

FOR MANY THE BATTLE CONTINUES

A Call-to-Action from Britain's Military Commanders to support Veterans' Mental Health

Those who have served in our Armed Forces have given the best years of their lives to the country and should be proud of their contribution as they transition to a more peaceful life as civilians.

For a small but significant minority that transition is anything but peaceful. Traumatic experiences during their military career can leave them facing serious mental health challenges for years, often decades, after serving. Without help, conditions like complex post-traumatic stress disorder destroy lives and tear families apart.

In the past three years alone, veterans' mental health charity Combat Stress has reported a 44% increase in new referrals from former service men and women seeking treatment for complex mental health conditions arising from military service. These are from the very generation we had the privilege of commanding on exacting operations in the nation's cause.

Veterans reach out to Combat Stress on average 13 years after leaving the military. With operations in Iraq and Afghanistan ending over a decade ago, demand is set to grow.

It comes at a time when the charity, impacted by the cost of living and inflation, is drawing on its reserves to deliver its life-changing treatment to those who need it.

The stark reality is that NHS-led mental health services for veterans are not enough to meet demand. Combat Stress has existed for over 100 years because its specialist services plug a critical gap.

Without support from Combat Stress, many veterans will be left to deteriorate until it's too late. There is a rapidly rising need for veteran mental health services in this country, which requires greater funding, and we are appealing to the nation and the public to play their part in strengthening mental health provision for those who have served this country.

We must all play our part to increase the funding for specialist charities like Combat Stress. By giving financial support or fundraising, you will save lives and families. To help, you can go to combatstress.org.uk/letter.

We have a long and proud history of supporting our military. Now we must fulfil our duty as a nation to support all those who have gone to extraordinary lengths to keep us safe and strong at home, but are now suffering the consequences.

For many the battle continues.

Signed:

General Sir Peter Wall GCB CBE DL

Admiral Sir George Zambellas GCB DSC ADC DL

Admiral Sir Philip Jones GCB ADC DL

General the Lord Houghton of Richmond GCB CBE ADC DL

General the Lord Richards of Herstmonceux GCB CBE DSO DL

Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier GCB CBE DFC

Air Chief Marshal Sir Andy Pulford GCB CBE DL

Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope GCB OBE DL