

Military Veterans - From 1 January 2008, all veterans should receive priority access to NHS secondary care for any conditions which are likely to be related to their service. ***However, veterans should not be given priority over other patients with more urgent clinical needs.***

A veteran is defined as “someone who has served at least one day in the UK Armed Forces”.

The ongoing deployment of UK armed forces means it is now more important than ever that the NHS works closely with military services to ensure that the health needs of the Armed Forces, their families and veterans are appropriately met. In particular, it will be important to provide priority treatment, including appropriate mental health treatment, for veterans with conditions related to their service, subject to the clinical needs of others.

Approximately 170,000 veterans receive war pensions (or another form of compensation) as a result of a service-related condition, and therefore have eligibility for priority treatment under the NHS for their service-related condition.

Other veterans will have received a lump sum gratuity rather than a pension because the degree of disablement caused by service is relatively minor: they too are eligible for priority treatment for service-related conditions, as are veterans who have an assessed degree of disablement caused by service but to whom no award is paid.

### **Most likely service-related conditions requiring treatment**

- **Audiology services** - The guidance on priority treatment for war pensioners applied also to service-related noise-induced hearing loss which is accepted as caused by service but for which no award was paid because the level of disablement fell below the threshold for compensation. Lack of clarity about this group’s entitlement to priority treatment in the past may mean that there will be some backlog coming forward now. In addition, there will be future groups of veterans for whom hearing loss may be an issue.
- **Mental health services** – Veterans sometimes do not seek treatment for service-related mental health problems until some years after discharge. It can be particularly difficult establishing whether a condition is due to service and its implication for treatment.
- **Orthopaedic services** – Because of injuries during a person’s time in the armed forces which begin to present problems some time after discharge.

## **Evidence Required to Prove Veteran Status**

Clinicians are not expected to systematically ask patients whether they are veterans suffering from a condition which they believe is related to their military service.

Evidence of veteran status may be in a variety of forms such as: GP referral letter, war pension documentation, or a letter on headed notepaper from the Ministry of Defence.