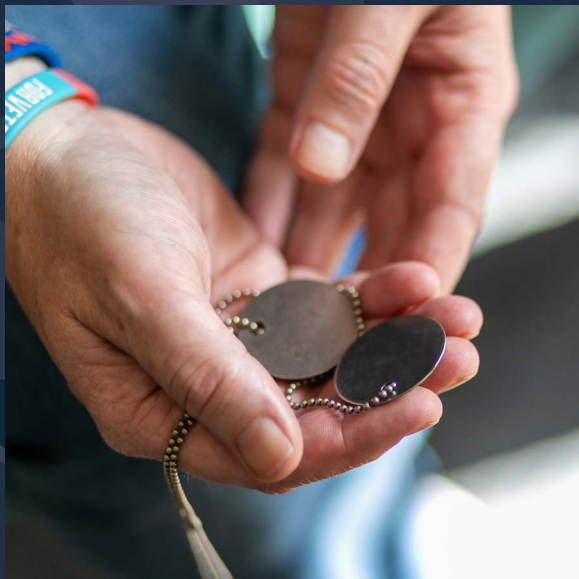


# TOGETHER WE'RE HEALING VETERANS



Your support enables veterans and their families to access our expert clinical treatment.

# LIVING WITH PTSD

**For veterans with PTSD, going about their everyday life, doing things that most of us simply take for granted, can bring huge challenges. Very often there's no such thing as normal life.**

Ordinary activities can be hidden triggers, taking a veteran straight back to their traumatic experiences in the military. For Army veteran Rebecca, white clinical lights in a supermarket, the sound of sirens and even some TV shows have the ability to transport her back to the field hospital in Afghanistan.

“

The first time it happened to me, I was in the car and the emergency services were trying to overtake me, and I had a panic attack.”



Rebecca, Army veteran

After undertaking our specialist treatment, Rebecca learnt techniques to improve her mental health. She says, “I wanted to end my life but Combat Stress saved me.”

## **Raising awareness**

We've been running an awareness campaign, 'Life as we know it: Living with PTSD', to highlight the day-to-day experiences that veterans living with post-traumatic stress disorder have to deal with.

You can read about Rebecca and the other veterans involved in the campaign at [living-with-ptsd.combatstress.org.uk](http://living-with-ptsd.combatstress.org.uk)

# OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

NEARLY **12,500** veterans benefitted from our help

## OUR ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE YEAR INCLUDE:

### **Increasing access**

We have continued to expand our services, providing our specialist treatment and support online and in-person. By providing the vast majority of our service online, we have removed geographical and logistical barriers for receiving treatment.

### **Strengthening our expert team**

We have employed more senior clinicians to respond to the increased complex mental health needs of the veterans who we treat and to ensure that we deliver the highest quality of service.

### **Delivering successful treatment**

Alongside the more traditional cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) we have embedded the use of highly effective and evidence-based therapies such as narrative exposure therapy (NET) and eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing (EMDR).

### **Driving best practice in veteran care**

We're committed to bringing together the NHS and all agencies working in the veterans' mental health sector to ensure that veterans get treatment from the right organisation at the right time. Alongside this our newly developed training team are sharing practical ways to support veterans' mental health with colleagues across the UK sector and our pioneering research team is leading the way in best practice and influencing treatment on the global stage.

# VICTORY FOR VICTOR

Our updated intensive treatment service for veterans with PTSD and Complex PTSD VICTOR (Veterans' Intensive Complex Trauma Organised Recovery) draws on the latest research and is tailored for each veteran to provide the best possible outcomes for long-term recovery. VICTOR involves preparatory, intensive and post-intensive treatment phases.

At the core is a three-week residential stay with evidenced-based psychological therapy for PTSD plus occupational therapy, art therapy, psychiatry and nursing interventions as well as peer and family support. Up to a year of support is available for veterans who are offered VICTOR.

“

The difference undertaking VICTOR at Combat Stress has made to my life is huge, and the support both my wife and I have had is phenomenal. I'll always be grateful to Combat Stress for the support we received.”



Army veteran, Tony

## Measuring success

The feedback received from VICTOR so far is hugely positive. **90%** of veterans showed clinically significant reductions in PTSD symptoms and **60%** no longer met the criteria for Complex PTSD after intensive treatment.

# RESEARCH LED

**Our high quality, robust research is furthering knowledge and understanding of how best to support the veteran community. Our research department has continued to explore innovative and effective ways of treating veterans.**

We are committed to publishing our research to contribute to the advancement of the veteran mental health field. We've had a research department for over 10 years and recently published a report detailing our major findings over this period.

If you'd like to find out more, please visit **[combatstress.org.uk/research](https://combatstress.org.uk/research)** or contact us if you'd like a paper copy.

## A FOCUS ON FIRSTS

**Some highlights from our research work:**

- First study to validate the concept and understanding of moral injury in the UK, leading to a pioneering new treatment.
- First study to validate the new Complex PTSD diagnosis and design an effective new modular treatment programme.
- First study into the experiences of women veteran survivors of military sexual trauma to improve engagement in treatment.
- First study to understand the needs of UK partners living alongside veterans with PTSD, leading to the development of specific family support.

# SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Families can be hugely affected by a veteran experiencing complex mental health issues such as PTSD. It can have a detrimental effect on partners' mental health as well as family relationships and children.

“

Some families are at breaking point by the time I talk to them. They are often desperate for the specialist support we provide which they're unable to find anywhere else.”

Anne Grierson, Family Support Worker

It's vitally important to include family and loved ones in the work we do with veterans. In addition to improving their well-being, research has also shown that outcomes for a veteran's recovery are better when their partner is involved.

## **In the last year the support we gave specifically to families included:**

- Over 40 partners took part in our Together Programme, coming together to learn about mental health, how to support loved ones and looking after their own well-being.
- Expansion of the Family Support Service. This one-to-one support helps families understand mental health symptoms, the treatment Combat Stress provides and how they can help the veteran in their family, whilst also supporting them to take care of their own well-being.

# LOOKING FORWARD

## **Veteran support**

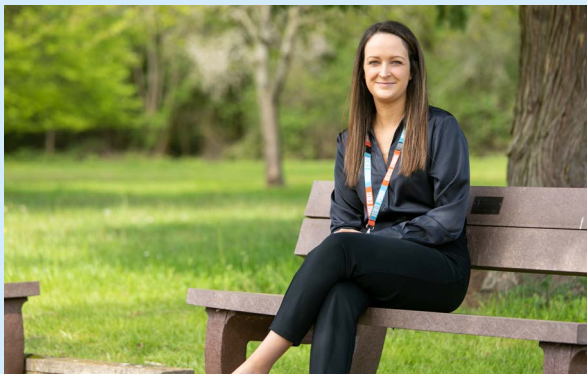
We will further develop our intensive treatment service VICTOR; refining the 12-month treatment programme for veterans with Complex PTSD based on feedback and outcome data. We will build on delivery of the programme – which currently includes a residential element – to allow participation fully online or on an outpatient basis to ensure as many veterans as possible can access and benefit.

## **Family support**

We will be investing in support for families by increasing access to our family support service across the UK.

## **Collaboration**

We aim to expand our partnerships and collaborations, particularly with the NHS on delivery of Op COURAGE. Our goal is to create a more joined-up and efficient system, making it easier for veterans to seek, access, and receive support and treatment.



Dr Leanne Bannister, one of our clinical psychologists who helps deliver the VICTOR service.

# THANK YOU

Lasting recovery starts at Combat Stress.

OUR HELPLINE WAS  
CONTACTED

16,000

TIMES DURING THE YEAR

16%

INCREASE

IN NEW VETERAN  
REFERRALS YEAR ON YEAR  
THIS DEMONSTRATES THE  
ONGOING NEED FOR OUR  
HIGHLY SPECIALIST SERVICES

Thanks to our supporters' generosity in our last financial year (2022-23) we were able to make careful investment in our services for veterans this year.

We rely on our supporters to continue to work with and for veterans: 74% of our income comes from donations and legacies.



76P VETERAN TREATMENT

19P FUNDRAISING

5P AWARENESS & ACCESS

For a more detailed look at our life-changing work over the last financial year, please visit: [combatstress.org.uk/annual-report](https://combatstress.org.uk/annual-report) or get in touch to request a hard copy.

If you'd like to speak with one of our team, please call **01372 587 151** or email [fundraising@combatstress.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@combatstress.org.uk)

