

FirstLight Trust Media Kit

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Our vision

Honour, respect and hope for every Veteran of the UK Armed Forces and Emergency Services.

Our mission

Helping Veterans of the UK Armed Forces and Emergency Services get back on their feet.

About FirstLight Trust

FirstLight Trust is a charity for Armed Forces with a difference. We help the 'hard to reach' Veterans as defined by other charities. Some can't cope, don't know what's wrong with them or are too proud to ask for help.

Many Veterans who come to FirstLight Trust have been in a miasma of hopelessness. They are isolated, lonely and feel that no-one understands. The majority of them have been passed around the charitable and service sector and simply do not know where else to go.

We provide them with whatever it takes to make that tiny difference between life and suicide. We show them that they are valued. We give them back a sense of belonging. FirstLight proves to them they aren't alone or too different to fit into civilian society.

Why is FirstLight needed?

The military has a unique culture which is very different to civilian life. Those leaving the Armed Forces can find it hard to adjust. Sorting out housing, work, benefits and bills can be confusing and intimidating. Adjusting to family life can also be difficult. Problems build up and can lead to a loss of purpose and identity.

Who are we?

We are a mix of civvies and Veterans from many conflicts. Many of us have first-hand experience of not knowing where to turn. We work out what needs doing and how. We then use existing services if possible, or provide or fund alternatives. We also provide drop-in centres where there are like-minded people.

Why are we called FirstLight?

FirstLight is named after the light you see in the morning when you've survived another night.



Facts about the UK armed forces and Veterans

General

- There are an estimated 5 million Veterans in the UK, and a further 20,000 personnel leave the forces each year. (Source 3)
- Despite the focus by the media on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the most common disorders in the UK armed forces post-deployment are depression, alcohol misuse and anxiety disorders. (Source 1)
- PTSD rates are low amongst British forces, with prevalence rates of around 4% in personnel who have deployed, rising to 6% in combat troops. (Source 2)

Mental health

- The number of serving military personnel assessed as having a mental health condition has risen 26% in four years from 3,875 in 2010 a year to 4,896 in 2014 (Source 4)
- Mental health problems in ex-service personnel often present in a complex way and are compounded by multiple social problems such as difficulties with employment, marital breakdown and debt. (Source 1)
- Younger Veterans are at high risk of suicide in the first two years after leaving service. (Source 3)
- Ex-service personnel are vulnerable to social exclusion and homelessness, both of which are risk factors for mental ill health. (Source 3)
- Some Veterans are reluctant to seek help from civilian health professionals due to concerns that they will lack understanding of military life or the context of their injuries. (Source 2)

Alcohol abuse

- Excessive alcohol consumption was more common in the UK Armed Forces than in the general population. (Source 2)
- 13% of serving personnel reported alcohol misuse (Source 3)
- There does appear to be a correlation between both deployment and increased alcohol misuse in combat troops. (Source 2)



Reservists

- Reserve Veterans are at greater risk of mental health problems as they do not have access to the usual support networks of the regular military. (Source 1)
- 26.3% of reservists suffer from common mental disorder, compared to 19.4% of regulars. (Source 2)

Sources:

1. Source 1: [Mental health of regular and reserve military Veterans by Institute of Psychiatry, London and King's College London](#)
2. Source 2: [The mental health of the UK armed forces: where fact meets fiction – European Journal of Psychotraumatology](#)
3. Source 3: [Armed Forces and Mental Health – Mental Health Foundation](#)
4. Source 4: From Secretary of State for Defence from figures received from one of the military departments of Community Mental Health and facilities contracted by the Ministry of Defence to provide in-patient treatment.



Facts about FirstLight Trust

We formed our charity in October 2012.

Since 2012 we have helped more than 160 Veterans.

2014/15: we raised more than £70,000 through fund raising and donations (including grants).

Where the money goes:

- £5 buys a Veteran two hot meals
- £20 buys a Veteran a food parcel

Our current locations

Redcar charity shop: 13 West Terrace, Redcar, Cleveland TS10 1DS

Scarborough charity shop: 63 Newborough, Scarborough YO11 1ET

Sharpe's Café/drop-in, Scarborough: 47-48 Queen Street, Scarborough YO11 1HQ

More information and social media links

For more information or to schedule interviews, please contact:

Dorinda Wolfe Murray at enquiries@firstlighttrust.co.uk or call 07464 828 049

Website: www.firstlighttrust.co.uk

Facebook page: [FirstLight Trust](https://www.facebook.com/FirstLightTrust)

Twitter account: [@FirstLightTrust](https://twitter.com/FirstLightTrust)



Downloadable photos and logos

Photo thumbnail	Description	Online link to larger image
	FirstLight Trust logo	http://www.firstlighttrust.co.uk/webedit/cached-images/11-0-0-0-10000-10000-350
	Redcar shop window	http://www.firstlighttrust.co.uk/webedit/cached-images/91-0-2473-0-7500-10000-395
	Scarborough shop window	http://www.firstlighttrust.co.uk/webedit/cached-images/85-0-2558-0-4312-7669-395
	Hands holding a match – please acknowledge copyright Howard Nichol	http://www.firstlighttrust.co.uk/webedit/cached-images/78
	The road home – please acknowledge copyright Howard Nichol	http://www.firstlighttrust.co.uk/webedit/cached-images/75-0-0-200-10000-9600-421
	From Ministry of Defence’s free downloadable image bank	https://www.defenceimagery.mod.uk/fo-toweb/

Success stories

By J.M. from Scarborough

"Following years of verbal abuse I left home with one bag of clothes, no money and no idea where to go. I ended up living in ground-floor bedroom in a shared house. As the toilet was on the first floor I found this a struggle because I have MS.

FirstLight helped me get assessed by an Occupational Therapist. They also put me in touch with the council's sheltered housing department. I was rehoused within six weeks. FirstLight supplied me with a bed, bedding and household items from the Scarborough shop. This has totally transformed my life. I have been so impressed by the care I experienced."

Kevin, former Royal Navy chef

"Getting sober is easy, staying sober isn't. I needed 'ordinary' people and support to move on to a better quality of life. I was virtually homeless but FirstLight helped me get a council flat. They encouraged me to do things myself and helped me believe in myself.

With their help I started my beekeeping hobby. My first honey was sold in their Scarborough shop. It has been a terrific journey for me to start a project and keep it going. As a recovering alcoholic, beekeeping has brought out a positive side to my nature. Being able to make and keep a long term commitment has enhanced my life and my recovery."



About Paul, ex-Army

Paul (ex-Army) came to us through wanting to sign up for a drug and alcohol rehabilitation programme. He walked 21 miles only to find that his case worker had left the previous week. As he'd made an appointment with us too, we could talk to him and gave him his bus fare home.

Three months later, Paul moved to get away from the drug dealers around his last home. He is in full-time employment but on the minimum wage. As he is paid in arrears we advanced him his rent. We are helping Paul with food parcels and how to budget. His children visit every weekend. We are supporting him in creating a healthy emotional relationship with them. Paul continues with his rehabilitation programme.

About JC (ex-Merchant Navy)

During Christmas 2013 JC was in hospital having his stomach pumped after he tried to end his life with drink and prescription drugs. His wife had died of a heart attack and JC's daughter had committed suicide. JC was set to follow suit. We responded with providing a 24-hour emergency support worker. Frequent call-outs started to stabilise JC's lifestyle. FirstLight responded four times to every one of the Emergency Services – saving them around £90,000 over six months.

After JC reduced his alcohol consumption we moved him to more suitable accommodation. As he sobered up we increased his activities programme. Riding, a gym programme and weight loss started to give JC confidence again.



Image © Howard Nichd

Meet our supporters

We are lucky to have some amazing supporters from regiments to individuals. Many are Veterans themselves, so understand the problems associated with a return to civilian life.

Patron: Bernard Cornwell OBE



Bernard Cornwell is the author of many historical novels including the Sharpe stories about the Napoleonic Wars. He feels very strongly about Veterans' needs.

"I've made a living writing about the adventures of soldiers. It just seems appropriate to give something back to the men and women who've provided me with so much material! I have a huge admiration for those who serve in our Armed Forces. They risk everything to make certain we have a comfortable existence. Too often their problems and needs are ignored when their service ends.

A very good soldier once told me that his career had been spent 'fighting battles for those who can't fight for themselves'. Now many of those men and women who fought those selfless battles need help themselves. FirstLight is trying to offer that help, and I'm honoured to be involved."

Chairman: Lady Jane Grosvenor



Lady Jane has been involved with charities for more than 30 years. She has been President, Chairman and Patron of organisations such as Macmillan Cancer Relief Scotland, a hospice in North West Norfolk and involved in fundraising for terrorist victims in Northern Ireland. Her brother, the late Duke of Westminster, served in the British Army after training at Sandhurst, so she has always had connections with the military.

Vice Chair: Ida Beerhalter



Ida is the Co-Head of IOME, a private investment partnership of women principals from the Gulf region with its head office in Riyadh, KSA. Additionally, she also serves as Member of the Board, Trustee, Advisor, and Expert to various for-profit and not-for-profit organisations around the globe.

"I became a Trustee in memory of my grandfathers. They fought the physical and psychological aftermath of World War II's horrors alone. I heard their stories about how difficult it was to get back to civilian life. They described it as being like an uprooted tree which needs to be re-planted. FirstLight provides those roots."

Trustee: Jim Bowden



As a former Brigadier with the Royal Engineers Jim served in Northern Ireland, Balkans and Iraq. Delivering life support services gave him a particular interest in strategic planning, infrastructure and sustainable development. After working for the Ministry of Defence, Jim is now a Business Development Director in the private sector.

Trustee: Gouy Hamilton-Fisher



Following an early career as a Royal Marines Commando, Gouy joined Timpson Limited in 1983. He is now a board member and director, responsible for the HR support for 3,000 colleagues. He is involved in work experience and recruiting ex-offenders through the Timpson Foundation. His current interests are in the recruitment of ex-military personnel.

Trustee: Gordon Rawlins OBE



Gordon was in the Army (Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers) for 25 years. He served in Aden, Oman, Jordan, Hong Kong, Brunei and Germany. Retiring as a Brigadier in 1989, he then worked for 15 years for professional engineering institutions. In 2002, Gordon became a business development and fundraising consultant. He has focused on charities that help disadvantaged Veterans, servicemen and servicewomen facing the challenge of the transition to civilian life.

Trustee: Dorinda Wolfe Murray



Dorinda's father was a Gordon Highlander and she comes from a military family. She has witnessed first-hand the catastrophic impact PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) can have on lives.

As the founder of the award-winning Independent Gardening Ltd, Dorinda creates outside space for sufferers of brain injuries and mental health issues. These spaces are designed to make people feel comforted and absorbed in the pleasure of their surroundings. The therapeutic garden shown at Hampton Court Palace Flower Show is now located at Tyrwhitt House, a treatment centre for Combat Stress in Surrey.