

## Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (LPFT) Veterans' Services

Every year approximately 22,000 armed forces personnel leave service and return to civilian life, whilst the majority do so without difficulty, for some Veterans the transition is more problematic and they may need some input from mental health and social care provision. Research has long identified that Veterans experience difficulty navigating the myriad of healthcare services and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector agencies to meet their needs. Furthermore, there are significant cultural differences between military and civilian services in terms of how they are accessed. This can also impact on the veteran's experiences of the healthcare system.

With this in mind, the **Veterans Mental Health, Transition, Intervention and Liaison service (TILS)** was set up in 2017 to bridge the gap in supporting veterans to access the appropriate services to meet their individual requirements. The referral process has been designed to be simple and accessible via one referral line (For the East Midlands 0300 323 0137). Veterans can self-refer or a friend, family member or professional can refer (with the veteran's consent). Once we have received the referral, one of our specialist veteran's mental health care professionals will contact the veteran within 5 working days and offer an appointment within 10. We will then provide a comprehensive veteran centric assessment and create a bespoke care pathway plan to meet these needs. Additionally, TILS offer an assessment to family members, friends or a significant other who has been supporting them on a regular basis as we recognise the wider impact on families. Once referred into TILS veterans and their carers have access to our 24-hour support line.

*"As an RAF veteran myself, I feel so honoured and privileged to serve the veteran community and give back to those who have given so selflessly to their country. It is so important to get this right, particularly when psychological harm is attributed to time served. Our team is a mixture of military veterans and civilians all with one shared passion and vision to ensure that veterans receive the help they so deserve"*

LYNDSAY KHAN, TILS TEAM MANAGER

Over time it was further identified that there was a requirement for a specialist high intensity service for veterans in crisis. From this was born the concept of the Veterans **High Intensity Service (HIS)** has been established. HIS is 7 different pathfinders across NHS England, all supporting veterans in crisis and at their most vulnerable in slightly different ways.

The Midlands HIS Pathfinder was co-produced by veterans, carers, and clinicians who identified this missing need in Veteran mental health care. We are part of an integrated model alongside TILS and the **Complex Treatment Service (CTS)** to ensure that military specific assessment and veteran engagement in the fore front of our contact and care planning. As a service we recognise the importance of supporting families and carers, we are there to listen, support and directly involve them in care planning.

Since Midlands HIS went live 1 October 2020 we have assessed over 100 ex serving armed forces personnel and completed 15 carers specific assessments. We contact our veterans within 24hrs of initial referral, we risk assess and arrange further contacts. We work with local NHS services to enhance support and educate other healthcare professionals on veteran's specific needs. The HIS can be accessed via TILS on the same referral number above based on clinical need.

*"As a mental health nurse and veteran, I feel passionate about leading the High Intensity Service across the East Midlands and providing military specific support to veterans and their carers when at their most vulnerable. The HIS enhances other NHS services already available to support veterans when in crisis"*

ELEANOR DUKE, TEAM MANAGER EAST MIDLANDS HIS

As a veteran's specific service, it is so important we offer ex-serving personnel and their carers an opportunity to work with a service which priorities their unique needs, understands the impact of military service and that ensure they receive the mental health care they are entitled to and so often desperately need.

As Team Managers for TILS and HIS within LPFT we endeavour to promote our service to the wider trust, region and veteran community. We do this via social media, engagement events, conferences, presenting at team meetings, forwarding our leaflets. More recently we have launched a Veterans Champions initiative which has had a great response across the trust, and we hope to roll this out across the regions we are working with to support healthcare teams to be veteran aware.

## How can governors help?

Governors can use their holding Non-Executive Directors (NEDs) to account duty to gain assurance as to whether the current service provision is meeting the needs of current veterans.

Governors also have a core statutory duty to represent the interests of members and the public so can play a key part in relaying feedback from the veteran community to their Trusts to help inform developments.

It is so important for Governors within the Trust have a deeper understanding of the Veterans Service in order to promote awareness across multiple arenas and ultimately contributing to the successful outcomes of the veterans we serve.