charities) website at: www.cobseo.org.uk

The Government recently launched the Veterans Gateway that aims to be a 'first point of contact' for veterans requiring help and support. Information about the service can be found via their website www.veteransgateway.org.uk

Quick Quiz - Consolidate your learning

This short quiz aims to help you consolidate your learning from this workbook. Having read this workbook, you should be able to answer most of the questions, however, you might also need to find out a little more about your own organisation. You can use Page 9 to make notes.

Asking the Question

As a practitioner working in or alongside criminal justice organisations it's important to ask the question **'Have you ever served in any of the UK Armed Forces as a Regular or Reservist?'** Please read the case studies below and think about the importance of the question and what you do next.

Veteran A

"I'd never been in trouble before and I didn't know what to expect. At Probation they asked me a lot of questions but none of them seemed to be about me and why I was there. I felt like they were going through the motions of ticking boxes and putting me in one. I wanted to talk to them, to tell them who I am and explain things but that didn't seem to be what was important. They asked me about my previous jobs and I told them what I'd been doing and that I'd been in the Army for 12 years before. I don't know why they asked because they showed no interest in what I said."

Veteran B

"My probation officer was brilliant, she asked me if I'd been in the forces and she told me straight away that there was help and support that I could tap into. She arranged a meeting with a SSAFA caseworker who helped me with a housing application and got me funding to help me move into new accommodation. I don't think I'd have thought about contacting SSAFA myself and the fact my Probation Officer asked me the question in the first place has made a big difference to me."

- Q1. Why do you think the question (have you ever served in the armed forces or reserves?) should be routinely asked?
- Q2. Do you know what to do with the information, where to record it and who you might need to pass the information on to?
- Q3. Why might it help you as a practitioner to know whether someone has served in the armed forces or reserves?
- Q4. Who are SSAFA and what do they do?

Making a referral

Below are case studies which demonstrate some experiences of veterans being referred to military charities.

Veteran C

"I'd not had a proper home for a while and I'd asked probation to help but they said they couldn't. I spoke to someone who gave me information about applying for housing at the council and they also put me in touch with SSAFA. Its early days but I'm hopeful that I'll soon be in a place of my own."

Veteran D

"I was at probation and they put me on the phone to someone who told me that I might be able to get help as I'd been in the Army. I always thought the help was for people in real need and not me but then I suppose I am. The most important thing was to meet up with people who weren't judging me and wanted to help. I was referred to SSAFA who are currently helping me."

Veteran E

"I was referred to the Legion for help and support with work. They have really helped me with advice on setting up my own business. I'd not realized what help was on offer until I asked and I'm glad I did."

- Q5. What information do you need to establish before referring a veteran to a military charity for support?**
- Q6. What type of support do you think military charities can help with?**
- Q7. Are veterans entitled or eligible to apply for support from military charities?**
- Q8. What information can I share with the charity?**
- Q9. What are my organisation's policies, processes and procedures for identifying, recording and supporting veterans in the criminal justice system?**
- Q10. Who is the Veterans' Champion(s) in your organisation? If there isn't someone identified would you consider becoming a champion?**

NOTES

Ring the Criminal Justice Referral Service & Helpline 02476 348227 – Just one number to ring to access your gateway to support, information and advice.

“I was met by friendly people, veterans just like me. I too had served in HM Armed Forces. I was immediately welcomed, supported and given assistance regarding my housing situation and my drug and alcohol issues - in short, my life is improving slowly through a measure of hard work and external support.” **Chad (Grenadier Guards Veteran)**

“I am currently receiving assistance finding employment, accessing funding for education and peer support whilst on probation. For me, this has been invaluable; I would recommend other Veterans who are struggling to make contact with the array of support organisations to make contact with Remember Veterans or the Veterans Contact Point in Nuneaton.” - **Rich (4 Parachute Regiment Veteran)**

“The staff at the VCP/RV project has really helped me in my time of need after suffering another episode of PTSD. I had no one else to turn to and they had helped me in the past. Their help and support is brilliant and just to have someone to speak to over a brew has really helped me to cope and to get my head sorted. The service and advice they have given me has really helped me, giving me a step by step plan to follow, thank you” - **Ben (Royal Artillery Veteran)**

Read more case studies from the project at www.remember-veterans.com

Help for Veterans & Family

Helpline 02476 348227

Mobile 07391 237 551

contactus@veteranscontactpoint.co.uk

Monday to Friday 10:00 to 15:00

Tuesday and Thursday 18:30 to 19:30

