

Guidance to working with the Armed Forces Community (including veterans) for Addaction staff

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Guidance to working with the Armed Forces Community (including veterans)

Dr Katherine Albertson, Sheffield Hallam University June 2017

Addaction's Right Turn veteran-specific recovery initiative

Right Turn is Addaction's specialist support package for veterans who have substance misuse problems. The elements of 'Right Turn' can include: A Mutual Aid Programme; Veteran Recovery Champion training; Specialist one-to-one treatment that acknowledges the specific experiences, problems and needs of veterans; Provision of social events and diversionary activities that build trust and fosters positive networks; Training for Addaction workers to enable them to identify and respond to the specific issues facing veterans. *This guidance is taken from the evaluation of this pioneering project in 2017¹, conducted by Sheffield Hallam University and funded by The Forces in Mind Trust.*

Key research findings

On the basis of the data sample we identified the following positive impacts of project engagement for veterans:

- Military veterans can take up to 12 years after leaving the forces to ask for help
- Of those with a history of contact with the criminal justice system, none had any further contact
- Of the 39% of veterans in active addiction when joining, all gained addiction recovery status; the remaining 68% successfully maintained their existing recovery status
- 65% of the veterans are now engaging in voluntary work or paid employment since joining the project
- All the veterans reported wider social network contact and engagement in community activities
- 78% reported significant improvements in their relationships with family members since joining the project
- The Right Turn group have better physical and psychological health outcomes, while veterans in the comparison sample not accessing the project experience significant deterioration in these outcome measures

Key messages to bear in mind when coming across a member of the Armed Forces Community

The three clear messages to policy-makers and practitioners working with veterans are:

- Veterans are more likely both to access and respond well to veteran-specific services in the first instance; this removes many of the common barriers to their engagement in services
- Valuing of the military identity in transition facilitates veterans' recognition of their own resilience, their own individual resources and their value to both veteran and civilian communities alike
- An holistic approach to supporting veterans can reduce the likelihood of: criminal justice contact; substance misuse; and further deterioration in mental and physical health; as well as addressing practical day-to-day issues, including social exclusion and emotional isolation

How do you find out if a service user is a member of the Armed Forces Community?

- The Armed Forces Community includes²: Regular serving military personnel; Volunteers and Reservists; Veterans; Family members of regulars, volunteers and veterans; The Bereaved (due to military service or otherwise)
- Simply ask the question: "Have you ever served in the Armed Forces as a regular, reservist or volunteer or are you or have you ever been a family member of someone who has?" (Albertson and Woods forthcoming³).

¹ Albertson, K., Best, D., Pinkney, A., Murphy, T., Irving, J., and Stevenson, J. (2017) "It's not just about recovery": The Right Turn Veteran-Specific Recovery Service Evaluation, Final report (June 2017), Sheffield Hallam University: https://www.addaction.org.uk/sites/default/files/public/attachments/right_turn_evaluation_report_june_2017.pdf

² Shared Intelligence Report (2016) "Our Covenant, Our Community" commissioned by the Forces in Mind Trust and LGA.

³ Albertson, K., and Woods, N. (forthcoming) Working with the Armed Forces Community, *Probation Journal*.