



**Page 3**  
**Our life-changing treatment**  
Veteran Norrie shares his story



**Page 4**  
**Test your endurance**  
Race to Remember this November



**Page 7**  
**"I feel honoured to be part of a veteran's story."**  
Holly-Jane explains her role

**COMBAT STRESS**

# COMBAT STRESS

*Autumn 2025*

## RECOVERY IN ACTION – OUR INCREDIBLE IMPACT

Our specialist treatment aims to help as many veterans as possible recover from PTSD. Dr Naomi Wilson, our Clinical Director, shares what this means to the veterans we help.



Dr Naomi Wilson

"For over a century, we've provided specialist mental health treatment and support for veterans struggling with the impact of trauma experienced during military careers. We believe recovery is possible with the right treatment, compassion and care. Recovery is not simply about reducing symptoms; it's also about empowering veterans to manage their mental wellbeing, improve their quality of life, and reconnect with themselves and their communities.

"Recovery means something different for every veteran. We aim to help all those who seek our support to be able to live the life they want for themselves, without the debilitating effects of PTSD shaping their every day. After receiving our treatment, most veterans no longer have PTSD. Although some mental health difficulties may remain, they're typically at a much lower level, meaning veterans are able to invest in their life and thrive in a way that wasn't possible before. For some, recovery means returning to work or education. For others, it's simply being able to enjoy time with family, walk into a crowded room without fear, or sleep through the night.



Dave with his wife Shirley



**I can have fun with my grandchildren and not have to say, 'let's be quiet now, Grandad's not feeling very well'. I didn't like that. I don't have to say that now, because Grandad's feeling good."**

Army veteran Dave shares what recovery means to him



**of those who undertake our treatment recover from PTSD**

"The work we do is life-changing and often life-saving. No one else does what we do. I'm hugely proud to say that, on average, 73% of those who undertake our treatment recover from PTSD. This is an incredible impact and significantly above the recovery rate for PTSD of other mental health services.

"Our job is restore hope to the veterans and their families who seek our help so they can recover and live the full and meaningful lives they deserve. I am immensely proud to say that this is what we are doing at Combat Stress every day."



# OUR LATEST NEWS

## Poppies at the Tower

There's a new commemorative display of ceramic poppies installed inside the Tower of London to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

The display of nearly 30,000 of the original poppies made for the 2014 installation, 'Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red', returns to the Tower, marking the sacrifices made by so many during the Second World War.

Combat Stress was a beneficiary of the funds raised by the sale of some of the poppies in 2014.

This new specially commissioned installation resembles a 'wound' at the heart of the Tower. Opened in May to coincide with the 80th anniversary of VE Day, the display can be seen until Armistice Day on 11 November.

To find out more visit [hrp.org.uk/tower-of-london](http://hrp.org.uk/tower-of-london)



Copyright Historic Royal Palaces/Imperial War Museums



## Funding award from the National Lottery

We've been awarded over £600,000 by the National Lottery Community Fund to provide our sector-leading peer support service to veterans in Northern Ireland and England.

Led by veterans for veterans, the service brings former servicemen and women together to share their experiences of mental health issues and receive support and understanding from others who've walked a similar path.

The grant, spread over three years, will help to ensure that veterans in Northern Ireland and England struggling with complex mental health issues, will get the best possible treatment and support.

## Their service, their story

### Attend our Armistice Address: 6 November 2025

This year, leading war correspondent Jane Corbin will be in conversation with three women veterans to hear about their personal experiences in the military and how it shaped their lives beyond service. Our panelists include:

- **Army veteran Gemma Morgan:** the first woman to be awarded the Carmen Sword for best young officer in the Royal Logistic Corps.
- **RAF veteran Liz McConaghy:** the youngest aircrew member to deploy to Iraq followed by ten tours to Afghanistan.
- **Commodore Carolyn Stait CBE:** in 2004 she was the first woman to command a Naval Base in Britain, no woman held a higher rank in the Royal Navy until 2015.

Together they will provide a unique insight into the rewards and challenges life in the British Armed Forces can bring.

Joining them on the panel is Dr Vicky Aldridge, Principal Clinical Psychologist, Combat Stress, providing expert insight on recovery from military trauma.

The event will take place on Thursday 6 November 2025 at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) between 6-8pm. Tickets are just £50 each, which includes a drinks reception with canapés. Book by 6 October to take advantage of this special early bird rate. After this date, tickets will be priced at £60 each.

To book please visit: [combatstress.org.uk/armistice-address](http://combatstress.org.uk/armistice-address) or call 01372 587 040



## Celebrate the festive season at the Combat Stress Carols

Join us for a memorable start to the festive season at our Carols in either London on 4 December at Guards' Chapel or Edinburgh on 11 December at Stockbridge Church. To find out more, please call 01372 587 040 or visit [combatstress.org.uk/support-us/our-events](http://combatstress.org.uk/support-us/our-events)



## Sign up for the Combat Stress Charity Digest

Be the first to know how your support makes a difference to the lives of veterans across the UK. Delivered direct to your inbox each month, our Charity Digest offers inspiring stories, updates on our life-changing work, and ways you can continue supporting those who served.

Visit [combatstress.org.uk/signup](http://combatstress.org.uk/signup) to start receiving our Charity Digest email.



“  
**Combat Stress**  
**has changed my**  
**life in ways I**  
**can’t describe.”**



Norrie today

**Norrie’s continuous five years’ service in Northern Ireland with the RAF Police left a deep imprint, affecting him for decades. Our specialist mental health treatment transformed his life.**

“In Northern Ireland, you were constantly under pressure, even if you didn’t realise it – you just got on with the job,” Norrie says. “Your life could end at any moment, and there were a few incidents that hit very close to home. Some days, my team and I wondered whether we’d all make it to breakfast the next morning.”

Norrie’s time in Northern Ireland was marked by several traumatic experiences, leaving him with what he describes as “survivor’s guilt.” Despite this, he was expected to carry on. He became angry and rebellious, and chose to leave the forces when his nine-year contract ended.

“Life was tough,” he says. “I had very few qualifications and little money. On my first night on Civvy Street I slept in a cardboard box in a local town because I couldn’t find accommodation.” He eventually found work

and enrolled in university, where he threw himself into his studies as a coping mechanism.

“I avoided talking about my military experiences and I’ve never worn my medals,” he says. “For years, I checked under my car for explosives. I hated November – Bonfire Night was excruciating. For my kids, I’d force myself to go, but I was hypervigilant, constantly expecting and preparing for the worst. Recurring nightmares, emotional reactions to emergency sirens, and a constant state of rage and terror consumed me.”

Norrie buried himself in work and by 2018, had achieved a hugely successful career. However, the demands of a very senior job, coupled with global travel and a heavy workload led to a breakdown. A GP suggested he might also be experiencing PTSD.

Norrie joined a local initiative for veterans but when asked about his service, he broke down in tears and being called a hero stirred up overwhelming emotions. He came to realise he needed help, so in 2021 – nearly 30 years after leaving the forces – Norrie called our Helpline and went on to be diagnosed with Complex PTSD. “It was such a relief,” he says. “You think it’s just you, that you’re weak. Getting the diagnosis meant I wasn’t imagining things, there was something clinically wrong. It opened the door to acceptance and treatment.”

Norrie received treatment at our hub in Glasgow. “For me, Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) was particularly helpful. It helped me unlock both happy and traumatic memories I thought I had buried,” he says.

Today, Norrie feels like a new person. “Combat Stress changed my life in ways I can’t describe,” he says. “I can talk about Northern Ireland now, which I never thought possible. Their kindness and support came at a time when I needed it most. Thank you.”



Norrie during his time in the RAF Police

To read about the life-changing treatment that we’ve provided to other veterans, please visit

[combatstress.org.uk/veteran-stories](https://combatstress.org.uk/veteran-stories)

**£43**



could fund a veteran’s call to our Helpline, the first step on their journey to recovery. Help us provide this by making a donation. Visit [combatstress.org.uk/donate](https://combatstress.org.uk/donate) or call **01372 587 151**

“  
**I can talk about**  
**Northern Ireland now,**  
**which I never thought**  
**possible.”**





# TEST YOUR ENDURANCE THIS NOVEMBER

On a chilly Saturday morning last November, over 200 supporters took on Race to Remember to support veterans' mental health. Challenging themselves to complete a 76km ultra marathon, a 36km run or a 36km walk, participants received motivation and encouragement along the route and through each check point, and felt a real spirit of togetherness. Every participant who crossed the finish line received their well-earned medal and a huge sense of personal achievement.

"Race to Remember always takes place on Remembrance weekend and it's such a poignant way to remember those who sacrificed so much for our nation. It really is a race for everyone – we have those who complete the ultra marathon course in just seven hours and others who take their time having a great day out walking for up to ten hours before they cross the finish line," says Jo Eason, Senior Challenge Events Officer at Combat Stress.

The ultra marathon begins in Aldershot, the home of the British Army. Those running or

walking the 36km route join the course in Petersfield with everyone finishing at HMS Warrior in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

"Last year was the fifth year the race has taken place and over that time over £260,000 has been raised for the charity – an absolutely amazing sum," adds Jo.

"Whilst this is a really popular event which always sells out, there's still time to sign up if you'd like to end the year on a high. I really hope I see you out on the course."

This year's Race to Remember takes place on Saturday 8 November. If you think this event might be for you, there are two options:

- Register for a charity place (£55 or £85 depending on distance chosen) and commit to raising £395
- Just take part for either £125 (36km run or walk) or £175 (76km ultra marathon)



Jo Eason, Race to Remember event organiser

To enter, visit [events.combatstress.org.uk/](https://combatstress.org.uk/events) **ANR2R** – we'll provide you with all the support you need throughout your training and fundraising journey. If you have any questions, please call our friendly team on **01372 587 140**.





# What's it like to take part in Race to Remember?

“ I just wanted to say a huge thank you for the event. I have run lots of ultras and marathons, but your setup, aid stations and support were exceptional throughout – one of, if not the, best I have experienced. Everyone was great and supported the runners.”

Marc who undertook the 76km run

“ The encouragement from others completing the race, their families and general public we passed was lovely. A key memory for me from the day was the atmosphere and buzz at the start and each check point as well as the awesome finishing point in the Historic Dockyard.”

Mark who undertook the 36km run



Congratulations for a finisher



Smiles all round for Francesca - the first woman finisher in the ultra marathon

# ON YOUR MARKS, GET SET, MARCH!



Our March in March event is set to be back next year! The event, which has raised over £1million so far, is for anyone – all you need to do is walk or run 10 miles on any day during March 2026.

You can take part individually, with friends and family or as a team with work colleagues. It's easy to get involved – simply register for free online, decide when and where you're going to walk and then get started! Take on the challenge of completing your 10 miles in one day or spread your miles over the month.

All we ask is that you try to raise as much as you can in sponsorship. To find out more, visit [marchinmarch.co.uk](https://marchinmarch.co.uk)



# THE CHANGING FACE OF PTSD

Over the past decade, our understanding and treatment of PTSD has evolved significantly. Here are four key developments we have incorporated into our specialist treatment for veterans.

## Understanding and treatment of Complex-PTSD

Our understanding of the enduring impact of trauma is becoming increasingly sophisticated and in 2019 a new diagnosis of Complex PTSD (C-PTSD) was incorporated in the World Health Organisation International Classification of Diseases.

One of the main differences between PTSD and C-PTSD is our understanding of the causes of each. Typically, PTSD might be caused by a specific event or events while C-PTSD is caused by prolonged or repeated trauma over a significant period where escape may be very difficult or impossible. C-PTSD can be understood as PTSD with three additional groups of symptoms – negative sense of self, relationships with others and severe emotional difficulties.

Following the introduction of this diagnosis, our research team, in collaboration with other international experts in the field, have rapidly become leaders in C-PTSD research. Studies exploring how common C-PTSD is in those veterans asking for mental health treatment and new treatments for C-PTSD are some of the first in the world. These treatments will help not only the military community but other populations with C-PTSD and are actively informing our treatment for veterans and how we introduce innovation in care for those with C-PTSD.

## Data driven care that improves outcomes

We continuously monitor and evaluate the impact of our treatments for PTSD and C-PTSD for those veterans who seek our help. By giving greater access to the information veterans provide us, we seek to empower them to work collaboratively with clinicians to ensure that the care they are receiving is working as well as possible. Collecting and using clinical data in this way helps us refine our care, support excellence in clinical practice, and deliver better outcomes for veterans.

## Delivering personalised care

Every veteran who seeks our help has a unique history and current circumstances. We recognise how important it is that veterans can receive not only effective, evidence-based treatment for PTSD or C-PTSD but that this is tailored to their individual needs.

We meet with veterans to assess their mental health difficulties in the specific context of their life now; understanding their strengths and capabilities and seek to understand what they want to be different and what recovery means for them. We use this information to talk to each veteran about the treatments most likely to work for them and help them think about the choices available to them also based on what they might prefer. Whilst all evidence-based psychological therapy for PTSD involves revisiting the traumas causing such difficulty now, personalised care means we ensure we can talk through treatment options and also how we plan treatment for each veteran session by session.

## Embracing trauma-informed services

Trauma-informed care increases awareness of how trauma can negatively impact on individuals and communities, particularly their ability to feel safe or form lasting relationships – this can include those with healthcare services and their staff.

At Combat Stress, we train all our staff (both clinical and non-clinical) to enable them to consistently respond to veterans who have experienced trauma in a way that prevents further harm and supports their recovery. We want to prevent retraumatisation by ensuring every interaction a veteran has with us enables them to feel safe and confident in the service we provide. All staff work to the principles of safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, empowerment and sensitivity to the culture and needs of the veteran community. Our intention is to provide experiences that contrast with that of trauma.

**Together these advances reflect our unwavering commitment to delivering world-class compassionate care that evolves alongside our understanding of the impact of trauma and recovery from PTSD.**





“  
I feel honoured  
to be part of a  
veteran’s story.”

## Senior Cognitive Behavioural Therapist Holly-Jane delivers our outpatient intensive one-to-one treatment for PTSD and C-PTSD. Here she shares a little more about her role and why she chose to work at the charity.

“I was in the military for 16 years, serving in the Royal Navy, first as a medic and then a mental health nurse. I was operationally deployed on land and maritime operations including Op Herrick in Afghanistan.

“I knew once I left the Navy I wanted to work with the military or veterans so when the job came up at Combat Stress, it was the perfect fit.

“My main role is working with veterans on a one-to-one basis providing intensive treatment for PTSD and C-PTSD. We develop a bespoke treatment plan for each veteran and then I provide up to 24 hours of trauma-focused therapy over a two-to-three week period.

“Building a therapeutic bond is crucial so we make sure there is a preparatory phase where I meet a veteran a few times before therapy begins and talk through how it will work. It’s important a veteran feels safe and secure when undertaking trauma-focused therapy. Having served myself, that naturally breaks down a few barriers – we speak the same language!

“The psychological therapy sessions are often the first time a veteran will have shared their traumatic experience or experiences. I help them to understand that the symptoms they have lived with for so long are their body’s trauma response. This requires someone to be vulnerable – not an easy ask for anyone.

“When a veteran begins treatment, they very often have the belief that they are damaged, broken and unfixable. By the end of treatment, they realise that whilst their experiences have impacted greatly on them, it’s going to be ok, there is a life ahead. They often can’t believe how far they have come.

“The treatment is intensive by design. It can accelerate recovery and typically results in much higher completion rates compared to weekly treatment. The work I do is challenging and emotive but thoroughly rewarding.

“I mostly provide treatment online. It makes our help equitable for veterans across the UK, aiding their ability to attend treatment. For example

for some veterans, financial costs or physical health issues may prevent them from attending psychological therapy in person.

“Very often veterans believe they are only deserving of military charity support if their issues are related to combat. It’s so important that people know we can help veterans whatever the cause of their military trauma.”



It costs £159 for a veteran to have an appointment with a psychological therapist to help them process and make sense of their trauma to aid their recovery. Please help us provide this by making a donation. Visit [combatstress.org.uk/donate](https://combatstress.org.uk/donate) or call **01372 587 151**.



# GIVING IN MEMORY

A gift made in memory is a loving tribute that makes a real and lasting difference to the lives of the veterans we support and their families.

Veteran Don Simpson had been a great supporter of Combat Stress for many years and when he sadly passed away earlier this year, his daughter Carly set up a personal tribute page in his memory.

“After receiving treatment from Combat Stress, my Dad was a completely different person. As a family we got our dad back. He went on to tirelessly campaign for the charity. His empathetic nature gave him a drive to help other veterans who like him struggled with daily life after leaving the military.

“After Dad’s passing, we as a family decided that we wanted his already fantastic efforts to raise funds and awareness of Combat Stress to continue, not only because Dad would have wanted this, but also because we know how their support helped us as a family. By continuing to raise awareness and funds, other families just like ours could enjoy their loved ones a lot longer and their time as a family be more meaningful.

“Setting up the Combat Stress tribute page was easy, it has enabled people to donate funds, share memories and show us as a family how much he was loved and thought of, which has brought us so much comfort at such a difficult time.”

We’re really grateful for families like the Simpsons who choose to give in memory. For more information about ways to remember your loved one, please visit [combatstress.org.uk/support-us/give-in-memory](https://combatstress.org.uk/support-us/give-in-memory) or contact Tracey on [tracey.martin@combatstress.org.uk](mailto:tracey.martin@combatstress.org.uk)



Carly pictured with her dad Don

Credit: Vicky Dawe

## HELP SUPPORT OUR WORK

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

Supporter no. (if known):

Title

Full name:

Email:

Phone number:

Address:

Postcode:

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**

I’d like to make a donation

£

☐ I enclose a cheque (payable to Combat Stress)

☐ Please debit my Credit/Debit/CAF card

Card number:

Expiry date:  /  For card payments, please provide your address

☐ Please send me details on setting up a regular gift

## OTHER WAYS TO DONATE



Scan the QR code

Online at [combatstress.org.uk/donate](https://combatstress.org.uk/donate)

Call our team on **01372 587 151**



Find out more [combatstress.org.uk](https://combatstress.org.uk)



© 2025 Combat Stress. All Rights Reserved.

Combat Stress, Company Registered in England & Wales No. 00256353. Charity Registration No. 206002 (SC038828 in Scotland). Registered Office: Combat Stress, Tyrwhitt House, Oaklawn Road, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 0BX.

Whilst all reasonable care is made to ensure accuracy of information, the publisher accepts no responsibility for the views or claims made by any of the contributors, advertising or editorial content included. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part without prior permission is strictly prohibited. The views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of Combat Stress. All information in this newspaper is correct at time of printing. Please pass on or recycle your newspaper.

25014



Make your donation worth more with Gift Aid

If you are a UK taxpayer, every £1 you donate to Combat Stress could be worth an extra 25p through Gift Aid.

☐ Yes, I want to Gift Aid any donations I make to Combat Stress. I confirm that I would like all donations to Combat Stress past, present and future to be treated as Gift Aid. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year that it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

☐ No, sorry I cannot Gift Aid. By ticking “no” we know not to ask you again.

Please notify us if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address or no longer pay sufficient Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax.

giftaid it

☐ Please send me an acknowledgement letter

☐ I would like to receive information about gifts in Wills

For details on how we process your data please visit [combatstress.org.uk/privacy](https://combatstress.org.uk/privacy). You can update your contact preferences at any time by contacting our Supporter Care Team on 01372 587 151, emailing [supportercare@combatstress.org.uk](mailto:supportercare@combatstress.org.uk) or by visiting [combatstress.org.uk/preferences](https://combatstress.org.uk/preferences)

