

This factsheet provides brief information on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and on services that are available for help.

## What is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?

PTSD could occur after exposure to an extreme event. It might develop due to someone experiencing or witnessing a terrible incident. This event may have been life-threatening or resulted in physical harm, and have happened either once or repeatedly over time. During the experience the person may have felt helpless, stunned, and a sense of intense horror or fear.

After such an incident many people notice signs of mental distress, such as poor sleep or nervousness, but these often diminish over a few days or weeks. These are normal reactions to distressing events and generally do not require professional intervention. Gradually most people are able to cope or come to terms with processing the event. When symptoms go relatively quickly this is seen as an acute reaction.

However some people find that their symptoms persist and they are still unable to cope with the traumatic event they have experienced. This is when a clinician may diagnose Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

## Symptoms

A combination of symptoms need to be met for such a diagnosis. The more common features include:

- flashbacks / feelings of re-experiencing the event or part of it
- intrusive thoughts and images
- nightmares or disturbed sleep
- distress or panic at reminders of the trauma
- trying to keep busy to divert attention
- avoiding situations associated with the trauma

- feeling detached, apathetic, emotionally numb, unable to express affection
- irritable and aggressive
- unable to concentrate / forgetfulness
- extreme alertness, easily startled
- Feelings of guilt, self-blame, shame

## What contributes to PTSD?

There are many events that might, for some people, constitute personal trauma. These include road accidents, near misses, natural disasters, wars, sexual and physical assault. Those who have been abused or exposed to disturbing events as children may still be affected as adults. People who have witnessed horrific events but were not directly involved in them may also develop PTSD. Some people may develop PTSD months or even years after an event. This is known as delayed onset PTSD.

Acts of violence can have long lasting and emotionally painful repercussions. Some peoples' trust in others may be shattered and they may lose their faith in the humanity of mankind.

However, it is not just a matter of being directly involved in a trauma which may cause someone to develop PTSD. For example, people who are trained to deal with disasters or terrible injuries may also experience PTSD. Others cope well with a certain number of exposures, for example to combat, but then find they have exhausted their mental reserves.

Much of PTSD involves disturbances in memory. The person recalls the trauma memory with great distress and the memory may feel very real, as if it is happening again in the here and now. The person with PTSD wants to avoid that distress but finds it difficult to do so.

Many who have survived traumatic events may feel guilty in ways that make no sense to others. Some people unreasonably blame themselves for not having done things to prevent a tragedy or to have been of more help to others. In situations where people have died, those who survived may feel guilty that they have survived. Some people may also have feelings of shame - this is especially common with traumas such as rape.

## Where can I get help?

You should initially speak to your GP, who may be able to refer you on to a mental health professional for treatment. People suffering from PTSD generally respond well to psychological treatment, either cognitive behavioural therapy or person-centred counselling. There are specialist services for people who have experienced

trauma due to war, or as refugees. You may also be given some medication to help alleviate some of your symptoms.

## Local Statutory Services

### **CNWL Community Mental Health Teams**

Bentley House, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, 15-21 Headstone Drive, Harrow and Wealdstone, HA3 5QX  
Tel: 0208 424 7701

We offer a comprehensive service for adults with mental health problems covering assessment of need and care management.

### **Harrow IAPT - Improving Access to Psychological Therapies**

12-14 Station Road, Harrow, London, HA1 2SL  
Tel: 020 8515 5015

Email: [harrow.iapt@nhs.net](mailto:harrow.iapt@nhs.net)

Referral to Harrow IAPT can only be accepted via a Harrow GP. If other professionals or clinicians wish to refer to the service, this needs to be requested via the GP.

## Local Voluntary sector services

### Helplines

#### **ASSIST (Assistance Support and Self Help in Surviving Trauma)**

11 Albert Street, Warwickshire CV21 2RX  
Helpline: 01788 560 800 or Tel: 01788 551 919  
Email: [admin@assisttraumacare.org.uk](mailto:admin@assisttraumacare.org.uk)  
Website: [www.assisttraumacare.org.uk](http://www.assisttraumacare.org.uk)

Support, understanding and counselling for people experiencing PTSD, their families and carers.

#### **Ex-Services Welcome**

Mind in Haringey, 73c Stapleton Hall Rd, London, N4 3QF  
Telephone: 020 8340 2474  
Email: [lea.jenkins@mih.org.uk](mailto:lea.jenkins@mih.org.uk)

Website: <https://www.mindharingey.org.uk/our-services/ex-services-project/>

The Ex-Services project at Mind in Haringey is free to access for anyone in London or surrounding areas with armed forces experience, as well as their families/dependents. It offers one to one wellbeing support for up to 12 sessions and offers access to our Coping with Life Skills group.

## **Into the Light**

Into The Light, PO Box 64427, London W5 9HA

Email: [info@intothelight.org.uk](mailto:info@intothelight.org.uk)

Website: <https://www.intothelight.org.uk>

Into the Light offers support, counselling, information and resources around the issues of sexual abuse for those who have been abused and those who support them. Its aims are giving information, breaking isolation and sharing experience. It offers help to both male and female survivors.

## **Refugee Action**

Tel: 0800 800 0530, advice and support provided by Asylum Help

Web: [www.refugee-action.org.uk](http://www.refugee-action.org.uk)

Provides a list of refugee support services by location on their website

## **Watford Rape Crisis and Sexual Abuse Line**

WRC PO Box 2355, Watford, WD18 1QD

Helpline: 0845 3011165 Or 01923 249 511 for cheaper mobile rates

Open: Sat 10am-12pm.

Email: [info@wrc-info.org](mailto:info@wrc-info.org)

Website: [www.wrc-info.org](http://www.wrc-info.org)

A free and confidential helpline offering support and information for women who have been raped or sexually abused

## **National Organisations**

### **Blue Light Infoline**

Mind Blue Light Infoline, PO Box 277, Manchester, M60 3XN

Helpline: 0300 303 5999

Open: 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except for bank holidays)

Email: [bluelightinfo@mind.org.uk](mailto:bluelightinfo@mind.org.uk)

Website: [www.mind.org.uk/bluelight/](http://www.mind.org.uk/bluelight/)

The Blue Light Infoline offers confidential, independent and practical support, advice and signposting around mental health and wellbeing. The Infoline is just for emergency service staff, volunteers and their families, to help keep staff and volunteers well for work.

### **Combat Stress (for ex-service people)**

Head Office Tyrwhitt House, Oaklawn Road, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 0BX.

Tel: 0800 138 1619, 24hour helpline; Text: 07537 404 719

Email: [contactus@combatstress.org.uk](mailto:contactus@combatstress.org.uk) / [helpline@combatstress.org.uk](mailto:helpline@combatstress.org.uk)

Web: [www.combatstress.org.uk](http://www.combatstress.org.uk)

Provides specialist treatment and welfare services for veterans suffering from psychological issues associated with service trauma.

### **Freedom From Torture**

111 Isledon Road, Islington, London N7 7JW

Tel. 020 7697 7777

F fax: 020 7697 7799

Email: [clinical@torturecare.org.uk](mailto:clinical@torturecare.org.uk)

Web: [www.freedomfromtorture.org](http://www.freedomfromtorture.org)

Provides medical treatment and psychotherapeutic support for those who have survived torture.

### **Waterloo Community Counselling**

Barley Mow Clinic, Greet House, Frazier Street, London, SE1 7BD

Tel: 020 7928 3462, 9:30 to 5:30pm Mon – Fri; 10am – 4pm Saturday

Email: [info@waterloocc.co.uk](mailto:info@waterloocc.co.uk)

Web: [www.waterloocc.co.uk](http://www.waterloocc.co.uk)

Provide free or low-cost professional counselling and psychotherapy to help resolve emotional issues, reduce anxiety and depression, and gain self-confidence.

## **Websites**

### **Bullying**

Website: [www.bullyonline.org/](http://www.bullyonline.org/)

A large resource on bullying, including bullying in the workplace, and in relationships and within the family. There is also a forum and an e-newsletter available on the site.

### **National Institute for Clinical Excellence**

[www.nice.org.uk/guidance](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance)

Guidance on good practice and treatment for a PTSD Diagnosis

### **PTSD UK**

Website: <https://www.ptsduk.org>

PTSD UK is a UK charity dedicated to raising awareness of post-traumatic stress disorder – no matter the trauma that caused it.

They aim to raise awareness of PTSD in three main areas – it's causes, symptoms and the treatments available.

## Mind (PTSD information)

Website: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/about-ptsd/>

Explains what post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and complex PTSD are, and provides information on how you can access treatment and support. Includes self-care tips and guidance for friends and family.

## Rape Crisis

Tel: 0808 802 9999, 12noon-2: 30pm and 7-9:30pm

Email: [rcewinfo@rapecrisis.org.uk](mailto:rcewinfo@rapecrisis.org.uk)

Website: [www.rapecrisis.org.uk](http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk)

An informative website for those who have been sexually violated or for friends and family.

**Please call Mind in Harrow on 020 8426 0929  
for a large print version of this factsheet or a summary translation.**



[www.harrowca.org.uk](http://www.harrowca.org.uk)

Mind in Harrow's Mental Health Information Service is a part of SWiSH, a consortium of five local charities, offering the local Care Act Information & Advice Service for Harrow residents, funded by the Council.

*This factsheet was produced by Mind in Harrow*

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