PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET AND PRIVACY NOTICE

TITLE OF PROJECT: Intensive Trauma Treatment for PTSD & Moral Injury – A Proof of Concept Study

Invitation

Northumbria University engages in a wide range of research to provide a greater understanding of the world around us. One of the contemporary developments in treating psychological trauma is using intensive treatment interventions. Traditionally, treatment has been on an hourly, weekly basis. However, intensive treatment involves sessions lasting up to eight hours and is carried out on consecutive days—emerging research suggests eight days provide a significant treatment effect.

The current academic literature also highlights a distinction between post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and moral injury. Moral injury is the distressing psychological, behavioural, social, and sometimes spiritual aftermath of exposure to such events. A moral injury can occur in response to acting or witnessing behaviours that go against an individual's values and ethical beliefs. Additionally, the research suggests that treating PTSD does not address moral injury but that the same is true and vice versa. Therefore, an effective treatment intervention needs to address both PTSD and moral injury together. This is the rationale for this research study.

You are invited to be part of a study exploring the impact of an eight-day intensive psychological treatment programme targeting PTSD and Moral Injury using group interventions. The treatment programme will include EMDR (Acute Stress Adaptive Protocol) and Compassion-Focussed Psychoeducation (EMDR & CBT).

The **eight days** are structured in the following way:

Days 1 – 4: In person
Day 5: Virtual (after 1-month)
Day 6: Virtual (after 1-month)
Day 7: Virtual (after 1-month)
Day 8: In person.

Before deciding if you want to be involved in this project, you must understand why it is happening and its implications. From our perspective, this must be an informed and empowered decision to participate. This document will explain why we are engaging in this research and how you can assist us. If, by the end of this document, you still have any outstanding questions, please feel free to ask one of the research team members. Their contact details are included at the end.

What is the purpose of the research?

As mentioned earlier, the current academic literature considers that moral injury represents a different psychological profile to that of post-traumatic stress disorder. Trauma is also well known for creating deep-rooted shame, which fosters over time and potentially inhibits people from talking about their trauma experiences. An important research question is developing a more robust understanding of a more effective treatment intervention to help with this.

This research is what we call a 'proof of concept' study. It tests two approaches with a sound evidence base to see if they are more effective when combined.

The research project will be carried out at the Vermont Centre for Responder Wellness This centre is a facility to help first responders connect with trauma services and evidence-based interventions and is available for all emergency services within the State. The research is an international collaboration between Northumbria University (UK), the Vermont Centre, and the Trauma Response Network Ireland.

The research focus is on psychological trauma and moral injury experienced by the research participant group (First Line Emergency Workers – Police, Fire Officers, Paramedics, Health, and Local Authority Care Workers) and then to explore the impact of a four-day intensive treatment intervention.

The primary focus of this research relates to the psychological health and well-being of our target population.

The research is interested in exploring the effectiveness of the following:

1. An internationally recognised trauma treatment - EMDR therapy endorsed by the World Health Organization (2013) and the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (2019)
2. delivered in a group format.
3. delivered intensively over eight days

This EMDR Group intervention is the Acute Stress Adaptive Protocol (ASAP). Compassion-focused psychoeducation (EMDR & CBT) is an emerging fusion approach treatment approach for individuals experiencing moral injury. The approach integrates EMDR/CBT with compassion-focused techniques to target the shame, guilt, and self-criticism often associated with moral injury/ trauma.

From our perspective as a research team, this study involves capturing a specific type of participant. Before recruitment, we will use a trauma assessment tool known as the Impact of Events Scale-Revised (IES-R) as a screening device. This assessment tool requires a cut-off score of 24 and above to participate in the study. This score is a helpful indicator of some of the potential psychological difficulties you may be encountering presently.

However, this study will also be utilising other measures. Although the study is mainly looking at trauma symptoms, we are also looking at the following aspects:

- anxiety
- depression
- adverse childhood experiences
- benevolent childhood experiences
- moral injury
- External & Internal Shame
- Quality of Life measure

We have calculated that it takes 15-20 minutes to complete the range of measures we use for the study.

Who is undertaking the research?

The project's Lead Researcher is Professor Derek Farrell MBE, who is based at Northumbria University, Newcastle. Derek is an international expert in EMDR Therapy and CBT. His contact details for further information are available at the end of this document.

The Vermont Centre for Responder Wellness and the Trauma Response Network Ireland are the partners assisting this research. As academic and research partners, we have successfully collaborated on numerous research projects over several years. Again, their contact details are available at the end of the document.

Involvement in the study includes 4-days (consecutive) and then three 1-day monthly sessions, followed by 1-day in person. All treatment provided is pro bono intensive trauma treatment.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You are invited to participate in this study as you are a Law enforcement/ First Responder who has experienced an impact on your psychological health and well-being during your work. Recruitment into the study will be done through the Vermont Centre for Responder Wellness.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is entirely up to you whether you wish to participate in the study or not. This information sheet will help inform that decision. You can withdraw from the study at any point up to the last day of the 8-day intensive treatment intervention without disclosing why or offering a reason.

Who is funding the research?

Currently, this research is unfunded.

What will it mean for me if I choose to participate?

If you choose to participate in the study, a Vermont Centre for First Responders member will contact you to arrange an initial telephone consultation. This meeting will allow you to discuss any questions or queries you may have regarding the research project.

During the research, you are asked to complete some questionnaires several times throughout the investigation. This data will assist the research team in monitoring your progress during the treatment and for some time afterwards. We check these measures before, during, and after treatment and after one, three and six months. These checks are known as a follow-up (FU). These measures will be carried out by the Vermont Centre for First Responders. As mentioned earlier, we estimate these measures will take 15-20 minutes to complete.

The treatment will consist of eight days (an initial block of four consecutive days, followed by three virtual monthly meetings and then one final face-to-face day) of structured activities involving large and small group activities. Four highly skilled trauma therapists will lead the treatment programme, which will involve two evidence-based trauma treatments: EMDR and Trauma–Focused CBT (Compassion–Focused).

The study aims to recruit N=16 participants. Some activities will involve the whole group, and others will be conducted in smaller groups, N=8. Each treatment day will start at 09:00 hrs and finish around 17:00 hrs.

After the eighth day of intensive treatment, you will be asked to repeat the same questionnaires completed at the start. We will ask you to repeat these measures on three further occasions: after one month, three months and six months.

Focus Groups
You will be invited to join a research focus group at the end of the intensive treatment intervention. This session will be carried out by another research team member who is not involved in the intensive treatment programme. The purpose of these focus groups is to provide the research team with vital feedback as to the intensive treatment programme. These focus groups will be digitally recorded for transcription and then subsequently analysed. Any material presented in any future presentations or publications will be completely anonymised.

Who has oversight of the research?
For this research to proceed, it must be approved by Northumbria University, Newcastle, in line with its Research Ethics Policy. Northumbria University complies with the General Data Protection Regulation [GDPR] Act (2018).

This research, in compliance with GDPR (2018), ensures that any data is:

1. Processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner
2. collected only for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes, and not be further processed in any way incompatible with those

3. adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary concerning the purposes for which it is processed
4. accurate and, where appropriate, kept up-to-date.
5. not kept as identifiable data for longer than necessary for the purposes concerned
6. processed securely

Will the information collected in this study be kept confidential and anonymous?

All information collected in this study will be entirely anonymous and unidentifiable. No individual information will be reported. Only the research team will have access to this documentation.

During the intensive sessions, you will be allocated into a group with eight other participants. During the treatment sessions, research participants may disclose personal information. Confidentiality and nondisclosure of any material must be maintained. The therapy team will reinforce this at the start of each session. This aspect will be included in the Participant Consent Form.

What happens if the 8-day intensive intervention is not suitable for me?

If the four-day intensive becomes too challenging or overwhelming, or if someone needs to drop out of the study, 1:1 support will be made available pro-bono by the Vermont Centre for First Responders. This service offers expert mental health services, including Consultant Psychiatrists, Clinical Psychologists, Mental Health Nurses, and Registered Psychotherapists.

What will happen to my results?

It is anticipated that the results of this study will inform the research on effective trauma treatments. The research findings will also be reported in peer-reviewed scientific journals and presented at international research conferences.

During the project, all data/information will be kept securely in line with the University's Policy for the Effective Management of Research Data and its Information Security Policy.

The findings from the research project will be used in the following ways:

- To use the research data and anonymised information gathered from participants in the research project to seek new knowledge and understanding that can be derived from the information we have collected.
- To summarise this information in written form for dissemination (through research reports, conference papers, journal articles or other publications).
- Any information disseminated/published will be at a summary level and fully anonymised. There will be no way to identify your personal information within the published results.

- Use the summary and conclusions from the research project for teaching and further research purposes. Again, any information used in this way will be at a summary level and will be fully anonymised. There will be no way of identifying your personal information from the summary information used in this way.

If you wish to receive a summary of the research findings or to be given access to any of the publications arising from the research, please get in touch with the lead investigator: derek.farrell@northumbria.ac.uk

How will my data be stored, and how long will it be stored?

Your consent form will be kept within Northumbria University. All electronic data are stored on a double password-protected computer at Northumbria University. All data will be stored following Northumbria University guidelines and GDPR (2018) and kept for as long as possible, subject to any legal restrictions on preservation.

How can I find out what information you hold about me?

You have certain rights concerning the personal information the University holds about you. Please visit for more information about Individual Rights under GDPR (2018) and how you exercise them.

What happens next?

Please keep this information sheet. If you decide to take part, please contact the researcher using the details below.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

If you decide you want to take part in our project, and we hope you do, or if you have any further questions, then please get in touch with Professor Derek Farrell MBE, email: derek.farrell@northumbria.ac.uk

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