

SAMARITANS VETERANS APP

A year since its launch

Since **1953**, suicide prevention charity Samaritans has been known for providing emotional support to anyone who needs someone to listen without judgement. Now, Samaritans has worked with all three branches of UK Defence, veterans' charities, serving personnel, veterans and their families to implement a tailored programme of support, funded by the Chancellor using LIBOR funds. This gave rise to Samaritans Veterans App, launched in **October 2021**. Available via app stores, the app has been downloaded nearly **3,500** times.

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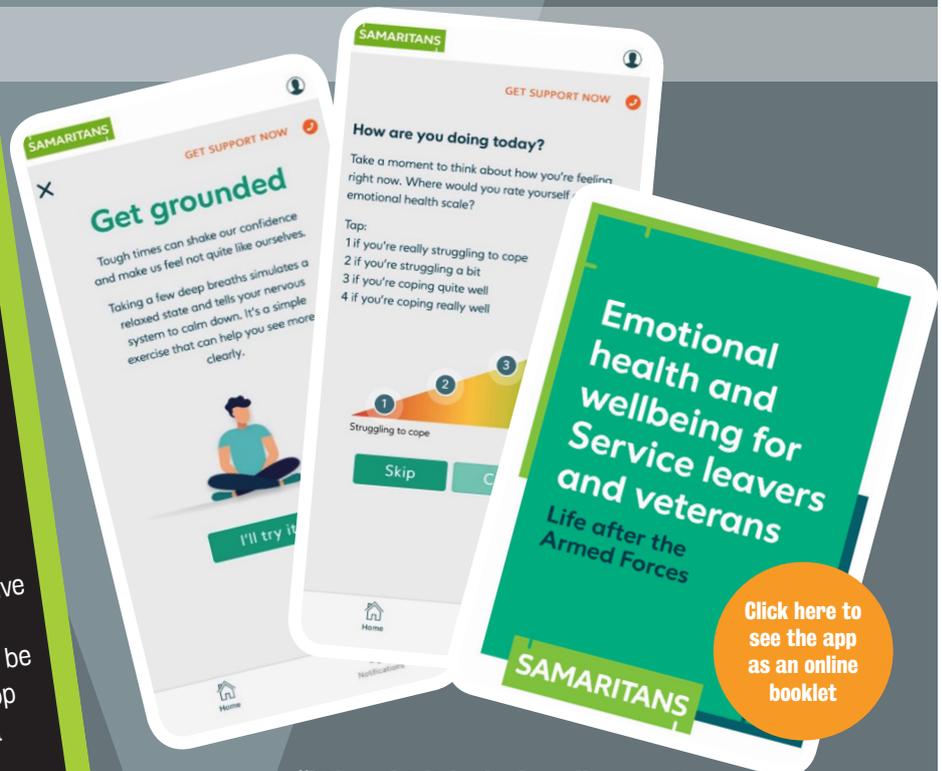
LIFE IN THE ARMED FORCES can be very challenging, and people who have recently left active service are particularly likely to struggle after losing that structure, camaraderie and sense of purpose. We all have mental health, and we should actively choose to maintain it, rather than dealing with it as a last resort. Anything that helps provide support is invaluable. Samaritans Veterans App is a great tool to help keep track of your wellbeing and includes useful resources if you are having a difficult time.”

JJ Chalmers –

Former Lance Corporal in the Royal Marines and TV presenter

Samaritans Veterans App

SAMARITANS VETERANS APP was designed to help Service leavers consider their wellbeing across the military-to-civilian transition. The app offers psychoeducational content on identity, cultural change and emotional wellbeing; practical breathing exercises; podcasts and videos; an action centre to set wellbeing goals, and a comprehensive resource section with key support contacts. This free-to-use app can be used on smart phones and desktop devices, and is accompanied by a dedicated **online booklet**.



“I thought it looked really smart, really professional and really well put together.”
(Participant in evaluation study)

Who has used Samaritans Veterans App?

There have been about **3,500 DOWNLOADS** recorded since its launch

96% of users accessed the app via their mobiles

The app's users span all Four Nations (England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland) and many other countries worldwide.

THE APP HAS HAD A LOT OF SUPPORT since its launch, including from:

- UK Ministry of Defence and Office for Veterans' Affairs
- National newspapers
- Men's health magazines
- Military media, e.g. magazines and radio
- Military charities

“ THIS APP IS WHAT I’VE BEEN WAITING FOR! I found the podcasts and videos from ex-Armed Forces members inspiring and hope more of these will be developed in this app. The wellbeing activities are positive for me, and I find they help me relax, when needed. Overall, this app has helped me at a time when I need it.”
[User review on App Store]

The Evaluation

Researchers at the King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR) evaluated the app to identify its strengths and points for development. The team interviewed veterans who had engaged with the app and analysed data reflecting the usage of the app since its launch. Overall, Samaritans Veterans App was very well-received, offering many helpful, and novel, supports in one place. Interview feedback led to

numerous improvements, including:

- Clarifying the title of the app to make app branding clear and searchable for new users
- Personalising the text so that the user is addressed directly
- Building the 'progress centre' of the app so users can record the steps needed to achieve longer-term goals and to track their progress over time
- Labelling themes of the podcast and videos so users are signposted to the most appropriate content
- Reassuring users that their scores on an emotional health scale do not trigger a call from a Samaritans volunteer
- Changing the yellow background of some features as this was interpreted as a 'warning' message

Winner of the International E-Learning Awards **BRONZE:** Mobile Learning Experience



Shortlisted for the Learning Technologies Award - Excellence in the design of learning content - Public & non-profit sector

learning technologies

Shortlisted for The Learning Awards' 'Innovation in Learning Award



The Evaluation (continued)

The researchers did **not** find Samaritans branding to be off-putting to veterans. Rather, the interviews suggested that Samaritans were viewed as an established and trusted organisation, differentiating this wellbeing app from others in a saturated market:

“ I know the market is flooded with various apps but I thought it was intriguing that it was an app for veterans delivered by Samaritans.”
(Participant in the evaluation study).

Joseph Walcott, Military Programme Lead at Samaritans, says:
“The evaluation gave us incredibly valuable feedback and early insight into the impact of the app prior to its official launch in late October 2021. KCMHR ensured that the evaluation of the app underwent a rigorous academic process, in order to generate the most comprehensive findings possible. KCMHR’s feedback and recommendations were key to ensuring that the app encompassed as much of the user feedback, gleaned from interviews and surveys, as possible before the app was released in its current form.”

So what’s next for the app?

Central to the app’s continued impact is the ongoing addition of **new content, resources and features**, with recommendations sourced from the KCMHR evaluation and user feedback. The app underpins a ‘journey’ for many Service leavers, and therefore needs to be a living hub of regularly updated content.

To achieve this, Samaritans will conduct **annual content reviews** to ensure that the app continues to provide relevant, helpful and impactful information and support to those who need it. This will involve consultation with Service leavers and veterans; consultation with other military community support organisations such as

SSAFA and The Ripple Pond, and a full review of KCMHR’s evaluation report so that any outstanding recommendations are implemented wherever possible.



Find out more

SAMARITANS

You can find out more about the app and the support Samaritans provides to the military community by contacting the Military Programme at military@samaritans.org



For more information about the research, please contact KCMHR via kcmhr@kcl.ac.uk

You can also visit www.kcmhr.org and follow the department on Twitter [@kcmhr](https://twitter.com/kcmhr) to learn more about research conducted by the centre.

You can access **Samaritans Veterans App** via the following QR codes:



IOS

The app is free to download and is compatible with iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch devices operating iOS 13.0 or later



Android

Android users require 6.0 and up