

BRIEFING NOTE FOR READING HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Work being done with GP Practices re registering Veterans

1. A Veteran is anyone who has been a member of the serving Armed Forces for a day or more (includes Army, Navy, Royal Airforce and Merchant Navy).
2. Veterans have a greater likelihood of some illnesses than their civilian counterparts, such as hearing, loss, limb and joint problems, and mental health issues.
3. Veterans have priority access to NHS secondary care for conditions related to their service, subject to the clinical needs of all patients. This means they should be given priority over patients with similar medical problems - not that they should be seen in preference to other patients whose medical condition is more urgent.
4. There are specialist NHS services available for Veterans, such as mental health and trauma.
5. Most veterans are not identified within the health system and this is a problem across the country. There are many causes of this, including the definition and use of the term "Veteran", and in some cases a reluctance of the Veteran to identify themselves.
6. Accurately identifying the number of armed forces veterans that reside in Reading Borough is not straight forward, given the range and quality of data that is available. Military pension and compensation scheme data can be used as a proxy for the number of veterans in an area (however, not all veterans are in receipt of pension or compensation payments). Using this measure, as of March 2017 there were 378 veterans in receipt of a pension/compensation living in Reading borough.
7. In April 2016 we found that 40 patients in Reading surgeries were identified as Veterans. Following this, the CCGs developed guidance for practices on registering patients from the armed forces community. Also a new armed forces page on the CCG's web site set out why veterans should register themselves as such with their GP. A survey undertaken in August 2017 found that 133 patients in Reading surgeries were now identified as Veterans.
8. This Autumn practices will ask patients attending flu clinics whether they had served in the Armed Forces. This idea was piloted last year at Parkside practice, Green Road, and the practice coded 32 new patients as Veterans (previously only 1 patient was coded). The CCGs will survey the number of patients identified in January 2018 to assess the impact of this initiative.
9. Veteran identification facilitates continuity of care on medical discharge from the armed forces. All people leaving the armed forces are given a summary of their medical records, which they are advised to give to their new GP when they register. The practice will also be advised of prior registration with Defence Medical Services and with a summary of their in-service care. From 2 October 2017, all practices will need to complete new patient registrations using a new family doctor services registration form, which asks if the patient is an armed forces leaver.