

## Just the information you need



## Easy to find service categories



## Map view



The new Veterans' Gateway App

May 06, 2020 16:15 BST

## New app boosts support for armed forces community

As the country gears up to commemorate VE Day, academics at Northumbria University are delighted to have played a vital role in the development of a new smartphone app which helps UK military veterans find support services they need; whether that's health services, jobs or housing.

The app has been launched by Veterans' Gateway, a 24-hour service for veterans' support, and was developed by a partnership between Northumbria University's [Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families Research](#) and



international software company RippleNami, Inc. The Veteran's Gateway app has been funded by grants from the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

The first of its kind in the UK, the Veterans' Gateway app provides a comprehensive interactive digital directory of all services available for almost three million veterans across the country.

The fully inclusive and accessible app provides them with the locations of local hospitals, substance abuse clinics and details of how to access education, financial assistance, employment support, housing and shelters – all in the palm of their hands on a smartphone or tablet. It even includes a recently added layer of support for those facing new challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic.

Importantly, the app has been designed to draw anonymised geolocation data on what users are searching for, to help to identify particular issues that may be faced within different regions. This will be used as evidence to show government where funding needs to be invested to improve services for veterans.

The new app builds on the success of the [Veterans' Gateway online directory](#) which was also developed by Northumbria University's Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families Research and RippleNami which groups together all NHS facilities and over 2,000 charitable organisations across the country, allowing veterans and their families to access local support as and when it is needed.

Since being set up in 2017, Veterans' Gateway has received over 47,000 calls and has signposted ex-forces personnel and their families to the wide range of support available to them.

Assistant Director of Veterans' Gateway, Mark Collins said: "This new app is a great way of enabling the veteran community to find information and gain advice on the go. Our team are here for them 24/7 and this technology means they can access local information quickly or use it to contact the service. By showing them the help and support available locally, it strengthens the fact that Veterans' Gateway is a key point of contact for veterans and their



families.”

[View embedded content here](#)

Northumbria University and Ripplenami have been working to develop the new app over the last five years. This work is part of a wider ‘Map of Need’ project being led by the Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families Research, which has been funded by the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust with grants to date totalling £1.4m.

As well as providing veterans with a much-needed interactive map of all specialist services available to them, the app has also been designed to help service providers to ensure they are offering the support that former UK service men and women want and need by collecting anonymous data about the types of services veterans are searching for and using.

The prefix of the app user’s postcode – such as NW1 – is collected when veterans conduct a search through the app. This detail is then used to identify if the services people are looking for are available in certain regions.

This intelligence will inform national debate and lead to the development of policy recommendations and guidance for improvements to services provision.

[Dr Matt Kiernan](#) is an Associate Professor of Mental Health and Veteran Studies at Northumbria University and a former Lieutenant Commander in the Queen Alexandra’s Royal Naval Nursing Service. He said: “This is the first time



that this type of mapping technology has been available on an app. We are proud that through this excellent collaboration we have been able to create something bespoke to the veteran community. It's a really clever piece of software that will be ground-breaking at an international level and paves the way for mapping veteran and military families' services worldwide. It will benefit veterans and their families as they use it and it will allow us to better understand the needs of the veteran community across the UK and use that information to develop future services.

"We can now see detail on what people are searching for and what services they subsequently access in different locations – but importantly with absolute anonymity. All we see is the first part of the user's postcode location, but this means we can analyse variances between what people are looking for and what is available to them locally. If the services they need aren't available close by then we will now have the evidence to advise government of where it needs to invest to meet these needs."

The bespoke design of the app has also allowed a rapid, flexible response to the coronavirus pandemic, meaning that Covid-19 specific local support has been added to the platform.

UK veteran Tom Ripley is an MOD Army Welfare Worker who works with serving personnel and families and encourages them to use the app. He said: "Our veterans can face many different problems when they leave the forces, from mental health, alcohol and substance abuse and PTSD to housing and employment issues. The app really is a one-stop shop; you can find all the services you might need in one place. There can be a stigma attached to asking for help and some people are embarrassed to take that first step. Being able to look up support services by themselves at home can make a huge difference – the anonymity is definitely appealing."

Veterans' Gateway is delivered by a consortium comprising The Royal British Legion, Poppyscotland, Combat Stress, Connect Assist, the Ministry of Defence and SSAFA, the Armed Forces Charity.

The Veterans' Gateway app is available for free on the [Apple App Store](#) and [Google Play](#). Here you can see a [video demonstrating the app in use](#).

**Notes to editors:**



## About Veterans' Gateway

Veterans' Gateway is a service which launched in response to Lord Ashcroft's Veterans' Transition Review. It acts as a point of contact for veterans, their families and carers who are in need of support, particularly from the charity sector. The service is funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund, which receives an annual grant from the Ministry of Defence, and is delivered by a consortium comprising The Royal British Legion, Poppyscotland, Combat Stress, Connect Assist, the Ministry of Defence and SSAFA, the Armed Forces Charity. Veterans' Gateway provides a pathway to a full list of services from housing and recovery to mental health services, financial and employment advice. The service aims to reduce the confusion for veterans seeking support within the military charity sector and will ensure it can signpost to the right service for any need a veteran may present with.

For more information on Veterans' Gateway, or for those in need of support, visit [www.veteransgateway.org.uk](http://www.veteransgateway.org.uk), call 0808 802 1212 or text 81212

The Veterans' Gateway app is available on the [Apple App Store](#) and [Google Play](#) Here you can see a [video demonstrating the app in use](#).

## About the Covenant Fund Trust

The Armed Forces Covenant sets out the relationship between the nation, the Government and the armed forces. It recognises that the whole nation has a moral obligation to current and former members of the armed forces and their families, and it sets out how they should expect to be treated. The Covenant Fund receives £10 million each year from the Ministry of Defence to support the Armed Forces Covenant by funding projects which address specific priorities. It also received a further £10m in the recent Budget to support veterans' health and wellbeing projects

---

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. Find out more about us at [www.northumbria.ac.uk](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk) --- Please contact our Media and Communications team at [media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk) or call +44 (0)191 227 4604 with any media enquiries or interview requests.



## Contacts



### **Rik Kendall**

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

[rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk)

07923 382339



### **Andrea Slowey**

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

[andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk)

07708 509436



### **Rachael Barwick**

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

[rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk)

07377422415



### **James Fox**

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

[james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk)

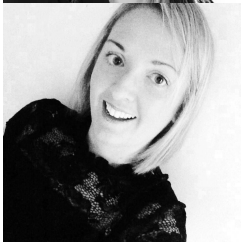


### **Kelly Elliott**

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

[kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk)



### **Gemma Brown**

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

[gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk)