

Psychological support services

We recognise that many of our clients have experienced psychological trauma, and that this can potentially be compounded through the process of accessing the legal services they need.

Led by Dr Nicola Lester, our psychological support services include providing clients with access to an independent assessment of their needs and a report setting out recommendations for support. We work together with clients to assist them to access these services, either via the NHS or to seek funding to secure this privately via military charitable funds. We use a therapeutic approach to assessing support needs, offering up to 4 sessions with an independent psychotherapist, Dr Russ Hargreaves. Russ has experience working with bullying, discrimination, abuse and sudden bereavement within the armed forces.

Nicola also provides expert clinical guidance to our legal practitioners to ensure our commitment to a trauma informed approach and works directly with recently bereaved military families who require responsive support to address their emerging needs in the immediate aftermath of a loss.

Please note, for our clients who would prefer to work with a female psychotherapist for the therapeutic assessment, we have a trusted network of mental health professionals we work with regularly so as ensure that clients are given a choice about how this is accessed.

About Dr Nicola Lester

Nicola is a registered mental health nurse with over 20 years' experience specialising in crisis intervention and psychological trauma. Since qualifying in 2005, she has worked with both public and private sector organisations in the UK and internationally, including in hostile and conflict-affected environments.

Nicola's work focuses on supporting individuals and organisations in the aftermath of traumatic events. This has included responding to incidents such as gender-based violence, arbitrary detention, hostage situations, acts of terrorism, aviation disasters, road traffic collisions, and military fatalities.

Nicola holds a Master's degree in Psychological Trauma and was awarded a PhD in Politics and International Relations in 2023. Her doctoral research explored how organisational responses to trauma impact victims, using the British military as a case study. This work examined the experiences of bereaved military families whose loved ones died on overseas operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Since completing her PhD, Nicola has focused on translating research into practice through the development of training programmes that promote trauma-informed approaches to victim engagement.

About Dr Russ Hargreaves

Russ started out as a scientist, attaining a Master's Degree and PhD in Immunology. He then trained as a Counsellor, qualifying in 2010 and now works in private practice as well as supervising the work of other therapists. Russ has worked extensively with bereavement, grief and loss, both with civilians and with military families and service personnel. He is comfortable working with all manner of traumatic losses including murder, suicide and accidental deaths.

He has also worked with victims of bullying, harassment, racism and sexism. Russ is always aware of the enormous courage it takes to speak to a therapist, especially where trust may have broken with senior leaders and colleagues.