Mental health and the military

Findings from a systematic review on the mental health needs of serving and ex-Service personnel and their families, commissioned by the Forces in Mind Trust.

Most serving and ex-Service personnel have relatively good mental health, but there are some who experience a range of mental health problems.

Serving personnel

Experience of mental health problems

Those who experienced combat or have been deployed are more likely to experience mental health problems, but tend to show symptoms after return from deployment.

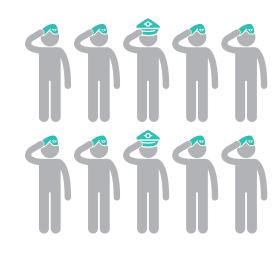
Help-seeking

Serving personnel are less likely to seek help for mental health problems than for those considered to be strictly 'physical'.



Workload and the level of support from peers and leadership can impact on mental health. Physical and psychological bullying, intimidation and lack of respect all negatively affect mental health.

Stigma and fear of the impact of disclosure on a military career are some of the main barriers to help-seeking. As a result, personnel sometimes wait until leaving the military to seek help.



be normalised during service and contribute in-service and beyond.

Those who decide to look for help typically contact friends or colleagues rather than the unit chain of command, welfare staff, or medical services.



Ex-Service personnel

Heavy drinking may

to alcohol misuse

Experience of mental health problems



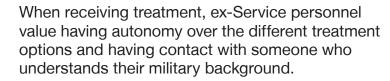
Most military personnel transition successfully to civilian life, but some struggle. They may experience problems in their relationships or feel isolated, misunderstood or less willing to meet others.

Help-seeking

Personnel leaving the military may try to deal with their symptoms alone and sometimes overuse alcohol to cope. Reaching a crisis point is often a trigger to seeking help.

Ex-Service personnel are often unaware of what support is available for them after they leave the Service.

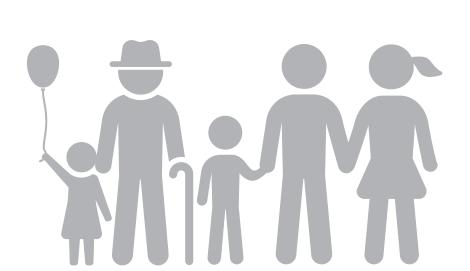
For many ex-Service personnel, receiving a diagnosis is a key step to understanding their mental health condition.







Families



Experience of mental health problems

The mental health of military personnel can have a significant impact on relationships with their families. Partners of military personnel often take on additional caring responsibilities and can experience secondary traumatic stress, depression or anxiety.

Help-seeking

Families face similar challenges to those experienced by military populations, including stigma, and practical issues, such as difficulty getting time off for work and childcare responsibilities.





