
Standard Operating Procedure Veteran Support Centres

Version No:	1
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Effective From:	14 Dec 2018
Review Date:	21/03/2019
Lead Reviewer:	Veterans Support Centre Committee
Dissemination Arrangements:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Standard Operating Procedure Distribution▪ All ONE Branches▪ All Veteran Support Centres▪ Others, as relevant

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1.0 Introduction

The Veteran Peer Support protocol recognises that veterans may need support at different times during their life. This is a ONE Board initiative, however, the project maintains and supports close links with the Citizens Information Centres (CIC) and Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS).

2.0 Purpose of the Standard Operating Procedure

Veteran Support Centres provides a number of services to veterans. Veteran Support Centres one to one support sets out to exemplify a person centred approach to veterans which is first and foremost a listening service and provides a framework to empower veterans to reflect on issues that impact on them and identify what actions, if any, may need to be considered.

The purpose of this standard operating procedure is to set out the process involved in referral to the Veteran Support Centres one to one listening service. We have a duty of confidentiality to you as a veteran but also have a duty to your safety and well-being and of others.

3.0 Scope of the Standard Operating Procedure

This guideline is applicable to all Veteran Support Centres; Veteran Peer Support Teams and all veterans.

4.0 Eligible to Access the Veteran Peer Support Centre

Those who are eligible to access Veteran Support Centres services are:

- All Veterans
- Family members of Veterans
- Serving members of the DF and their families

5.0 Our responsibilities as Veteran Peer Supporters

First and foremost Veteran Support Centre is self-referral, a service that is available during nominated opening hours each week. Each Veteran Support Centre has a team of experienced staff, trained in offering individual and non-judgemental, unconditional support.

Veterans can be seen in Veteran Support Centres or at home, depending on individual circumstances.

On receipt of a referral the veteran will be contacted within 72 hours of the referral being made to acknowledge receipt and take any additional information that would help to ascertain the urgency of the referral.

5.1 Veterans

The relationship between the veteran who accesses the Veteran Support Centre and the veteran peer supporter is confidential. Confidentiality is an expression of trust that enables the veteran to talk about their personal and private concerns.

There are limits to confidentiality which is pointed out to the veteran at the beginning. Concerns are raised with the veteran in the first instance. An example of this would be where there is a risk of serious harm to the veteran or others.

5.2 ONE Welfare Officers

Although Veteran Support Centre are primarily a self-referral service Welfare Officers may in certain circumstances find that such a service would be beneficial to a veteran and suggest that they access it or may access the service on the veteran's behalf.

There is no distinction between self-referral and Welfare Officers referral in terms of confidentiality. The content of the meeting will be between the veteran and veteran peer supporter.

6.0 Definition of Terms

Referral: A referral for Veteran Support Centre one to one support can either be self-referral or other types of referral.

Availability: The Veteran Support Centre one to one listening service operates during prescribed opening hours with a veteran peer supporter. Out of hours contact can be made via a mobile number provided at the Veteran Support Centre.

Triage: On receipt of the referral acknowledgement is made within 72 hours. The veteran peer supporter can usually determine whether a referral to Veteran Support Centre is immediate or an appointment can be booked within the next few days/weeks.

The Veteran Support Centre Team usually have their diary clear on the day to receive any immediate referrals.

Allocation of Veterans: Veterans are assigned to a veteran peer supporter by the Veteran Support Centre Administrator taking into account current case load of the veteran peer supporter and their location.

A copy of the information sheet setting out the main points (confidentiality, meetings, sessions available, cancellations and evaluation of the service) is handed to the veteran at the first meeting.

Confidentiality: An information sheet (Appendix 9.1) must be given to the veteran when they attend Veteran Support Centre. This information sheet sets out an understanding of confidentiality and the limitations. The information states the following,

“Confidentiality is an expression of trust that enables you to talk about your personal and private concerns.

Although this is a confidential space there are limits to confidentiality and it is important that we point this out to you from the beginning although we will raise our concerns with you in the first instance. An example of this would be if there is a risk of serious harm to you or others.

Whether you have been referred by someone (for example, family, or colleague) or have self-referred we do not report back unless you give us consent to discuss you with others.

Concerns: If a veteran peer supporter has any concerns regards the mental health status of the veteran, the veteran peer supporter may advise that they contact their GP however, if there is significant concern that would require immediate support then the Gardaí or Ambulance Service would be contacted.

Self-care of veteran peer supporters: Veteran Peer Supporter adheres to the ethical principles of fidelity, autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice and self-respect. In order to be effective peer supporters a belief in our own self care is paramount. Attending to the peer supporters' well-being is essential to sustaining good practice. Peer supporters have a responsibility to themselves to ensure that their work does not become detrimental to their health or well-being by ensuring that the way that they undertake their work is as safe as possible and that they seek appropriate professional support and services as the need arises.

Although there is no formal mechanism for peer group support and case review with a current caseload this is currently an informal process with peers.

Discharge and onward referral: The information sheet given to the veteran makes it clear that the service is not time limited and states the following,

“Veteran peer support is not time limited and the number of appointments can vary according to the veteran’s need.

We take the opportunity to check in with you to evaluate whether your needs are being met. However, some veterans feel less than six sessions have helped without requiring any additional sessions. There is no time limit to staff accessing the service at any time.”

Where onward referral may be required this is discussed with the veteran in the first instance and may require the support of other members of the multi-disciplinary team.

Attendance at Veterans Support Centre: Due to resources the following procedure is considered by the peer support team:

Veterans may cancel their appointment and have this re-scheduled to another day that is suitable to them. Where a veteran does not attend (DNA) it would be routine to contact them to offer another appointment. Where a veteran DNAs on two occasions it may be that they do not want to engage with the service at this time but know that peer support is available at the Veteran Support Centre if they need to contact the service.

Where a veteran DNAs and cancels over a period of time consideration to whether they wish to engage with the service at this time should be considered and are encouraged to access the service in future if they require it.

Evaluation of the Veterans Support Centre one to one service:

The introduction of the Veteran Support Centre policy states, “An evaluation of the experience of users’ hopes to demonstrate that the veteran support centre has supported veterans with issues that can contribute to stress. This data may also help to inform ONE about common themes that need to be addressed within the veteran’s policy.

Skill set of the team: The Veterans Support Centre Team come from varying professional backgrounds but collectively have a skill set essential to delivering peer support (interpersonal skills, knowledge and experience of complex problem solving, ability to remain calm and manage in a critical fluid and stressful situation of indeterminate length).

7.0 Monitoring and review

It is important that the service is continually monitored and this is achieved by veteran feedback either during a session or alternatively to the Veteran Support Centre Administrator.

8.0 Code Of Practice

- 8.1 Stress Trauma interventions and risk assessments should only be undertaken by practitioners who have undertaken an officially recognised Critical Incident Stress Management Course (CISM) and or a Mental Health First Aid course (MHFA).
- 8.2 All interventions should be conducted strictly in accordance with the protocols taught on the Veterans Support Peer Course.
- 8.3 All Veteran Peer Supporters are to observe the following ethical statements:
- 8.4 Maintain confidentiality unless indicated by law not to do so.
- 8.5 Obtain informed consent.
- 8.6 Avoid any re-traumatising actions to the greatest extent possible.

8.7 Operate within personal levels of training, expertise, education and experience.

8.8 Use the Peer Support protocol in an empathetic, sensitive and respectful manner.

8.9 Self monitor personal capacity to do 'the work'.

8.10 Do no harm.

8.11 Promote human welfare.

8.12 Be fair.

8.13 Fulfil commitments to veterans.

8.14 Finally, take regular and ongoing actions to insure self-care and enhance the ability to deliver quality and professional services.

9.0 Appendix

Information Sheet

Appendix 9.1

Information Sheet

Information Sheet

Thank you for accessing the listening service of the Veteran Support Centre. We hope that you experience your visit(s) as welcoming and comfortable. At any point during your time here we would welcome any feedback that you may have.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an expression of trust that enables you to talk about your personal and private concerns.

Although this is a confidential space there are limits to confidentiality and it is important that we point this out to you from the beginning although we will raise our concerns with you in the first instance. An example of this would be if there is a risk of serious harm to you or others.

Whether you have been referred by someone (for example, family or colleague) or have self-referred we do not report back unless you give us consent to discuss you with others.

Meeting

We will meet regularly at a mutually convenient location and time. Veteran Support Centres are located throughout Ireland. (See attached map)

Sessions available

Peer support is not time limited and the number of appointments can vary according to veteran's need. Veterans can access the service during prescribed opening hours.

We take the opportunity to check in with you to evaluate whether your needs are being met. However, some veterans feel less than six sessions have helped without requiring any additional sessions. There is no time limit to veterans accessing the service at any time.

Cancellation

If you are unable to make a meeting that has been scheduled then please contact us at the earliest opportunity so that we are able to offer this session to someone else.

Evaluation of the service

It is important that we continue to monitor our service and face to face feedback as well as an evaluation of your experience of the service is invaluable to us. The evaluation is voluntary and anonymous.

Other sources of help:

Samaritans: is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for anyone struggling to cope. For confidential, non-judgemental support please call Free helpline: 116123 e-mail: jo@smaritians.org

Aware: provides face-to-face, phone and online support for individuals experiencing mild to moderate depression or anxiety and for friends or families. Helpline 1800 804848. E-mail: support@aware.ie . www.aware.ie

My Mind: provides multilingual counselling and psychotherapy services, both online or face-to-face. Clients can self-refer and appointments are within 72 hours. Fees are based upon employment status, offering the unemployed and students affordable services. www.mymind.org

Social Anxiety Ireland: provides a group treatment programme for those with social anxiety. www.socialanxietyireland.com

Shine: supports people with mental ill health and their families and friends. The information helpline provides general information, a listening ear and specific information about Shine services. Email support: phil@shineonline.ie Information helpline 1890 621631 Mon to Fri 0900 – 1600.

GROW: Helps people who are experiencing mental health problems. www.grow.ie
Infoline: 1890 474474.

HSE: Information on mental health services.
http://hse.ie/portal/eng/services/list/4/Mental_Health_Services/

PSS: The PSS is staffed by professionally qualified BPSSOs and SWs who have experience in dealing with a whole range of problems that may exist in a veterans life. Available in all Military Bks/ Post. Veterans can self-refer. www.military.ie

