

## Op NOVA Service Visit 2024: Life-changing support for veterans in the justice system 24.07.24, Kent Police Training College, Coverdale Avenue, ME18 9DR

### Keynote Speaker Summary: Forces Employment Charity

Delivered by: Alistair Halliday, Chief Executive Officer

**“Op NOVA is an extraordinary community, capable of delivering real change”**

Alistair Halliday profiled the first year of Op NOVA and provided an overview of the timely rollout of Op NOVA’s in-prison service, providing delegates with a structured framework for supporting veterans affected by SDS40.

Launched in April 2023, Op NOVA is established and active in all police and probation areas. Its national network of specialist caseworkers has collaborative partnerships across police custody, NHS L&D, RECONNECT, prison and probation teams.

These sector relationships have empowered a “well-established and well-proven” Op NOVA referral and care pathway, delivering life-changing – and often life-saving – outcomes.

### Op NOVA, April 2023- April 24:

- 1,233 actively engaged veterans
- 97% reported progress in at least one outcome area
- 82% reported improved mental health
- 76% reported a crime-free life

Op NOVA is now entering phase two of its delivery plan, rolling out its structured support service in prisons throughout England. This support is being delivered by a specialist subcontractor, Care after Combat.

The support to veterans in custody will comprise 1-2-1 support, regular group forums and a monthly wellbeing pack, the ‘Stand Easy’, produced in consultation with veterans and clinical experts.

This timely rollout ensures that Op NOVA is well-placed to support the justice system to address the pressures facing the prison system, with a particular focus on SDS40.

The final numbers eligible for statutory release under SDS40 are expected to be confirmed within the next six weeks, but overall figures are expected to be under 10,000. Those eligible will then be released in two tranches; first from 10 September 2024, second from 22 October 2024.

In preparation for the two tranche dates, Op NOVA is working closely with prison and probation colleagues - particularly Community Offender Managers and Prison Offender Managers - to identify, support and engage veterans in each tranche.

**Identify:** work closely with veterans and justice workers to identify eligible veterans.

**Engage:** Generate awareness of Op NOVA among veterans in custody through Prison radio, personal letters and the Stand Easy pack. Ensure that all prison, probation and health service staff are aware of the referral process. Enhance visibility and access to Op NOVA resources such as posters and leaflets in staffrooms, visiting suites and departure lounges.

**Support:** Ensure that support is in place to manage veteran's transition into the community. The in-prison team will facilitate a transition into the Op NOVA community team, ensuring timely contact with housing, finances, healthcare services to encourage stability and probation compliance. The structured approach to Op NOVA's Phase two rollout means that "we have the right mechanisms, the right people, and the right organisations and collaborations in place to help manage SDS40." We have come a long way since Project NOVA's origins some ten years ago. NHS England's support has driven a comprehensive national rollout, enabling Op NOVA to ensure access and equity regardless of postcode.

Significant strides have been made in the first year to establish Op NOVA as the proven national pathway, but our focus remains on improving and enhancing delivery in newly established regions.

"We are incredibly proud of what we have achieved together so far. We know there is still work to be done, and there are huge challenges in the pipeline, but we have the collaborations and structures in place to create positive change and deliver life-changing support to veterans in the justice system".

**Referral to the Op NOVA Support Team:**

Freephone: 0800 9177 299

Monday to Friday: 8am – 8pm | Saturday: 8am – 2pm

Online referral form:

[www.forcesemployment.org.uk/opnovareferral](http://www.forcesemployment.org.uk/opnovareferral)

Email: [opnova@forcesemployment.org.uk](mailto:opnova@forcesemployment.org.uk)

Secure Email: [opnova@forcesemployment.cjsm.net](mailto:opnova@forcesemployment.cjsm.net)

