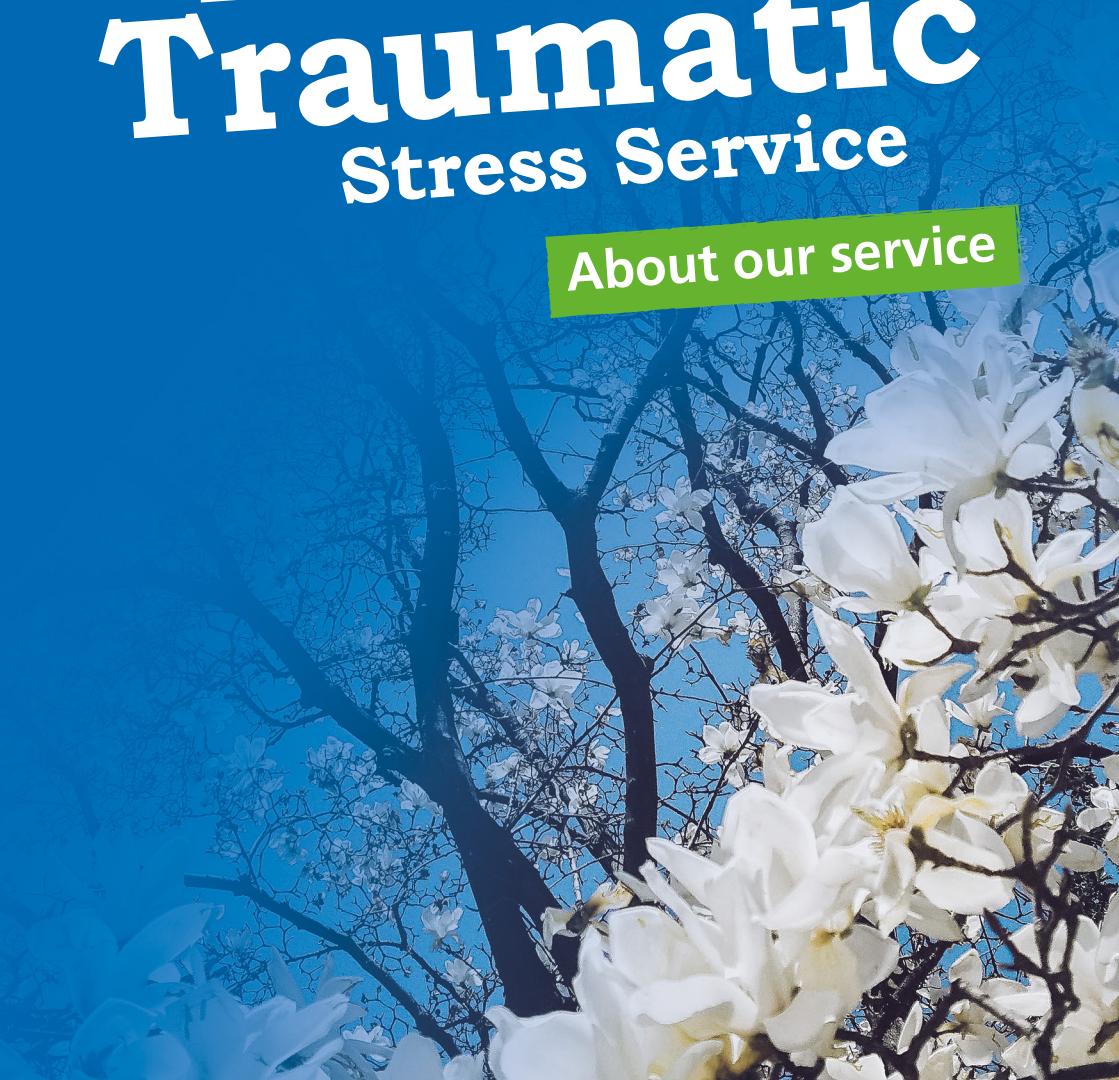




Berkshire Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Berkshire Traumatic Stress Service

About our service



This booklet has been created by staff at the Berkshire Traumatic Stress Service.
Copyright © Berkshire Traumatic Stress Service 2022/23

Berkshire Traumatic Stress Service asserts the right to be identified as the author of this work.
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of Berkshire Traumatic Stress Service.

Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust - BH129a v2.4 (April 2023)

Front cover photo by: Meriç Dagli on Unsplash.com

Back cover photo by: Aubrey Odom on Unsplash.com

Contents

Introduction	4
About our service	5
Who we support	6
Understanding PTSD and Complex PTSD	
What is PTSD?	8
About PTSD	9
What are the symptoms?	10
About treatment	12
Support during assessment and treatment	14
How to access our service	16
How to find us	17
Client experiences and words of encouragment	18
Contact us	20



Photo by: Ricardo Gomez Angel on Unsplash.com

We are a team of therapists who specialise in working with people who have been traumatised.

We have expertise which is co-created by our own training and learning from our clients' experiences. We value the opportunity to learn from our clients' recovery journeys as this helps us shape the service we offer.

We want you to know that we will do our best to make you feel heard, seen and supported through your treatment journey with us and we will do everything we can to offer you the most helpful pathway to support your recovery.



Find more information about our service on our website:
<http://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/traumaservice>

About our service

Berkshire Traumatic Stress Service is a specialist NHS out-patient service. We provide specialist assessment and psychological treatment for people who are experiencing symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Complex PTSD following exposure to traumatic events.

Our service is led by a **Consultant Clinical Psychologist** and consists of a team of experienced clinicians who have expertise in working with people who have experienced trauma and in psychological treatments for PTSD, Complex PTSD and other trauma-related difficulties.

Our team includes:

- Clinical Psychologists
- Counselling Psychologists
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapists
- Trainee Clinical and Counselling Psychologists
- Assistant Psychologists
- Managers
- Administrators



We offer a range of treatments for PTSD and Complex PTSD, including both group and individual therapy.

If you have any questions or concerns or would like more information about the service, please contact us and we would be happy to discuss this with you.

Call: **0118 904 7111**

Email: **traumaandveterans@berkshire.nhs.uk**

Who we support

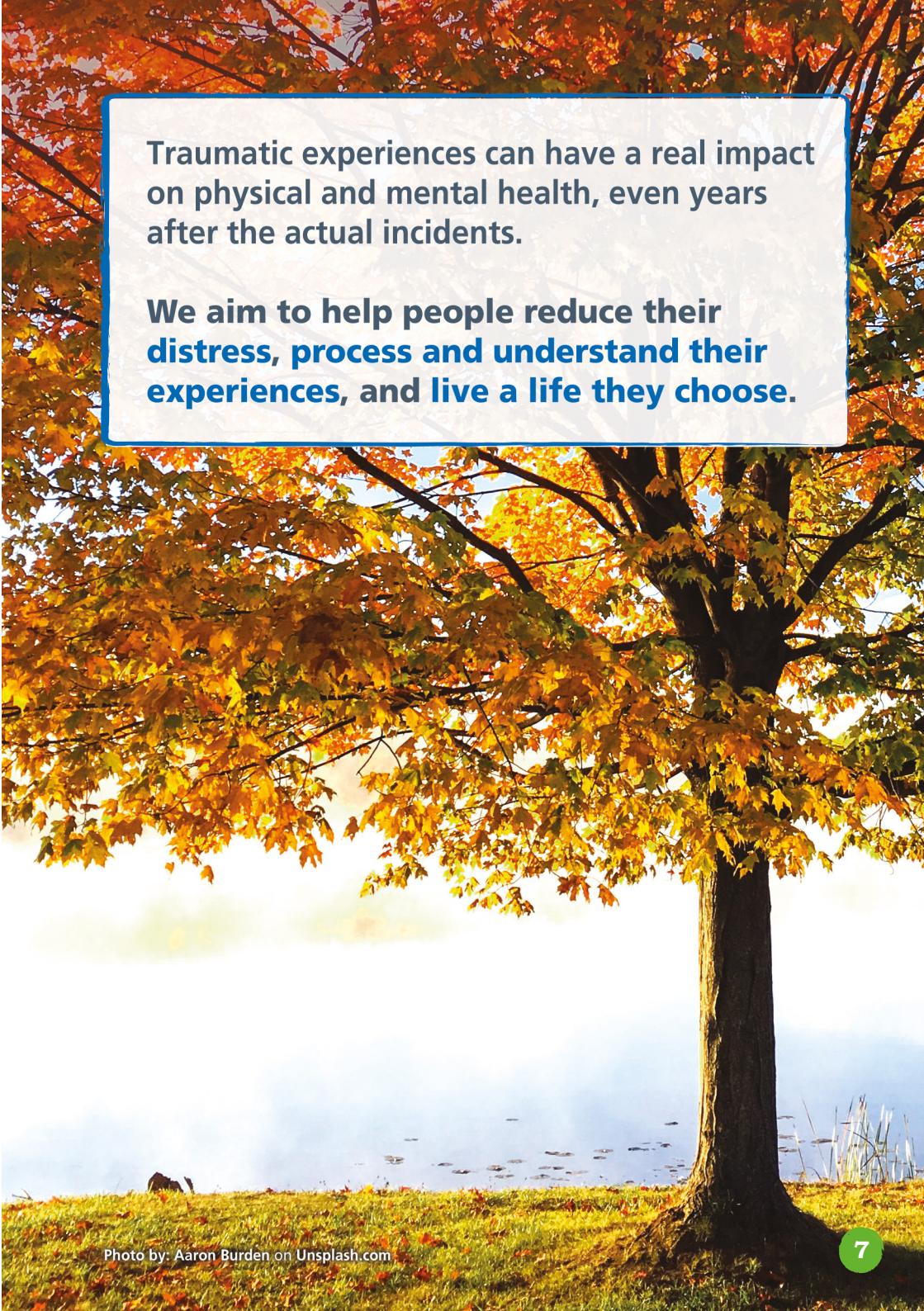
Please note, this page includes a list of different types of traumatic experience.

We provide assessment and psychological therapy for people experiencing symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Complex PTSD.

Often people think that PTSD develops only in those who have been in the military, however PTSD is an understandable reaction to several different types of traumatic experience.

In the Berkshire Traumatic Stress Service, we work with people who have been exposed to a range of different experiences, which may have happened during childhood, as an adult, or both, including people who:

- Have experienced repeated or prolonged trauma, such as, physical and sexual assault, rape, domestic violence, trafficking, torture and detention
- Have experienced childhood abuse
- Have experienced a traumatic bereavement
- Are a refugee or asylum-seeker
- Have experienced war and conflict
- Have experienced a traumatic birth
- Are struggling to come to terms with strong feelings of shame and self-criticism



Traumatic experiences can have a real impact on physical and mental health, even years after the actual incidents.

We aim to help people reduce their distress, process and understand their experiences, and live a life they choose.

Understanding PTSD and Complex PTSD

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is the name given to a group of symptoms that people can experience after exposure to traumatic events. PTSD is a normal and understandable response to devastating and overwhelming experiences.

Our brain and body responds in a different way to traumatic events than to non-traumatic events. Because of this, PTSD symptoms can develop after trauma.

Often, people experience a range of emotional responses after trauma, for example shame, guilt, rage and anxiety. It's also common to have feelings of numbness, emptiness and disconnection. These are all normal and understandable responses to trauma.

The way our brain and body responds to traumatic events is automatic

It is not your fault you have responded in this way.

It's important to remember... that not everybody reacts in the same way and there is no right or wrong way to respond.

PTSD

**Post:
Traumatic:**

Stress:

Disorder:

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

After a traumatic event or events.

Traumatic events are devastating and overwhelming experiences that can happen at any age. Sometimes traumatic events happen to people directly and sometimes people can be traumatised by watching or hearing about bad things happening to others. Traumatic events might be one-off or repeated, unexpected or anticipated.

Having nightmares, flashbacks, and/or continuing to feel frightened, anxious or distressed.

It's a difficulty that is causing distress and impacting day-to-day life.

What are the symptoms of PTSD?

Re-experiencing

- Having dreams or nightmares related to the traumatic events
- Experiencing flashbacks where it feels as though the trauma is happening again in the here-and-now
- Having upsetting intrusive memories (memories that suddenly come into your mind when you don't want them to)
- Feeling physically and emotionally distressed when reminded of the traumatic events
- Having strong physical symptoms when reminded of the traumatic events, such as heart racing, difficulty breathing, sweating, shaking, feeling sick, pain



Avoidance

- Trying to push away feelings associated with the trauma
- Staying away from reminders of the traumatic events, such as people, places and conversation topics
- Trying not to think about the trauma
- Keeping very busy and distracted



Hyperarousal

- Feeling very alert, jumpy or 'on edge'
- Feeling angry or irritable
- Difficulties sleeping
- Difficulties concentrating
- Taking risks or doing things that might cause harm



PTSD and Complex PTSD can affect many areas of day-to-day life, such as work and social life, as well as personal relationships. Changes in mood, including feeling depressed, guilty, ashamed, or angry are also very common. Sometimes people cope using alcohol or drugs, or by harming themselves, which are understandable and common ways of coping but can cause additional and unintended difficulties.

What are the symptoms of Complex PTSD

Complex PTSD includes the three PTSD symptom groups (re-experiencing, avoidance & hyperarousal), as well as some additional difficulties:

Difficulties managing emotions

- Emotions may feel uncontrollable, intense, and overwhelming
- Feeling numb, 'zoned out', frozen, empty or disconnected
- Difficulties experiencing feelings such as pleasure and happiness
- Difficulties with anger or angry outbursts



Negative view or sense of self

- Feeling defeated and worthless
- Feelings of shame, despair and guilt
- Self-loathing and a critical 'inner voice'

Difficulties in relationships

- Feeling cut off or distant from others
- Feeling isolated from other people and alone, even when around others
- Problems trusting others and feeling safe in relationships
- Avoiding relationships



Complex PTSD often develops after experiencing multiple and repeated traumatic events and being harmed by other people. It's understandable to develop these difficulties. They are natural responses to being hurt and harmed by others that were developed to keep you safe, but may now be causing additional difficulties and having an impact on your life.

About treatment

We provide evidence-based psychological treatments for PTSD and Complex PTSD. These treatments aim, and have been shown, to reduce distress and symptoms such as nightmares, flashbacks and intrusive memories.

Treatment at Berkshire Traumatic Stress Service typically follows a phased approach, which is outlined on the next page. Each phase may not be appropriate for everyone so treatment is tailored to each individual, following an assessment with us, and is agreed between the person and their clinician.

We offer both **group** and **individual** therapy. Not everyone attends a group and whether someone would like to attend a group is discussed during the assessment.

Therapy appointments are typically **face-to-face** in our clinics in Reading or Slough, however we can also discuss other options, such as remote appointments. All therapy rooms are fully wheelchair accessible.



Three phased approach

Phase 1

Developing Compassionate Resilience

This phase explores our capacity to be self-compassionate. Self-compassion is a much needed skill to help us manage strong emotions and a tendency to blame ourselves for things that have happened in our lives.

Phase 2

Working on trauma memories

This phase helps you to make sense of your trauma experiences and, where necessary, work more directly with flashbacks and difficult memories. This will be one-to-one with a therapist.

Phase 3

Living life after trauma therapy

This phase helps you to discover how you would like to live in line with your values and self-compassion.



Recovery

Support during Assessment and Treatment

Often people feel unsure or anxious about coming for an assessment and treatment. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to help your assessment or therapy feel more comfortable.

Bringing others with you

- You are welcome to bring a friend or family member for support if you would find this helpful. There will be space for them to wait in the waiting room if you would prefer for them not to attend the whole appointment.
- You are also welcome to bring a support pet with you to your appointment, however we would be grateful if you could please let us know in advance so that we can make appropriate arrangements to accommodate this.



Working with interpreters

- We regularly work with interpreters where clients do not speak English, where English is not their first language, or for those who communicate using sign language. Please tell us in advance if you would like us to arrange an interpreter for your appointment.
- We understand that people sometimes have concerns about an interpreter being present. Interpreters follow our confidentiality rules and will keep your information private. We ensure that you do not know the interpreter personally and can use telephone interpreters if this would help you to feel more comfortable.



Clinician preferences

- As a service, we value people's different backgrounds, cultures and identities. If you would prefer to see a clinician from a particular background please let us know and we will try to accommodate this and discuss how we can best support you.
- If you would prefer to see a male or female clinician then please let us know in advance and we will try to meet your request.
- Decisions around clinician preferences are led by what is clinically helpful and appropriate.



Accessibility

- All our clinic rooms are on the ground floor and wheelchair accessible or accessible by lift.
- In our car park we have car parking spaces reserved for people with a Blue Badge.
- We know that coming to sessions can be hard. If you need time after the session to take a break then you are welcome to sit for a while in our waiting area.
- If you have other needs please let us know and we will do our best to support you with this.



How to access our service

Referral

To access our service you need to be referred by your GP or other healthcare professionals.

After we have accepted the referral, we'll ask you to opt-in for an assessment with us.



Assessment

People who we think will benefit from our service are offered an assessment with one of our clinicians.

The assessment is where you can let us know how your traumatic experiences have affected you and what you would like support with. We'll talk with you about the difficulties you're facing and decide together whether our service can offer the support you need. We'll discuss the treatment options with you so that you can make an informed decision.

If we decide that our service can provide the treatment that would be most helpful for you, you will be added to our waiting list for treatment.

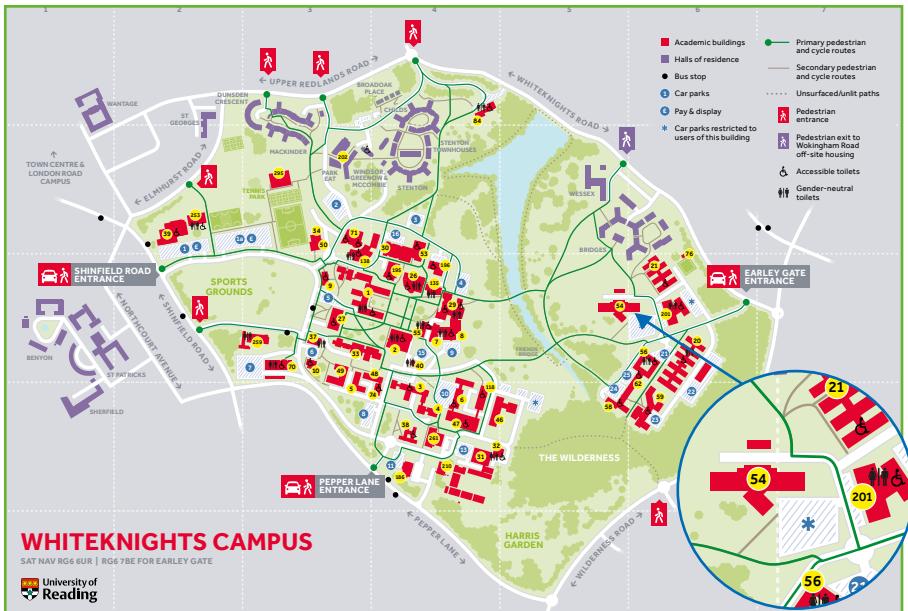
Sometimes we may recommend that another service may be better for you, and will suggest that you are referred to this service.

We offer assessments via video call or face-to-face in our clinics in Reading or Slough.



How to find us

Berkshire Traumatic Stress Service is based at Erleigh House, on the University of Reading Whiteknights Campus (54).



To get to Erleigh House, follow directions to **RG6 6BZ**. The University has more than one entrance – our closest is **Earley Gate (RG6 7BE)**.

By car - Follow directions to **RG6 6BZ**. In front of Erleigh House there is a large car park which is free and available for people to use for the duration of their appointment.

By bus - Below are the bus stops closest to Erleigh House (EH)
Earley Gate (5 minute walk to EH) - 19a, 19b, 19c
Three Tuns (7 minute walk to EH) - 4, X4, 17
Harcourt Drive (14 minute walk to EH) - 21, 21a

By train - The closest train stations are Earley and Reading.



Find more information about our service on our website:
<http://www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/traumaservice>

Experiences and words of encouragement from previous service users

I've just gotta say from someone who's had PTSD for 20 years, you really try to convince yourself that nothing on earth will ever change the way you feel and you will struggle forever but I just want to say, please give it a go. **I know it's difficult to believe in anything but please just give it a go**, because from my experience **it's given me my life back, and I can feel it.**

For anyone who's unsure, it's okay to feel nervous and anxious and **it's okay to feel anything**. If you think that you can't do it, everyone else is feeling that as well, it's not just you.

By practicing the techniques doing the work at home away from the sessions, I began to feel in control. It has helped me greatly cope with the flashbacks and reliving. **I'm proud of me**, it's a hard journey to travel but I did it and now I have a life I enjoy.

Just take a deep breath and go for it. Don't be scared, just go for it.

Know that whatever you are going through, **it's not just you**

I thought there's no way ... that what we did would make a difference. **But somehow gradually over the weeks you feel the difference**. I felt like I was coming down off of my perch and going back into my own body.

Just take a deep breath and go for it. Don't be scared, just go for it. Have confidence in the people. Being rejected a lot I didn't have confidence in anyone, I've always been rejected, so that was a big barrier. Just going to an appointment for me is a really big deal and I expect it's like that for a lot of people. **To do that first step is immense.**

I was quite sceptical as I'd tried so many different things that just didn't really work or fully stick. So, I would say **just trust us**, as a survivor here I have actually found some active tools that really help.

I didn't believe that I could be helped as my religion and cultural differences would be so difficult to explain. However, throughout this journey I have realised that to understand and help me, **the human me needed to be understood**. Everything else was just extra.

For me, the difference in me from last year is amazing. I hadn't left my house in four months, and now I'm walking my dog and going to the shops. My daughter was in tears... because she couldn't believe the difference in me since I've been going to treatment. She said "**he's changed your life**".

I know everyone says that you know you're not alone, but you actually start realizing that you're not alone, and that other people feel exactly the same emotions that you do even though they've gone through something different. **What you're feeling is completely normal.**

Contact us

Berkshire Traumatic Stress Service

Erlegh House, Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading,
Earley Gate, Whiteknights Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 6BZ

 Tel: **0118 904 7111**

 Email: **traumaandveterans@berkshire.nhs.uk**

 Visit: **berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/traumaservice**

If you have any questions, or need more information before coming to the service, please feel free to contact us.



‘You are not alone’



berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk