

Information for Partners, Carers & Families

Veterans First Point is a service designed by veterans to meet the needs of veterans. Unfortunately we do not provide direct tailored support to family members and carers. If you are requiring psychological support for your own difficulties, we would encourage you to contact your GP to discuss a referral to our colleagues elsewhere in NHS Lothian.

We work closely with partners to provide support for the entire veterans community as we recognise the enormous contribution carers make to our veterans and they deserve special appreciation. We have created this pack to help support you to support your Veteran and we hope this will be of use to you.

We at Veterans First Point would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for supporting your veterans. You have been through so much with your veteran, you are pivotal in motivating them to seek help and supporting them through their recovery,

On behalf of everyone at Veterans First Point and all our Veterans

We Thank You,

Dr Lucy Abraham

Veterans First Point Lothian Clinical Lead



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The Veteran First Point (VFP) Process

The Team

Our team is made up of Psychological Therapists, Veteran Peer Support workers, an Office Manager and a Consultant Clinical Psychologist. We also have two Psychiatrists who work with the team on a part time basis. When someone calls the service, anyone may answer your call. We follow a team approach and the call handler will ensure your query is answered by the appropriate person.

Registration

When a veteran or referrer makes contact with V1P, they will be allocated to one of our Veteran Peer Support Workers and will be offered an initial registration appointment, this is usually done in person but we can also arrange to conduct this appointment by telephone or video consultation, if necessary. Our team of Veteran Peer Support workers are core to acting as the navigators to appropriate help, facilitating supported onward referral and addressing needs such as housing, employment and financial concerns. This appointment is an opportunity for the veteran to discuss their support needs and our Veteran Peer Support Workers will work together with the veteran to develop a plan for support. This may involve social and welfare support and/or clinical support.

Clinical Assessment

If a veteran requires support relating to their mental health, their Veteran Peer Support Worker will refer the veteran to the clinical team within V1P, for an initial psychological assessment.

We aim for this assessment to be offered within approximately 4 weeks from the point of registration. This appointment will discuss in more detail with the veteran their mental health needs and discuss treatment options available to them. If it is considered that psychological therapy is appropriate, the veteran will be placed onto our psychological therapy waiting list. Our clinicians will also discuss with the veteran how to access support whilst awaiting therapy to commence. This may involve developing a plan for coping. Veterans can also access their Veteran Peer Support Worker throughout this time, should they require. The Scottish Government treatment targets ask that everybody is seen in a maximum of eighteen weeks. Here at V1P most people are seen within 6 – 8 weeks.

Many Veterans attending Veterans First Point Lothian assessments will receive a diagnosis of some kind from a clinician at the service. We understand that this can be worrying to hear. It is important to remember that mental health conditions are relatively common. One in four people will suffer from a mental health condition at some point in their lives. There are a range of evidenced based therapies treatments to help address the difficulty. Defining the nature of the problem and having a diagnosis is often the first step to recovery. We understand that you probably have a lot of questions following your loved ones diagnosis. Please feel free to ask to join a consultation to find out more. There is also a range of useful information and resources on mental

health disorders at the Scottish Association of Mental Health Website. Please visit [About mental health problems | SAMH](#) to find out more.

Treatment Options

Once the veteran reaches the top of our waiting list, they will be sent an appointment to meet with one of our Psychological Therapists to discuss commencing therapy. This initial appointment will be an opportunity to review the veteran's needs, to discuss what psychological therapy involves, to set goals for therapy and to agree a treatment plan. We offer a range of evidence based pharmacological and psychological treatments including Cognitive Behavioural therapy, Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing Therapy, Cognitive Analytic Therapy, Interpersonal therapy and Behavioural Activation. The average length of our treatment is currently 12 sessions, depending on severity.

Your rights as a Carer

Carers are defined as anyone aged 16 or over who provide a regular and significant amount of care for someone aged 18 or over has the right to an assessment of their needs as a carer. Since the implementation of the Care Act in 2015, carers have more rights than ever before. The Act gave carers parity with the people they care for through new entitlements to an assessment of their needs, support to meet their eligible needs, and information and advice. Advice on how to access these can be found here: <https://www.carersuk.org/files/section/5978/assessmentsscotlandsc1020-april2020-212.pdf>

In addition carers UK provides helpful advice and support [Why we're here - Carers UK](#)

Sharing of Information

We will routinely write to both our veterans and their GP to update and summarise on their care and treatment. The veteran may chose to share their reports with you and we would encourage them to involve their family in their care. We also routinely invite out veterans to bring along someone to support them at their appointments. It is common for carers/ significant others to be invited to some joint an appointment in order to understand more about the veterans condition and find out how best to support them. Unfortunately we cannot share information directly with you either verbally or in writing about the attendance and/or progress of therapy of the veteran.

Everything a veteran discusses with the service will remain confidential except in the following circumstances:

- In the rare event that during therapy it becomes apparent that either the safety of the veteran or the safety of other is at risk, this includes children. In this case we may notify you if the veteran gives permission

- If the service has serious concerns for the veteran’s health and wellbeing and the service believes it is in their best interest that another professional such as their GP be informed of the important information relating to this
- If the veteran is subject to the compulsory powers under the law (for example compulsory treatment or detention in hospital). AND has chosen to nominate you as their ‘named person.’ This then gives you the opportunity to have a greater involvement in the veterans care in order to represent and safeguard their interests. More information can be found here [Mental health law in Scotland: guide to named persons - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot/resources/consultation-papers/cgp2015010001/mental-health-law-in-scotland-guide-to-named-persons.pdf)

In the event of any of the scenarios above the views and wishes of the veteran themselves will always be sought first.

We welcome feedback on any aspect of our service and this can be done via the link below:

[Online Feedback Form \(nhslothian.scot\)](http://nhslothian.scot)

Support Available for those who support our Veterans

You may not feel that you would wish to define yourself as a carer but this guide is here to support you or anyone concerned about a veteran, as we know from experience how much this can affect people’s mood and wellbeing. To support others we must also look after ourselves. Therefore we have developed the following guide which includes some strategies, advice and resources that you may find useful.

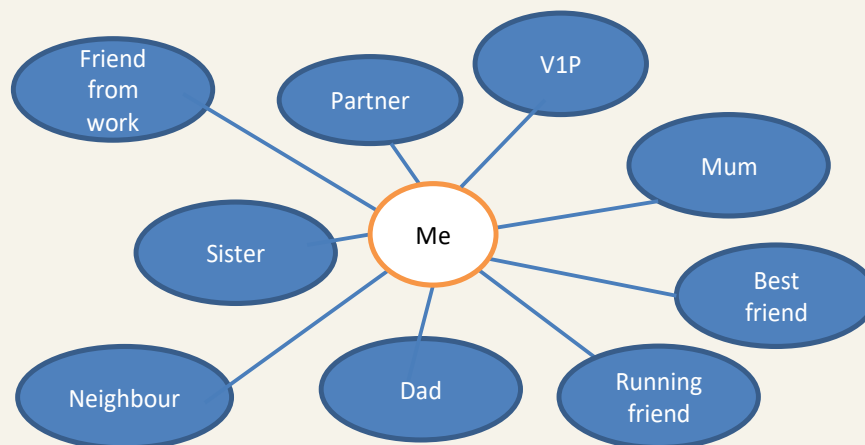


Emotional Support & Social Connection

Staying connected with others and maintaining your social networks is important at any time but particularly when we are struggling or feeling overwhelmed. This can be done via email, text, phone, video and social media. There are lots of lovely examples of people connecting in different ways. For example, sitting having a chat over the phone or group / individual video calls.

Connecting with and helping vulnerable or unwell people locally, in your community would be helpful to them and you. For example, delivering food packages, or set up a chat group for your street so that neighbours can be in touch and help each other

Exercise: Try drawing a network of people in your life like below:



This can be helpful to think about and identify people that you could connect with in some way. As human beings we all need connection in some form.

Perhaps there are friends or family that you have been meaning to contact for a while but have not had the time. Or it may be that it has been hard to meet face to face, the current situation may allow a way to connect in a gradual way as there is no pressure to meet face to face at the moment. Have a think about what might be practical and realistic for you and give it a go.

Online Support



Samaritans' Veterans App, is completely free to download on a smart phone or tablet and offers free emotional support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year and is confidential. You can download the app by googling Samaritans Veterans or looking up/ clicking -

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/military/samaritans-veterans-app/>



Sleep

Poor sleep can affect our mood and health significantly. Worry can affect our ability to relax and have a restful night. We can optimise sleep by ensuring we have healthy sleep habits, a comfortable sleep environment and a good night time routine.

Habits

- **Regular Sleeping Pattern.** It is important to establish a fixed sleep schedule, by waking up and falling asleep at the same time. This allows our bodies to know when it is time to wind down and help to improve sleep quality.
- **Avoid Napping.** When we are at home lying on the sofa, it may be tempting to take a nap but this can often make it more difficult to fall asleep at night.
- **Exercise regularly, but not before bed.** Regular exercise, particularly in the afternoon, can help to improve sleep quality. However, exercising just before bedtime will have a stimulating effect and make falling sleeping more difficult.
- **Avoid caffeine and heavy, spicy or sugary food 4-6 hours before bedtime.** Both caffeine and certain foods have been found to affect your ability to fall asleep. Be mindful that this will include coffee, tea, fizzy drinks and chocolate.
- **Avoid alcohol 4-6 hours before bedtime.** Although it may seem like alcohol can help with falling asleep, it can interfere with sleep quality. While alcohol will make you feel tired at first, a stimulant effect can occur when the blood alcohol levels in your body fall.

Environment

- **Comfortable bedding.** Uncomfortable bedding can prevent a good nights sleep and make sleeping seem unappealing.
- **Temperature.** Although it may vary with personal preference, studies have shown that a cool (but not cold) bedroom is the most conducive to sleep.
- **Quiet and dark room.** Eliminating as much light and noise in your bedroom will provide an optimal environment for sleep.
- **Reserve the bed for sleep and sex.** It is important when spending more time at home not to let your bedroom become a workroom or living room.

Night-time Routine

- **Light snack.** Warm milk and foods high in the amino acid tryptophan, such as bananas, have been found to improve sleep.
- **Relaxation.** Breathing techniques and yoga can help to relieve anxiety and reduce muscle tension, making it easier to fall asleep.
- **Worry period.** It's important not to take your worries with you when you go to bed. Assigning a specific time for worrying in the day can help to contain worrying and improve sleep.
- **Screen time.** Watching TV or being on an electronic device at night time has been found to negatively affect sleep. Try to give yourself a tech-free hour before bed to prepare yourself for sleep.
- **Waking up during the night.** If you find yourself waking up in the middle of the night and can't get back to sleep within 15-20 minutes, we recommend leaving the bedroom and doing a quiet activity, such as reading but not anything too challenging like housework.









Sleepio App was validated in the world's first placebo-controlled clinical trial for a digital sleep intervention. Fall asleep 54% reduction in time to fall asleep Stay asleep 62% fewer awakenings

RESOURCES

We produce a veterans calendar monthly which shows groups, resources and organisations that may be useful for veterans. We have in this section the groups, resources and organisations that may be useful to you as a friend or family member of a veteran. Some are practical, some supportive.

Resources		
Physical Health		
<p>Hours 9.00am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday</p>	<p>Defence Medical Welfare Services: Providing support to any member of the veterans' community currently in hospital and due to be discharged back to the community. Can assist with appropriate adaptations to the home, housing and supported onward referral.</p>	<p>Defence Medical Welfare Services</p> <p>Tel: 07789982621</p> <p>Email: loth.veteransdmws@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk</p>
Mental Health Support		
<p>As required</p>	<p>There are a range of services available in NHS Lothian to support people experiencing their own mental health difficulties</p>	<p>Please speak to your GP in the first instance and they will be able to discuss with you the options available in your area and will be able to make a referral on your behalf</p>
<p>Anytime</p>	<p>Chris's House</p> <p>Centre for Help, Response and Intervention Surrounding Suicide</p>	<p>Chris's House</p> <p>4A Newmills road, Dalkeith, Mid Lothian</p> <p>EH22 1DU</p> <p>Email: info@chrisshouse.org</p> <p>Telephone: 01313571671</p> <p>Facebook: chrisshouse.org</p>
<p>Everyday (working day)</p>	<p>Who Dares Cares</p> <p>The aim of our charity is to help support our Armed Forces, Emergency Services and Veterans including their Families and Dependants who are suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)</p>	<p>Website: Who Dares Cares</p> <p>Email: wdc@who-dares-cares.com</p> <p>Facebook: Who Dares Cares</p> <p>Twitter: who_dares_cares</p>

		<p>LinkedIn: Who Dares Cares</p> <p>Instagram: whodarescares</p>
<p>Monday-Friday 09.00 – 17.00</p>	<p>Rock 2 Recovery (one to one coaching for veterans and affected family)</p>	<p>Contact V1P for a referral or Email: support@rock2recovery.co.uk Tel: 01395 220 072</p>
<p>Anytime</p>	<p>HeadFit (HeadFIT for life helps defence people stay mentally fit and on top of their game... At home or work)</p>	<p>Website https://www.headfit.org/home/</p>
Online Treatment Options (NHS Lothian)		
	<p>Beating the Blues (An online treatment programme that uses Cognitive Behavioural Therapy to address mild depression/anxiety)</p>	<p>Please speak to your GP about a referral into the Beating the Blues programme</p>
	<p>Silver Cloud</p>	<p>Please speak to your GP about being referred</p>
	<p>IESO (Text based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy available to patients across NHS Scotland)</p>	<p>To be eligible for online therapy you must be over 16 and registered with a GP in Scotland</p> <p>ieso Online Therapy Scotland (iesohealth.com)</p>
Relationship Support		
<p>Monday -Thursday 9am – 9pm, Friday 9am – 5pm, Saturday 9am to 5pm, Sunday closed.</p>	<p>Bright Light Relationship Counselling (Edinburgh and Lothians)</p>	<p>18 York Place, Edinburgh EH1 3EP</p> <p>0131 556 1527</p> <p>www.bright-light.org.uk</p> <p>askus@bright-light.org.uk</p> <p>(As well as counselling in York Place, counselling is offered at health centres throughout the Lothians)</p>
<p>Monday-Friday</p>	<p>Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity / Relate (Free confidential relationship and</p>	<p>Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity</p> <p>Contact: 023 9387 1568</p>

08.30 – 16.30	Family Support)	Email: support@nrnmc.org.uk
	<p>Relationships Scotland Relationships Scotland's network provide relationship counselling, family mediation, child contact centres and other family support services across all of mainland and island Scotland. Our work supports individuals, couples and families experiencing relationship difficulties.</p>	<p>Relationships Scotland – Counselling, mediation and family support (relationships-scotland.org.uk)</p> <p>0345 119 2020 Open Mon - Fri 9:30am - 4:00pm</p>
Family Support		
As required	<p>Living Life Project (Provides mediation for families effected by issues of Complex Stress, includes mediation and respite options)</p>	<p>Referrals are made via V1P Lothian Please speak to a member of the team</p>
Wellbeing APPS		
	Calm app is for Sleep, Meditation and Relaxation. It is also the perfect mindfulness app for beginners but includes programmes for intermediate and advanced users.	
	Headspace is your guide to everyday mindfulness in just a few minutes a day.	
	Mindshift is a totally free anxiety tool which uses proven strategies based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)	
	Self-help for Anxiety Management is a friendly app that offers a range of self-help methods for people who are serious about learning to manage their anxiety	
	Happify is a science based activities and games app which can help you overcome negative thoughts, stress and life challenges	
	Sleepio is an online programme to help those with insomnia. It is based on CBT principles and has a strong RCT evidence base. It is a structured programme taking place over 6 weeks	

General Resources		
Monday to Friday, 9am – 6pm	Carers Scotland	www.carersuk.org/scotland info@carersuk.org 0808 808 7777
Everyday (working day)	Fares 4 Free Providing transportation to access essential services and support people attending everyday events which reduce loneliness and isolation.	Fares 4 Free www.Fares4free.org Contact: 01412666000 Facebook: Fares4Free
Fortnightly 13.00 – 17.00	Citizens Advice Bureau Clinic Please contact V1P to make an appointment.	V1P Lothian Argyle House, Floor K, Lady Lawson Street, Edinburgh, EH3 9DR, Tel: 0131 220 9920 Email: veterans.enquiries@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk
As Required	Solicitors for the Armed Forces Community (Scotland) Help to veterans with any legal enquiries.	Contact: Lesley Iannarelli, Solicitor (former WRNS/RN) Email: SFAFCS@outlook.com or Call: 07905 798016
Anytime	Reading Force FREE books and scrapbooks to families with children and grandchildren aged 0-18. Have fun sharing stories!	Reading Force https://www.readingforce.org.uk/join-reading-force/ (To apply please click the link above)
Monday – Friday 9am – 5pm	Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP) (Is part of Citizen Advice Bureau.	A referral can be made by Veterans First Point on your behalf or you can contact ASAP directly on 0808 800 1007

	Helping Armed Forces, Veterans, regular or Reserve and their dependants).	Website – www.adviceasap.org.uk Or complete an online form on the website and get a call back.
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Further information -.

Veterans can access our website www.veteransfirstpoint.org.uk for further information on how to contact services that may be able to help.

Email Veterans First Point, Lothian on veterans.enquiries@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk