A guide to working with Veterans in custody
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank SAMH, Scotland’s leading mental health charity for allowing us to use parts of their Life Force publication which has been invaluable setting the scene for the issues faced by Veterans who find themselves in the Criminal Justice System.

We would like to give a special thanks to Nick Wood, a recent Butler Trust award winner, who was the inspiration behind the Veterans in Custody Support scheme and whose relentless enthusiasm has moved this agenda forward.

We would like to thank colleagues from the In Reach group, consisting of the Ministry of Defence, National Offender Management Service, Royal British Legion, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association - Forces Help, Combat Stress, Action for Prisoners Families, HM Prison and Probation Colleagues and nacro for their unending support and patience in driving this initiative forward.

Lastly we would like to thank colleagues from the prisons, probation and the agencies of the voluntary sector who gave their time and expertise to the Veterans in Custody Support Workshop, held at Newbold Revel in February 2010.
Forward

The Veterans Prison In-Reach Working Group brings together 3rd sector organisations - The Royal British Legion, SSAFA Forces Help, Combat Stress, Action for Prisoner’s Families and nacro, as well as the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA), the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the National Offender Management Service of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), HMP frontline staff, representatives from the Devolved Administration and a representative from the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health. It aims to provide a common and collaborative approach to Veterans in prison and probation. It works to raise awareness amongst ex-Service personnel in prison and probation of the help and support available to them and to their families whilst they serve their sentence and as they prepare for release. The overall aim of the group is to help support and reduce reoffending amongst the Veterans community.

You will hear more about the invaluable work of the ex-Services charities and the support they offer to veterans in prison/probation through the various workshops organized today, as well as the welfare support provided by the MoD’s Service Personnel and Veterans Agency. The Veterans In-Custody Support Service is an idea promoted by the Veterans Prison In-Reach Group, and today’s event has been organized by Nacro on behalf of the Ministry of Justice. Communication, education and training are essential if we are to get this right. Events like this present the opportunity to share best practice, advice and guidance and raise awareness of staff that potentially come into contact with ex-Service personnel. In particular the array of help and support in existence for Veterans to ensure that they are signposted appropriately and promptly.

The MoD, through the Veterans Prison In-Reach Group, is committed to working closely within Government and with the third sector to minimize the risk of veterans reoffending.

Liz Nwofor  
DCDS Pers Pension, Compensation & Veterans  
Ministry of Defence  
February 2010
Introduction

We are delighted to introduce this new guide, which we hope will be an invaluable resource for anyone whose work brings them into contact with Veterans and the Veterans community.

The word “Veteran” may conjure up images of older soldiers who served in the conflicts of the last century, but in fact it includes everyone who has been in the Armed Forces. In the UK, there are over five million Veterans (source: Veterans UK) ranging from those who have served in campaigns in Northern Ireland, the Falkland Islands, the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq and many other places, in addition to those whose service took place in a supporting role within the UK and Germany.

There are some excellent support services aimed specifically at Veterans and their families, and this guide seeks to help Prison, Probation and non-specialist community services to link with these organisations and support the ex-service offender to a successful resettlement path.

This guide provides information on some of the issues Veterans might face and some of the military structures, customs and phrases that matter greatly to ex-service personnel but can be baffling to others.

It describes the Veterans in Custody Support process and finally offers contact details of the many specialist services keen to offer help to ex service offenders, in custody and the community. We would recommend you build on local contacts and add their information to the back of this pack.

Sally Wentworth James, Nacro
Nick Woods, HMP Everthorpe
February 2010
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Section 4: Local contacts
Section 1: General background and context

According to a recent snapshot analysis conducted by the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Justice, there are approximately 2500 ex service personnel currently serving a prison sentence and it is anticipated the same, if not more, will be serving a community sentence. The majority of people leaving the Armed Forces do well, suffering no ill effects, entering full time employment and leading meaningful and fulfilling lives. Some Veterans however fare badly after service and this guide is to support those who find themselves sentenced to a custodial term.

This section aims to offer readers an awareness of military terminology, some reasons why individuals join up and lastly some of the issues they can face when they leave service.

The Armed Forces, Veterans and the Veterans community

The British Armed Forces encompasses the Royal Navy, the Army, and the Royal Air Force constituting one of the largest militaries in Europe. These Forces are made up of regulars and reservists.

Regular

Regular Forces personnel are employed full-time, and have usually signed long-term contracts committing them to regular service.

Reservists

Regular Reserve Forces will have served in the regular Forces. Volunteer reservists will consist mainly of people who have joined directly from the civilian community with careers outside the military. Both groups of reservists will be called up for training and service when necessary.

Veterans

A Veteran has spent a proportion of their life serving their country in the Armed Forces as a regular or reserve. This includes National Servicemen, former Polish forces under British command and Merchant Mariners who have seen duty in military operations (e.g. the Falklands Conflict).
Veterans community
Veterans together with their widows/widowers and their dependants make up the Veterans community. Research released in 2005 says that the United Kingdom’s Veterans population\(^1\) stands at just over 10.5 million, indicates over 5 million Veterans in the UK. Many Veterans join the Armed Forces as young adults, an important time in life for shaping values, beliefs and attitudes. Ministry of Defence\(^2\) intake figures to the UK Regular Forces for 2007/2008 show that of the 21,325 new recruits, 53% were aged between 16 and 19.

Some of the reasons for joining the Armed Forces
There are many social and economic reasons for joining the Armed Forces including personal improvement by learning new skills and job security by gaining full time employment. There are opportunities to see different parts of the world and the chance for people to do something different with their life. For many personnel, military life is ‘a great leveller‘; it is a positive experience (especially for disadvantaged youths who enter service early) allowing them to enjoy a more favourable life pathway.

Whilst TV advertising and poster campaigns play their part, many new recruits will have a life in the Forces recommended to them by a peer (family member of friend) who is a serving member or a Veteran.

Comradeship
Comradeship is very important for many Veterans. While there are differences in the ways that comradeship is perceived by different individuals, it is often seen as something that cannot be destroyed by time. Comradeship is seen as deeper than ordinary friendship, the depth of the relationship arising because of the shared hardships, the shared lives, and the sense of dependency for one’s life on others. During conflicts intimate relationships and bonds are formed with colleagues in order that they can rely on each other in times of crisis. For some Veterans, continued service provides comradeship, and in fact may be the reason many individuals continue to serve in the Forces.

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\(^1\) Profile of the Ex-service Community in the UK – The Royal British Legion 2005.
\(^2\) Office of National Statistics UK Regular Forces Intake And Outflow By Age For Financial Year 2007/08
Service personnel frequently form lifelong friendships because they have shared a common threat and destiny. The deep bond that develops over time has been described as the ‘band of brothers’ by soldiers throughout history. The legacy of military service can often be seen in a Veteran’s strong identification with other Veterans, which brings with it a sense of personal identity and value, as well as affording a degree of security or protection.

Combat and hardship do little to diminish the feeling that Veterans have of ‘taking part’, ‘being there’, and being ‘part of the family’.

The other side of this coin can be a mistrust of others who are not part of the ‘group’. Not uncommonly Veterans stereotype civilians and vice versa.

This lack of trust, alongside the incorrect assumptions that support agencies may make about often proud Veterans can be potentially problematic when facilitating a smooth transition back into the community.

Veterans’ organisations themselves have identified a 'dependency culture' in the Armed Forces which can lead to resettlement difficulties. Adjustment back into society for some Veterans can be problematic without the support of their comrades.

**The regime**

Military training promotes strict conformity to high standards of behaviour in terms of defined discipline, punctuality, orderliness, cleanliness and obedience. These behaviours are what other people’s lives may depend on in times of conflict.

Pride in the job, not wanting to let others down, responsibility for subordinates, and development of specialist skills etc. require a flexibility of mind and action which can be attributed to a service career.

Some Veterans can find the transition back into society difficult when those around them follow different guidelines and do not exhibit attributes learned in the forces. For example, some Veterans may find it stressful when they are kept waiting or when things do not run according to plan.

**How do Veterans see society?**

Many Veterans have had experiences in the course of service that will be very different to the majority of the community. These experiences may relate to their exposure to people’s capacity to behave inhumanely towards others.
During conflicts service personnel are required to respond in the most difficult and arduous situations. In theatres of war this can result in the severe injury or death of another human being, and may require service personnel to ‘dehumanise’ the enemy. Many struggle within themselves to reconcile this with their personal values and beliefs, feeling that their lives have been changed as a result of their experiences.

Service people serving overseas in war zones or peacekeeping missions are required to ‘put their lives on the line’ for their country. While this is accepted as part of the job, it can become a source of bitterness and resentment for Veterans who feel that the public or government have not appreciated their sacrifice, or the ‘ultimate sacrifice’ of mates who have been killed. Veterans may have to deal with mental and physical health problems in isolation following their service and feel that they have to fight for recognition of this.

Veterans may not always wish their circumstances of leaving the Forces to be disclosed. If a Veteran was suffering a combat related stress disorder whilst in the service, this may not have been recognised by managers. Poor levels of job performance or disciplinary problems attributable to this illness may have resulted in a discharge termed “Services no longer required” which may be a source of shame to a previously effective serviceman or woman.

Discharge and the resettlement process
People leaving the Armed Forces (service leavers) can be grouped into 3 categories: Normal Service Leavers, Medically Discharged Service Leavers and Early Service Leavers.

Normal Service Leavers
Normal Service Leavers are discharged on completion of their engagement, having submitted their notice to leave or having been given notice of discharge under redundancy. For normal service leavers entitlement to a resettlement process can be sought anytime up to two years before the date of discharge.

Medically Discharged Service Leavers
This group of leavers will have had a pre-existing physical or mental health problem, been injured or have developed a medical condition that has affected their future in
the services. All service leavers within this group will have attended a medical board which made the decision about their remaining in or leaving the service. When an individual is medically discharged, a resettlement officer will have been contacted to plan resettlement actions. All individuals who are medically discharged are entitled to the full resettlement provision.

Medical documents
Those leaving the Armed Forces, after having a medical examination, are encouraged to request a copy of medical documents which can be given to a GP. The GP can then, if necessary, request the full medical records of his or her patient relating to the period of service in the Armed Forces, by post from the Ministry of Defence.

This system relies on the individual Veteran presenting the GP with the medical documents and the GP requesting the full medical records if necessary. This may be problematic as the documents may have been misplaced by the Veteran. Medical documents are automatically forwarded to the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA) which determines eligibility for the type of pension/compensation that can be claimed.

Departments of Community Mental Health (DCMHs)
Departments of Community Mental Health are multidisciplinary teams which carry out clinical, educational and advisory services to both primary care and the chain of command.

Their aim is to provide timely assessment and treatment for serving personnel and for those who cannot be rehabilitated, to ensure they receive a smooth transition to civilian life. DCMHs are located in areas with a strong Military population. Standards of care are generally extremely high with fast tracking for urgent cases and very short waiting times for routine referrals.

Defence Mental Health Social Work Service (DMHSWS)
Service personnel likely to be medically discharged with a mental health related problem are referred to the Defence Mental Health Social Work Service (DMHSWS). This tri-Service provision is accessed through the fifteen DCMHs. Mental health
social workers support service personnel and their families, throughout the medical discharge process and for a period afterwards. The DMHSWS links with community resources to secure housing, health and social work services. There is a focus on finances by accessing military pension provision and civilian benefits entitlements. They also pursue the availability or deferment of resettlement training.

**Early Service Leavers**

Early Service Leavers are either discharged compulsorily (e.g. as a result of alcohol/drug misuse, criminal acts, inefficiency, temperamental unsuitability), losing eligibility/entitlement to resettlement provision or leave at their own request having completed less than 4 years service. Early service leavers leaving at their own request have the same discharge procedures as normal service leavers. Personnel being discharged prematurely often leave at extremely short notice without having the opportunity to plan their transition to civilian life. This is especially true for those being compulsory discharged and those reservists being demobilised post operations. Consequently this may have an impact on the individual and their families if left unattended.

**What is the resettlement process?**

The resettlement process refers to making the successful transition from military life to the civilian world. It is a phased process including advice, information and training. This includes decisions about housing, education, (their own and that of their children) finances and employment. Resettlement services assist with providing advice, information, guidance and training to prepare and find suitable civilian employment for service leavers.

**The Career Transition Partnership (CTP)**

The Career Transition Partnership (CTP) is funded by the Ministry of Defence to deliver resettlement services to all ranks of the British Armed Forces, to make the transition from military to civilian life as smooth and successful as possible. They teach service leavers the skills they need to produce a CV, learn interview techniques, research the employment market and apply for jobs two years before they leave Service and up to 2 years after they have left.
The Regular Forces Employment Association (RFEA)
The RFEA provides extra support in assisting servicemen and women of all ranks, leaving the Armed Forces, to find employment from the day of discharge without restriction of time thereafter. It supports servicemen and women in the career planning process by providing advice, and guidance, which enables them to develop their capacities to determine and execute immediate and later career decisions.

Managing finances
The move to civilian life away from the more structured force’s community may prove difficult for some Veterans now managing new finances within different and often complicated structures.

On discharge Veterans may face a situation where they need to deal with issues like accommodation and utility costs, and perhaps applying for benefits, for the first time. The wait for financial support post discharge is a potentially vulnerable time for some Veterans and their families. Proud Veterans, trained not to show weakness, may not be assertive in highlighting financial problems, thus lengthening the scale and impact of the problem.

Veterans may encounter significant difficulty with budgeting and money management. Some Veterans may be at risk of being seriously affected by debt, thus highlighting a need for targeted and ongoing support in this area.

The Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA)
The Service Personnel and Veterans Agency is aimed at improving personnel, pensions, welfare and support services to members of the Armed Forces and Veterans. The responsibility for all pension provision, whether a war pension or an Armed Forces pension now falls under the direct control of SPVA.

Housing
The military are required to provide suitable accommodation for serving personnel to allow its members to move as and when required to do so. The Ministry of Defence provides accommodation to many of its personnel. Service Family Accommodation
(SFA) accounts for 47,000 family homes and Single Living Accommodation (SLA) provides 112,000 single living spaces³.

**Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO)**
The JSHAO is set up to provide service personnel and their families with information and advice on the increasingly complex range of civilian housing options. The JSHAO provides a focal point for housing information and advice to all service personnel and their families in particular those about to return to civilian life, and to ex-service personnel who are still in Service Families Accommodation.

**Specific issues and concerns**
Veterans may use avoidance as a primary coping strategy, specifically by using alcohol and keeping busy, which delays the process of requesting support. Many Veterans, particularly those who have served for long engagements want to ‘move on’ despite having enjoyed their service. Most are very proud of their service but others may not wish to be stereotyped as ‘ex-service personnel’.

In health services, clinicians will not automatically have any way of knowing that their patient has served in the Armed Forces, let alone that his or her condition may be related to their period of service. This can be problematic as some conditions show symptoms months or years after the person has left the Armed Forces (particularly in relation to mental health).

**Mental Health**
An analysis of 3000 1990/1991 Gulf Veterans seen by the Medical Assessment Programme found that 75% were well. Of those who were unwell, 81% of ill-health was accounted for in whole or part by psychiatric illness. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder was the most common psychiatric diagnosis (12% 'Prevalence' in this group). The most common Gulf-related organic disorders were respiratory (e.g. Asthma) and skin (e.g. Eczema-like) disorders⁴.

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⁴ Defence Factsheet Medical Assessment Programme Ministry of Defence
“*Most do not develop mental health problems as a result of serving, the minority who do, fare badly*”\(^5\).

Mental health problems are not an inevitable outcome of operational deployment. Veterans with mental health problems during service may be at higher risk of social exclusion after leaving the Forces and therefore these individuals represent a potentially vulnerable group of the Veteran population.

Those who have had problematic or unsuccessful military careers are likely to be extremely vulnerable at their transition to civilian life. Veteran’s mental health problems can have a major impact on family members and peers.

In the Armed Forces there are a number of factors that may contribute to a person’s resistance to seeking help for mental health problems.

These include concerns about how a serving member will be perceived by the chain of command including peers and subordinates. Those with mental health problems may be associated with weakness and failure in the individual's own mind.

Talking to a Military Medical Officer (Military GP) about such problems may not be an option for fear of being medically downgraded, discharged or scorned by comrades. Concerns about stigma may therefore prevent those most in need of help seeking support during service. They may also be reluctant to seek assistance after leaving.

There is potentially a large gap between the number of Veterans who exhibit mental health problems and those who actually present for help and support. Individuals may not seek support unless they are struggling and lack appropriate resources.

The extent of mental health problems among the younger ex-service community is much higher when compared to their peers. In the 16–44 age group, the number of mental health problems is three times that of the UK population of the same age\(^6\).

**Addiction problems**

Misuse of alcohol is common in some Armed Forces personnel and recognised as a general issue for the services in a culture of “work hard, play hard”. Alcohol plays its part in military social life with easy availability and the perceived approval or acquiescence of the authorities: for example the giving of cases of beer as prizes after sporting events. This leads to a ‘lad’s culture’ and stereotypical misconceptions.

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5 Improving The Delivery of Cross Departmental Support And Services For Veterans. A Joint Report of The Department of War Studies and The Institute of Psychiatry, King’s College London (2003)

on the part of the civilian population. It may also be used as a coping agent for those suffering from mental health problems.

Service Veterans including many who served in Iraq and Afghanistan may struggle to cope with the psychological fallout of war, and may turn to drugs and alcohol to gain relief from the distressing symptoms they experience. The drinking culture and habits formed within the Armed Forces may reinforce this.

Combat Stress\(^7\) identify alcohol misuse as more typical than illicit drug misuse, although younger Veterans presenting are more likely to have turned to both alcohol and elicit drugs while Older Veterans predominantly to alcohol alone.

**Homelessness & vulnerability**

Single servicemen are particularly vulnerable on discharge because they may not have anywhere to go. They might go and stay with relatives or friends but very often this becomes an unsatisfactory arrangement and they can then fall into the cycle of no job and no house. These difficulties can be compounded if the Veteran is returning to an area of high unemployment.

An important area of ongoing concern articulated by a significant number of formerly homeless ex-service personnel is social isolation. For some, loneliness is a defining feature of everyday life.

In the military population those with mental health problems are more likely to leave the service prematurely and are at risk of being socially excluded e.g. becoming homeless.

Some Veterans may find it difficult to reintegrate into society. Some end up homeless and without hope. Veterans will be exposed to homelessness as consequences of vulnerability- the causes of this are similar to other groups of homeless people.

Specific vulnerabilities linked to life in the Forces may include:

- Those that were derived from childhood or adolescence and carried into Forces life and later into civilian life;
- Difficulties that originated during service, such as the onset of substance or mental health problems;

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• Problems in coping with the transition back into civilian life;
• Experiences which occurred later after return to civilian life, including relationship difficulties, financial problems and unemployment.

Service personnel experiencing homelessness may consider themselves better equipped to endure, and are less fearful of, the hardships of street life. They may be less inclined to seek or accept help given their tendency to elevate the perceived ‘shame’ of their situation. These factors, together with their greater propensity to drink heavily – which many claim was initiated or exacerbated by the military lifestyle – combine to make them more susceptible to sustained or repeat homelessness.

**SPACES (Single Persons Accommodation Centre for Ex-Services)**

The SPACES project, based within the Resettlement/Welfare complex at Catterick Garrison, North Yorkshire provides accommodation placements across the country for single personnel being discharged from all three services.

The overall aims and objectives of the project are to assist single service leavers to secure appropriate accommodation as they leave the Armed Forces, attempting to reduce the likelihood of them becoming homeless or rough sleepers.

The project specifically targets the most vulnerable group of service leavers, especially those with less than 6 years service. SPACES will work with any single service leaver regardless of their length of service or reason for discharge. The MoD are taking steps In-Service to minimise the risk of homelessness after personnel have left the Armed Forces.

**Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

Military commanders and doctors have recorded a variety of symptoms which eventually became linked with the effect that the traumatic events experienced in war fighting (and peacekeeping) can have on those involved.

PTSD is one psychological reaction to the experience of intense traumatic events particularly those that threaten life. Servicemen and women engaged in combat are many times more likely to experience the traumatic triggers that result in PTSD occurring. More recently, servicemen and women engaged in peacekeeping operations and other operations short of war have experienced the same symptoms.
This is not surprising given some of the grotesque events they have witnessed and been involved with in the course of their duties.

Like all mental health problems, PTSD can affect every aspect of a person’s life. It prevents them from functioning properly and can make activities of daily living difficult. It can also interfere with relationships and cause disharmony and breakdown of marriages and friendships. This can leave the victim socially isolated and also impact upon the veteran’s family and friends.

Symptoms may include:

- Insomnia
- Recurring nightmares
- Persistent high anxiety levels
- Severe mood swings
- Hyper alertness
- Unwanted, intrusive thoughts, sights, sounds, smells which may be extremely vivid, ‘as if’ back there
- Violent and aggressive outbursts
- Lack of concentration
- Sexual dysfunction
- Depression.

In addition the Veteran may also suffer from alcohol or drug abuse related problems often caused through an attempt to self-medicate their symptoms.

Encouraging Veterans with PTSD to accept support can be a significant challenge. Many feel misunderstood by health professionals and society; they withdraw and suffer in silence. Others frequently feel guilt and shame which leads them to feel unworthy or undeserving of help.

The military take a number of steps to ensure the welfare of their personnel, for example, briefings on stress and trauma-related problems are provided before and after deployment. These briefings are also designed to address barriers to care, such as the stigma of mental health problems, which is a significant issue for the military.

A Veteran’s strategy for coping with traumatic memories might be to avoid situations where talking about such events may occur. Peer support does not always apply for Veterans in relation to talking about traumatic experiences. War Veterans might not
have shared traumatic memories with comrades and such reminiscence may not have been encouraged within the culture of the military environment.

**Physical problems (during and after discharge)**

Seriously injured casualties are generally given initial treatment and stabilised by medical personnel in the theatre of war then returned to the UK when appropriate. Over half (52%) of the ex-service community have a long-term illness or disability, and over one fifth (20%) have multiple conditions. This rate is much higher than that of the general population, 35% of whom report a long-term health problem. The younger ex-service community, aged 25–64 years, are much more likely to report poor health than their peers.

**Veterans Regimental Associations**

For many Veterans, Regimental Associations are an important part of their lives. Veterans’ Associations play a variety of roles. Other Veterans may be the only people a Veteran can talk to because of the special relationship forged through shared wartime experiences. For older Veterans there are places the Veteran can make friends after the loss of work-related social relationships following retirement. They provide practical help with advice on pensions, monetary support and other matters. For many, the companionship afforded through membership of an organisation or club is often the only means of social contact that they experience. Research by the Royal British Legion indicates that a significant number of the Veterans’ population over the age of 65 has social contact no more than once or twice a month. It is important where possible that Veterans sustain friendships created during service once they return home, should the Veterans wish to do so.

This section has hopefully offered a flavour of some of the issues ex service personnel face and potential reasons that lead them into crime. Now the problem has been identified, it is important to consider what agencies are doing about it. The next section considers the partnership between the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Justice and the Voluntary Sector as well as taking you through the Veterans in Custody Support service offered in many prisons.

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9 Profile of the Ex-Service Community in the UK (2005)
Section 2: Reaching Veterans in Prison

Prison In Reach Group

It is important that Veterans who find themselves in prison are aware of the advice and support available to them as ex-Service personnel and the arrangements being made to better reach them. Prison In-Reach (PIR) is an initiative that aims to ensure all Veterans that are either in prison or on probation orders or licences, their families and resettlement services are fully aware of the forms and levels of support available to them from the Service and Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA) or the ex-Service charities. This includes the help they can get pre or post release. The work of Prison In-Reach is designed to contribute to the wider Government goals of reducing the risk of re-offending.

PIR has ensured that the SPVA’s Veterans UK website is now available to prison staff via its computer systems. Prison and Probation staff should now be better informed on the work of the SPVA (including the help it provides to all Veterans on pensions, compensation, access to Service records, medical entitlements, welfare advice/support etc) as well as the role of the many other service providers.

The Royal British Legion, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association-Forces Help and the mental health charity Combat Stress all provide welfare visits to Veterans in prison and their families. These visits do not count against an offenders personal visit allowance. It can be important that offenders, especially those close to their release date, have access to such visits if they need them so that they can be helped through that often difficult but crucial period either side of release.

In continuing to improve the ways we reach Veterans in prison, MOD leads a working group that brings together the National Offender Management Service, the Prison Service and organisations from the voluntary sector. It is a non-executive body that helps ensure we build a partnership approach to all our in-reach activities. One aim of the group is to better analyse Veteran the prison population to find out more about them.

One of the initiatives supported by the Prison In Reach group, is the Veterans in Custody Support service which was set up to ensure establishments are involved in the identification and signposting of Veterans in custody to the relevant specialist community support agencies.
The Veterans in Custody Support Process (VICS)

This section explains the purpose and work of the Veterans in Custody Support (VICS) scheme. It suggests ways to link to existing internal processes as well as which external agencies, using a pathway approach, can support the transition to community resettlement. Nick Wood, HMP Everthorpe, was the inspiration behind the VICS project and he has compiled a list of establishments who are currently operating the scheme or who are in the development stage. A current list (February 2010) of all nominated VICS coordinators is available from kim.lau@noms.gsi.gov.uk, and we would suggest that an internal email network is set up to share good practice and contacts.

There are existing processes in place that identify Veterans in custody, including the recently developed P NOMIS, an IT process, undertaken at reception or induction, through to the signposting services offered by Information Advice and Guidance (IAG), Education, Resettlement, Offender Management and Healthcare. Subject to resources and at the Governors’ discretion, it has been suggested that each nominates a Veteran in Custody Support Champion (VICSC) to ensure that relevant departments are identifying Veterans, and offering them current information to aid the access and support of TRBL/SSAFA Forces Help Caseworkers. This role doesn’t have to be a prison member of staff but could be someone from the voluntary sector who overseas IAG activities. Similarly, it could be a prison member of staff based in Offender Management, resettlement, induction or wing based. To help with the role we would recommend that the support of a colleague is enlisted and, where possible, utilise the time and resources of Peer Support Workers. Whoever takes on this role needs to make sure that any intervention offered to offenders serving more than a 12 month sentence, is discussed with the Offender Management team.

What should the VICS do?

The main purpose of this role is to complement existing services, to identify, offer information, and signpost to specialist help across the pathways. We have included suggestions as to the type of basic information and signposting that can be offered. Initially the VISC Champion may need to devote an amount of their time to ensure that the relevant departments are set up to identify, offer and signpost individuals to
community support. Following this, the role should involve checking for any difficulties which may arise, and ensuring that services have the most up-to-date information.

**Identify Veterans**

Once successfully rolled out, P NOMIS will include in its assessment process a box that identifies whether an individual has served in the Armed Forces. Ideally the VICS should coordinate with the assessment function within their prison and ensure this information is passed on to the relevant intervention and signposting team. It is not the VICS Champions responsibility to do this work themselves but to ensure that there is an appropriate referral system. The VICS Champion may wish to investigate whether a slot on Veteran services could be added to the induction process and whether there is an appropriate member of staff or peer worker that could deliver this information. Alternatively they may wish to work with the IAG team to assess the best method of getting information to the Veteran early in their sentence.

**Offer basic information:**

The VICS Champion should link with identified veterans and draw attention to the basic information on specialist help and support available to Veterans through new leaflets and posters that are being sent to all establishments. The leaflets provide details of organisations that offer services and the ways they can be contacted. (Prison Governors have been encouraged to allow the contact phone numbers for these organisations to be used by offenders themselves.) For Veterans who might have chosen not to identify themselves, it is recommended that posters and leaflets are readily displayed to enable them to access information and support independently.

There are several websites that provide Veterans’ information such as [www.veterans-info.uk](http://www.veterans-info.uk). This site contains the Veterans’ Knowledge Map – an interactive directory of contact information for Veterans. Other addresses can be found in section 3 of this guide.

It is imperative that Offender Managers (OM) are aware of and/or involved in agreeing the interventions to be offered by specialist agencies to offenders who will be released on licence. The degree of involvement will depend on whether the
community based manager is responsible for overseeing the sentence or not. Either way the community based Offender Manager or the prison based Offender Supervisor should ensure that issues regarding risk of harm and risk of reoffending are managed and that interventions are delivered in accordance with a sentence plan. Any issues likely to be outstanding at the point of release should be identified so that they can be followed up in the community.

**Signpost specialist help:**
We would recommend that you establish contacts and relationships with the local specialist agencies to familiarise yourself with their assessment processes, actions services and support the can offer the Veteran offender. This will also smooth the process for access into the prison.

The VICS Champion should ensure attention is drawn to the specific areas of help for veterans. Principal points of contact for such help are listed in the factsheet of specialist help and local points of contact should be developed and circulated by the IAG function. The VICS Champion could periodically check this is being completed. We would recommend you copy the factsheet and circulate to colleagues in reception, IAG, OM and other departments as well as to relevant wing based and specialist peer support workers

**Mutual support networks:**
Subject to Governor approval, the VICS Champion could help to arrange informal mutual support networks for Veterans in custody. Participation would be voluntary and Veterans could share their experiences of Service life, transition and in accessing support as a veteran. Discussion forums with specialist agencies could be organised and we suggest you liaise with IAG or your Voluntary sector Coordinator to organise these. Peer support workers should be able to assist in this by running these networks.

**Use a VICS network:**
We encourage VICS Champions to contact colleagues with the same role in other establishments in order to share good practice. A current list (February 2010) of all nominated VICS Champions across establishments is available and further copies can be obtained from kim.lau@noms.gsi.gov.uk.
Veterans in Custody Support process (flowchart)

Identify the Veteran offender at the earliest point – First Night in Custody, Reception. Critical to **ASK the QUESTION** – “**have you ever served in the armed forces as a regular or reservist?**”

- Provide an induction advice guide to the prisoner (copy available from Nick Woods, HMP Everthorpe)
- Refer Veteran to VICS Champion

VICS Champion makes contact with the Veteran and records forces service information such as Armed service number, Army Regiment / Navy Branch / RAF branch, D.O.B, length of service, date and reason for discharge and operational theatre e.g. N Ireland, Falklands, Gulf, Iraq, Afghanistan etc.

- Referral made to ex service organisation such as SSAFA or TRBL
- VICS Champion update establishment records, P NOMIS and informs Offender Supervisor of referral (if appropriate)
- SSAFA/RBL caseworker feeds back action plan and outcome to VICS Champion
- Information passed to Offender Supervisor by VICS Champion for inclusion in sentence planning and resettlement plan
Actions and information can be circulated to community based Offender Managers ensuring a continuous path of engagement and sharing of appropriate resettlement information. If the offender will not be released on licence (usually serving less than 12 months) then contact can sometimes still be sought with an Integrated Offender Management/PPO scheme or via various other community based services, particularly drug treatment. This should ensure that appropriate follow up in the community is established. In all circumstances information from discussion and actions taken should be recorded on P NOMIS.

A similar service is being developed in the National Probation Service, known as the Veterans Support Officer or VSO, it mirrors VICS process which allows for a more streamlined transition from custody and back into the community.
Factsheet of Specialist Help for Veterans Serving a Prison Sentence

Principal points of contact for specialist help can be located in Section 3 and we would encourage colleagues to develop local points of contact and ensure they are coordinated by a central function such as Information, Advice and Guidance or Offender Management. This factsheet can be reproduced and circulated to all new Veteran offenders as part of their induction pack. You can also request copies of publicity leaflets and information from Nick Wood (nick.wood02@hmps.gsi.gov.uk).

Below, by subject area, are examples of where you can refer Veterans to.

- **Health**
  If a Veteran has a condition linked to his/her time in the Armed Forces, he/she may be able to gain access to his/her Service medical records through the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA). Veterans should be assisted in contacting the SPVA through their free phone helpline or website. These records should be shared with prison medical staff. If a Veteran is suffering a mental health condition they could be referred by prison medical staff to ‘Mental Health In-Reach’ staff. If prison medical staff and/or the In-Reach staff suspect that the Veteran’s condition is related to Service in the Armed Forces they could refer the case to Prof Ian Palmer of the Medical Assessment Programme (MAP) in London. The MAP offers expert mental health assessments for Veterans and refers cases for treatment. Prof Palmer can visit establishments to assess cases where appropriate.

- **Welfare/Wellbeing**
  In addition to CARATs (drugs and alcohol treatment) services available to those in custody, veterans can be referred to the SPVA’s Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) or the specialist veterans charities: The Royal British Legion (TRBL), the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen and Families Association - Forces Help (SSAFA-FH) and Combat Stress. The charities’ welfare managers visit Veterans and their families to provide one-to-one advice and support. **Welfare visits to prisons do not count against an offenders personal visit allowance.**
• **Housing**
  In addition to advice for Veterans on social housing from his/her local authority, a veteran should be referred to specialist charities. Shelter can offer specialist advice on housing needs, and there are a number of voluntary sector providers offering housing advice in many prisons. The Veterans’ charities RBL, SSAFA-Forces Help, Veterans Aid, Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation and Haig Homes all offer various forms of help and support. The SPVA and its VWS offer advice on which might be the most appropriate to approach depending on the need. Seeking appropriate accommodation should be done in consultation with Offender Management and/or the establishments housing advice function.

• **Finance/Benefit & Debt (FBD)**
  Many Veterans will have finance problems. It is advisable to address them at the earliest opportunity to avoid the difficulties that can be associated with debt. Some establishments have close links with the local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), who will provide specialist support on matters relating to debt. Jobcentre Plus staff may be available to advise on benefits, if the benefit is linked to housing, the Housing Advice service, if available, should be contacted. There may be funds available to help Veterans pay off certain debts through the Veterans charities – TRBL, SSAFA Forces Help and Veteran’s Aid. There may also be funds to pay for rent deposits if rent guarantee bonds are not accepted. The FSA has funded nacro to deliver Money Management training to prison service staff who can go on to support prisoners with finance and debt issues back in their establishments.

• **Employment**
  In addition to the Employment, Training and Education (ETE) services available to all those in custody, Veterans should be referred to those organisations that help Veterans finding work e.g. SPVA VWS, the Regular Forces Employment Agency (RFEA) and the TRBL’s ‘Civvy Street’.

A guide to working with Veterans in custody
• **Families Support**

Veterans should be advised on the specific help available to veterans’ families and dependants. This can involve arranging through the SPVA for VWS welfare visits and advice to families as well as signposting to areas of support from Veterans charities (e.g. TRBL, SSAFA Forces Help). Veterans can also be signposted to support provided by offender charities such as Nacro, and Action for Prisoners’ Families.
Section 3: List of specialist agencies
These organisations can engage with the Veteran prior to release. Veteran are able to make a self referral or via the Veterans in Custody Support Officer (if available), the Offender Supervisor or by another member of staff.

**Armed Forces Compensation Scheme**
SPVA
Tomlinson House
Norcross
Thornton Cleveleys
Lancashire
UK
FY5 3WP

Phone 441253 866043
e-mail veterans.help@spva.gsi.gov.uk
www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/Personnel/Pensions/Armed ForcesPensions/AFCS

The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme is for Serving personnel and ex-Service personnel whose injuries, wounds and illnesses arose on or after 6 April 2005. Please note that in some cases, claims may be considered under both schemes due to injuries, wounds and illnesses arising both before and after 6 April 2005.

**BLESMA (British Limbless Ex Service Men's Association)**
185-187 High Road,
Chadwell Heath,
Romford,
Essex RM6 6NA

Tel: 0208 590 1124
Email: headquarters@blesma.org
www.blesma.org

The national charity for limbless serving and ex service men and women and their dependants and widows.
Civvy Street (part of the Royal British Legion)

Civvy Street Helpline 0800 169 4073
www.civvystreet.org

Civvy Street is a website for serving and former members of the UK Armed Services and their dependants. It offers free information and advice about resettlement into civilian life, learning and work. Armed Services and ex-Armed Services personnel can improve their skills and job opportunities with Civvy Street's free online learning and work tools. Civvy Street has a special focus on helping individuals who face one or more barriers to learning and work.

Combat Stress

Tyrwhitt House,
Oak lawn Road
Leatherhead,
Surrey, KT22 0BX

Telephone: 01372 841600
Email: contactus@combatstress.org.uk
www.combatstress.org.uk

Combat Stress offers short stay remedial treatment at three-specialist short-stay Treatment Centre's in Shropshire, Surrey and Ayrshire. These provide a range of treatments including psychiatric support and occupational therapy to help veterans rebuild their lives and provide a break for the families of traumatised veterans. Services offered include Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Treatments, Behaviour, Cognitive and Solution Focused Therapy, Eye Movement Desensitisation Reprogramming (EMDR), Social Skills Training, Drugs maintenance and assessment for GP's, Anger and Anxiety Management, Physical Exercise and Outdoor Pursuits and Occupational and Recreational Therapies.
The Forces Pension Society exists to ensure that serving and retired members of the Armed Forces, their widows, widowers, surviving partners, civil partners and dependants receive the pension to which they are entitled.

Help for Heroes
Unit 6,
Aspire Business Centre,
Ordnance Road,
Tidworth,
Hants, SP9 7QD

Telephone 0845 673 1760 or 01980 846 459
www.helpforheroes.org.uk

Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO)
Headquarters Land Forces
Erskine Barracks
Wilton
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP2 0AG

Tel: Civ: 01722 436575
Mil: 94331 2575
Fax:01722 436577
www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceFor/ServiceCommunity/Housing

(JSHAO) provides Service Personnel, Service Leavers and ex Service Personnel still occupying Service Family Accommodation with comprehensive advice on housing options including civilian housing information, advice and where possible placement into social housing.
Medical Assessment Programme (MAP)
Veterans who have concerns about their mental health should seek a referral to the MAP via their GP or prison doctor; GPs should write to:

Dr Ian Palmer  
Head of Medical Assessment Programme  
Baird Medical Centre - Gassiott House  
St Thomas Hospital  
Lambeth Palace Road  
London SE1 7EH

E-mail: map@gstt.nhs.uk  
Freephone Helpline: 0800 169 5401

The purpose of the MAP is to assess, and attempt to understand, the physical and psychological difficulties experienced by ex-Service personnel resulting from operations: to provide advice to individuals and health professionals about the mental and physical health of veterans in their care and where possible, to provide diagnoses and management strategies for individuals and the medical and mental health professionals involved in their care.

Medical Records
GPs seeking advice on how to request medical records can contact the records departments via these numbers.

RAF: 01494 497 410  
Royal Navy & Marines: 02392 768 063  
Army: 08456 009 663

Norcare
Norcare Head Office  
Portman House  
Portland Road  
Shieldfield, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE2 1AQ

Telephone: 0191 261 2228  
Email: norcare@norcare-ltd.com  
www.norcare.co.uk

SUPPORTED housing charity Norcare is working with The Royal British Legion to establish a facility for vulnerable veterans that will help them to find homes and jobs.
The Norcare Veterans Centre will have onsite accommodation and a visitor centre where veterans can access advice on employment and training, welfare and debt advice, family liaison and counselling, health and well-being programmes and specialist help for issues such as trauma.

**Prison In Reach - Reaching Veterans in Prison**

DCDS Pers Pension, Compensation & Veterans
Ministry of Defence
Main Building: 7.1.20
Whitehall, SW1A 2HB

Civ: 0207 218 0295
Mil: 962180295
e-mail: DCDS PERS-PCV-TRANSIT POL
www.veterans-uk.info/vets_issues/prisonsinreach.html

Prison In-Reach (PIR) is an initiative that aims to ensure all Veterans that are prison or probation offenders, their families and resettlement services are fully informed of the forms and levels of support available to them whether from the SPVA or the ex-Service charities. This includes the help they can get before as well as after release.

**Remount**

12 Carne Place
Barnwood
Glos GL4 3BE

Telephone 01452 505686/ 07800 510420

Remount is free to all service personnel and it offers a series of residential conversion and personal realisation courses at Brathay Hall near Lake Windermere. The Remount Programme aims to help service people to enjoy a smooth and fruitful transition into civilian life, and to help them plan to cope with the stress which can often arise from undergoing such significant personal change. Programmes include recognise the relevance of the qualifications gained during military service. Learning about PTS its causes, symptoms, effects, treatments and how to manage it as well as managing alcohol and drug abuse.
Reserves Mental Health Programme (RMHP)
Tel: 0800 0326 258
Web: www.army.mod.uk/rtmc/rmhp.htm

Open to anyone who has seen active service as a volunteer or reservist since January 1 2003, is now demobilised, and has mental health problems that might be linked to service on operations. Self referral or GP referrals.

Royal Star and Garter Homes
Richmond Hill
Richmond Upon Thames
Surrey
TW10 6RR

Telephone Number: 020 8439 8000
Fax Number: 020 8439 8002
E-mail: generalenquiries@starandgarter.org
www.starandgarter.org

The Royal Star & Garter Charity provides nursing & therapeutic care to the ex-Service Community at its Richmond and Solihull Homes.

Rural Life Skills
Game Lea Farm,
Rod Knowle Lane,
Eastmoor,
Chesterfield S42 7DB

Telephone: 01246 568206
Email: elizabeth@gamelea.fsnet.co.uk

The centre offers ex service people the opportunity to gain recognised qualifications if required (not compulsory) such as OCN qualification in Music Technology, OCN qualification in Animal care, OCN Qualification in Horticulture, OCN Qualification in Craft –Textiles/wrought iron work /woodwork etc, etc, City and guilds/NPTC in a wide range of rural skills and ASDAN Awards. Comradeship with others who have had similar experiences or support to access jobs through CV/letter writing and job interview skills.
SIR Oswald Stoll Foundation
446 Fulham Road
London SW6 1DT

Telephone  020 7385 2110
www.oswaldstoll.org.uk/

The Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation provides homes and rehabilitative support to vulnerable and disabled ex-Servicemen and women, including those who have been homeless.

South Atlantic Medal Association 1982
PO Box 82
Blackwood
Gwent NP2 0YE

www.sama82.org

SAMA82 will investigate any case of hardship or distress amongst South Atlantic veterans in which direct financial assistance is sought or recommended.

St Dunstan's
12-14 Harcourt Street
London
W1H 4HD

Freephone 0800 389 7979 - for Applicants only
Telephone Number: 020 7723 5021
Fax Number: 020 7262 6199
E-mail Address: enquiries@st-dunstans.org.uk
Website Address: www.st-dunstans.org.uk

St Dunstan's is a charity which helps visually impaired ex-servicemen and women to continue to have independent lives. On a practical level, services include rehabilitation, teaching new skills, resolving housing issues, help with benefit claims and access to sporting facilities and social activities.

The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)
www.adviceguide.org.uk

If the information you need can not be found on Adviceguide, contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau where advisers will be able to help you. To find your nearest CAB, visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/getadvice.
The Regular Forces Employment Association (RFEA)
PO Box 126
Stalybridge SK15 2LE

Telephone 01457831140
www.rfea.org.uk

The RFEA's aim, has been to help those leaving the Armed Forces to find and to remain in employment throughout their working lives. This is done as part of the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) for up to two years after discharge and thereafter is done on behalf of the Service Benevolence Funds.

The Royal British Legion
199 Borough High Street
London SE1 1AA

Legionline: 08457 725 725 (10am - 4pm, Monday to Friday)
www.britishlegion.org.uk

The Royal British Legion offer a range of practical help for serving and ex-Servicemen, women and their dependants providing financial, social and emotional support to those who have served or are currently serving in the Armed Forces, and their dependants. The RBL offer support and advice on War Pensions, benevolent help, benefits, housing / care homes, resettlement training / employment / business loans and advice, vocational training and legion membership.

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency,
Norcross,
Thornton Cleveleys
Lancashire, FY5 3WP.

Freephone 0800 169 22 77

The Service Personnel & Veterans Agency (SPVA) provides pay, pension and support services to both Military Personnel and the Veterans Community.
The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association - Forces Help

19 Queen Elizabeth Street
London SE1 2LP

Tel 020 7403 8783
Fax 020 7403 8815
E mail info@ssafa.org.uk
www.ssafa.org.uk

To qualify for assistance from SSAFA Forces Help, a Veteran needs to have only served one days paid service in any of the Armed Forces. This includes those who served in the Reserve Forces (T.A.) and anyone who did National Service as well as close relatives, widows and widowers. SSAFA Forces Help can assist those serving a prison sentence or recently released. Caseworkers can help prisoners who are due for release prepare for a smooth transition to life outside again by discussing resettlement needs. This could be education, including distance learning, training, learning a trade and guidance on getting a job.

SSAFA can provide support with immediate needs, household items, practical advice on housing and debt, essential items (such as children’s clothes, school uniforms and books), personal support, experienced, non-judgemental and confidential advice and financial assistance for a wide range of needs. SSAFA also help those entitled to apply for state and local benefits and war pensions or to review existing state pensions, seek monetary support from civilian and Service charities and benevolent funds and making grants from SSAFA resources. They can also offer help in organising and funding home adaptations or special equipment for the disabled which cannot be obtained from statutory sources.

The Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex Services,
Regional Resettlement Centre, 
St. Aidan's Road 
Catterick Garrison, 
Catterick 
North Yorkshire DL9 3AY

Tel 01748 833797 or Catterick Military 94731 2940. 
www.spaces.org.uk

SPACES, is designed to help single ex-regulars find appropriate accommodation when they leave the services. Through this service the project reduces the likelihood of ex-service personnel becoming homeless or sleeping rough after discharge.
Veterans Aid
40 Buckingham Palace Road,
Victoria,
London, SW1W 0RE

Free Phone 0800 012 68 67
www.veterans-aid.net

Provide direct and immediate help to vulnerable Veterans with hostel accommodation, financial assistance, meal vouchers & clothing and advice and advocacy

Veterans UK

www.veterans-uk.info

Veterans-UK is the single brand covering a variety of different veterans services. It is a single point for accessing information. It provides information on issues such as welfare, pensions and compensation, remembrance, special support services and publishes a monthly newsletter called Veterans World.

War Pensions Scheme

SPVA
Tomlinson House
Norcross
Thornton Cleveleys
Lancashire
UK
FY5 3WP

Phone 441253 866043
e-mail veterans.help@spva.gsi.gov.uk
www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/Personnel/SPVA/

The War Pensions Scheme is for ex-Service personnel whose injuries, wounds and illnesses arose prior to 6 April 2005. This scheme also covers War Widows and Widowers Pensions.