

Armed Forces briefing

24 May 2022

Op COURAGE: welcomes Ministers Gillian Keegan and Leo Docherty

Clinicians and service users from the London Op COURAGE service and Veterans Trauma Network (VTN) came together this week to welcome Kate Davies CBE, Gillian Keegan, Minister for Care and Mental Health and Leo Docherty, Minister for Defence People and Veterans to St Pancras Hospital.

The ministers heard about the work of Op COURAGE and VTN, which provide dedicated care and support for veterans with mental and physical health problems. At the meeting, peer support workers and veterans were able to share their experiences of Op COURAGE and the VTN and describe how they have played a valuable role in reshaping their lives as civilians.



Lloyd Dellaway, an Afghanistan veteran, who received a medical discharge in 2015 and was diagnosed with PTSD in 2016, gave a short presentation and shared the following, “When you come out of the Army you are on your own, a soldier without a war. I was referred to Op COURAGE in 2019/20 after two suicide attempts and it has saved my life. Op COURAGE plays a crucial role in helping veterans adjust to civilian life and needs to be more visible to those preparing to leave the Armed Forces.”

Minister Docherty also recently met with military veterans and mental health experts from the Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to learn more about the vital support on offer at the South Central Op COURAGE service.

Whilst visiting the newly refurbished Op COURAGE clinic space on the University of Reading campus, he learned about what Op COURAGE services offer and how they improve people's lives. He also heard the team's views on what he can do to help more people access specialist support.



Minister for Defence People and Veterans Leo Docherty said: " I encourage veterans who may be struggling to reach out to their GP to access the dedicated health and wellbeing support available."

Dr Deborah Lee, Clinical Lead for the South Central Op COURAGE service said: "What's different about what we do is that we co-create our service with our peer support workers - who are veterans and have accessed support themselves - and with the wider Armed Forces community. This helps us make sure that we really understand military life and put the veteran and their family at the heart of everything we do.

Watch the below videos from veterans who have used this service:

[Gemma's Op COURAGE journey: "Treatment is hard but it's worth it"](#)

[Nick's Op COURAGE journey: "I'm back to the real me, the old, before I had problems"](#)

[Stuart's Op COURAGE journey: "I can carry on a normal life, instead of the burden of PTSD"](#)

[John and Op COURAGE peer support: "The biggest step is realising you do need help. You aren't alone"](#)

RCGP podcast on NHS care of female veterans

The Royal College of General Practitioners' (RCGP) Clinical Innovation and Research Centre has published a podcast on the [NHS care of female Armed Forces veterans on Apple Podcasts](#)

In this podcast, RCGP Veterans Clinical Champion, Dr Veronica Grant, meets Ali Brown, military veteran, member of the NHS England Armed Forces Patient and Public Voice Group and co-chair of the Serving and Ex Serving Women - Health Improvement Steering Group, COBSEO Female Veteran Cluster, to discuss female veterans' health and potential medical challenges faced by this patient group.

Step into Health

The [Step into Health programme](#) supports the Armed Forces community access career opportunities within the NHS. This includes connecting to NHS organisations to set up training opportunities, clinical and general work placements and insight days, as well as receiving help with job applications.

Step into Health is open to all Service leavers, reservists, veterans, Cadet Force Adult Volunteers and the families of all of these. There are more than 350 clinical and non-clinical roles within the NHS. Whatever your background, previous work experience and qualifications, you can find something that is suitable for you.

NHS organisations that have pledged to Step into Health have dedicated people you can talk to about opportunities within their organisation. They will be able to provide more information on the careers available within their organisation, work placements, information days, give application guidance and answer questions on the wider NHS.

After registering yourself on the Step into Health [system](#), you'll be able to get in touch with a Step into Health contact and speak to a dedicated person or team about opportunities within their organisation. Please note that due to the nature of COVID-19, volunteering, insight days, work experience or shadowing opportunities may not be available at this time. However, NHS employers are still on hand to offer recruitment support and advice regarding working in the NHS.

Sarah Learney, NHS Programme & Operations Director said: "As a veteran enjoying a successful career in the NHS, I knew where to go when I needed project managers."

Department of Health & Social Care consultation on acquired brain injury strategy

The Department of Health & Social Care is encouraging people to share their views on what the Government's strategy on acquired brain injury should include in order to better support people with this condition. This includes looking at whether support or services needs to be improved for those living with other neurological conditions. To complete the survey, which closes on 6 June 2022, visit [here](#).