

Passport to improved health for military veterans

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A healthcare 'passport' to access NHS and other wellbeing services has been beneficial for the mental health of veterans and provides them with a sense of identity, according to research published in the *BMJ Military*

Health.

The Veterans Universal Passport (VUP) [pilot project](#) was developed by Diane Palmer, formerly of the Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS) for the Midlands and East of England, and is supported by the Ministry of Defence along with several veterans' charities. It has been independently evaluated by the Veterans and Families Institute for Military Social Research at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU).

Participants in the scheme, who were veterans recently transitioning to [civilian life](#), reported improved continuity of care and promoted a feeling of control over care. The military-specific nature of the VUP also gave participants a sense of identity and helped them negotiate the complexities of the civilian healthcare system.

One [veteran](#) who took part in the pilot scheme said: "It's been really great actually. It's got all my information in one place. Instead of me having to keep going backwards and forwards trying to find it. I find it really easy."

Healthcare workers also praised the VUP. One said: "It's a regularity of feeling proactive, engagement, in their own care."

Lead author Dr. Lauren Godier-McBard, of ARU, said: "Many [ex-service](#) personnel find navigating health and social care services on 'civvy street' daunting and complex. However, it is important that veterans who are in need of these services are not lost in the system and an ongoing [healthcare](#) record provides continuity of care and patient empowerment.

"We identified in our research that participants found having a single document to access a number of different services reduced their anxiety

and provided them with much-needed structure to their journey through treatment.

"The fact this is a document exclusively for veterans also gave them a sense of pride and identity, further improving their wellbeing."

More information: Lauren Rose Godier-McBard et al, Veterans Universal Passport: a pilot of a health and social care record for UK ex-service personnel, *BMJ Military Health* (2020). [DOI: 10.1136/jramc-2019-001288](https://doi.org/10.1136/jramc-2019-001288)

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