

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION (RBL) COUNSELLING

Over the last 20 years many of our current- and formerly-Serving beneficiaries and their families have been involved in and affected by operations in Afghanistan. The withdrawal of allied troops over recent weeks and the consequences of this has had a significant impact on our community. We want to make sure we are there to support people who may be struggling with these developments.

From Wednesday, 1 September, a specialist team at RBL's Contact Centre is on hand to provide free counselling to those impacted by the events in Afghanistan. Beneficiaries of this service may include:

- Those who are still Serving
- Those who Served

And/or their:

- Spouses/Partners/Widows
- Dependants
- Carers
- Siblings (affected by the death or serious injury of a loved one in Afghanistan)
- Parents (affected by the death or serious injury of a loved one in Afghanistan)

Beneficiaries may self-refer to this service by contacting RBL's Contact Centre on 0808 802 8080. The Contact Centre is open from 8am to 8pm, 7 day per week. Beneficiaries may also make use of the [online chat](#) functionality if they would rather not discuss their initial concerns over the telephone.

All counselling records will be stored in a secure area, inaccessible to RBL welfare teams.

For CSG members and their staff and volunteers:

You are encouraged to direct appropriate beneficiaries to the RBL Contact Centre as detailed above. From point of first referral, it may take up to one week for a counsellor to contact the beneficiary to arrange their first counselling session. Note: details of counselling, including whether it is being provided, will *not* be shared.

1. What is it?

RBL's counselling service, delivered by specialist and qualified teams at Connect Assist, can provide invaluable support to our community. Counselling appointments will be by telephone or video call.

An assessment of the type of counselling, and number of sessions will be completed on an individual basis, and will require information of the person's circumstances and current needs.

2. Who is it for?

At this initial stage, our counselling support is limited to those who are experiencing mental health or wellbeing difficulties associated with the Afghanistan conflict and the recent withdrawal of forces.

Counselling will be offered after the potential beneficiary has been assessed by Connect Assist, and only if that team believes that counselling sessions could be beneficial. The assessment process includes the completion of a PHQ9, which is a short questionnaire exploring an individual's psychological and emotional responses to certain factors, such as feelings of anxiety or depression.

3. How will the counselling be delivered?

It is a one-to-one session where the beneficiary can speak about their concerns in a safe, respectful environment. The type of therapy will vary, and will depend on need. Types of therapy include:

- One-off sessions focusing on immediate changes in circumstances such as bereavement or trauma. This can include discussion around the "grief journey" or supportive conversation about negative thoughts or disturbing feelings. Signposting to other organisations or assessing whether further counselling is needed may also be part of these sessions.
- Solution-Focused Brief Therapy is a short term therapy that aims to find solutions and make positive changes rather than focus on the causes of past problems. The therapist will help the individual set goals and discuss ways to achieve them.
- Integrative Counselling is a long-term method that takes into account the individual's mental, physical, and emotional needs. The approach taken throughout this therapy will be tailored to the individual, and the counsellor aims to build a trusting and non-judgemental relationship while helping them set goals and develop new, positive behaviours.

4. Who provides the counselling?

Connect Assist has a team of counsellors ready to support the Armed Forces community. They are all highly qualified and have experience providing counselling to a range of people with various needs.

Counsellors will work towards positive outcomes, encouraging beneficiaries to look at their own strengths and employ techniques to improve their quality of life. They will also signpost if needed, including to Samaritans, relevant statutory sources and sector partners such as Combat Stress.

Every member of the team has extensive experience as a counsellor and they are actively given safeguarding training to identify and act upon any concerns identified during counselling sessions.

Any questions should be directed to [Daniel Elser](#), Assistant Director of Operations.

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