



**PWYLLGOR DIWYLLIANT, POBL A DATBLYGU SEFYDLIADOL
PEOPLE, ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT & CULTURE COMMITTEE**

DYDDIAD Y CYFARFOD: DATE OF MEETING:	13 June 2024
TEITL YR ADRODDIAD: TITLE OF REPORT:	Improving outcomes for Veterans and the Armed Forces Community – end of year report 2023/24
CYFARWYDDWR ARWEINIOL: LEAD DIRECTOR:	Lisa Gostling, Director of Workforce and Organisational Development
SWYDDOG ADRODD: REPORTING OFFICER:	Anna Bird – Assistant Director of Strategic Partnerships, Diversity and Inclusion Beverly Davies – Strategic Partnership and Inclusion Manager

Pwrpas yr Adroddiad (dewiswch fel yn addas)

Purpose of the Report (select as appropriate)

Er Sicrwydd/For Assurance

ADRODDIAD SCAA

SBAR REPORT

Sefyllfa / Situation

This report provides an annual update to the People, Organisational Development and Culture Committee (PODCC) on the work that the Health Board is doing to implement the Armed Forces Covenant and Armed Forces Covenant Duty. The report provides assurance that a broad range of activities are on-going to improve outcomes for veterans and members of the Armed Forces community.

Cefndir / Background

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 Covenant¹ states that '*those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.*'

The Health Board reinforced its commitment to the Armed Forces by re-signing the Armed Forces Covenant in March 2021 and by gaining the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold award in July 2021.

In November 2022, the [Armed Forces Covenant Duty](#) came into force. The Duty places a legal obligation to specified bodies including health to have due regard to the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the Armed Forces and to apply special provisions or remove disadvantages arising for Service people.

1

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/578212/20161215-The-Armed-Forces-Covenant.pdf

Asesiad / Assessment

The attached report provides an overview of the work that has been carried out by the Health Board and provides evidence of how we are working to improve outcomes for veterans and members of the Armed Forces community. The report has been written by the Strategic Partnerships, Diversity and Inclusion (SPDI) Team who co-ordinate the Health Board's response to the Armed Forces Covenant and chair the Health Board's Armed Forces Steering Group, and the report includes contributions from steering group members.

The report highlights action taken in relation to a broad range of activities in five key themes:

- Fostering leadership and strengthening partnership to implement the Armed Forces Covenant and the Armed Forces Covenant Duty.
- Understanding the health care needs of our veterans and the Armed Forces community.
- Working collaboratively to reduce disadvantage for veterans and the Armed Forces community.
- Actively supporting veterans and the Armed Forces community through awareness raising events, staff training, and partnership working.
- Promoting Hywel Dda as an employer of choice for veterans and the Armed Forces community.

The report, which includes electronic links to additional supporting information, is offered to provide assurance to the Committee that the Armed Forces Covenant is being actively implemented.

Argymhelliad / Recommendation

The People, Organisational Development and Culture Committee are asked to:

- **NOTE** the update report
- **TAKE ASSURANCE** from the work being undertaken demonstrates that the Health Board is proactively implementing the Armed Forces Covenant.

Amcanion: (rhaid cwblhau) Objectives: (must be completed)	
Committee ToR Reference: Cyfeirnod Cylch Gorchwyl y Pwyllgor:	To provide assurance to the Board on compliance with legislation, guidance and best practice around the workforce and OD agenda.
Cyfeirnod Cofrestr Risg Datix a Sgôr Cyfredol: Datix Risk Register Reference and Score:	N/A
Parthau Ansawdd: Domains of Quality Quality and Engagement Act (sharepoint.com)	7. All apply
Galluogwyr Ansawdd: Enablers of Quality: Quality and Engagement Act (sharepoint.com)	6. All Apply
Amcanion Strategol y BIP: UHB Strategic Objectives:	4. The best health and wellbeing for our individuals, families and communities
Amcanion Cynllunio Planning Objectives	1 Workforce Stabilisation
Amcanion Llesiant BIP: UHB Well-being Objectives: Hyperlink to HDdUHB Well-being Objectives Annual Report 2021-2022	4. Improve Population Health through prevention and early intervention, supporting people to live happy and healthy lives 5. Offer a diverse range of employment opportunities which support people to fulfill their potential

Gwybodaeth Ychwanegol: Further Information:	
Ar sail tystiolaeth: Evidence Base:	Armed Forces Bill Armed Forces Covenant Duty 2022
Rhestr Termiau: Glossary of Terms:	Included within the body of the report
Partïon / Pwyllgorau â ymgynhorwyd ymlaen llaw y Pwyllgor Diwylliant, Pobl a Datblygu Sefydliadol: Parties / Committees consulted prior to People, Organisational Development & Culture Committee:	Armed Forces Steering Group GP Clinical Lead Armed Forces Champion

Effaith: (rhaid cwblhau) Impact: (must be completed)	
Ariannol / Gwerth am Arian: Financial / Service:	Not applicable.
Ansawdd / Gofal Claf: Quality / Patient Care:	The effective implementation of the Priority Treatment guidance for veterans and parity of waiting times for Armed Forces family members will impact on the quality of patient care and experience.
Gweithlu: Workforce:	All staff have a role to play in implementing the Armed Forces Covenant Duty.
Risg: Risk:	Not applicable.
Cyfreithiol: Legal:	Armed Forces Covenant Duty 2022
Enw Da: Reputational:	Implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant and compliance with the Armed Forces Duty is reviewed by Welsh Government and Veterans Commissioner for Wales. The Health Board also works in partnership with the local authorities, third sector providers and community champions who informally hold the Health Board to account for our progress and work to improve outcomes for veterans and the Armed Forces community.
Gyfrinachedd: Privacy:	Not applicable.
Cydraddoldeb: Equality:	An Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken as this is an update report.



Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2023-2024



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Hywel Dda
University Health Board

Contents

Introduction	3
Leadership and strengthening partnership working	5
Our Armed Forces Champions	5
The Health Board Planning Objective	5
Regional and National Partnership Working	6
National Consultations and Collaboration	7
Internal collaboration and partnership working.....	7
Enabling Quality Improvement in Practice: Improving planned care for veterans	7
Understanding the health care needs of our Veterans and the Armed Forces community.....	9
Our Armed Forces community	9
The Armed Forces community within our workforce	10
Increasing the number of veterans recorded in our patient data systems	11
Patient Experience	11
Working collaboratively to reduce disadvantage for veterans and the armed forces community.....	12
Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)	12
Early identification of veterans and members of the Armed Forces Community	12
Reducing disadvantage	13
Community outreach to support veterans, members of the armed forces and the diverse communities in Hywel Dda	14
Improving treatment pathways for veterans with a co-occurring mental health and substance misuse issues	15
Awareness raising.....	16
Armistice/Remembrance Day 2023	16
Promoting Hywel Dda as an employer of choice for veterans and the armed forces community.....	17
Inclusive Recruitment.....	17
Staff Network	18
Pride in Veterans Standard (PiVS).....	18
Staff Recognition.....	18
Looking ahead	19
Armed Forces Covenant Health Action Plan 2024-2026.....	19

Introduction

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 Covenant says that:

‘those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.’

Over the years, the Health Board has visibly demonstrated its commitment to the Armed Forces by:

- re-signing the Armed Forces Covenant in March 2021
- gaining the [Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold](#) award in July 2021
- signing up to PiVS the [Pride in Veterans Standards](#) in November 2022 (a programme developed to show our commitment and be welcoming to LGBT+ Veterans, serving personnel and their families)
- achieved the [NHS Veterans Care Health Alliance \(VCHA\)](#) Veteran Aware accreditation on 6th June 2023.



In November 2022, the [Armed Forces Covenant Duty](#) came into force. The Duty places a legal obligation on specified bodies, including health, to have due regard to the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the Armed Forces and to apply special provisions or remove disadvantages arising for Service people.

Based on the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, the Statutory Guidance on the Armed Forces Covenant Duty, and other policies/standards in place, the Health Board focused on five key areas of work or priorities in the year 2023-24. These key areas were:

1. Fostering leadership and strengthening partnership to implement the Armed Forces Covenant and the Armed Forces Covenant Duty.
2. Understanding the health care needs of our veterans and the Armed Forces community.
3. Working collaboratively to reduce disadvantage for veterans and the Armed Forces community.
4. Actively supporting veterans and the Armed Forces community through awareness raising events, staff training, and partnership working.
5. Promoting Hywel Dda as an employer of choice for veterans and the Armed Forces community.

The [Strategic Partnership, Diversity and Inclusion \(SPDI\)](#) team co-ordinates the Health Board's response to the Armed Forces Covenant and the Armed Forces Covenant Duty and has been working collaboratively with partners within the Health Board as well as with other public and third sector organisations, to ensure a broad range of actions are progressed.

This Annual Report highlights the key areas of work which have been on-going in year 2023-24 in order to provide assurance that the Health Board is uphold the Armed Forces Covenant commitments.

Leadership and strengthening partnership working

Our Armed Forces Champions

The Health Board has a number of specifically named Armed Forces champions who lead and work together in driving forward key actions at various partnership forums, both internally and externally. The Health Board Champion Dyad is set out below:

Our Executive lead	Lisa Gostling, Director of Workforce & Organisational Development
Our Board Champion	Delyth Raynsford, HDdUHB Independent Member
Our GP Champion	Dr. Anthony Dew Clinical Lead Intermediate Care
Our Strategic Lead	Anna Bird Asst. Director - Strategic Partnerships, Diversity and Inclusion
Our Operational Lead	Beverly Davies Strategic Partnership and Inclusion Manager

The Health Board Planning Objective

The Strategic Partnerships, Diversity and Inclusion (SPDI) team who co-ordinate the Health Board's response to the Armed Forces covenant, set an overarching team objective in 2023-24 to:

“Support service planning and delivery in partnership to address health inequalities for Veterans and implement actions by 31 March 2024 that tackle barriers to accessing health services, promoting healthy lifestyle choices and reduce inequalities in health experienced by diverse communities and vulnerable groups.”

In order to embed the Health Board's response and work to implement the Armed Forces Covenant and duties, the SPDI team co-ordinate a Health Board Armed Forces Covenant Steering group. Membership of this group is drawn from a range of services and teams within the Health Board, and these colleagues also act as Armed Forces Champions within their own teams and/or directorates, sharing best practice,

contributing to task and finish groups and helping to drive forward key actions that link to the Covenant duties.

The Health Board is committed to ensuring that leadership responsibilities are distributed within and throughout the organisation and that responsibility for implementing the Covenant is not reliant on any one individual.

Regional and National Partnership Working

The Health Board actively participates in partnership working in a variety of forums including:

- **Local Armed Forces Covenant groups.** These groups are led by Local Authority partners and focused on operational action and networking between professionals.
- **Regional Armed Forces Covenant group.** The regional group is jointly chaired by the Health Board and Local Authority Champions on a rotational basis. This group meets approximately quarterly and is attended by Delyth Raynsford, Independent Board Member Champion.
- **All-Wales Armed Forces Lead Officer group.** This is an informal forum chaired by Cardiff and Vale Local Health Board as a peer support group for lead officers. The group meet online on a bi-monthly basis to share good practice and identify opportunities for joint working. This has been particularly beneficial during national celebrations, such as Armed Forces week, when each Health Board took a lead in organising on-line awareness raising sessions which were made available to NHS staff across Wales.
- **All-Wales Armed Forces Champions forum.** The all-Wales forum is chaired by Welsh Government and bringing together Independent Board Member Champions and strategic officer leads. This group meets approximately bi-annually. As a result of discussions at a national level, our Health Board has been working with Welsh Government colleagues to consider the development of a benchmarking survey which could be used by Health Board's across Wales to highlight their progress with implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant responsibilities.

National Consultations and Collaboration

As part of our leadership commitment, the Health Board submitted an organisational response to two national consultation documents which impacted on veterans:

- The Office for Veterans' Affairs consultation, 'Supporting Our Veterans' which sought evidence on needs of veterans and their families and how best to support them.
- The Welsh Government Consultation on the White Paper on Ending Homelessness which sought feedback on housing and housing related support needs of veterans and the Armed Forces community.

Internal collaboration and partnership working

In the last year, the SPDI Team have made presentations to various forums including the Managed Practices Quality and Safety Group, Primary Care Locality Leads and the Trauma & Orthopaedic Departmental meetings. This has enabled the team to raise awareness of the health needs of veterans and the Health Board's actions in relation to the [Welsh Health Circular \(2023\) 022 or Armed Forces Covenant - Healthcare Priority / Special Consideration for Veterans / Ex-Armed Forces Personnel](#) and the Armed Forces Covenant as a whole. The meetings have supported our work to strengthen local implementation of the priority treatment referral pathway, ensuring processes are in place to record veteran status when patients register with the practice, and create a shared understanding of the numbers of veterans in Hywel Dda.

Enabling Quality Improvement in Practice: Improving planned care for veterans

Another example of the leadership work being undertaken within Hywel Dda is a project to improve planned care for veterans through the Enabling Quality Improvement in Practice or EQliP programme. The project, which commenced in November 2023, aims to develop and implement a mechanism to enable our staff to confidently identify veterans who are eligible for priority treatment consideration in a timely manner.

Within the scope and the principles of the EQliP programme, this project specifically aims to seek improvements in the use of the Welsh Patient Administration System (WPAS) (the health board's clinical system) to record and manage veteran status and

support clinical teams in managing planned care waiting lists. It is envisaged that the collaborative discussions and findings from this project will inform further areas for improvement, for example, developing a best practice guidance for staff to ensure best planned care journey for veterans in the Health Board and improving the Implementation of Priority Treatment Flowchart.



Understanding the health care needs of our Veterans and the Armed Forces community

The Health Board continues to work to identify our veterans, both in the workforce and within our communities.

Our Armed Forces community

Hywel Dda University Health Board is the provider of NHS healthcare services for people in Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire (West Wales) and its bordering counties. Our 11,000 members of staff provide primary, community, in-hospital, mental health and other health services for around 382,800 (ONS Census, 2021) people across a quarter of the landmass of Wales.

Of the 382,800 people living in Hywel Dda, 15,637 or 4.08% have previously served in the UK Armed Forces according to 2021 Census data. The breakdown of the UK Armed Forces veterans living in the Hywel Dda area as follow.

- 12,115 have previously served in the regular UK Armed Forces.
- 2,801 have previously served in the reserve UK Armed Forces.
- 721 have previously served in both the regular and reserve UK Armed Forces.



DID YOU KNOW?

A veteran is anyone who has served for at least one day in His Majesty's Armed Forces.

Along with Conwy and the Isle of Anglesey, based on the most recent census data Pembrokeshire have the highest proportion of veterans in Wales with 6,000 people or 5.7% of the total of its total population. These local authorities have, or are located near, military establishments, suggesting that UK Armed Forces veterans may stay in the same area after they have left service.

Of the 15,637 veterans living in Hywel Dda area, GP practice data shows that **8,045** or **51.5%** are known to be registered in our GP



DID YOU KNOW?

In the last six months, we saw an increase of 15% of patients registered in GP practices with veteran status?

practices and have self-identified veteran status (data as of 31 March 2024). This is an increase by 1,023 or 15% since 30 September 2023 and reflects the ongoing work to encourage self-identification of veteran status. In order to continue to increase the number of veterans known to GP practices, the SPDI team uses mechanisms such as the General Medical Service Newsletter and Primary Care Directors Briefing to promote staff awareness, and to share updates on work which has been on-going, and creating a shared understanding of the needs of veterans in Hywel Dda.

The introduction of the Veteran Aware GP Practice scheme overseen by Health Education Improvement Wales, is also being promoted within the Health Board and it is hoped that this will continue to increase the number of veterans identified.

The Armed Forces community within our workforce

As an employer, Hywel Dda University Health Board encourages staff to self-identify their link to the Armed Forces community using the supplementary role facility within the Electronic Staff Record (ESR). To promote this, the Learning and Development Team developed a guide for staff setting out instructions on 'Adding Supplementary Roles in ESR Self Service'. This is actively promoted during "on-boarding" sessions for new staff and through Global email messages.

Staff are able to add whether they are a family member of a serving personnel, a Reserve, a Veteran, or a Cadet Adult Volunteer within their personal record on ESR (the Electronic Staff Record). The table below provides a comparison of self-identified characteristics from data held as part of our Armed Forces Staff Network as well as information recorded on the ESR system at 31st March 2024.

Table: Self-recorded status of staff at 31st March 2024

ESR Supplementary role category	Staff Network Member Self-recorded status	ESR Self-recorded status
Veterans	36	47
Reservists	12	5 (1 at High Readiness level)
Adult Cadet Volunteers	10	3
Armed Forces family members	30	38
Total	88	93

The data collected from ESR and the Staff Network vary for a variety of reasons. Not all staff report or record their supplementary roles on ESR, declare their Armed Forces status during recruitment or in job applications, or register interest in the Staff Network. The above numbers, therefore, may not be a true figure of all the staff in the workforce who have links with the Armed Forces community and there is no way of verifying the data to provide a definitive number. Despite this, it is positive that the numbers of staff coming forward to self-identify have increased.

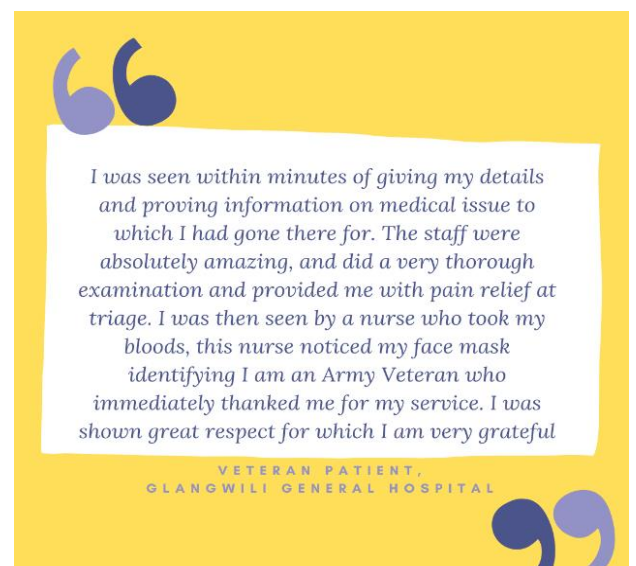
Increasing the number of veterans recorded in our patient data systems

- As part of the EQliP project the team has carried out a review of the number of veterans in our care and will continue to progress work to improve the recording and reporting of veteran status in our data systems such as WPAS. Key findings from the project work so far are that as of December 2023, 50 patients are identified as veterans in the Health Board's WPAS (clinical system).

As described previously, the EQliP project team are looking to identify ways to ensure the timely recording of veteran status within our clinical systems in order to ensure that any entitlement to priority treatment consideration can be actioned promptly. Additional actions to identify veterans have been taken by the Waiting List Support Service who during 2023/24 trialled the introduction of proactive questions and the outcome of this is being reviewed and refined.

Patient Experience

The Health Board contacts over 20,000 people who have used our services, to ask them for feedback on their experience of using our services. The system records patient feedback and information is accessible to managers to inform service delivery. The system also supports the creation of bespoke surveys which are supported by the Patient Experience Team. In the last year, The Health Board Patient Experience Team



received feedback from four patients who are veterans/members of the Armed Forces.

Working collaboratively to reduce disadvantage for veterans and the armed forces community

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Equality Impact Assessment is a process used by staff when planning service changes, developing new services, or reviewing and developing policies to ensure that we are not putting specific population at a disadvantage. Whilst veterans are not a named protected characteristic group within the Equality Act (2010), the Armed Forces Covenant Duty established a legal duty to give “due regard” to the needs of veterans. As a result, the Health Board adapted its EqIA paperwork and does include questions to prompt the consideration of the needs of veterans and the wider Armed Forces community.



DID YOU KNOW?

In 2023 – 2024, a total of **217** EqIAs were carried out in the Health Board.

Early identification of veterans and members of the Armed Forces Community

The SPDI Team and the Primary Care GP Editors have been working together to enhance the [Community Health Pathways](#) website with the aim of strengthening the implementation of Welsh Health Circular (2023) 022 and also facilitating health staff to signpost patients to community support services. The Community Health Pathways website was launched in December 2023 and is a mobile-friendly platform that can be accessed by primary care clinicians whether they are in a clinic, on a hospital ward, or out in the community. The platform will support our clinicians to make decisions, together with patients, at the point of care or during primary care consultation. Prompts and information relating to veterans and the Armed Forces community are being developed for inclusion in the website to ensure that clinicians accessing the platform can find concise guidance for assessing and managing a patient need, i.e. priority treatment and external referrals, or provide information on how to signpost veterans to services within Hywel Dda community.

Hywel Dda

COMMUNITY

HEALTHPATHWAYS

Reducing disadvantage

Ystwyth Medical Group in Aberystwyth has been proactive in organising a drop in event for veterans who were known to the practice through records on the clinical system.

Each patient received a personal letter inviting them to the session held in January 2024, and during the event they had the opportunity to meet with a clinical member of the practice team to review their health needs. The practice also worked in partnership with the Veterans Legal Link service based in Aberystwyth University who were able to provide information about legal support which is available free of charge to veterans.

In conjunction with Ystwyth Medical Group, the SPDI Team developed a patient survey and two awareness raising posters; one about Priority Treatment and a second to promote the recently launched Veteran ID Card. As well as being suitable for display in public spaces, these resources are being proactively shared with patients in Ystwyth



Are you a veteran of the UK Armed Forces?
If so, you may be eligible for NHS priority treatment.

What does this mean?

If you need to be referred to hospital for a condition which is related to your time in Service, you will be eligible for priority treatment. You won't be prioritised over people who have more urgent needs, but will be given priority over people with the same level of clinical need.

What should I do?

- ✔ Tell your GP practice that you are a veteran and have previously served in the UK Armed Forces.
- ✔ Ask your GP to record that you are a veteran in your clinical records.
- ✔ Talk to your GP to explore if the current health care need relates to your time in Service.
- ✔ Ask your GP to include your eligibility for priority treatment in your hospital referral letter.
- ✔ Check that the hospital consultant knows of your veteran status.

How long will I have to wait?

Waiting times can vary, but the Health board publishes information on average waiting times on the [NHS 111 Website \(Search: planned care\)](#).

Ydych chi'n gyn-filwr o Lluoedd Arfog y DU?
Os felly, efallai y byddwch yn gymwys i gael triniaeth flaenoriaethol gan y GIG.

Beth mae hyn yn ei olygu?

Os oes angen i chi gael eich cyfeirio i Ysbyty am gyflwr sy'n ymwneud â'ch cyfnod yn Gwasanaethu, byddwch yn gymwys am driniaeth â blaenoriaeth. Ni fyddwch yn cael blaenoriaeth dros bobl sydd ag anghenion mwy brys, ond byddwch yn cael blaenoriaeth dros y rhai â'r un lefel o angen clinigol.

Beth ddylwn i ei wneud?

- ✔ Dywedwch wrth eich meddygfa eich bod yn gyn-filwr ac wedi gwasanaethu yn Lluoedd Arfog y DU yn flaenorol.
- ✔ Gofynnwch i'ch meddyg teulu gofnodi eich bod yn gyn-filwr yn eich cofnodion clinigol.
- ✔ Siaradwch â'ch meddyg teulu i weld a yw'r angen gofal iechyd presennol yn berthnasol i'ch amser yn y Gwasanaeth.
- ✔ Gofynnwch i'ch meddyg teulu gynnwys eich cymhwyster ar gyfer triniaeth flaenoriaethol yn eich llythyr atgyfeirio i'r ysbyty.
- ✔ Gwiriwch fod yr ymgynghorydd ysbyty yn gwybod am eich statws cyn-filwr.

Pa mor hir fydd yn rhaid i mi aros?

Gall amseroedd aros amrywio, ond mae'r Bwrdd Iechyd yn cyhoeddi gwybodaeth am amseroedd aros cyfartalog ar y [GIG 111 Website](#).

Remember you are a veteran if you have served for at least ONE day in His Majesty's Armed Forces.

Cofiwch eich bod yn gyn-filwr os ydych wedi gwasanaethu am o leiaf UN diwrnod yn Lluoedd Arfog Ei Fawrhydi.

If you have any further questions about NHS priority treatment please email: StrategicPartnerships.hdd@wales.nhs.uk

Os oes gennych unrhyw gwestiynau pellach am driniaeth flaenoriaethol y GIG, anfonwch e-bost at: StrategicPartnerships.hdd@wales.nhs.uk

Medical Group, who during a drop-in event, identified that they were unaware of the NHS priority treatment consideration process. The posters have been made available to all practices and shared with community groups and Local Authority partners across Hywel Dda, as well as nationally through the All-Wales Armed Forces Lead Officers group.

Community outreach to support veterans, members of the armed forces and the diverse communities in Hywel Dda



The Health Board Community Development Outreach Team (CDOT) have been proactively providing signposting support to veterans with long-term ill-health who attend coffee mornings and other drop in events such as in Carmarthen Leisure Centre, the VC Gallery in Pembrokeshire, and Woody's Lodge in Ceredigion area. They have supported veterans to access health related information such as healthy eating, exercise, alcohol scratch cards, smoking cessation, and immunisation and vaccination. They also supported our veterans to be involved in the recent Health Board consultations regarding the site of the proposed new hospital. CDOT have been

proactive in encouraging our veterans including those who are homeless to attend immunisation sessions, register with a GP practice where they live and help the team has also liaised with and encouraged our GP practices to display the poster which is been used as part of the awareness campaign that was reissued last year.

In general, the main activities of CDOT include:

- meeting and talking with people including veterans in the community and encourage participation in public engagement events;
- sharing important public health messages;
- empowering people to access healthcare services and promote vaccine uptake; connecting people with other agencies;
- support health staff to use Language Line and the interpretation App to improve patient/clinician experiences; and

- in partnership, plan and attend community events to bring communities and services together to celebrate diversity and inclusion.

In the last year, CDOT participated in 29 events where they engaged with members of the Armed Forces Community, attended 7 Drop-in sessions where a total of 471 people attended.

Improving treatment pathways for veterans with a co-occurring mental health and substance misuse issues

The Substance Misuse Area Planning Board has started work to review the Health Board's implementation of the Welsh Government [Service Framework for the Treatment of People with a Co-occurring Mental Health and Substance Misuse Problem](#) and the [Welsh Government Substance Misuse Delivery Plan](#). Section 5.7.7 of the Framework set outs the action for area planning boards to review their existing local care pathways with a view to ensuring that access to substance misuse treatment for veterans is improved. As part of the Area Planning Board Treatment and Recovery Action Plan, the Substance Misuse services team have been working directly with partners such as the local AFLO and the local and regional Armed Forces Covenant Community Forums to understand current practices and identify areas for improvement. The team also carried out a workshop in January 2024 to gain specific feedback from partners.



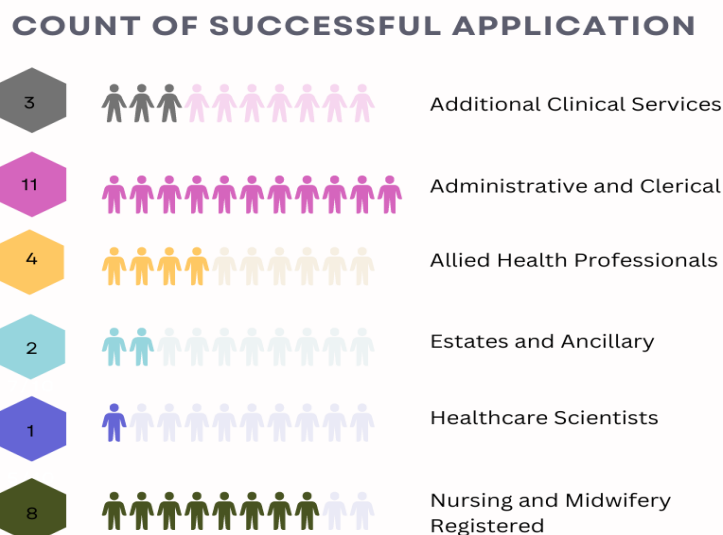
Promoting Hywel Dda as an employer of choice for veterans and the armed forces community.

Inclusive Recruitment

The Health Board is committed to inclusive recruitment. The [Inclusive Recruitment: Reasonable Adjustment leaflet](#), for example, includes the due regard for veterans and the Armed Forces community in line with the Armed Forces Covenant.

As a DERS (Defence Employer Relationship Scheme) Gold award holder, all Health Board vacancies that are advertised on NHS Jobs and Trac include an additional question 'Are you a member of the Armed Forces Community?' During the shortlisting process, applications from members of the Armed Forces community are highlighted and, if individuals meet the minimum essential criteria for the role, they are guaranteed an interview. The Health Board also advertises vacancies on the Forces Families Jobs websites and continues to work in partnership to have an active profile in other recruitment networks and websites such as Step into Health for Veterans and the Fighting with Pride Jobs Board.

From 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024, a total of 207 applicants have declared "Member of the armed forces community". Of these, 95 or 46% were invited to interview and 29 or 31% of those who were interviewed were offered roles in the Health Board. Below is the breakdown of the job offers by professional group.



Staff Network

Members of the Armed Forces Staff Network continue to be involved in various collaborative meetings and partnership working so that they are able to inform decisions and activities that affect them, for example, in the planning of Health Board's celebration of last year's Armed Forces Week and Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday. The Staff Network shared their individual citizens views on the recent Office of Veteran Affairs Consultation.

The Health Board has a dedicated Microsoft Teams channel for the Network which provides space for continuous discussion and sharing of information about staff wellbeing initiatives and training opportunities.

Pride in Veterans Standard (PiVS)

The Health Board has submitted its Year Two Report to PiVS to ensure we are continuing to visibly demonstrate our commitment to providing an inclusive and welcoming service to LGBT+ Veterans. Fighting With Pride is a trusted and respected LGBT+ military charity that has lived experience and knowledge to support organisations wanting to develop or improve their LGBT+ welcome and support services. Following the publication of the [Independent Review by Lord Etherton into the service and experience of LGBT veterans \(fightingwithpride.org.uk\)](https://www.fightingwithpride.org.uk), the Health Board proactively promoted the range of staff well-being support which is available for staff members to access on a self-referral basis.



Staff Recognition

Three of our Reservists and members of the Armed Forces Staff Network were shortlisted and awarded silver and bronze awards at the 2023 [Welsh Veterans Awards Reservists of the Year category](#). At this event, Hywel Dda University Health Board also received a certificate as a shortlisted organisation in the Employer of the Year category.



Looking ahead

Armed Forces Covenant Health Action Plan 2024-2026

“Fostering inclusion of veterans and members of the Armed Forces community in all that we do”

The Health Board is committed to fostering inclusion of veterans and members of the Armed Forces community in all that we do. A collaborative approach to progressing key areas for improvement and specific actions and initiatives to promote positive outcomes for veterans and the Armed Forces community both in our workforce and those who use our services, are set out in the Armed Forces Covenant Health Action Plan 2024-2026.

The Action Plan includes actions that address four priority areas:

- leadership commitment;
- reducing disadvantage for veterans and the Armed Forces community;
- partnership working; and
- promoting Hywel Dda as an employer of choice.

Implementation of the Action Plan will be co-ordinated by the SPDI team and monitored through the Armed Forces Covenant Steering Group.