

Briefing

January 2020

Development of a Veterans' Mental Health High Intensity Service for UK Armed Forces veterans in England

Background

As part of the commitments of the NHS Long Term Plan, NHS England and NHS Improvement are progressing arrangements to commission a High Intensity Mental Health Service (HIS) for veterans who are in a mental health crisis and need urgent and emergency care and treatment.

Commissioning of the HIS builds on progress made over the last few years with the launch of the Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS) and the Veterans' Mental Health Complex Treatment Service (CTS). Whilst these two services have been welcomed and made a significant difference to the health outcomes of many veterans and their families, there is a cohort of veterans who are experiencing periods of crisis and may require admission to inpatient services or who may require a more bespoke offering, such as placements in specialist / niche services.

The HIS is intended to help meet these needs by providing an enhancement to existing crisis services and inpatient mental health services using the New Care Models for Mental Health Services programme approach. This means that the new service will be delivered through provider led mental health care collaboratives, comprising organisations from across the NHS and independent and third sectors. This approach is intended to fully join up mental health commissioning pathways so that coordinated decisions are made across provider collaboratives in the most effective way possible to improve outcomes for veterans with mental health conditions. As part of this, the network of providers must be managed by an organisation with experience of mainstream adult mental health services and include a provider with experience of delivering the TILS or CTS, as well as Armed Forces and other charities. The network will be expected to work with people with lived experience and their families, communities and social care to help improve patient experience.

A new service informed by patients and their families

To help inform the development of this service, NHS England and NHS Improvement have considered the views and experiences of patients, families and clinicians, with key themes as follows:

- Services need to be close to where a patient lives and works.
- Services need to be predominantly community based, with in-patient services used for the stabilisation and treatment of individuals who are at risk of harm to themselves or others.
- Services need to be integrated with the rest of the NHS and wider emergency response services.
- All involved organisations need to be clear on each of their roles and work together with the patient and their family to plan, co-ordinate and deliver care.

This has helped to inform a proposed service model that will be tested through the commissioning of regional pathfinders with the aim of providing:

- crisis care
- therapeutic inpatient support
- care co-ordination across organisations that are able to support veterans
- support and care for family members / carers where appropriate.

The pathfinder services will be mobilised in June 2020 and run until the end of March 2022. Learning and insight from the pathfinders will inform the development of a final integrated mental health service model for HIS that will be in place by April 2022. This will be in addition to a programme of engagement that will help to inform commissioning arrangements.

Benefits of the HIS pathfinder collaboratives

By taking responsibility for the entire mental health patient pathway, provider led collaboratives will become an important delivery vehicle for improving veterans' mental health services. This new approach is intended to deliver the following benefits:

- Personalised care closer to home with greater opportunity for family, friend and carer involvement.
- Local services that are co-designed with people with lived experience.
- A reduction in out of area hospital admissions.
- Shorter length of in-patient stay.
- Improved continuity and quality of care.
- Improved patient experience and outcomes.
- Greater local system integration, case co-ordination, decision making and autonomy, whilst maintaining national consistency in clinical standards and quality.

Next steps and further information

Commissioning of the pathfinder collaboratives is subject to a competitive procurement process with final business case submissions required by 21 February 2020. This will be followed by a selection assessment process in March 2020 and an interview process in April 2020. We expect to award contracts during May 2020 so that services can start to mobilise in June 2020.

For further information on the HIS and provider collaboratives, please email england.armedforceshealth@nhs.net.