



FIRST PETT Study Newsletter

Autumn 2026 edition

Progress, research updates, and more



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Welcome to our Autumn Newsletter!

Welcome to the Autumn issue of the FIRST PETT newsletter! Thank you for your continued support, involvement, and interest in the FIRST PETT study. Your engagement helps make this research possible, and we're very grateful to everyone who continues to support the trial.

In this issue, we'll share the latest updates from the FIRST PETT trial, including our current progress and what we hope to achieve over the coming months.

We'll also introduce our Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement group and hear more about the vital role they play in this work.

We'll take a closer look at our efforts to reach veterans across the UK, including how recruitment is progressing in different areas and how you can help us spread the word.

In Out & About, you can learn about Neil and Lisa's work delivering FIRST training in Australia to enable clinicians there to deliver the therapy to veterans with PTSD. You can also read about our next steps over the coming months.

We hope you enjoy this issue and learning more about the progress of FIRST PETT, the people involved, and the work happening both in the UK and further afield. Thank you again for your continued support!

- The FIRST PETT Study Research Team

Study Update

Veteran Participants

We are happy to share that 162 veterans have now been randomised into the study. This is thanks to your interest and the dedicated work of our Assistant Psychologists. Among those, 124 veterans have completed the 6-week data collection, 90 have completed the 12-week data collection, and 74 have now completed the 20-week data collection.

These follow-up stages are an important part of the study, helping us to understand how veterans experience FIRST therapy over time and how its effects develop beyond the initial treatment period.

Recruitment

We are still recruiting veterans onto the trial, so our study team are interested in speaking with organisations or networks that can help us reach veterans in need. If you can think of any groups that might be interested, we'd love to hear from you! Please contact us at firstpett@kcl.ac.uk



Meet the Team



Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement group

The FIRST PETT trial is supported by the important and engaged work of our Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) group. The PPIE group has 10 members who are themselves ex-servicemen and ex-servicewomen, and is chaired by Jason Shephard and facilitated by Sharon Stevelink, Amber McKenzie, and Claire Ballard. The group's work involves providing their perspectives, feedback, and ideas to guide the trial and to ensure the voices of military veterans are embedded in all aspects of the research.

Here, we wanted to share some insights from the PPIE members. Our PPIE chair Jason Shephard told us about why he got involved, what this role involves, and how the PPIE group are working to help to shape the trial:

"I have been involved with the PETT Project for a number of years now, watching its development from the very beginning to what is now the FIRST PETT trial. I have reviewed, tested and critiqued elements of the trial during its development to ensure that the trial is delivered in such a way that is both safe, but also "Veteran friendly".

I would like to think that overall, I have brought a more informed awareness of military veterans to the Team. Having Complex PTSD myself, I have walked in your shoes, I feel privileged to know that I have been given the opportunity to use my voice in such a way that will benefit those participating in the trial." – Jason Shephard

The FIRST PETT trial would not be possible without our PPIE team, whose knowledge and perspectives help shape the research and keep the voices of military veterans at the forefront of our work.

On the next page, hear from Dr Amber McKenzie who facilitates PPIE within the trial.

Meet the Team



Dr Amber McKenzie – Research Associate

I joined the FIRST PETT trial to support the facilitation of its Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) advisory group. My role involves organising and facilitating PPIE meetings, developing meeting agendas and identifying key topics for discussion. An important part of this is considering the different milestones and stages of the FIRST PETT trial that would particularly benefit from the valuable perspectives of people with lived experience. For example, we have sought the group's advice on recruitment strategies, including how we can make research participation more accessible and reach people who may otherwise be less likely to take part.

Throughout my academic career, I have been a strong advocate for embedding PPIE throughout the research process. I believe that robust and meaningful research is strengthened by involving those with lived experience of the issues we are seeking to understand. Their perspectives can help researchers ask better questions, identify topics and themes we may not have considered, and ensure the research remains relevant to those it is intended to support.

The FIRST PETT PPIE group is a great example of this in practice. Members' recommendations and feedback are valued, with their input actively incorporated into the ongoing development and delivery of the trial.

* Figures from Scotland Census 2022, Northern Ireland Census 2021, England Census 2021, and Wales Census 2021

Reaching Veterans Across the UK

We're proud to be recruiting veterans from across the UK, and it is important to us that veterans in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales have the opportunity to hear about and take part in FIRST PETT.

So far, we have found 153 veterans in England, 9 in Northern Ireland, 18 in Scotland, and 13 in Wales to be eligible at the Assistant Psychologist assessment stage. We wanted to increase expressions of interest coming from Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, so over the summer we carried out a further social media advertising push in these areas. Over that 3-month period, we've welcomed 17 additional veterans from the devolved nations.

We're keen to keep building on this progress and make sure that veterans in all parts of the UK are able to hear about the study. If you have colleagues, friends, or contacts in the veteran community – particularly in Northern Ireland, Scotland, or Wales – please help us spread the word.

Following our Facebook page ([FIRST PETT research trial](#)) and sharing our recruitment posts is a simple way to help us reach veterans who may not have heard about the study yet.

Every veteran who hears about the study helps us reach a wider community.



176,000 veterans
live in Scotland*

37,000 veterans
live in Northern
Ireland*

1.7 million veterans
live in England*

115,000 veterans
live in Wales*

Out & About



Dr Lisa de Rijk and Professor Neil Greenberg with Wee See Chua (Clinical Psychologist) and Dr Rory Morris-Butler (Psychiatrist and Director, Soul Medicine VAR)

FIRST Therapy for Australian Veterans

Dr Lisa de Rijk and Professor Neil Greenberg from the clinical trial team are working with Soul Medicine VAR in Australia to enable clinicians to deliver FIRST™ to veterans presenting with PTSD. Soul Medicine VAR is a veteran-led specialist psychiatric service delivering national telehealth care to Australian Defence Force (ADF) veterans and serving personnel.

Soul Medicine VAR commissioned and funded training from March on Stress (Professor Greenberg) and Awaken Consulting (Lisa de Rijk) for 11 clinicians — a mix of psychologists, mental health social workers, and nurse practitioners — and are conducting a Service Evaluation to see if similar results to those from the King's trials can be replicated in real world settings. Early results are similar to those found in our clinical trials and we anticipate publication of the results later this year.

In the interim, Dr de Rijk and Professor Greenberg are returning to Soul Medicine, Australia in October to begin upskilling their Lead Clinical Psychologist, Wee See Chua, in training delivery. Wee See has already been upskilled in supervising clinicians using FIRST.

See the next page for more photos from Neil and Lisa's visit.

Out & About: FIRST Therapy for Australian Veterans



Neil, Rory, Lisa, Wee See, and the therapists at the end of training



Rory discussing the learnings from the training with the trainee therapists



The therapists in discussion about their observations of the training in practice



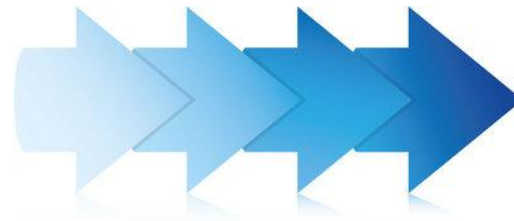
The therapists working with the FIRST protocol and being observed by Neil



The therapists working outside while enjoying the view of the Sydney skyline and the footings of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the location of the training venue

Next Steps...

- 💡 We are still recruiting participants into the trial. If you know UK military veterans/ex-service personnel who might benefit from taking part, please let us know.
- 💡 Our participants are completing the follow-up questionnaires, with a £15 Amazon voucher available for each completed set to express our appreciation.
- 💡 Follow our Facebook page at [FIRST PETT research trial](#) to keep up to date with the study and day-to-day news.
- 💡 Do you have any experiences you'd like to share with the community through this newsletter? Get in touch!



Resources

Are you in need of help right now? Contact:

Samaritans – Telephone: 116 123

Emergency services – Telephone: 999

Do you have questions, comments, or ideas for us? Email: firstpett@kcl.ac.uk

Visit our study website: www.inspirewellbeing.org →

