

contact

Collaborating for Military Mental Health

Chair: Dr Charles Winstanley

www.contactarmedforces.co.uk | twitter.com/contact_af

The Contact Group Quarterly newsletter - Spring 2021

Welcome

Welcome to the [Contact Group](#) quarterly newsletter for Spring 2021. The aim of the newsletter is to provide an update on recent [Contact work](#), as well as information about relevant events, research and funding opportunities. It is circulated to Contact members, associates, partners and other contacts. Please feel free to forward it to colleagues, partners and contacts. To be added to the distribution list or if you have feedback or suggested content for future editions, please email: anna.owen@contactarmedforces.org.uk

About the Contact Group

[Contact](#) is the UK collaboration for military mental health treatment, policy and research. Consisting of core [member](#) organisations from the statutory and non-statutory sectors (charity, academic and professional) from the four nations of the UK, the aim is collaborative working to improve mental health support for the UK armed forces community including serving personnel, veterans and their families. Contact is also pleased to work with a growing number of [associates](#), [research associates](#) and [partners](#) who are active in the area of military mental health. Contact acts as the mental health cluster for [Cobseo](#).

Contact Group - [What we do](#)

Contact has several priority areas of work, each overseen by a core member representative as Executive Lead. A summary of recent progress in each is included below. Current priority work areas include:

- Common assessment
- Case management (CM)
- Quality and accreditation
- Data dashboard
- Research
- Communications

[Common Assessment](#)

- ❑ The aim of this work is to develop a **common assessment framework (CAF)** for the capture of service user information, including medical and service details, so this information does not have to be repeated multiple times by users accessing services from different providers. Work has continued via the Contact sub-group for this area,

comprising representatives from NHS England, Contact member charities and others and the group has developed a plan and timeline for roll-out of the CAF they have designed. As part of the development process, Help for Heroes tested the practicalities of using the CAF and found that it is important to link its use to how the service provision is delivered. Overall, it was found to be very user-friendly for beneficiaries and to provide good capability for comparing data between services.

- ❑ Current plans are to pilot the CAF with the charity sector and selected NHS providers and then roll out the system to providers on a voluntary basis from April 2021, with a view to considering its use with new Op COURAGE contracts sometime after April 2022. [Read more>](#)
- ❑ If your organisation is interested in learning more about the CAF and/or using it in future, please contact: anna.owen@contactarmedforces.org.uk

Case Management (CM)

- ❑ There has been a growing recognition of the need to improve the beneficiary journey for veterans seeking mental health services and, in particular, the linking of relevant data held by the principal statutory and third sector service providers. Following the first Contact Case Management workshop in Edinburgh in June 2019, Cobseo and Contact convened a **Case Management Working Group** of key stakeholders in autumn 2019 to consider the feasibility of a more holistic approach. The group's report and recommendations, which identified a number of [key principles](#), were supported by the Office of Veterans Affairs (OVA), who agreed to fund a Scoping Study for the development of a **Veterans Mental Health Information System (VMHIS)** and an IT consultant to take this work forward.
- ❑ The Scoping Study will address the IT development work needed to achieve the aspirations set out in the Working Group report, including the development of a project specification that potential suppliers will draw upon to develop their costed proposals. The consultant is currently engaging with key stakeholders, and their front-line service providers, to ensure that their perspectives are reflected in the proposed way forward. [Read more>](#)
- ❑ In March 2021, Contact hosted an online [military mental health and case management conference](#) (the programme and outputs including a video recording and speaker slides are available at the link) attended by over 100 sector professionals at which the above aims and work were outlined and feedback invited. [Feedback](#) on the project is welcome at any time. The feedback received so far has suggested that a VMHIS as described above would be welcomed by the sector.

Quality & accreditation

- ❑ Improved quality and accreditation of military mental health treatment providers will help members of the armed forces community identify and access service providers that are operating according to recognised best practice and agreed quality standards. Contact is working with the Royal College of Psychiatrists to develop the first sector-specific quality network and accreditation scheme for military mental health, the **Quality Network for Veterans Mental Health Services (QNVMS)** which will be accompanied by an easily recognisable 'quality mark' so that those looking for treatment can quickly and easily identify whether the treatment providers they are considering have been quality checked.
- ❑ A clinical advisory group for the network, comprising expert clinicians from the

military mental health sector, helped to draft the first edition of the quality standards. These are currently being tested in a 12-month pilot funded by the Department for Health and Social Care and NHS England & NHS Improvement. The ten pilot teams are drawn from the NHS in England, Scotland and Wales and charity/independent providers from across the UK. At the end of the pilot, the quality standards will be reviewed before the network is opened up to all UK military mental health teams that may want to participate from autumn 2021 onwards. [Read more>](#)

- ❑ On 8 July, the Royal College will host the network's online **annual forum** at which the pilot report will be presented, pilot teams will share their experiences of participating, guest speakers will feature and relevant workshop sessions will be offered. If you or your team/organisation are interested in attending, please email anna.owen@contactarmedforces.org.uk for more information.
- ❑ Further details for teams and organisations interested in participating in the QNVMHS network from autumn 2021 will be shared in early summer 2021. If you have any queries, would like further information, would like to attend the annual forum on 8 July, or would like to receive sign-up details to join the network in autumn 2021, please email anna.owen@contactarmedforces.org.uk

[Data dashboard](#)

- ❑ Contact and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) have continued to work on the development of a military mental health data dashboard. The aim is to present a complete picture of the strength and nature of demand, capacity and outcomes across all parts of the military mental health sector using available data on veterans and serving personnel accessing clinical mental health treatment in the UK, including MoD, NHS and charity/independent providers, together with outcomes data and indicators of capacity.
- ❑ The dashboard will be updated on a quarterly basis (where data allows). Editions of the dashboard to date have focused on available MoD and NHS data and work is currently underway with Contact charities Combat Stress, Help for Heroes and Walking With The Wounded to more fully incorporate their available demand, capacity and outcomes data which will be included in future editions of the dashboard, the production of which will shortly be supported by the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA). [Read more>](#)

[Research](#)

- ❑ Contact work in this area includes the monitoring of relevant recent and ongoing military mental health-related research and interpreting and reporting on it for the benefit of Contact work, members, associates and the wider sector, as well as identifying and monitoring potential research gaps. This is carried out by the Contact Research sub-group whose members are [Contact Research Associates](#) chaired by Dr Alan Finnegan. The group meets and reports to Contact on a quarterly basis.
- ❑ The group's work so far has included identifying potential gaps in military mental health research which are currently being monitored and explored in further detail, including: minorities' access to healthcare; ageing veterans (especially women) and dementia; war (distinct from service) widows; and families and children. [Read more>](#)

[Communications](#)

- ❑ Contact was delighted to be able to launch a new website last December, thanks to the support of the [Veterans Foundation](#). The new site has retained the existing Contact logo and design but the majority of the content has been re-written and restructured to more accurately reflect the group's sector coordination and collaborative work. Please take a look if you haven't already and [send us](#) any feedback or content ideas! [Read more>](#)
- ❑ Contact uses [Twitter \(@Contact_AF\)](#) to tweet and retweet information about its work and the work and services of members, associates, partners and others relevant to military mental health and related issues - do follow us if you aren't already!

Upcoming events

Contact Group meetings & events:

- ❑ **Contact Group quarterly meetings** for core members take place in March, June, September and December each year, usually in different UK locations (when circumstances allow). The last meeting took place on 15 March online and the next will take place on 24 June, also online. Contact Associates are welcome to observe a Contact quarterly meeting (on a first come first served basis). If interested, please email: anna.owen@contactarmedforces.org.uk
- ❑ **Research sub-group meetings** for current research associate members of the sub-group take place prior to each Contact quarterly meeting.

External events:

- ❑ [Forces in Mind Trust 'Lifting our Sights: Beyond 2030: The impact of future trends of on our Armed Forces Community from military to civilian life' report launch](#), 27 May, 10-11am, online
- ❑ [The Invictus Games Foundation Conversation: Learning and emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic - The role of sport](#), 2 June, 2.00-3.45pm, online
- ❑ [Sheffield MIND Keeping Families in Mind: Understanding the military family](#), 24 June, 1-4pm, online
- ❑ [University of Chester Westminster Centre for Veterans Armed Forces Community Research International Webinar Series](#), July (date TBC), online

Please send details of relevant events for circulation or inclusion in future newsletters to: anna.owen@contactarmedforces.org.uk

Research

The following recently published military mental health-related research and reports may be of interest to sector professionals:

- ❑ [The Mental Health of the UK Armed Forces - KCMHR Fact Sheet](#), May 2021
- ❑ [Performance and image-enhancing drug use in military veterans](#), FiMT, May 2021
- ❑ [The impact of moral injury on the wellbeing of UK military veterans, Williamson et al, BMC Psychology](#), May 2021
- ❑ [The Health and Wellbeing of Armed Forces Veterans in Northern Ireland](#), FiMT, April 2021

- ❑ [Age at entry to UK military service and long-term mental health](#), Bergman et al, BMJ Military Health, April 2021
- ❑ [Gender differences in barriers to mental healthcare for UK military veterans: a preliminary investigation](#), Godier-McBard et al, BMJ Military Health, Mar 2021
- ❑ [Substance misuse and service leavers: A qualitative investigation into the impact of a Compulsory Drug Test \(CDT\) discharge](#), FiMT, March 2021
- ❑ [Delivering treatment to morally injured UK military personnel and Veterans: The clinician experience](#), Williamson et al, Military Psychiatry, Mar 2021
- ❑ [Mental health treatment experiences of commonwealth veterans from diverse ethnic backgrounds who have served in the UK military](#), Pearson et al, BMJ Military Health, Feb 2021
- ❑ [Identifying and characterising adverse childhood experiences in a Northern Irish military veteran population](#), C. Armour, European Journal of Psychotraumatology, Feb 2021
- ❑ [Forces in Mind Trust 2020 Impact Report](#)

Useful research links

For general browsing and/or to keep up to date on the latest research, you may find it useful to check the latest publications on these sites:

- ❑ [King's Centre for Military Health Research](#) (KCMHR)
- ❑ [Forces in Mind Trust](#) (FiMT) published research reports
- ❑ [Combat Stress research](#)
- ❑ [Veterans and Families and Research \(VFR\) Hub](#) (includes a 'mental health' search filter, 3D interactive map of results, saved search alerts and 'Snapshots' of research on themes including mental health)

There are many useful sources of military mental health research - if you are aware of others that would be useful to include in future newsletters, please email:

anna.owen@contactarmedforces.org.uk

Funding Opportunities

- ❑ [The Veterans' Foundation](#) provides grants to organisations that help serving and retired members of the armed forces, qualifying seafarers and their dependents, including urgent pandemic-induced grants which may be decided out of committee. Grants of up to £30,000 over 1-3 years are available together with a small number of grants of up to £40,000 over 1-2 years to cover salaries only for small to medium wealth organisations. Deadlines for online applications in 2021 are 27 Aug and 12 Nov.
- ❑ The [Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust](#) currently has four programmes open for applications:
 - ❑ [Sustaining Support for Armed Forces Communities](#) (for existing charitable projects - round 1 deadline: 4 June)
 - ❑ [Sustaining Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant](#) (for eligible local authorities - deadline: 11 June)
 - ❑ [The NAAFI Fund](#) (for UK Armed Forces bases - stage 1 deadline: 14 July)

- ❑ [Armed Forces Covenant Fund: Force for Change](#) (for community projects - round 2 deadline: 2 Aug)
- ❑ [Lloyds Bank Foundation](#) has a fund for small charities (income £25,000-£1m) tackling complex social issues including mental health, addiction & substance abuse, homelessness and others in England & Wales (year-round applications - no deadline)
- ❑ [Cobseo](#) has a dedicated Covid-19 funding sources page that is updated regularly.

We feature ongoing funding opportunities in newsletters and will circulate details of any additional opportunities as and when they arise. Please feel free to submit any relevant funding opportunities for circulation or inclusion in future newsletters to:

anna.owen@contactarmedforces.org.uk

We hope you have found this Contact quarterly newsletter informative and useful. We welcome feedback, including whether you would find it helpful to have more, less or different content in future editions - please email:

anna.owen@contactarmedforces.org.uk