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Our story

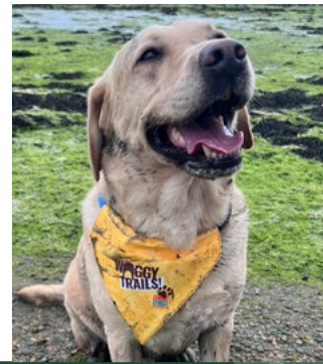
An insight into our past



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Recovery with Combat Stress

What does this mean in reality?



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Waggy Trails

Our new dog walking challenge!

COMBAT STRESS

Autumn 2024

DEMAND FOR OUR SPECIALIST SUPPORT SURGES

44% increase in new treatment referrals

Every year thousands of former serving personnel turn to us struggling with complex mental health conditions as a result of military trauma. Our specialist treatment not only changes lives – it saves them too. But we need help to support the increasing numbers – we've experienced a 44% surge in demand in the last three years.

This year we expect to spend £15 million delivering our specialist services to veterans across the UK, drawing on our reserves to make up for the impact the cost of living and inflation have had on the charity's finances. Long-term we must grow our income to meet the rapidly rising demand for treatment.

It takes on average 13 years from leaving the military for a veteran to seek our help. With British involvement in the Iraq war ending in 2009 and the last British combat troops leaving Afghanistan in 2014, it's a sombre prediction that there are many more veterans who are struggling today and contemplating their first call to Combat Stress.

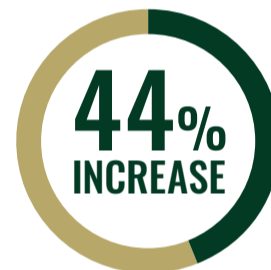
Recognising this, in May, our President, General Sir Peter Wall, led a group of senior military chiefs and issued a letter to the nation calling for support. Eighty years on from D-Day, we believe this is the first time such an intervention has happened since the Second World War. It testifies the importance of veterans' mental health and how dire the situation could become without more support for Combat Stress.

The publication of the letter marked the launch of a new advertising campaign to raise the public's awareness of the charity. The advertising was developed thanks to volunteer

Corporate Advocate Jeremy Miles, who has worked in advertising for over 35 years and used his experience and contacts to bring together a team of volunteers to develop the campaign and access their networks to make best use of our limited budget. We are extremely grateful for their support. This is the most comprehensive advertising campaign we have ever executed.

“ 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.”

An extract from Gen Sir Peter Wall's letter to the nation which marked the launch of our new advertising campaign.



IN DEMAND IN THE LAST THREE YEARS



IS THE AVERAGE TIME IT TAKES A VETERAN TO SEEK OUR HELP AFTER LEAVING THE MILITARY



Our new campaign included large scale advertising in locations such as the Holland Park roundabout in London (above) and also ads in national newspapers

To find out more about the campaign please visit combatstress.org.uk/fm

And listen out for our radio ads in September on stations like Classic FM, Greatest Hits Radio and LBC.

FOR MANY THE BATTLE CONTINUES

COMBAT STRESS FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH

OUR LATEST NEWS



Postcards will be on display at a central London venue in November (pictured above the 2023 event at Bankside Gallery)

Our Secret Postcard Auction – back for 2024!

Over 200 professional artists, celebrities and veterans have submitted postcard-sized original artwork anonymously for this year's Secret Postcard Auction. Don't miss out on your chance to bid on your favourite piece of art (or the art you think is by your favourite artist!) – the auction is open between 18–29 November. The art varies in format and style – it's only when the auction closes that winning bidders find out who has created their piece of artwork!

Art and creativity play a key part in our specialist treatment to help veterans tackle the past and take on the future. By taking part in our auction, you'll help raise funds so that more veterans can receive our life-changing mental health treatment.

To register your interest and be some of the first to hear which artists and celebrities will be taking part visit combatstress.org.uk/spa-2024

Our new CEO

In July, Chloe Mackay joined us as CEO. Chloe was previously Deputy



Chief Executive at the Forces Employment Charity and brings with her a wealth of experience and dedication to improving the lives of veterans facing complex mental health issues arising from military service.

Before joining the Forces Employment Charity, Chloe held the roles of Head of Strategy at Macmillan and Breast Cancer Now and previously worked as a management consultant for PricewaterhouseCoopers and IBM.

"Since joining the charity, I've spent time with staff and veterans across the UK. I've seen first-hand how our specialist services absolutely transform the lives of those with some of the most complex mental health issues and I want to continue this outstanding work to support those affected by military-related trauma," says Chloe.

King Charles III retains patronage of Combat Stress

We are immensely proud to announce that His Majesty King Charles III has chosen to retain his patronage of Combat Stress. It follows a review

of more than 1,000 Royal patronages by the Royal Household after The King's Accession in September 2022. King Charles' patronage means that the Royal Family has continuously supported Combat Stress for more than 80 years. The King became our patron as the Prince of Wales in 2003 following the death in 2002 of his grandmother Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother, who had served as our patron for 60 years. Through his patronage of Combat Stress, The King has taken a keen and active interest in supporting our work to provide specialist mental health treatment to former service personnel with military-related trauma.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

We'd love you to join us at one of our upcoming events:



26 SEPTEMBER

It's not too late to join our day of clay shooting. To find out more please visit combatstress.org.uk/clay-shoot



6 NOVEMBER

Three war correspondents give different perspectives on conflicts across the globe. Find out more at combatstress.org.uk/armistice-address



20 NOVEMBER

Pop into our England South hub for some festive shopping. Find out more at combatstress.org.uk/Christmas-fayre



5 DECEMBER (LONDON)

12 DECEMBER (EDINBURGH)

Celebrate the festive spirit at Guards' Chapel, London or at Stockbridge Church, Edinburgh. Find out more at combatstress.org.uk/carols

OUR STORY

An insight into our past

2024 marks 110 years since the start of the First World War and it was this conflict that was the catalyst for the creation of the charity we know now as Combat Stress.

By 1918, the human cost of the First World War was all too obvious. Millions had given their lives during the conflict and thousands returned from the trenches with horrific injuries. But not all of the wounds veterans faced were physical – many who returned struggled to leave the battlefield behind mentally. On the frontline, the constant sound of heavy artillery, lack of sleep and exposure to injury and death had led large numbers of soldiers to develop shell shock, what we now call PTSD.

The thousands of servicemen who returned home traumatised received little or no sympathy from the public. Many were locked away indefinitely in war hospitals and then asylums, while others suffered in silence at home. But the founders of Combat Stress believed that veterans could be helped to overcome their trauma through rehabilitation. Striking out against the contempt and misunderstanding of the era around mental health, the charity began fundraising to introduce residential homes where veterans could live and work, helping them to start rebuilding their lives.

By 1920, we had opened our first recuperative home on Putney Hill in South West London. More homes followed over the years and in 1942 we received royal patronage when Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth (later The Queen Mother) became our patron and this Royal Patronage continues to this day.

Over time we've developed our services, evolving to meet the changing needs of former military personnel. Today we support veterans with some of the most complex mental health challenges as a result of their military experiences. Through our clinical research we work closely with veterans to better understand trauma recovery and continually develop our cutting-edge mental health expertise. Our specialist treatment and support is available online and in-person across the UK.

While a lot has changed over the last 110 years, one thing remains the same: how vital our support is to the veteran community.

COMBAT STRESS THROUGH THE YEARS



Treatment in the past

The charity was originally known as the Ex-Servicemen's Welfare Society, with three aims: the relief of distress; the provision of employment; and access to professional medical assistance.

Our first recuperative home for veterans opened in Putney in 1920. Others in Leatherhead and Beckenham followed soon after.

In 1927, the charity obtained the patent for electric blanket manufacture. This provided meaningful employment for veterans in our care for many years.



Treatment today

Today we support veterans with complex mental health difficulties relating to trauma experienced during their military service. Our specialist treatment and support are available online and in-person.

Our staff are based across the UK and we currently have five hubs from which our specialist teams provide our services to veterans.

RECOVERY WITH COMBAT STRESS

Our specialist treatment aims to help as many veterans as possible to recover from PTSD. But what does this mean in reality?

“

Recovery is different for every veteran but we aspire for all to be free from the disabling impact of PTSD so they can live the life they want for themselves.

“PTSD can overwhelm someone’s life. But our evidence-based treatment enables veterans to shift from living with the debilitating effect of PTSD to moving on with their lives.

“After our treatment, many veterans tell us ‘I feel like I did before I developed PTSD’. They may still be dealing with other issues but the impact of PTSD on their day-to-day life has been vastly reduced. We know this because we measure the impact of our specialist treatment on veterans’ mental health and most make significant changes as a result of our expert help and support.

“After treatment many veterans no longer meet the criteria for PTSD. That’s not to say some don’t still have some mental health difficulties, but if this is the case they are typically at a much lower level. This means veterans are able to get on with life in a way that wasn’t possible before.



“As a charity we aim to help as many veterans as possible recover from PTSD, developing sophisticated treatments to meet the changing needs of the veterans who turn to us. An example of this is our research into the development of a new treatment designed specifically to treat Complex PTSD. The research was carried out by the Combat Stress Centre for Applied Veterans’ Health Research in conjunction with Edinburgh Napier University, King’s College London and Ulster University.

It has been kindly funded by the Forces in Mind Trust. This is the first treatment to specifically target Complex PTSD and the research trial has shown promising findings that the treatment is effective.

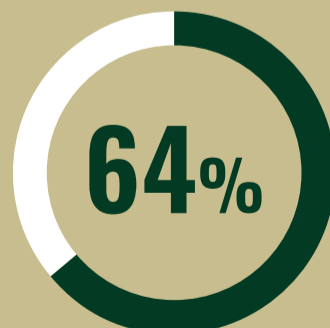
“You can read more about the Complex PTSD research trial in the research section of our website.”

Dr Naomi Wilson, Associate Clinical Director / Head of Psychological Therapies

Veterans who undertake VICTOR, our intensive treatment service for PTSD and Complex PTSD, have extremely positive outcomes.



SHOWN CLINICALLY SIGNIFICANT REDUCTIONS IN PTSD SYMPTOMS



NO LONGER MET THE CRITERIA FOR COMPLEX PTSD

“

COMBAT STRESS HAS GIVEN ME THE TOOLS TO GET MY LIFE BACK.”

Army veteran Joe who undertook VICTOR

Data based on outcome analysis of VICTOR cohorts.



“

My treatment has been life-changing. What might seem like little things for some are major steps for me, like being able to function in a normal society and go into crowds.

“I even took my little girl to a firework display last November; it all became possible because of Combat Stress.

“I have hopes and aspirations for the future, which I never had before and life isn't dark grey anymore, it's colourful. I've got a good job now and can provide for my family; I'm optimistic for the future.”

A six-month tour in Afghanistan left RAF veteran Lewis with Complex PTSD, but thanks to our expert treatment he's now living his life to the full again.

£25,000

That's the cost for one veteran to undertake VICTOR, our intensive treatment service for PTSD and Complex PTSD. Please help us provide this to more veterans by making a donation. combatstress.org.uk/donate



“

For the very first time in my life I'm having fun. Little glimpses of the me from my childhood are coming out, mischievous and naughty. I learned to play polo at 65 years old because why not?

“If I hadn't been helped by Combat Stress, I'd be lying in the gutter with a bottle of wine in my hands, or I'd be dead. Without the help I wouldn't have survived.”

For 50 years Army veteran Bob blamed himself for an incident in Northern Ireland. Our life-changing treatment helped him to see he wasn't at fault and move on with his life.

“
I WANT
TO SAY A
MASSIVE
THANK
YOU TO
COMBAT
STRESS.”



Rob today

A gruelling tour of Iraq left Army dog handler Rob experiencing serious mental health issues and homelessness. Years later, he's now back working with dogs thanks to our specialist mental health treatment.

A number of incidents during Rob's four years in the Army had a lasting impact on him, including a mortar alarm going off in Iraq and the time someone died after taking his role on a tour. "Because of the way the dates worked it wasn't my tour anymore, and so I signed off and the other person went to do my role," he says. "They went and they didn't come back. Then you're left with combat guilt."

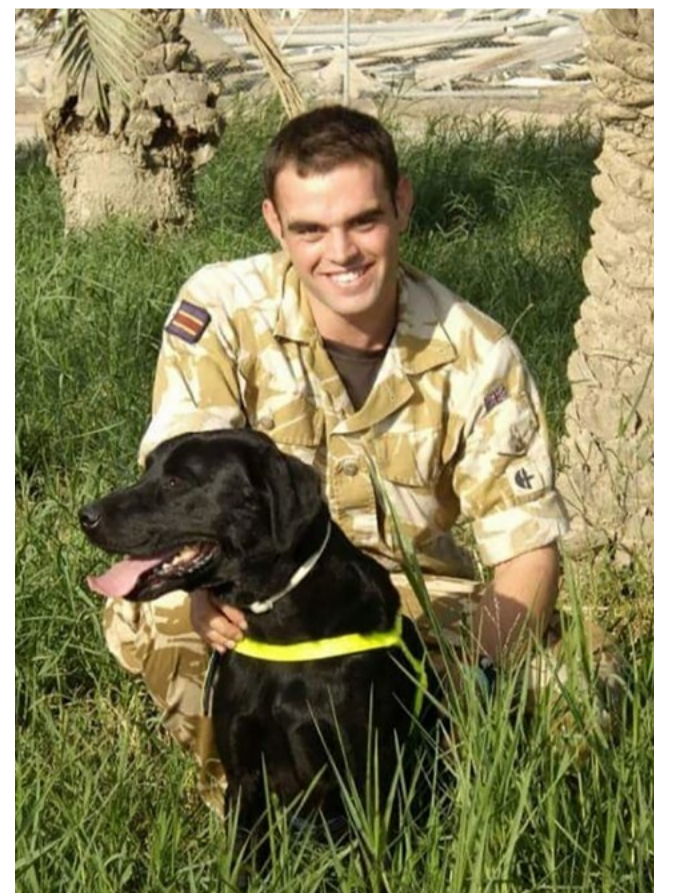
Rob noticed he was experiencing mental health issues when he was still in the Army but didn't feel he could seek help due to stigma. "I was on leave and went to a bonfire night display," he says. "A rocket had gone off and I was quivering

behind a car. I put on a stiff upper lip and said I was fine, and my family thought I was mucking about but I wasn't playing. Suddenly things fell into place, and I started realising I had a problem."

When Rob left the Army in 2010 life was hard. He tried different jobs and eventually set up a successful dog training business, but this ended during the Covid-19 lockdowns. His relationship also broke down, and Rob ended up living in his van and visiting foodbanks to eat. Rob says, "I was homeless for eight months. And found it hard asking for hand outs and help as I didn't want to take from anyone less fortunate."

Rob decided he needed help and called our Helpline. "From that moment on, Combat Stress walked beside me," he says. "They were worried about my condition and bit by bit they worked to get me to a safe place. Friends try to help you and Combat Stress became a friend, which helped me to get back on my feet."

Rob had treatment over the phone for the next two and a half years, including Occupational Therapy and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy appointments. He moved into a new home and found old friends re-entering his life. Life is now better for Rob, who is back to doing the things he used to enjoy – including training dogs again.



Rob in the Army

“

I want to help people understand that there's light at the end of the tunnel. We need to be open about PTSD and other veterans shouldn't be afraid to ask for help.”



Rob today with his dog Harley Quinn



Our specialist staff support veterans online and in-person.

TRAUMA-FOCUSED THERAPY

The nature of some traumas means that our brains don't process them in the same way they process everyday events.

After experiencing a trauma, people may avoid thinking about it due to it creating ongoing distress.

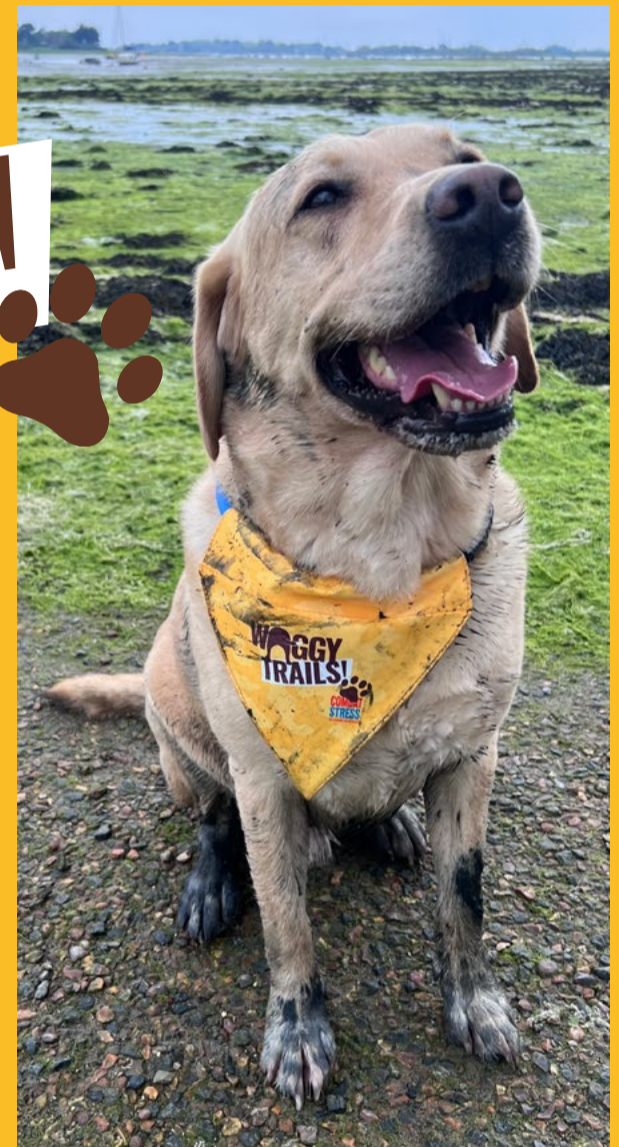
As a result of these responses, trauma memories aren't stored in the same way typical events are and can cause PTSD.

Trauma-focused therapy provides a safe space to process traumatic events. The aim of trauma-focused therapy is to enable the brain to store trauma memories as past experience, allowing the individual to move forward.

Rob used Cognitive Behavioural Therapy as part of his PTSD treatment but we also offer Narrative Exposure Therapy and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing trauma-focused therapy.

WAGGY TRAILS!

If you're a dog lover like Rob, why not join our dog walking challenge in November? Make it your mission to get out and about with your four-legged friend whilst raising vital funds for our specialist mental health treatment for veterans.



Pick your distance (30, 90 or 150 miles), pull on your walking shoes (or wellies!) and get outdoors during November 2024. Take it on whenever you can and wherever you like – your dog will love it whatever the weather!

It's easy to take part – simply register online, decide when and where you're going to walk with your dog, and then get started! All we ask is that you spread the word and raise as much as you can in sponsorship.

To find out more and sign up, call 01372 587 140 or visit events.combatstress.org.uk/WAGGYT

FREE BANDANA!

Register online and receive a free dog bandana



COMMEMORATING THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

6 June 2024 was the 80th anniversary of D-Day, when Allied forces mounted the largest seaborne invasion the world has ever witnessed. It marked the beginning of the liberation of western Europe but is synonymous with the horrors of war and significant loss of life.

As the world reflected on this milestone, it was an opportunity to honour the courage and sacrifice of the thousands of allied troops who participated in the D-Day landings, remembering those who gave their lives and those who had to live with unspeakable memories for years afterwards.

To commemorate the anniversary, almost 90 Combat Stress supporters took part in the D-Day 44 Challenge on 6 June 2024. This unique 44-mile run (or 22-mile walk or run) saw participants race across four beaches of this historic coastline, finishing at the iconic Pegasus Bridge. The ages of those taking part ranged from 23 to 70 and together they raised over £160,000. Kev Barlow was one of those who took part and afterwards he said, "Undertaking the D-Day 44 Challenge was out of this world. I'll genuinely remember it for the rest of my days."

D-DAY 44 CHALLENGE 2025

We'll be taking another team to the D-Day 44 Challenge in June 2025 – if you'd like to take part, visit events.combatstress.org.uk/NPDDAY

HELP SUPPORT OUR WORK

Your donation can help us provide life-changing treatment and support to veterans with complex mental health issues as a result of their military experiences.

Please send this form with your donation to the following address:
**Freepost RTKB-SYUY-CZYR,
 Combat Stress, Tyrwhitt House,
 Oaklawn Road, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 0BX**

Supporter no. (if known):

Full name:

Address:

Postcode:

I'd like to give a regular donation

Please pay the sum of:

£

monthly quarterly
 semi-annually annually

Starting on:

1st 15th of (month)
 until (month/year)
 or until further notice.

(Direct Debits can only be deducted on the 1st or 15th of the month.)

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

Name(s) of Account Holder(s):

Account no:

Sort code:

Reference number (for office use only):

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To: The Manager
 Bank/Building Society

Address:

Postcode:

Service User Number **6 7 8 9 5 0**

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society

Please pay Combat Stress Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Combat Stress and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature:

Date:

- Please send me an acknowledgement letter
- I would like to receive information about gifts in Wills

OTHER WAYS TO DONATE

Online at combatstress.org.uk/donate

Call our team on **01372 587 151**



Find out more combatstress.org.uk



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NPA24