

# contact

## Collaborating for Military Mental Health

### Contact Group Terms of reference (December 2021)

#### Name

1. The Contact Group ('Contact').

#### Legal status

2. Contact is not, and does not seek to be, a legal entity. It is a collaboration of national government departments and statutory, charity, professional and academic bodies. It relies on a rotated member host for any contractual undertakings.

#### Purpose

3. Contact exists to improve the mental health of the military community, particularly UK veterans, by working collaboratively on issues of military mental health policy, treatment and research.

#### Aims

4. To fulfil its purpose, Contact aims to collaborate to:
  - Increase the quality, availability, and awareness of mental health treatment services for veterans in the statutory and voluntary sector of the four nations of the UK and communicate the availability of these services to the veteran community and other stakeholders
  - Improve four nation organisational liaison within the military mental health sector by providing platforms and opportunities for information exchange
  - Understand the progress of current services from gathered data and available research findings
  - Identify research gaps/relevant projects in mental health-related topics, treatment and service provision
  - Highlight to policy makers the benefits of veteran-specific services, recognising the legitimate variations in national arrangements

- Assist the veteran journey between supporting mental health organisations including co-leadership of projects to develop a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and clinical and welfare data exchange, the Veterans' Mental Health Information System (VMHIS)

### Strategic priorities

5. Assist the sector and potential service users by identifying and promulgating the range and quality of statutory and accredited charity services available to veterans.
6. Serve the veteran community by understanding the evolving demand for veteran mental health services and tracking evidence of unmet need.
7. Improve the service user experience by participating in the leadership of programmes that facilitate the digital transfer of veteran patient/client data between UK organisations.

### Core membership

8. Core membership is voluntary and available to:
  - NHS mental health services in the four nations of the UK, represented by national strategic leads
  - UK charities providing military mental health treatment and participating in the Contact/RC Psych QNVMHS accreditation programme
  - The major UK research organisations specialising in military mental health
  - Policy makers in health departments of UK national governments and from UK central government (MoD and OVA)
  - UK professional clinical bodies for mental health
  - Sector representative organisations
9. Prospective core members will submit a Contact core membership application form. This application will be considered by core members at the earliest opportunity, with Contact core membership being granted if a panel of core members agree that the criteria are met.

### Associate membership

10. Associate membership is available to established UK organisations with a professional interest in veteran mental health and wellbeing but where treatment is either not offered or is not core business.
11. Prospective associate members will submit a Contact associate membership application form. This application will be considered by core members at the earliest opportunity,

with Contact associate membership being granted if a panel of core members agree that the criteria are met.

### Principal workstreams

12. For 2021-2022, these are as follows (not ranked):

- Capture and promulgation of sector data ('Dashboard'). Led by OVA.
- Standardisation of patient data input categories/designations ('Common assessment framework'). Led by NHSE-chaired sub-group.
- Quality Network for Veterans Mental Health Services (QNVMS). Led by RCPsych.
- Data integration (VMHIS project). Co-chaired by Cobseo and Contact.
- Monitoring of relevant Research projects/gaps. Led by Research sub-group.
- Communications to the sector. Co-ordinated by Project Officer.
- Associate membership programme. Co-ordinated by Project Officer.

### Member liaison

13. Contact core members will be invited to quarterly meetings. These meetings will be a blend of remote and face-to-face. When face-to-face, efforts will be made to hold them in all parts of the UK. There may also be an annual conference. Chairs of member organisations will participate in an annual strategy discussion.

14. Associate members will receive a regular newsletter and be invited to attend any annual conferences or other relevant Contact events. They will also have the chance to be involved in Contact workstreams, consultations or other activities, where opportunities arise.

### Governance

15. An independent Chair will be appointed by members for up to two renewable terms of up to three years. They will be selected in open competition by a panel representing all categories of core membership.

16. Decisions are made by a majority of members. The independent Chair will seek member agreement to all proposals, with endorsement of his/her interim decisions at the earliest opportunity.

17. An elected senior representative of a member body will act as a formal executive link to the Chair, raising any member concerns about process, systems, performance, and behaviours that are unsuited to discussion at quarterly meetings.

18. An agreed Code of Conduct can be activated if members are concerned about behaviours of Contact members in a Contact context.

### Service charity sector liaison

19. In addition to its core function, Contact also acts as the mental health cluster for Cobseo and the Contact Chair is consequently ex-officio chair of the cluster and (in this capacity only) is accountable to Cobseo.

### Hosting

20. Contact's employment and finance services will be provided by a rotating host drawn from the membership. Arrangements for funding, expenditure, and employment will be led by the Chair, agreed by the membership, and managed by a project officer.

### Operational funding

21. Contact's operational funding will be provided via annual grants, usually multi-year agreements. Funding in the period 2021-24 is provided by FiMT. The bulk of costs relate to the employment of a part-time project officer.

### Fundholding

22. Contact holds programme grants from a variety of organisations (for example DHSC/NHSE, the Veterans Foundation, etc). These restricted funds are held by the host and managed by the project officer under direction of the Chair. Funds are deployed on programmes such as accreditation subsidy, conferences, and website management.

### Review of Terms

23. These terms must be reviewed annually, and amendments approved by a majority of core members. The next review is due in December 2022.