

contact

Collaborating for Military Mental Health

Chair: Dr Charles Winstanley

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Independent Chair, Contact Group Application pack

Independent Chair, Contact Group

2 days a week (equivalent)

Unremunerated (reasonable travel & subsistence expenses provided)

Start date: 1 April 2022 (with induction Jan-Mar 2022)

Deadline to apply: 31 August 2021

Online interviews: November 2021

To apply: CV & covering letter (letter max 2 A4 pages; CV & letter should highlight relevant skills & experience, email to: anna.owen@contactarmedforces.org.uk)

The [Contact Group](#) is currently recruiting for an independent Chair to take office on 1 April 2022. It is hoped that the new Chair will have availability during Jan-Mar 2022 for a comprehensive induction process with the retiring Chair, including meeting members.

This application pack is designed to aid potential applicants and provides the following information:

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If prospective applicants have queries which are not answered in this pack or would like to request a brief, informal conversation with the current Chair about the role and/or the Contact Group, please contact Anna Owen, Contact Project Officer: anna.owen@contactarmedforces.org.uk.

No agencies please. Any CVs received from agencies will be treated as a direct approach from the candidate and no agency fees will be payable.

About the Contact Group

The [Contact Group](#) ('Contact') is the UK-wide collaboration of statutory and non-statutory (including charity, academic and professional) organisations working to improve mental health support to the UK armed forces community including veterans, serving personnel and their families. [Core member organisations](#) include the Ministry of Defence, NHS (in England, Scotland and Wales), Cobseo (the Confederation of Service Charities), Combat Stress, Help for Heroes, Royal British Legion, Walking With The Wounded, Northern Ireland Veterans' Support Office, Togetherall, Royal College of Psychiatrists and King's Centre for Military Health Research. Contact is also the mental health cluster for Cobseo. Core funding is provided by the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) to the end of 2021, with an application in progress to extend this to the end of 2024.

The group is currently working collaboratively on a number of priority military mental health projects which are summarised below. Further details on each can also be found on our [What we do](#) webpage (project links also included below):

[Case management](#): The aim of this work is to improve the beneficiary journey for veterans seeking and accessing 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 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 to appoint 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 to ensure their perspectives are reflected and this stage of work is expected to conclude by Sept.

In March 2021, Contact hosted an online [military mental health and case management conference](#) for sector professionals (the programme and outputs including a video recording can be accessed at the link). At the event the aims of the VMHIS project were outlined and feedback invited from attendees which suggested that such a system would be welcomed by the sector.

[UK military mental health data dashboard](#): Contact and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) are currently working 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.

The aim is that the dashboard will be updated on a quarterly basis (where data allows) and made available to those requiring an overview of emerging trends in military mental health. Editions of the dashboard to date have focused on MoD and NHS data and work is currently underway with Contact member charities to incorporate their demand, capacity and outcomes data.

Common assessment: Contact work on a common assessment framework (CAF) for use by both NHS and charity/independent military mental health treatment providers for assessing users accessing their services is led by NHS England which chairs a sub-group of Contact members working on this issue. It is envisaged that, as a result of the CAF and accompanying information system, especially for veterans moving between or accessing multiple service providers (statutory and non-statutory), the common information collected by providers and information-sharing capabilities of the system will mean veterans will not be required to repeat their medical and military histories multiple times which can be traumatic, frustrating and time consuming.

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 NHS England Op COURAGE contracts sometime after April 2022.

Quality and accreditation for military mental health treatment providers: Improved quality and accreditation of military mental health clinical 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)**. Organisations that are successful in achieving accreditation will be awarded a recognisable 'quality mark' so potential users can easily identify whether the treatment providers they are considering have been quality checked.

A 12-month pilot is currently underway, supported by the Department for Health and Social Care and NHS England & NHS Improvement, with ten teams 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 veterans' mental health teams that may want to participate from autumn 2021.

Other areas Contact is active in include identifying and interpreting the findings of relevant recent and ongoing military mental health-related **research** and promulgating them among Contact members and beyond. The Contact Research sub-group also identifies and monitors potential gaps in research, of which they are currently exploring four areas: minorities' access to healthcare; ageing veterans and dementia; service widow/ers; and families and children.

Contact also has an **Associate membership programme** which is currently open to Cobseo member organisations who can demonstrate involvement in military mental health services or support. In time, this will be extended to non-Cobseo members with the same criteria.

Statement from current Contact Chair, Dr Charles Winstanley

Dr Charles Winstanley has served in the role of Independent Chair of the Contact Group since 2018.

Charles has provided the following statement about his experience in the role and working with the Contact Group which we hope will aid prospective applicants:

"I have been lucky enough to have had leadership roles in the army, in business, in the NHS, and in central government. But I can honestly say that I have had no role as challenging and as worthwhile as that of Chair of the Contact Group.

UK veterans, particularly those from recent conflicts, need mental health services where the staff understand the stresses of active military service, and recognise service people's perspective on life.

The Contact Chair has no true authority, just the influence derived from clear strategic thinking. The Chair has limited direct resources, but can harness the immense capacity of Contact members.

The leadership challenge is to encourage a team of already busy and senior people to advocate the merits of Contact's collective work streams, and to subsequently consider them as urgent and significant as their own local projects.

I commend the role to you, and would be delighted to chat to applicants."

Charles is available for a brief, informal conversation about the role and the Contact Group with any prospective applicants who may be interested - please email:

anna.owen@contactarmedforces.org.uk.

Intended timeline for recruitment

Commence advertising of post:	June 2021
Shortlisting (by panel of five Contact member representatives):	September 2021
Interviews (latest):	November 2021
Panel recommendation to Contact members:	early December 2021
Formal appointment:	mid December 2021
Induction:	January-March 2022
Start date:	1 April 2022

Independent Chair, Contact Group - Role description

Appointment and accountability

1. The Contact Group appoints an independent Chair for a term of three years. With member approval, this appointment may be renewed for one further term or extended for a further shorter period by agreement.
2. The Chair reports to the collective membership of the Group.
3. Recommendation on the selection of a new Chair will be by a panel drawn from senior representatives from five core members of Contact, to include Cobseo (in cluster role) and the financing body (presently FiMT). Panel members will elect their own panel chair, and the panel will be convened and supported by the project manager. The panel decision will be confirmed by the full Contact membership at the earliest opportunity.
4. The serving Chair's performance feedback is led by a single designated member of the Group, a rotating role to be designated by members.

Principal tasks

5. The Chair will:
 - a) *lead quarterly meetings of the Contact membership*
 - b) *agree principal workstreams (and lead some of them)*
 - c) *assure themselves of workstream progress between meetings*
 - d) *act as an ambassador for the UK military mental health sector*
 - e) *liaise regularly with principal sector stakeholders, including the Office for Veterans' Affairs, the four nation NHS, service charities, and others*
 - f) *when necessary, act as decision-maker pending confirmation at the next member meeting.*
6. The Chair supervises Contact staff (presently a part-time project manager), and is also responsible to members for both generating and deploying Contact funds (staff are employed, and funds held, by a rotating Contact member).
7. In addition to its core function, Contact also acts as the mental health cluster for Cobseo. The Contact Chair is consequently ex-officio chair of this cluster and (in this capacity only) is accountable to Cobseo.
8. The Contact Group has a diverse membership, from policy makers to statutory providers, and from charities to research bodies; members' operational priorities and organisational cultures are equally contrasting. In demonstrating sensitivity to these member differences, the Chair must constantly remind his/herself that Group membership and any collaboration is entirely voluntary, and the added value represented by this membership body participation must be constantly self-evident. Therefore, the Chair must create (and regularly articulate) a clear vision of the benefits of collaboration, and act as energetic advocate of sector consistency, quality, innovation, and effective communication.

Independent Chair, Contact Group - Person specification

Knowledge, understanding and experience

1. Candidates for the post will have extensive recent experience of chairing boards, significant committees and/or large collaborative and cross-sector groups or organisations; they will be able to describe the characteristics of effective chairing in this context. Ideally experience will include the chairing of remote meetings (in systems such as Teams and Zoom).
2. A candidate must have extensive knowledge and understanding of the military and veteran community, although this familiarity is not necessarily based on past military service.
3. Equally, they will have familiarity with current clinical treatments for mental health conditions, and a broad understanding of the statutory, charitable, and independent provision of such services in the four nations of the UK. This knowledge does not require clinical qualifications or past medical roles.
4. The post holder will have a knowledge and understanding of project and financial management, ideally with experience as both a project manager and as a budget holder.
5. Ideally, candidates will have also had a past professional exposure to the UK third sector.

A special style of leadership

6. Members of the Contact Group, as a collaborative body, are uniquely neither 'under command' nor accountable to the Chair in any formal sense. Most members have their own boards, or departments, to whom they report. However, as willing Contact members, their default approach will be to contribute to the interests of the sector within their resource constraints.
7. The Chair of the Group must win, and retain, member support and enthusiasm for workstreams to the point where members are willing to account to the Chair (and fellow members) for their contribution to progress. In this circumstance the Chair will be a supportive, critical friend.
8. While the Chair will (ex-officio) have access to ministers, central and national government, senior echelons of the NHS, and charity leaders, they will use the authority derived from such access with great caution. Representatives of the Contact membership may not appreciate being by-passed, and the Chair will prompt late actions or missing contributions with firmness wrapped in diplomacy and tact.
9. Equally, in their role as an ambassador for the sector, the Chair will not be expected to provide the media or sector stakeholders with a private opinion. The postholder must ensure that any publicly-stated view or policy position has the sanction of the membership.
10. The Chair will have the emotional intelligence and gravitas necessary to lead decision-making in settings where all members must have an opportunity to contribute to discussions.

Availability

11. Chairing the Contact Group requires the time equivalent of at least two days a week. However, external and internal access to the Chair will be useful on most days of the week, so it is probably unrealistic to confine availability to two specific days each week.
12. Most business is done by email, with occasional phone calls. In non-Covid times, face-to-face meetings of the group move round the UK. During 2020 all meetings have been remote, with the successful use of the associated technology.

How to apply and further information

To apply for the role, please submit a CV and covering letter (max 2 A4 pages) highlighting relevant skills and experience as soon as possible and by no later than the application deadline of 31 August 2021, by email to: anna.owen@contactarmedforces.org.uk

For further information, queries about the role or the Contact Group, or to request an informal conversation with the current Contact Chair, please contact: anna.owen@contactarmedforces.org.uk

Many thanks for your interest in the Contact Group.