

Harry's Story

HARRY SERVED IN THE ARMY FOR 15 YEARS. HE COMPLETED MULTIPLE TOURS OF AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ DURING WHICH HE DESCRIBES HAVING LIVED THROUGH MANY 'BAD TIMES'.

These experiences led to a decline in Harry's mental health and he was subsequently diagnosed with service related PTSD while still a serving soldier. In addition, during active service Harry sustained a back injury. It was the injury to his back which eventually resulted in his medical discharge from the armed forces. Harry reports that despite his diagnosis of PTSD he was never offered any treatment while in the forces.

Over the years Harry used alcohol to manage the increasing symptoms of PTSD, with increasing dependency and, in his own words, reached his 'lowest darkest place' and was 'a broken soldier'. His relationship had broken down, life was

out of control, he did not want to be alive anymore and so made attempts to take his own life.

Harry became involved in criminal activity. Following arrest, he was referred to the veterans' charity Project Nova who in turn referred Harry to Care after Combat following his sentencing; the way that the ReGroup pathfinder operates to ensure veterans remain on a single care and support pathway.



In prison Harry signed up to the Veteran Care Through Custody program, a partnership service between Care after Combat and the NHS. Harry engaged in a full healthcare assessment. His PTSD and alcohol dependency was recognised and he was enrolled on a course of treatment to address the symptoms of PTSD with a healthcare professional with military experience. Monthly group forums were delivered within the prison for all military veterans. Harry took on the role of Veteran Representative working closely with the Care after Combat team. He also signed up for a Care after Combat mentor to support him with the practical and emotional adaptation to prison life

and preparation for release. During any prison sentence it is common to be transferred from one prison to another and this was indeed the case for Harry, however, Care after Combat continued to provide its service to Harry regardless of location. Harry has since stated that this continuity of care was a major stabilizing factor for him.

Harry was in prison during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prisoners were locked in their cells for 23 hours each day, with no visitors permitted. Care after Combat maintained a minimum of weekly contact via Wellbeing Activity packs, telephone calls and letters. Care after Combat also provided

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— HARRY

Harry with stamped addressed envelopes and writing paper weekly to further enable essential communication. As part of Harry's assessment in prison it was identified that he needed to find new employment when he was released from prison. Care after Combat spoke at length with Harry to establish areas of work that would be suitable and of interest to him. Care after Combat liaised with local employers so that a plan of potential employment could be actioned ready for release. Types of work and potential employers were identified. Training packages, to ensure Harry was job ready, were arranged to take place soon after release. Care after Combat made necessary enquiries and ensured that

Harry received funding he was still entitled to via the MoD's Enhanced Learning Credits scheme. Under this scheme, veterans can receive financial support to contribute towards their higher-level learning.

Harry has now been released from prison. He has completed employment training and is now employed full time. He is sober. He has been able to reconnect with his partner. Harry is fully accepting of the help available. He has reengaged with Project Nova, has approached Op Courage which is an NHS provision of care for military veterans in the community, and continues to work with Care after Combat.