



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care

*From the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care*

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Dear Colleagues,

The Armed Forces and Veterans community represent the very best of us. The dedication and sacrifice of this community and their families to safeguard the security of the United Kingdom is fully deserving of our unending respect and gratitude. Indeed, we have seen this not only in Afghanistan, but also across the UK as the Armed Forces have helped with the COVID effort. We owe it to this community to provide them with the best possible support across all spheres of life, including healthcare.

I am writing to you as recent events in Afghanistan have put a spotlight on the Armed Forces and Veterans community. I know the potential negative impact events like these can have on the physical and mental wellbeing of veterans that have served in any capacity, but now, particularly those that have served in Afghanistan.

I want to emphasise that we are duty bound by the Armed Forces Covenant to ensure that the armed forces community experiences no disadvantage in accessing timely, comprehensive, and effective healthcare. We must ensure we honour and enact this principle as more veterans reach out to us for help.

I know that NHSE already provides first class support for our veteran community, including those that have served in Afghanistan. Services such as the Veterans Trauma Network provide the care and treatment to those physically injured during their time in the armed forces. I am incredibly proud of the mental health support we offer to veterans through Op COURAGE. It is a phenomenal achievement that 16,000 people to date have accessed support through Op COURAGE. That is 16,000 lives we are helping to improve.

Those who serve and have served in the Armed Forces have spent their careers defending our country and protecting our physical safety. It is only right that we do everything we can to protect and safeguard their mental health and wellbeing in return. I would, therefore, encourage all NHS Trusts and frontline staff to utilise the excellent support offer available to veterans and to signpost veterans to these services as necessary. Veterans at risk may present with a variety of issues, but it is imperative NHS Trusts and frontline staff can spot the warning signs, such as alcohol and drug misuse and give them the support they need.

I have attached a leaflet that outlines the mental health support available to veterans through Op COURAGE. Please do distribute this to frontline staff so they know where to signpost veterans for support.

I know NHSE will continue to provide first class support to veterans through this potentially difficult time. I also know NHSE always look to improve the support offer for our veterans. I am proud to work alongside you as we support those that have given so much to the United Kingdom.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Javid.', is centered on the page.

**RT HON SAJID JAVID MP**