



## **Veterans in Scotland struggling with life after the military are urged to join a unique Peer Support Service**

Former servicemen and women in Scotland who are struggling to cope with life outside of the military are being urged to sign up to a Peer Support Service, delivered by veterans' mental health charity Combat Stress.

Led by veterans for veterans, it's the first UK-wide service of its kind for those with mental health problems. The Peer Support Service, funded by The Royal British Legion, helps those veterans whose mental health has been affected by their time in the Armed Forces, and who are experiencing loneliness and social isolation after leaving the military.

For many former servicemen and women, the adjustment to civilian life can be confusing and distressing, leaving them struggling with changes to their identity and feeling that few people around them truly understand what they're experiencing. This can be even more isolating if the veteran develops symptoms of mental health conditions.

The Peer Support Service offers former servicemen and women a chance to share their experiences, receive support and socialise with others who have had similar experiences.

So far Combat Stress has established groups in Dunfermline, Glasgow, Greenock, Hamilton, Lanarkshire, Moray and Stirling.

The service is co-ordinated by Robert Lappin, a retired Royal Engineer. During his 21 years in the Army, serving initially in the ranks and then as an officer, he served on operations in Northern Ireland, the Balkans and the Gulf. Robert overcame his own challenges following his transition to civilian life and has worked for Combat Stress since 2010. He has a solid understanding of the challenges faced by veterans in Scotland.

Robert said: "Mental health problems can make even the simplest things seem hard to do but this service is a way for veterans to easily access support and advice. Veterans have the chance to come along to small group meetings or to meet me individually."

Carol Smith, Director Client Services at Combat Stress, said: "I'd like to thank The Royal British Legion for funding the Peer Support Service.

"Research has suggested that social support has a positive impact on mental health and the effects of trauma. Peer support aims to help by increasing social interaction amongst individuals who may otherwise feel isolated or stigmatised."

Veterans can call the Combat Stress 24-hour mental health helpline on 0800 138 1619 to be referred to the Peer Support Service.

ENDS

### **Notes to editors:**

Combat Stress is the UK's leading charity for veterans' mental health.

For almost a century we've helped former servicemen and women deal with issues like trauma, anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Over the past five years (2012 to 2017) we have seen an average of more than 2,000 referrals each year. We saw a 143% increase in referrals between 2006/7 and 2016/17.

On average it takes 12 years after leaving the military for veterans to contact Combat Stress for help, by which time their condition is often highly complex. However, veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts are coming to Combat Stress much sooner (three and four years respectively).

To help veterans rebuild their lives, we provide a range of free services:

- **Short-stay clinical treatment** at our treatment centres in Ayrshire and Surrey
- **A specialist Intensive Treatment Programme** – delivered at our treatment centres
- **Community Teams** – providing treatment and practical support to veterans. Last year our regional community teams undertook almost 5,400 face-to-face appointments
- **Outpatients** – assessment by psychiatrists and psychologists – at our treatment centres and in the community – enables us to diagnose, define and deliver the treatment veterans require
- **Occupational therapy** – delivered at our treatment centres and in the community, we use meaningful and creative activity to encourage hope, wellbeing and recovery
- **Peer Support Service** - Led by veterans for veterans, it's the first UK-wide service of its kind for those with mental health problems. The service enables them to share their experiences, receive support and socialise with others with similar experiences.
- **Substance Misuse Case Management Service** – helping veterans to access the services for their drug and alcohol problems so their mental health issues can be addressed
- **We have a 24-hour Helpline** available to veterans and their families (**0800 138 1619**) and to serving personnel and their families (**0800 323 4444**)

### **Useful links**

**Our website:** [combatstress.org.uk](http://combatstress.org.uk)

**On Twitter:** @CombatStress

**On Facebook:** [facebook.com/CombatStress](https://facebook.com/CombatStress)

**On LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/company/combat-stress](https://linkedin.com/company/combat-stress)

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