

**Guidance to working with the Armed Forces Community  
(including veterans) for Addaction staff**

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## Guidance to working with the Armed Forces Community (including veterans)

Dr Katherine Albertson, Sheffield Hallam University June 2017

### Addaction's Right Turn veteran-specific recovery initiative

Right Turn is Addaction's specialist support package for veterans who have substance misuse problems. The elements of 'Right Turn' can include: A Mutual Aid Programme; Veteran Recovery Champion training; Specialist one-to-one treatment that acknowledges the specific experiences, problems and needs of veterans; Provision of social events and diversionary activities that build trust and fosters positive networks; Training for Addaction workers to enable them to identify and respond to the specific issues facing veterans. *This guidance is taken from the evaluation of this pioneering project in 2017<sup>1</sup>, conducted by Sheffield Hallam University and funded by The Forces in Mind Trust.*

### Key research findings

On the basis of the data sample we identified the following positive impacts of project engagement for veterans:

- Military veterans can take up to 12 years after leaving the forces to ask for help
- Of those with a history of contact with the criminal justice system, none had any further contact
- Of the 39% of veterans in active addiction when joining, all gained addiction recovery status; the remaining 68% successfully maintained their existing recovery status
- 65% of the veterans are now engaging in voluntary work or paid employment since joining the project
- All the veterans reported wider social network contact and engagement in community activities
- 78% reported significant improvements in their relationships with family members since joining the project
- The Right Turn group have better physical and psychological health outcomes, while veterans in the comparison sample not accessing the project experience significant deterioration in these outcome measures

### Key messages to bear in mind when coming across a member of the Armed Forces Community

The three clear messages to policy-makers and practitioners working with veterans are:

- Veterans are more likely both to access and respond well to veteran-specific services in the first instance; this removes many of the common barriers to their engagement in services
- Valuing of the military identity in transition facilitates veterans' recognition of their own resilience, their own individual resources and their value to both veteran and civilian communities alike
- An holistic approach to supporting veterans can reduce the likelihood of: criminal justice contact; substance misuse; and further deterioration in mental and physical health; as well as addressing practical day-to-day issues, including social exclusion and emotional isolation

### How do you find out if a service user is a member of the Armed Forces Community?

- The Armed Forces Community includes<sup>2</sup>: Regular serving military personnel; Volunteers and Reservists; Veterans; Family members of regulars, volunteers and veterans; The Bereaved (due to military service or otherwise)
- Simply ask the question: "Have you ever served in the Armed Forces as a regular, reservist or volunteer or are you or have you ever been a family member of someone who has?" (Albertson and Woods forthcoming<sup>3</sup>).

<sup>1</sup> Albertson, K., Best, D., Pinkney, A., Murphy, T., Irving, J., and Stevenson, J. (2017) "It's not just about recovery": The Right Turn Veteran-Specific Recovery Service Evaluation, Final report (June 2017), Sheffield Hallam University: [https://www.addaction.org.uk/sites/default/files/public/attachments/right\\_turn\\_evaluation\\_report\\_june\\_2017.pdf](https://www.addaction.org.uk/sites/default/files/public/attachments/right_turn_evaluation_report_june_2017.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Shared Intelligence Report (2016) "Our Covenant, Our Community" commissioned by the Forces in Mind Trust and LGA.

<sup>3</sup> Albertson, K., and Woods, N. (forthcoming) Working with the Armed Forces Community, *Probation Journal*.