

Freedom of Information request 126-23

Request

1. Does the Trust have a person appointed Armed Forces/Veterans Champion?
2. If so, what is their name and contact details?
3. Does the Trust have an agreed suicide prevention action plan or strategy?
4. If so, does this strategy recognise veterans as an at-risk, priority or tailored group?
5. If so, does your strategy reference veterans in any other way?
6. If so, when is your strategy due to be reviewed?

Response

1. NHS Borders has a person appointed Armed Forces/Veterans Champion.
2. Andrew Carter – Director of HR - andrew.carter@borders.scot.nhs.uk or BOR.AFVChampion@borders.scot.nhs.uk
3. Yes, NHS Borders have a new combined Mental Health Improvement and Suicide Prevention Action Plan (Creating Hope in the Scottish Borders) which launched in November 2022. The 3-year Action Plan (2022 to 2025) was published following a twelve-month period of engagement with partners and stakeholders. Our aim for the new action plan is to increase the number of people in good mental health at every age and stage of life and to reduce the number deaths by suicide in the Scottish Borders.
4. We refer to the national Suicide Prevention Strategy in shaping our local plan. Through consultation we ensure local priorities reflect local need. The 'Every Life Matters Action Plan: Suicide prevention action in Scotland 2018-2022', looked at actions that targeted at risk groups and this included improved understanding of the needs of veterans. Scotland's new suicide prevention strategy was published in September 2022.

We recognise veterans in our local Action Plan – Creating Hope in the Scottish Borders. Under Programme 2 an area of action is targeted interventions for groups of the population more at risk of suicide and self-harm. We will target this work in a way that is designed with lived experience insight, practice, data, research, and intelligence. The groups at greater risk of suicide and self-harm in the Scottish Borders include men, people who have previously self-harmed, people with mental illness, those in touch with the criminal justice system, **Veterans**, particular age groups and people bereaved by suicide.

In the Scottish Borders we have Veterans First Point (V1P) which is a community-based service, offering peer support, signposting and access to specialist evidence based psychological therapies for veterans with service related mental health difficulties. The team has strong links with the local community and has built good working partnerships with local statutory and non-statutory services that support veterans across a range of issues.

V1P Borders supports NHS Borders commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant by offering timely support and access to psychological treatment for those veterans whose difficulties are related to their

service. In cases where the veterans presenting difficulties are clearly not related to their time in service, they will be supported to access the most appropriate treatment.

V1P's peer support workers attend the Mental Health Armed Forces training (2-day course) and have access to ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training). Their work is clinically supervised by the Psychologist who is also the escalation point for veterans presenting with potential of suicidal risk. The service has robust links with Crisis team and the community mental health teams for further escalation.

V1P Borders is meeting the requirements of the Scottish Government Veterans Mental Health & Wellbeing Action Plan December 2021. V1P have strong links with both primary and secondary care mental health teams ensuring that referrals between services are swift.

5. Please see the information in Question 4 above.
6. NHS Borders carries out annual reviews of the action plan until its end date.

If you are not satisfied with the way your request has been handled or the decision given, you may ask NHS Borders to review its actions and the decision. If you would like to request a review please apply in writing to, Freedom of Information Review, NHS Borders, Room 2EC3, Education Centre, Borders General Hospital, Melrose, TD6 9BS or foi.enquiries@borders.scot.nhs.uk.

The request for a review should include your name and address for correspondence, the request for information to which the request relates and the issue which you wish to be reviewed. Please state the reference number **126-23** on this request. Your request should be made within 40 working days from receipt of this letter.

If following this review, you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, you may appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner and request an investigation of your complaint. Your request to the Scottish Information Commissioner should be in writing (or other permanent form), stating your name and an address for correspondence. You should provide the details of the request and your reasons for dissatisfaction with both the original response by NHS Borders and your reasons for dissatisfaction with the outcome of the internal review. Your application for an investigation by the Scottish Information Commissioner must be made within six months of your receipt of the response with which you are dissatisfied. The address for the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner is, Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner, Kinburn Castle, Doubledykes Road, St Andrews, Fife.