



By Email

22 February 2024
CDO(2024)1

Dear Colleague,

ARMED FORCES COVENANT

As part of the regular engagement programme between Scottish Government and the Director of Defence Healthcare we had a discussion around the Armed Forces Covenant and the level of awareness of dental teams in Scotland. We agreed that the clinical needs of serving personnel and their families and veterans should be understood and supported within the NHS.

Further information about the Covenant can be found at the following link:

[The Armed Forces Covenant and status in law - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/libraries/commons/2018/06/14/the-armed-forces-covenant-and-status-in-law)

A key step towards achieving this is by helping dental teams support veterans to access the right help and at the right time allowing NHS Scotland to deliver on our Armed Forces Covenant commitments. There are a few simple steps that could help us identify who our veterans are within our primary healthcare system:

- Improve dental teams' awareness around the potential health impacts of serving in the Armed Forces. Whilst the new General Practice Armed Forces and Veterans' Recognition Scheme training pack is medically focused it contains very useful information to assist dental teams in understanding the impact of military life on health and wellbeing. We would urge that you spend a few moments to review the information; access is via the following link: [Scottish Government: Armed Forces and Veterans' Recognition Scheme \(Healthcare\) | Turas | Learn \(nhs.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/armed-forces-and-veterans-recognition-scheme-healthcare/turas/learn/nhs.scot) or type 'Armed Forces' into the TURAS Learn search engine;
- Dental teams should encourage veterans to declare their veteran status – practices could consider a range of approaches to optimise the self-identification of veterans within their patient group (e.g., practice displays, social media, SMS);
- Ensure that veteran status is highlighted on any onward referrals – by ensuring that the veteran marker is highlighted in referrals from primary to secondary care, dental practices can help uphold NHS Scotland's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant;
- Being aware of the third sector veteran organisations' resources that are available could help streamline signposting to the support needed.



As, the families of serving personnel are required to move on a regular basis, it is often the case that they cannot access the full range of healthcare; as they move before they get to the end of a waiting list. Whilst we do not wish you to give preferential treatment to families we would ask that you seek to place them in any waiting list for treatment or registration for care at the relative position they were at in their previous posting, subject to clinical need. This means that they suffer no disadvantage by being the family of serving personnel.

Thank you for your support to our Armed Forces to date and you efforts to bring in these small improvements going forward.

Yours sincerely



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Chief Dental Officer



AVM David C McLoughlin
Director Defence Healthcare