



Veteran Aware

Guide to Accreditation



Document Status

Purpose:

This document is for NHS healthcare providers and commissioners to outline the process and evidence required to gain accreditation as a 'Veteran Aware' organisation.

The Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA) national team (hosted by the Royal National Orthopaedic Trust) oversees the accreditation process on behalf of NHS England and Improvement using the framework in this document.

Please note GP practices are required to follow a different accreditation process overseen by the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP). More information is available on the [RCGP website](#).

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As a controlled document, this document should not be saved onto local networks or drives but should be accessed from the Veteran Aware website at www.veteranaware.nhs.uk

Date	Version	Author	Summary of document changes

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The Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance

The Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA) is a group of NHS ‘Veteran Aware’ provider organisations in England committed to providing the best standards of care for the armed forces community (veterans, reservists and their families) based on the principles in the Armed Forces Covenant.

The [Armed Forces Covenant](#) is a promise by the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly. The twin principles are:

‘The Armed Forces community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens.’

‘Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.’

The VCHA is overseen by a national team, which supports NHS organisations to achieve ‘Veteran Aware’ status through an accreditation process.

The team is funded by NHS England and Improvement (NHSE&I) and is hosted by the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital.

The VCHA was established following the publication of the Chavasse Report¹ in 2014 by Professor Tim Briggs.

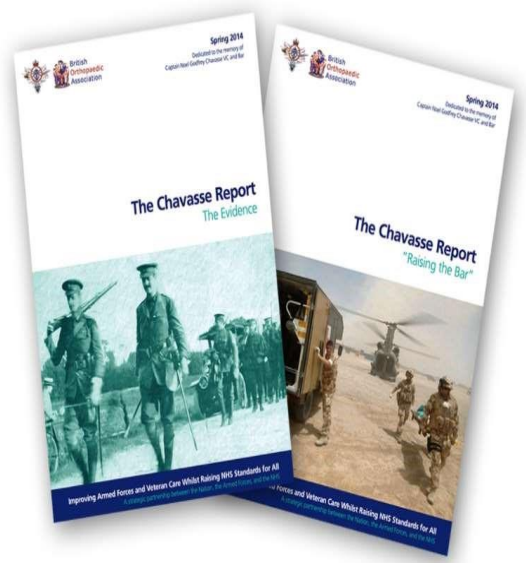
The report identified the variation in quality and standardisation of NHS services that members of the armed forces community encounter, and proposed solutions for tackling them.

Professor Briggs is the National Director of Clinical Improvement/NHSE&I, Chair of GIRFT, and Chair of the VCHA Steering Group. General Lord Richard Dannatt, former head of the British Army, is Patron of the VCHA.

The Covenant, due regard and compliance

In the UK, a veteran is defined as anyone who has served for at least one day in HM Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve) or Merchant Seafarers who worked alongside Service personnel in legally defined conflict situations. This includes national service.

During active service, the Defence Medical Service (DMS) provides the majority of healthcare to serving personnel and their families. After discharge, or while a reservist not on active operations, the NHS provides all healthcare services and some specialist services to the Ministry of Defence.



¹ [The Chavasse Report - Downloads](#)



The Armed Forces Act 2011 is currently undergoing a parliamentary revision for the Covenant Duty to become a legal requirement – the Armed Forces Bill - from April 2022.

The Duty will require healthcare organisations to have due regard to the principles of the Covenant when developing policy, and making decisions that affect the armed forces community.

In 2018, NHS England published ‘Healthcare for the Armed Forces Community: a forward view’² to outline the strategic plan to improve the health and wellbeing for serving personnel and their families.

By joining the VCHA, NHS organisations demonstrate their commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant principles and commitments outlined in the forward view.

In particular, alliance organisations should ensure that members of the armed forces community do not face disadvantage when accessing healthcare services and should consider:

Family members should retain

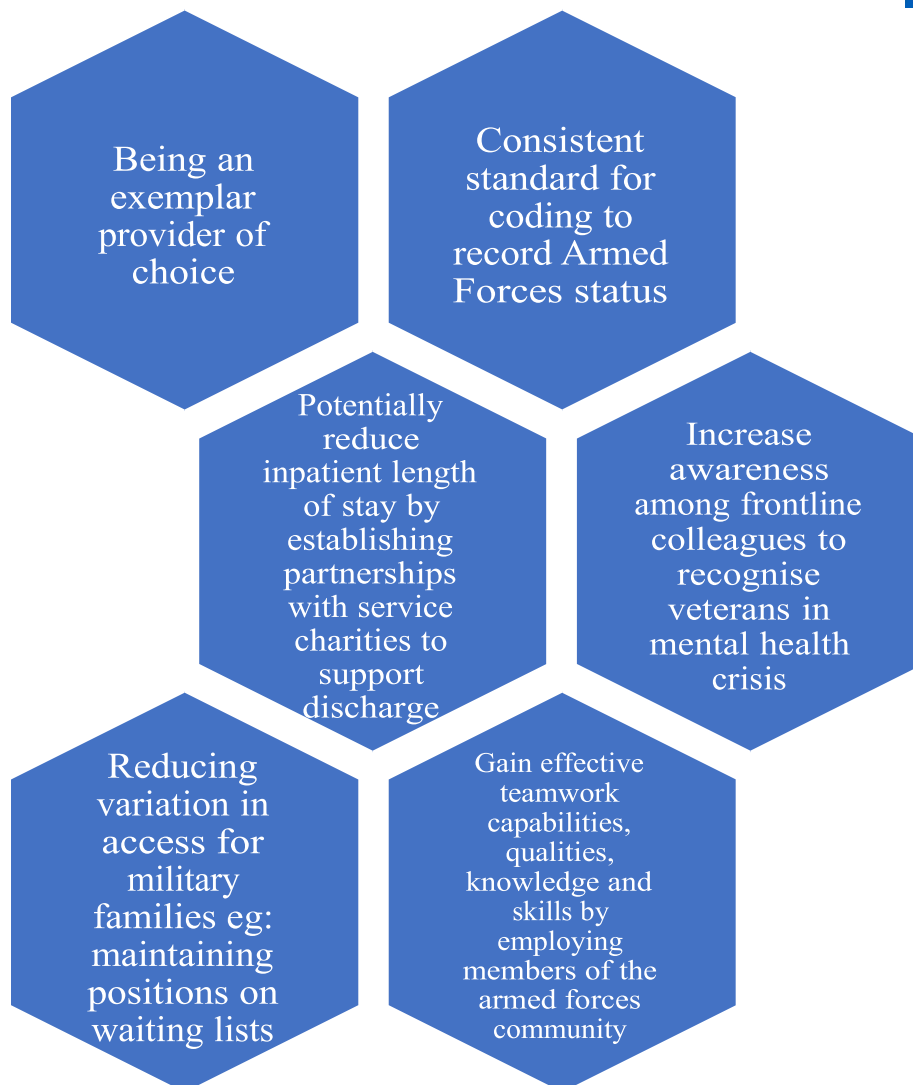
their place on any NHS waiting list, if moved around treatment service which relate to their service, or their need.

Veterans and Reservists

should receive priority for a condition/s when being posted. the UK due to subject to

The benefits of becoming a ‘Veteran Aware’ organisation

² [Healthcare for the Armed Forces community: a forward view to 2022 \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.england.nhs.uk/healthcare-for-the-armed-forces-community-a-forward-view-to-2022/)



The Manifesto Standards

The Manifesto is an agreed framework of eight standards that imbue Armed Forces Covenant principles and how they relate to the NHS.

It is against these standards that Veteran Aware accreditation is measured. The aim is to identify and highlight the best standards of care for the armed forces community and to drive the implementation of proven practice in the treatment to these groups across the UK.

Organisations are encouraged to collate and record evidence to support their accreditation process.

The Standards are:



The Accreditation Process

To achieve Veteran Aware accreditation, organisations should first contact the VCHA National Team.

Organisations will be assigned a Regional Lead (RL) for the duration of the accreditation process, which takes on average 3-6 months to complete.

The process is an evidence-based assessment of how organisations are meeting, or plan to meet, the manifesto standards as part of the accreditation process.

Once an organisation achieves 'Veteran Aware' status, they are expected to embed, implement and develop plans to further improve against the standards.

After one year, accredited organisations will have a review, followed by a full reaccreditation process in year three. Please refer to the Appendices section for the relevant forms.

Organisations express interest by contacting rnoh.vcha@nhs.net
Organisations should identify their 'Champion Dyad' - one clinical and one management lead

A Regional Lead will be assigned and will arrange an introductory meeting usually with the Champion Dyad and/or members of the executive team.
You will be provided with a resource pack, which will include key contact information, documents, and resources for each standard

Organisations convene a 'Veterans Working/Steering Group' responsible for implementing the work required to achieve accreditation.
The Regional Lead may attend to offer guidance and support as required

Organisations work on achieving the manifesto standards with support from the Regional Lead to identify and address any outstanding areas.

Organisations complete the Accreditation Form and provide supporting evidence. Once completed, submit to the Regional Lead

Regional Lead will review application and evidence, provide guidance to prepare a submission to the VCHA Steering Group
Note: Trusts will need to consider their own internal approval process

‘Veteran Aware’ status awarded

Note: If the Steering Group has further queries about your submission, your Regional Lead will work with you to resubmit with additional evidence

Confirmation Letter sent by Regional Lead to organisation along with Accreditation Award Pack and display sign

Organisation to promote ‘Veteran Aware’ accreditation
This may involve the option of an informal presentation ceremony, which your Regional Lead can advise on further

Year One – Review
Regional Lead will assess your progress against an agreed continuous improvement plan in preparation for full re-accreditation at year three

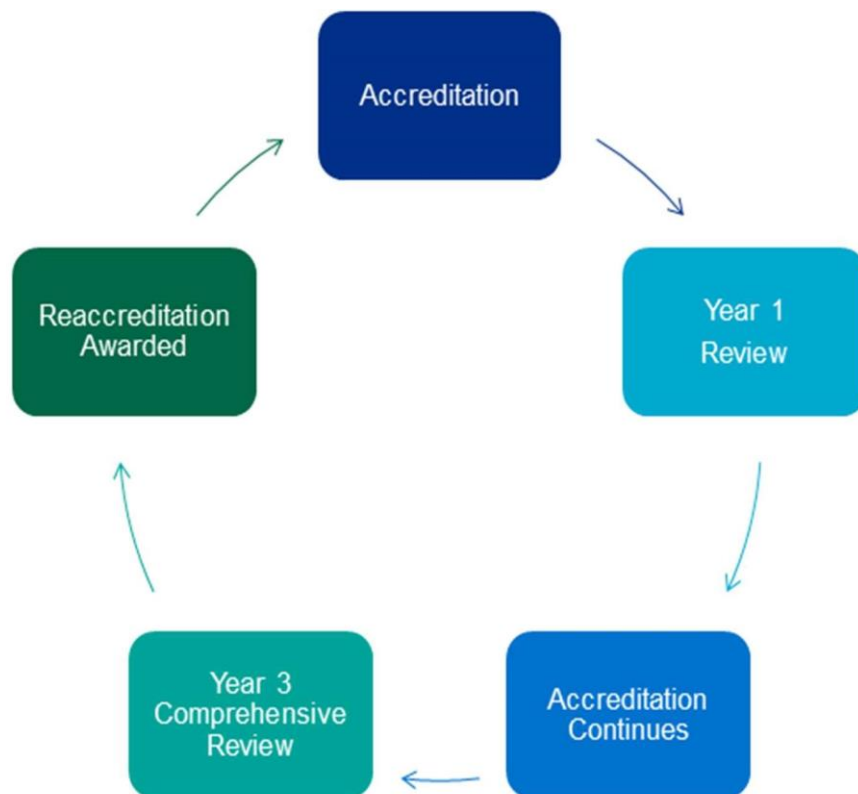
Year Three - Re-accreditation
This is a full accreditation review and will consider what progress the organisation has made since initial accreditation was achieved

Review and Re-accreditation

Your organisation has demonstrated successful achievement of the manifesto standards, and recognised formally as ‘Veteran Aware’ by the VCHA Steering Group.

This guide will be provided to your organisation at the point you are accredited. Organisations should continue to compile evidence relating to your year one activities in preparation for the Year One Review and Year Three Re-accreditation with your Regional Lead.

The purpose of the re-accreditation process is for an organisation to demonstrate that it continues to meet the manifesto standards, has considered and implemented further improvements as planned, and is able to show intent for further work towards improving quality healthcare provision for the armed forces community.



Year One Review

After one year, your Regional Lead will contact your Champion Dyad to arrange a meeting to discuss your progress. You will be asked to complete a short annual accreditation report. The information requested will include:

- Confirmation that Champion Dyad contacts are still current
- Progress made since initial accreditation to embed, implement and improve against the manifesto standards e.g. data collection, number of staff trained, staff case studies or patient stories eg relating to improvements in access and outcomes, reductions in variations of care
- Identify and highlight new ways to improve NHS care for the military family within the organisation
- How the organisation is developing its action plan for re-accreditation in year three
- Statistics on Armed Forces awareness training delivered
- Summary narrative of achievements, challenges and future aspirations.

Year Three Accreditation

At year three, your Regional Lead will contact you to undertake a formal full reaccreditation process. This is an opportunity for your organisation to show case excellent examples of practice and continuous improvement.

- Full meeting (face-to-face or virtual) with Trust VCHA leads to review original accreditation paperwork and agree next steps
- Completion of re-accreditation application to present evidence and exemplar practice.

Once this meeting has taken place, your evidence will be reviewed by the VCHA Steering Group with the potential outcomes as follows:

- Full Re-accreditation –substantial improvement from initial accreditation
- Requires Improvement – limited progression from initial accreditation award will require an action plan and improvements to be made within 3-month period
- Not compliant – loss of accreditation agreed by Steering Group, and organisation to reapply.

Merger of Trusts

As the NHS landscape continues to change, there will be organisations that merge to form larger entities including the formation of Integrated Care Systems (ICSs). The VCHA team will agree a management approach once all the ICSs are in place.



If both Trusts are accredited, the VCHA national team will confirm the Champion Dyad and align re-accreditation dates.

For Trusts that merge whereby one is accredited and the other is not, the nonaccredited Trust has a period of six months to meet the manifesto standards.

Appendices

In this section you will find the web links to the relevant forms to support your accreditation as follows:



[Appendix One – VCHA Accreditation Form](#)

You should complete this form if your organisation is not yet accredited.

[Appendix Two – VCHA Year One Review Form](#)

You should complete this form 12 months after receiving your initial accreditation.

[Appendix Three – VCHA Year Three Re-accreditation Form](#)

You should complete this form three years after you gained your initial accreditation.

[Resource Pack](#)

A range of resources to support you with the accreditation process