Survivors against terror

7/7 – In Their Words

Twenty years on, survivors and bereaved speak, uninterrupted.

Author

Jo Berry CBE

Co-Founder of Survivors Against Terror and bereaved daughter of Sir Anthony Berry MP, killed in the Brighton Hotel Bombing

Survivors against terror

Acknowledgements

A heartfelt thank you goes to every single person who gave up their time to share their story and help to create this report. We recognise how much emotional energy this must have taken, and hope that this report does justice to your experiences and honours your courage.

Your voices have shaped this work and are central to everything it stands for.
We also extend our gratitude to the families, friends, and support networks of those affected, whose strength and solidarity continue to inspire.

Special thanks to the team at Survivors Against Terror for bringing these stories to light.

This report is dedicated to all those affected by the 7/7 attacks — in remembrance, in solidarity, and with the hope of building a future where compassion, understanding, and resilience prevail.

Survivors against terror

7/7 – In Their Words

Twenty years on, survivors and bereaved speak, uninterrupted.

Introduction

On 7 July 2005, four bombs were detonated on London's transport system in coordinated terrorist attacks that killed 52 people and injured hundreds more. In the years that followed, headlines faded, memorials were held, and the city moved forward. But for those directly affected—survivors, bereaved families, first responders, and those who supported them—the impact of that day never truly ended.

Behind every statistic is a human story.

In this collection, survivors and loved ones share, in their own words, the long arc of recovery from their trauma. They describe panic attacks that lasted for years, the loneliness of being told to "get on with it," and the silence that often followed early offers of help. They speak of the deep need to make sense of what happened, to be acknowledged, to find meaning, and to heal.

These are not just memories of the past—they are reflections on what's still missing today. Too many were left without proper psychological support. Some were given sleeping pills or told to take time off work, but never offered therapy. Others were retraumatised by insensitive bureaucracy, media intrusion or overwhelmed by systems not designed to deal with the emotional fallout of terror.

And yet, in every voice here, there is resilience. There is honesty. And there is a shared hope: that by telling their stories, they can help create a better path for others who may face similar tragedies in the future.

At the heart of these testimonies is a call for change. Survivors Against Terror is working to ensure that no one affected by terrorism in the UK is left to navigate recovery alone. These stories are the foundation of that campaign.

They are a testament to what was endured—and a demand for what must be done.Their stories—raw, honest, and courageous—form a portrait of survival that is as much about what was *missing* as it is about what endured. They speak of resilience —but also of neglect, silence, and long roads toward recognition.

Survivors against terror

Who are Survivors Against Terror (SAT)?

Survivors Against Terror was launched in 2018 to try and respond to the suffering, resilience and determination of hundreds of survivors of terror attacks in Britain (and of British people who have been affected by terror overseas).

Our network includes people affected by very recent terror attacks to those that happened many decades ago, among our members are numerous survivors from 7/7.

Our work is led by survivors who are at the heart of everything we do and our mission is to reduce the likelihood of terror attacks, reduce the harm that such attacks do, and help the public play a constructive role in countering terrorism.

In 2019, partly because of the systemic failings following 7/7, SAT created the Survivors Charter. The idea of the Charter came from survivors who realised that the scale of failings in the support for survivors required a fundamental paradigm shift that would recognise the fact that the state has a particular responsibility for survivors of terror attacks (given that civilians attacked are targeted as a proxy for the state) and provide a set of guaranteed and enforceable rights for those affected.

The charter - drafted by those survivors - proposes eight key guarantees:

1. Guaranteed proactive personal support
2. Guaranteed access to rapid psychological triage and services
3. Guaranteed immediate financial assistance
4. Guaranteed state compensation
5. Guaranteed legal support
6. Guaranteed recognition
7. Guaranteed memorialisation
8. Guaranteed comprehensive long-term support

This report - twenty years on from 7/7 - shows why this charter is needed. In recent months the government has at last responded to important elements of the charter by proposing a new support hub (that would provide proactive personal support) and by launching a public consultation on a national day of memorial. But key parts of the charter remain unfulfilled - and we urge the government to continue to address mental health support and the compensation system in particular as key ongoing failings still blighting the lives of survivors.

Survivors against terror

Author's Note:

Jo Berry CBE

As the 20th anniversary approaches of the 7/7 attack

As I reflected on the 40th anniversary of losing my dad in a terrorist attack, I found myself pondering the concept of closure. It's a notion that suggests we can reach a point where we're unaffected by our past, where we can return to the person we were before the tragedy. But in my experience, this isn't the case.

As the 20th anniversary of 7/7 approaches, I started wondering about the people who were affected. What did they think as the anniversary drew near? How did they feel about the approaching milestone?

Do they feel they had closure? And then some of the hard questions. How has their pain changed over the last twenty years? Did they have the support they needed? Did they manage to get compensated and navigate all the forms? Did they get their questions answered at the time or later?

This idea has grown into a exploration of people like you and me who were travelling or had family travelling that day. Their lives were changed forever. And if we'd had the Survivor's Charter in place and the mental health support that we know is important, their recovery and healing could have been very different.

My intention in sharing these reflections is not to present an academic study, but rather to offer their personal perspectives. I've been deeply moved by the resilience of those who have shared their stories with me, despite the lack of support. Their courage and strength have been both humbling and inspiring, and I'm grateful for each story that has been shared.

Jo McVey

Bio:

Jo McVey is an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Lecturer/Tutor at a leading Arts University in London. She teaches and supports international students to develop and use English as an additional language for academic study.

She has been involved with Survivors Against Terror since participating in the 'Conflict Cafe: Life After Terror' at The Imperial War Museum in 2018.

In the summer of 2005, she worked at an English Language School on Southampton Place, High Holborn teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to students coming from all over the world to London for short English language courses.

Jo's Story:

On the 7th of July she was not due to work in the morning, though she had agreed to an extra shift to cover another teacher. She was on her way to work from where she lived in Seven Sisters to High Holborn. She ended up taking a different route as there were problems on the line, meaning she had to switch lines and instead of changing at Finsbury Park she changed at Kings Cross for the Piccadilly line. She then boarded the train from Kings Cross, just before the bomb exploded on that fateful day.

She says; *"Today, 20 years and still a teacher, I cherish and value the people I have met and the connections I have made with people from all parts of the world, who come from many cultural backgrounds, races, and faiths."*

Jo was on the tube when the bomb exploded in the front carriage. She was in a section where passengers were stuck and trapped in the tunnel near King's Cross.

Afterwards, she sought help.
"I went for an initial assessment after three weeks, and they said there was no sign of PTSD, but that I might have mild depression. They recommended a book — Overcoming Depression *by Paul Gilbert — and said, 'If you start getting flashbacks, get in touch with your GP.'"*

Reflecting now, she says:
"It was awful. I remember thinking back then that I had to be stoic — I'd be fine. Because 20

years ago, these sorts of things weren't talked about the way they are now. So it was just, 'Okay, I'll be fine.' I had friends and family, I took myself off work, and after a few weeks I went on holiday."
"I later decided to leave the country entirely — six months after the bombing I went to Brazil and taught there for around nine months."

This strategy of avoidance and stoicism carried on for years.
"I developed quite strange coping mechanisms and reactions — things that are actually really common with PTSD — but I didn't know. I was hypervigilant, didn't like crowds, and had all the classic symptoms. I just thought I was going through a rough patch."

It wasn't until **nine years later** that Jo realised she wasn't okay.
"I went to my doctor, who signed me off work and referred me for CBT. That was good — it helped me with travel and getting back on the tube. But there was no follow-up after the 12 sessions. I left thinking, 'I'll be fine now.'"

But soon after, tragedy struck: her brother died suddenly.
"That changed everything. My nightmares got worse. I felt desperate. It was like I was back there again, reliving the trauma of 7/7. The coping strategies I'd learned didn't work anymore."

Then in **2021**, Jo had a breakthrough.
"I contacted Caroline Harrison at the Maudsley Hospital. At first she said she couldn't help because I hadn't been referred. But then she asked how I was. When I told her my story, she took me straight to the front of the queue. She said I deserved help after everything I'd endured. That changed everything."

Jo worked with Caroline for several months:
"The therapy was the real deal. It made me realise I had so many coping mechanisms and behaviours I hadn't even noticed. I'd been using distraction techniques from CBT — music, podcasts — but underneath it, I was always scanning, always tense. Now I can get on a bus or a tube and just be. I'm not constantly managing fear anymore."

She adds:
"Now I can say: it's something that happened to me. I've put it in a box. It's part of my life story, but I'm not carrying it around like a massive weight, waiting for it to rear its ugly head."

Jo reflects on the 20th anniversary:
"At first, it felt overwhelming. The last 20 years have been filled with so many different moments and experiences that have led me to this point. For years, I felt that even calling myself a 'survivor' was false and grandiose. But now, it feels justified."
"I've come to understand just how deeply 7/7 affected my life — and those around me. With excellent mental health support in recent years, I finally have the coping mechanisms I need to feel safe in my day-to-day life.Now I can now get on a bus or a tube and I'm not scanning the place, and trying to use distraction techniques that I have learned in CBT, like listening to music which was good but I was always still coping with intense fear and a sense of hyperawareness. I can happily travel and listen to a podcast and not have PTSD symptoms

creeping up on me on a daily basis”

“The terrible experience of that day doesn’t define me — but it is a part of me. I am a survivor.”

“The purpose of contributing is to help others so that they do not have the same experience. In fact many are going through this experience, and no doubt as we can probably guess many have still received no support in the last 20 years. My hope for the future is that this will change.”

Ella Young

Bio:

Ella now lives happily in Oxfordshire. The 7/7 London Bombings irrevocably changed her life.

At the time, she was employed as the National Training & Operations manager for a major charity based in London. The day of the bombings she was on the Edgware Road train simply commuting to work as others do daily.

Now aged 66 Ella continues to work part-time for the NHS in Oxfordshire. She enjoys running with her greyhound Eddie, strength training, reading, gardening and overseas travel.

Despite the trauma of that day, she has rebuilt a rich, fulfilling happy life, grounded in independence, family, and close friends.

Ella's Story:

Ella was injured in the Edgware Road bombing and reflects on the long wait for support, the impact of media intrusion, and her eventual recovery.

"I was injured on the Edgware Road underground and had to go to hospital. Nobody came for some time. Eventually, I was taken from the underground to an M&S store, and then, after another security alert, everyone was moved to a hotel. Someone there asked for my name, address, and phone number to contact my husband. I was grateful — I'd lost my bag, my shoes, and the phones weren't working."

But later, Ella discovered that the "helpful person" was a journalist.
"He kept ringing me, asking for details for a newspaper article. I made it worse by refusing to talk to him about what happened. No one had contacted my husband, Steve, who was a paramedic. He managed to get into London and spent the day going from hospital to hospital, and tube station to tube station, looking for me."

Her injuries, though not life-threatening, required hospital treatment.
"Compared to those who lost their lives or limbs, my injuries were less serious — but I had wounds to my hands, arms, feet, and damaged eardrums. The chaos and confusion made everything worse. My husband eventually found me at the Royal Free Hospital. As time went on it was realised journalists had got into the A&E department and were asking patients questions. The hospital was immediately put into lockdown and anyone

other than patients had to leave."

The Aftermath

"After 7/7, I just switched off. I couldn't talk or think about it. That lasted months — and it only got worse. I wouldn't come out of my bedroom. I stayed home. I couldn't engage with anyone or anything."

Her GP prescribed tramadol to help her sleep.
"I was having flashbacks during the day and nightmares at night."

Before the bombings, Ella had worked as an Operations Manager for St John Ambulance.
"My job included emergency planning and resilience. I felt I was absolutely crap — guilty, even — that I didn't do more. But I was injured, couldn't hear, and I just froze."

The **media intrusion** made things even harder.
"They kept ringing over and over again. Eventually, I had to change my phone number, email, address, even my social media name to get some peace.

Struggles to Get Help

Ella was offered 10 counselling sessions in central London, but it proved too much.
"I only attended two sessions. The journey from Oxfordshire was traumatic. The flashbacks and nightmares got worse."

Three years later, she had a complete nervous breakdown.
"I was still on tramadol. Eventually, my GP referred me to the local mental health unit. I was tested, and my depression and PTSD scores were high. But the local hospital said they couldn't help and sent me to the Warneford Hospital in Oxford."

Despite the PTSD diagnosis, Ella was placed on a long waiting list.
"I went back to Oxford every six months — filling out questionnaires, tests — all confirming I needed help. But there were no available therapy slots.."

A Turning Point

Eventually, her sister convinced her to attend a commemoration.
"I hadn't attended any commemorations because I still couldn't travel to London but my sister convinced me that it might actually help as shutting myself away clearly hadn't helped.

Tessa Jowell was present and asked me how I was doing?

I looked at her and said "I'm not ok' .

I explained "I used to have a responsible job, got up in the morning; put the suit on; went to work and came back, I earned a good salary. I can't do anything now - I've lost it all".
Tessa asked "Are you having any therapy?'
I explained the waiting list situation and how I was deteriorating over time.
Tessa asked " Do you have another appointment?" I said, 'yes, but I'll go, do a questionnaire, then they say they will let me know when a slot is available. They will tell me to try to relax, maybe swim (I cant swim) ...So I'm stuck.
Tessa said, "When you attend your next appointment take my number with you, ask the date your therapy is starting and ring me while you're there and let me know" Tell the person you see that you must have the date we're starting because Tessa Jowell wishes to report back to the Health Minister as she has 7/7 in her remit at DMCS."

Next time Ella went to the appointment, she shared Tessa's words.
"At the appointment I asked. "Can you tell me at what point I can start doing some sort of therapy?" She explained about the long waiting list, so I explained Tessa Jowell asked me to inform her when the therapy was available as 7/7 happened more than two years ago .....Within a few minutes I was given a start date"

Recovery and Understanding

Therapy began within two weeks.
"Suddenly, funding was available. I was offered intensive daily sessions at first, then weekly, then monthly. The psychologist, Martina Mueller, was amazing. I had EMDR, CBT, mindfulness, talking therapies — all sorts of support. Learning various techniques to manage panic attacks helped so much."

She learned to manage panic attacks and understand her trauma.
"A few years later, I was in my car listening to the radio. A woman was talking about losing her son in the Hillsborough disaster. It had been 20 years, and she spoke like it happened yesterday. That hit me — 7/7 was five years ago, and it still felt like yesterday. I realised I couldn't live like this for another 20 years."

Ella got back in touch with Martina.
"We focused on understanding myself — what happened, how I react, what makes me feel good, and what I do when I feel bad or guilty. That understanding gave me back control."

Where She Is Now

"I take time for myself. I know myself well now. I eat, rest, exercise, and meditate daily. Thankfully, it works."

She reflects:
"Does PTSD ever really go away? I don't know. But my life is good."

Garri Holness

Bio:

Survivor of the London bombings, part qualified accountant, and Mental Health First Aider. He says *"I lost a leg, but found a mission."*

With a wicked sense of humour, a background in metaphysics, and a deep passion for mental health, he is committed to uplifting humanity and championing the voices of trauma survivors*. "Because healing starts when we put mental wellbeing first and sometimes, a laugh helps too."*

Garri's Story:

Garri shares the trauma of surviving the 7/7 bombing, the long road to recovery, and how he found meaning in helping others heal.
"On July 7th, 2005, I was on the platform waiting for a train. The first one was packed, so I let it go. At six foot one, I needed space. As the second train arrived, a woman jumped in front of me to board. I gently tapped her on the back and said, 'Have a lovely day, love.' She smiled and waved goodbye through the window."

The third train came, and Garri got on.
"I placed my bag in front of me and held the pole. I used to work in fashion shows, so I found myself checking out people's outfits. The day before, we'd won the Olympic bid, and I was reading the back of the paper. Then something strange caught my attention."

Unknowingly, Garri was standing next to the suicide bomber, and as something caught his attention he was instinctively jolted into movement.
"They say my sudden movement saved my life. The bomb went off, blowing a hole in the floor where I had been. The pole I was holding disintegrated. I hit my head and everything felt like an out-of-body experience."

In the moments after the blast, Garri went into survival mode.
"I found myself pulling people to safety, trying to calm them. One girl screamed that she'd lost her leg. I looked down at my own and realised my foot was at a strange angle — my leg was badly injured. Around me were 26 bodies. There were a few survivors. I just kept saying, 'You're going to be okay.' I helped people get comfortable. I was the last survivor pulled out, two hours later."

Lack of Support

Garri spent months in hospital — but mental health support was almost non-existent.
"I got a massage, eventually an occupational therapist checked my home. But I was never given psychological support. No one helped me process it. Three years later, I finally saw a doctor who referred me to the Maudsley Hospital."

There, he attended a handful of sessions.
"The doctor even took me back underground — though I had already forced myself to face that fear six months after the bombing. Still, he helped me understand my reactions. I was diagnosed with severe PTSD."

He began to rebuild using self-directed tools:
"I now study metaphysics, meditate, garden, exercise, walk in the park. I'm careful about what energy I allow into my space."

The Media: From Hero to Villain

In the immediate aftermath, Garri's positivity captured hearts.
"The media painted me as a hero. I spoke from the heart — unscripted — and people connected with that. I lost my leg, but became a role model. My story inspired people across the world."

But then the media unearthed a conviction from his youth.
"I was a teenager when it happened — two decades earlier. And just like that, the headlines turned. From hero to villain. It was painful. But even 20 years on, I'm still here. Still helping others. Planting seeds for recovery. Because I've walked that path."

A Deeply Personal Journey

The anniversary of 7/7 holds deep meaning for Garri.
"It marks how far I've come — mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally. My mum passed away two weeks later, on July 21st, 2005. Every year, the emotions come back. I think about my journey, and sometimes, what more I could've done if the media hadn't sensationalised things. But maybe it was a blessing in disguise."

He now dedicates his life to supporting others.
"I help people. I uplift. I know I was given a second chance, and I've embraced the transformation from within."

Survivors against terror

A Testament to Resilience

“My journey is a testament to the power of transformation. From facing unimaginable horror to becoming a source of strength — I’ve shown that recovery is possible. Yes, I have a past. Yes, there were setbacks. But I chose to channel my experience into purpose.”
“We can emerge stronger from darkness. Every story of survival can plant a seed of hope. That’s what I live for now.”

Alex Marshall

Bio:

Alex is a chef manager and has been for the last 20 years.
His hobby is scuba diving and he did a lot of first aid training with his scuba club.

He started working as a chef from catering college and has been working as a chef ever since.

Alex's Story:

Alex was working in the kitchen at Woburn House when the bomb exploded on the number 30 bus at Tavistock Square, killing 14 people, including the bomber.

He was among the first on the scene, offering first aid and practical support using whatever he could find.

One of the First on the Scene

"I heard the bomb go off and ran outside. I was one of the first there. I brought out tables, surgical gloves—whatever I had in the kitchen."

With no medical supplies on hand, Alex improvised.
"I had gloves for cooking and tea towels. I dropped them with people who needed them—to use as tourniquets or pads. There was just nothing else."

Someone mentioned the threat of another bomb, but Alex stayed to help.
"I said, I can get tables—and I brought them out so we could move the injured. We carried them on the tables to the BMA building."

He stayed by one injured woman's side.
"I don't know who she was. I held her neck while a doctor tried to help her. Then I walked out the back of the BMA—still in my chef's uniform—and went home."

An Unanswered Call for Support

After the attack, Alex assumed help would come.
"I wrote to the BMA a few days later. I thought they might want to check in, after everything. But they sent a letter back basically telling me to go away. That I wasn't a doctor. It was ridiculous."

No formal support came his way.
"At the time, I didn't know what I needed. But nothing was offered. Eventually, I found Brent Bereavement. They were handling things. That was the first time I got any help."

Alex later found a private, secure email group for others affected.
"That group was a lifeline. We used to meet up once a month—just to chat, have a drink. It might sound morbid, but it helped. You could talk about what you'd seen in a way only we could understand. Anyone else listening would've thought we were mad. But it made sense to us."

Physical Injury, Minimal Medical Help

It was days before Alex discovered the extent of his own injuries.
"Turns out my eardrums had been blown out. I didn't even realise until four days later."

He went to his GP.
"She said, 'Would you like some sleeping pills?' That was it. No support, just tablets. I remember thinking—no, I don't want pills. I don't want to go down that road."

A Visit from Victim Support—And Its Limits

Alex also contacted the police, wanting to provide a witness statement. He met with officers at the Royal Agricultural Society in Kensington.

Shortly after, a visit from Victim Support left him surprised—and concerned.
"The poor lady who came out wasn't prepared at all. I think she expected to talk about a stolen TV. I started telling her what I'd actually done that day, and you could see it hit her. She left looking more shocked than I was. She never came back."

Anniversaries and the Illusion of Closure

Alex will mark the 20th anniversary by attending the remembrance events in Tavistock Square, St Paul's Cathedral, and Hyde Park.
"For me, the 20th will be the same as other years. A day of reflection. Catching up with people."

Some years the anniversary hits harder than others.
"Sometimes I feel alright. Other years, I just don't feel right—and I can't put my finger on why. It's under the skin, always there."

On the idea of "closure," Alex is blunt:
"I don't know if I'll ever get that. I think it's just a word the government or others use to draw a line under it and move on."

He sums it up simply:
“It’s the gift that keeps on giving. You don’t know how or when it’ll come back. But you live with it. You just find a way to cope, or to turn it around.”

Lizzie Comba

Bio:

Lizzie grew up in Wiltshire, where she also went to school, and in July 2005 she had just finished her GCSEs. It was the end of the school year and she was staying up at her parent's flat in the Barbican while she did a week's work experience at an interior design firm in Kew.

Ideally she would have got the district line from Mansion House but was running late that morning and was also not quite 100% sure of the route (and this was before smart phones!) so instead she got on the Circle Line at Moorgate in a bid to save time. Obviously the tube never made it to Mansion House.

She now lives in South East London with her partner, Alf and works at Christie's auction house as a Specialist in Private & Iconic Collections.

Lizzie's Story:

Alone at 16

Lizzie was just 16 years old when she found herself caught up in the Aldgate bombing. She was in London alone, having travelled to the city for work experience.
"I was on the Aldgate tube. I was not injured, but I was 16 and I was travelling on my own. I didn't live in London-I had just come for work experience. Looking back, it's terrifying that I didn't get any mental health support. But at the time, I just thought this was normal. I needed to get on with it."

That instinct to carry on had lasting consequences.
"It resulted in long-term mental health issues for me."

No One to Talk To

Lizzie witnessed scenes that no teenager—or anyone—should ever have to see.
"I saw horrifying things. People killed in the most horrendous way. And there was absolutely no one to talk to about it."

Survivors against terror

Despite her survival, she felt forgotten.
“I was lucky I wasn’t physically hurt. I survived. But I just think some kind of support would have helped me—and it needs to be there for future victims.”

Living with the Aftermath

Lizzie struggled alone for years, experiencing symptoms of PTSD that she didn’t understand at the time.
“I just felt so lucky that I wasn’t injured and I survived. I wasn’t thinking about my mental health and the future implications this incident could have. Looking back, I know that some type of support would have helped me and it needs to be there for future victims.
I think it was the PTSD that meant I went over it again and again in my head. I didn’t properly communicate with my parents about what I was going through at the time - the general consensus was to stay calm and move on. That’s not their fault, they weren’t experts in trauma.”

It wasn’t until much later that she finally received help.
“There needs to be something to catch you—for a bit, at least. It wasn’t until my late 20s, over a decade later, when I got some proper NHS counselling. That really helped me begin to deal with it.”

Eventually, she also paid for private therapy.
“The terrible debilitating panic attacks eventually stopped. I stopped pushing my experience away which had been so unhealthy.”

Looking Ahead

While Lizzie has found a way to manage the long-term effects, the lack of early support still leaves its mark.
“It doesn’t affect me day to day now. But I get upset thinking about how much it affected me for so long— wasn’t properly dealt with.”

What troubles her most is the sense that things haven’t improved.
“And then there would be a bit more closure. What affects me now is the fact that nothing's really changed.

Twenty years on, what distresses me is that if it happened again tomorrow, another 16 year old on another tube would have exactly the same experience. No aftercare, no support, left to navigate the consequences alone.

I’m through the worst of it now, but it would give me great closure to know that future victims would be supported”

Ronnie

Bio:

Jon and Ronnie met at college when they were both 17, and married when they were 28. They were big social people and had a good circle of friends from both work and home, they both commuted into London from Milton Keynes - travelling together daily.

Her life was devastated on 7th July 2005 when her husband Jon was killed, and she struggled to cope. Having support from her workplace (TfL) was truly outstanding and she eventually decided to leave TfL at the end of December 2006. She spent most of 2007 travelling to discover who she was now - as she had been with Jon all of her adult life. She says "*At the age of 33 it is very hard to suddenly have to face life alone and work out what to do. The year of discovery led me to move to Ireland and it was there that in late 2009 I met my now husband and we have a daughter*."

They moved to Scotland nearly 10 years ago.
"My life will never be the same and every year leading up to the anniversary several feelings come to the surface - I mark the anniversary in some way every year. Grief is a very personal journey and with added trauma it is a harder one I believe, as it is to face it alone.

I still am not happy with the lack of support for someone my age at the time - or now for that matter - whose partner was killed. The impact for a parent, son or daughter is very different - as is the age that you face this tragedy. It still makes me angry that I had to find my own way to where I am today without any consideration or support from the UK 'system."

Ronnie's Story:

Early Support

Ronnie was 33 years old when her husband Jon was killed in the 7/7 bombings. She had been with him since she was 17. At the time, she worked for Transport for London (TfL), who offered her counselling support straight away.
"My line manager arranged for me to see one of their specialist trauma counsellors—someone trained to support drivers after suicides on the line. I probably saw her for two, maybe three years."

This support from her employer was crucial, especially when there was little from other

sources.
“There was nothing from my GP, nothing from the NHS, and no help to fill out that horrendous CICA form. My mum’s GP—who lived nearby—saw me once and prescribed temazepam, but I never took it. I gave the tablets to my mum and said, ‘If I really need them, I’ll ask.’ But I wanted to go through this on my own terms.”

Her TfL manager was exceptional.
“He insisted I have a counsellor close to home so I didn’t have to travel into London. I’m still in touch with him now.”

Ronnie returned to work part-time in September 2005 and resumed full-time hours by January 2006. She saw her counsellor weekly on her day off.
With the counsellor's support and using cognitive behavioural therapy, Ronnie eventually managed to travel again on the tube—including through Edgware Road.

The Struggle for Compensation

Despite the counselling, accessing official support systems was frustrating.
“I had to fill in the CICA compensation form. Maybe the police liaison officer helped a bit, but I can’t remember. Then I had to see a psychiatrist for a PTSD diagnosis—because my counsellor, being non-clinical, couldn’t give one. Without it, I couldn’t get compensation.”

Even with the diagnosis, she felt the system failed her.
“They reduced the amount I was given, saying I was earning a similar income. But how does that make sense? How does that work? But that doesn't compensate for the fact that I was with somebody for 17 years and all of a sudden they've gone It wasn’t resolved until 2008.”

Insensitive Communication

One of the most distressing moments came unexpectedly.
“There were also things that came through from the coroner, the post just landed on my doorstep. I didn't have any pre-warning that something was coming. There was one report that I got and I can picture myself opening it sitting on my bed and going. I don't want to read that. So there was no understanding as to the impact of a piece of paper”

And the official silence held a painful irony.
“The other thing is there was a two minute silence at 12 o'clock on the 12th July. It hadn't even been confirmed that Jon had been killed. To me this felt awful, I screamed just wait, . Hold on. And I don't know if I was the only one that didn't know, as it wasn't confirmed to me that Jon was dead until the 13th of July”

Survivors against terror

The Ongoing Impact

Ronnie describes her life in two parts: before Jon and after.
"When I look at my life, I see it split—'with Jon', from age 17 to just before I turned 34, and then 'after Jon'. I'm a completely different person now. It never really goes away. You just learn to live with it."

Jon's own outlook continues to guide her.
"He used to say, 'I've got to do whatever for me because I can't change what happened.' That's helped me. I just try to deal with it in my own way."

Anniversaries and Family

This year, Ronnie's daughter will be coming to the anniversary events—and this time, she'll understand why.
"She was at the 10th anniversary, but she was only two, in a buggy. Now I need to explain it to her. I'll also prepare her teachers, so they can support her if she needs it."

Anniversaries remain deeply emotional.
"They're incredibly draining. I feel like I'm back there, even though I'm distant from everything around me. The build-up is the worst part. I also avoid the press—I've never spoken to them and never will."

She adds,
"Please speak to my mum. She's never spoken to anyone, and she gave me so much support."

On Closure

Ronnie is clear that the idea of closure doesn't sit with her.
"There's no such thing as 'closure'—how could there be? One moment changed everything. I've rebuilt my life without Jon, but I think about him every day. Any new terrorist attack brings it all back. And then another family is going through it."

Ronnie's Mum

Her Story:

Her son-in-law Jon was killed in the Edgware Road bombing. She supported her daughter through unimaginable grief, while navigating the silence, confusion, and systemic gaps that followed.
"It's the first time I've been asked about any of this in 20 years
Bereaved families like ours should have been treated separately from survivors. And even within the bereaved, people have different needs—young wives are different to older ones, parents are different again. But we were all treated as if we were just one group."

She had questions in the first days after Jon's death—urgent, and profound questions which no one answered. One of them wasn't answered until twenty years later, when she saw a documentary.
"The police could've told me at the time. It would've given me peace, but we were left in the dark."l

She remembers the first few days vividly.
"The police liaison officers were kind, they really were—but it took days before we had any information. I lived in Northamptonshire, Ronnie was in Buckinghamshire, and Jon had been killed in London. The three police forces didn't speak to each other. It made things so much harder."

She's grateful for the Law Society.
"Without them we would've struggled. They offered free legal assistance, helped us make the compensation claim, and supported us through the legal aspects of Jon's death. The law firm that handled the inquest was brilliant too. But compensation was still painfully slow. These systems don't consider what it's like to grieve while also fighting bureaucracy."

The memorial service at St Paul's was meant to be a point of national recognition—but it added more distress.
"There was no help getting around London. One of my daughters got caught in a crush in the underground and had a panic attack."
"*Whenever there's another attack, I hear that MI5 knew something and didn't act. It's like nothing has changed. We were never given any updates on the reforms that were supposed to follow 7/7. There's been no follow-up, no closure, not even an acknowledgement."*

Most of all, she wants bereaved relatives of victims to be supported too—not just as carers for the bereaved, but as people in need themselves. ***"****We supported Ronnie the best we could, but we were grieving too. There should be help for people like us.****"***

Sarah Webb

Bio:

Sarah Webb 45, Mental Health Social Worker lives in Wiltshire with her husband and children. In 2005 she was a newly qualified social worker in the local authority aftercare service working with 16-21 year olds.

Sarah's Story:

Sarah was on the tube on 7/7. After the bombing, she received some paramedic treatment at the Hilton Hotel, where survivors were taken.

Immediate Aftermath

"They kind of made us all stay in the Hilton for the day. Then around 3 or 4pm, they just said, 'You can go now.' I remember walking from Edgware Road back up to Paddington, still wrapped in one of those little foil blankets. I was with one other person who happened to be heading the same way."

She still remembers the kindness of strangers.
"The staff at Paddington were lovely. They put us in first class and looked after us. My dad came to meet me. I remember looking in the mirror—I was still a bit sooty and dishevelled."

She took a few days off work, but when she tried to return, it didn't go well.

First Steps Toward Support

Sarah went to her GP soon after.
"My doctor cried with me in the surgery. She gave me diazepam, some sleeping tablets, and told me to take as long as I needed off work. But there was nothing in terms of psychological support, no sense that this might be something significant until about three or four months later."

Eventually, her GP gently raised the possibility of PTSD.
"He said, 'We need to have a bit of a chat about what's happening with work. You might have PTSD.' I didn't really know much about it, apart from what I'd come across in social work with unaccompanied minors from places like Iran and Albania."

Turning Point and Therapy

“After about six or eight weeks, I started thinking: What do I actually need? I just wanted to feel a bit less crazy about it all.”

Sarah used her compensation money to pay privately for therapy.
“I was awarded just under £2,000 from the criminal justice compensation scheme. A couple of people encouraged me to apply, even though I didn’t have physical injuries. They said it could help—and they were right. That money paid for my therapy.”

That’s when she found approaches that really helped.
“I started exploring things like EMDR. It helped unlock something for me—it was a switch. I became more confident, especially in returning to work. I could finally talk about what happened without being overwhelmed.”

This turning point also changed her professional path.
“I moved from working with care leavers in social work into mental health social work. It felt like something good came out of it.”

Long-Term Impact and Reflection

“The 20th anniversary feels significant. This experience completely shaped my career, and it’s had a big impact on my personality and identity.”

She’s still unsure where she’ll be on the day itself, but she knows the people around her will understand its meaning.
“Closure for me has come from raising awareness about mental health recovery, supporting others through trauma, and knowing I’m taking care of myself in the best way I can.”

Amy Washington

Bio:

Amy is a 43-year-old health and well-being coach, Level 3 personal trainer, and Level 1 England boxing coach. Her journey into fitness and healing began with a life-changing experience — surviving the 7th of July 2005 London bombings. That day reshaped her outlook and ignited a deep purpose: to use movement and mindset to support others in their own journeys toward recovery and strength.

With over eight years in the fitness industry, she specialises in creating safe, empowering spaces where people can rebuild physically, emotionally, and mentally. Whether through one-to-one coaching, boxing, group fitness, or holistic well-being sessions, my work is rooted in helping people overcome challenges, reconnect with their bodies, and cultivate lasting self-belief.

Amy says *“My mission is simple: to help people feel stronger inside and out.”*

Amy’s Story:

It started as a typical day for Amy.
“I was traveling to work — I worked in Leicester Square. It was my normal routine: getting up and going to the Tube. I got on at Finsbury Park. It was packed, more than normal. Normally, I would go down to the first carriage, but I didn’t because the platform was so packed — I just got on where I could.”

Things began to feel very different when she got on the tube.
“At King’s Cross, a lot of people got off, but loads got on. As we were leaving King's Cross, it felt like seconds that we were in the tunnel — then suddenly it stopped. The lights went out. I can’t remember if emergency lights came on. People started panicking, shouting — but some were trying to calm others. Someone said we’d hit a concrete block; that stuck with me.”

Amy describes the turmoil of the immediate aftermath.
“I remember looking at a lady wearing white. Her nostrils looked hairy — but it was soot. I looked down and saw I was covered in it too. We didn’t know what was going on. It felt like forever. I started panicking and crying. The lady reassured me: “Don’t worry, we’ll be fine.” I’ve since been told we were down there about 45 minutes.

Eventually, a door towards the end of our carriage was opened and we were able to get out

onto the tracks. We walked single file back to King's Cross. I remember seeing what looked like a car door — obviously, now I know it wasn't. I also remember following a lady with pink pumps — I just focused on her feet.

Amy finally was able to get outside with help.
"We were helped onto the platform by firemen and told to go out the nearest exit. We ran up the stairs and out a fire exit. I ended up wandering in a daze. I found the lady with the pink pumps again and stuck with her and a few other ladies. We wanted an alcoholic drink — we were in shock. We tried to call people but couldn't get through. My auntie rang from Ireland — she'd seen it on the news. That was when I realised something serious had happened. The line went dead.

We got into a café where we could clean off some of the soot. Walking away from the station, we saw people running towards us — someone said something about a bus. We still didn't know what was going on. Some of us started feeling chesty. We told a policeman — he let us under the cordon and back into King's Cross.

At the station, there were double-decker buses taking people to hospital. That's when I first saw the walking wounded — people with shrapnel in their faces, covered in blood. It was surreal. We were told to go upstairs on the bus. A police officer was taking names. Someone asked her what had happened — she said something was going on but didn't want to say much more.

We were escorted to the Royal Free London. It felt like a movie. Four double-decker buses, police stopping traffic. At the hospital, we were triaged in a tent outside, then taken inside to queue. I remember seeing someone being worked on and turned away — I didn't want that memory.

In the hospital toilets, I saw people with shrapnel in their faces and hands. They checked us over and said, "You seem alright for now — but you can't leave, you need to give your story." We were taken to what I think was the canteen, where police took statements. The news was on — we were glued to it."

The Months After and the Inner Turmoil

Amy struggled desperately in the next few months.
"For the next six months, it was hell — I couldn't sleep, had flashbacks. Hearing sirens was horrible. One time my partner tried to take me out for a walk. We saw a fight — someone bleeding — and I had to go home immediately.

I stayed in contact with the lady with the pink pumps and a couple of others. We checked in with each other daily. After the attempted attacks on the 21st of July, we were even more in touch. I visited her house at one point."

Work was understanding, and supported her.
"My work was very good — they told me to take as much time as I needed. I went to my

doctor several times within the first two months — I knew something wasn't right, I wasn't sleeping. They didn't seem to know what to do.

The 7th of July Assistance Centre was set up. Rachel North created a group for survivors and the bereaved. She had written a blog and I somehow found her. The group was really helpful — we talked, met up, and figured out where we had been in the train. That's how I learned I was in the fourth carriage."

Whilst Amy had found this vital group, she still struggled get the support she needed from her GP.
"I kept going to the doctor — my work connected me to an occupational health adviser. I was properly signed off and diagnosed with PTSD. I couldn't even go into the office without a taxi, and had panic attacks when I did.
The doctor didn't initially say I had PTSD. I thought I was going crazy — I couldn't sleep, kept reading newspapers and watching the news. It became obsessive, but I now understand why."

Amy finally received trauma support.
"The 7th of July Assistance Centre eventually got me help. I had an amazing psychologist, but had to travel all the way to Camberwell for appointments. I wouldn't take the Tube, so I went by bus, which was hard but probably good in the long run. The psychologist also helped me with my unresolved grief about my sister, who I lost in 2003. We started there, and then worked through the 7th of July. He even took me on the *Tube as part of therapy — helping me realise it was a different time and day, and that I could do it."*

Amy slowly started learning how to cope with her PTSD.
"I can now use the Tube, though for a long time, if I saw something like an unattended bag, I would panic. Once I saw a rucksack in a bar and went mad. My friends understood why — but now, I can handle those situations better.
I was off work from July until the following March or April. I had a phased return — allowed to go in after rush hour and leave before rush hour. That helped. Later that year, we moved to Australia.

By then, I'd had enough help to understand PTSD and manage my triggers. It still took time."

Amy's Recovery

Amy reflects on her journey to recovery.
"Recovery has been a long road, and it's still ongoing, really. In that first year after the attack, having the 7/7 Assistance Centre and the survivors' group made a massive difference. Just being able to talk with people who got it helped me begin to process everything. Marking the first anniversary at St Paul's Cathedral was a big moment — standing there with fellow survivors felt very powerful."

She moved to Australia.
"After that, I decided to move to Australia. I wasn't running away — it was more that I didn't want life to be stuck on pause anymore. The attack had made me realise how fragile everything is, and I wanted to live fully. I already had a connection there through one of the other survivors, and having that friendship helped hugely. I made new friends too, but the survivors I'd bonded with in London remained a lifeline — we've stayed in touch all these years."

When Amy moved back to the UK she used the coping mechanisms she had learnt after the attack to deal with new stresses.
"When I moved back to the UK in 2015, things got very hard again. My marriage broke down, I became a single mum to twins, my mental health hit a low, and I struggled with housing and money. It felt like another massive trauma. But I got through it by focusing on what I could do. Exercise had always helped me — it had been a coping mechanism in Australia — so I trained as a personal trainer, partly to help myself, but also to support others."

She was able to find a way to be inspired, and to inspire others.
"Later I found boxing, and it was like another form of therapy — hitting those pads was such a release. I became a Level 1 boxing coach so I could bring that to others too.
It's only more recently, through my work in health and wellbeing, that I've started to properly tackle the deeper stuff — childhood trauma and all the layers of mental health I'd never really faced. Peer support has continued to be vital — having that understanding from others who've been through similar things is something I still lean on. I know a lot of survivors felt very alone, and I think it's crucial that proper, trained peer support is built into any future response to attacks like this."

Trauma never really goes away.
"I still carry the trauma — it never fully goes — but I'm proud of how far I've come. I've got my girls, a career I love, and a good life. I think about those we lost all the time. Part of my recovery has been making sure they're never forgotten, and that we keep fighting to improve support for anyone affected by terrorism in future."

Amy's Suggestions for Future Support

Amy believes strongly that there should be comprehensive, trained, peer support.
"Looking back, there's so much I think we could do better for survivors in the future. For me, one of the biggest things is making sure that proper, trained peer support is in place straight away — not just an online group or a social thing, but something structured, supported, with funding. Being able to talk to someone who really understands — who's been through it — makes a world of difference. I honestly don't think I'd be where I am now without that.
And that support needs to be there for the long haul. For a lot of us, it was years later that things hit us the hardest — when life changed, when anniversaries came around, or when other traumas triggered it all again. People shouldn't be left to fend for themselves after the first year or two."

Survivors against terror

Helping survivors find a sense of purpose.
“The other thing is helping survivors rebuild a life that feels meaningful again. For me, training as a PT and a boxing coach wasn’t just about fitness — it gave me back a sense of purpose. We need to think about vocational support, about helping people rediscover what they love and what makes them feel alive, after something like this.”

There needs to be a whole person approach to supporting people with trauma.
“Finally, we’ve got to get much better at supporting people with all the trauma they’re carrying. A lot of us came into this with past stuff that got stirred up, and it can’t just be about treating the symptoms of the attack itself. There needs to be a whole-person approach — mental health, wellbeing, physical recovery, community, everything.”

Sue Greenwood

Bio:

Susan Greenwood is a survivor of the 7/7 London Terrorist Attacks. She lost her leg in the bombing, and now lives with scars and advocates for research into scar free healing. She lives in Bournemouth with her husband, two children and two dogs. She has worked for the NHS all her adult life, and currently works for NHS England.

She was born in The Medway Towns, went to college, trained as an NHS Operating Department Practitioner. She lived in Australia, and on her return home, moved to London and off she went to start her new life. The real story starts a couple of years later when she was 29 years old. Life was very good. Suddenly all of that changed when she was travelling to work one day. On the 7 July 2005, she was caught up in the atrocities in London.

Her left leg had to be amputated above the knee. Her right was severely damaged and required skin and fat grafts to cover the blast wounds.

Despite all of this with true grit and determination and help from her husband, friends, and family she was able to move on quickly. She returned to life at work, at play and at sport in a short period of time. She credits this to those around her who ensured she was safe

Sue's Story:

Injured in the Piccadilly Line tube
"I was severely injured by the bomb detonated on the Piccadilly Line tube. I had my leg amputated, suffered many other injuries, and underwent a large number of operations."

A Long Wait for Compensation

Waiting for compensation was gruelling.
"I had to wait 7 years before my payments with CICA for compensation were finalised. I had a solicitor, barrister and QC who worked on a pro bono basis for me. I was made aware of the available help being offered from the Bar Pro Bono service at the time to 7/7 survivors, so I could get the help I needed.

I felt the compensation system was a broken system, and that without the help of the legal

professionals working for me, I wouldn't have got the compensation that I did."

A Broken System

From her experience, Sue concluded that the CICA system was not working to support the people that need compensation the most.
"It isn't fair that people can only access the help they are entitled to if they have the strength—and legal representation—to fight the system. I know of others with similar injuries who ended up with far less, simply because they didn't have access to legal help."

Intermittent Payments Created Uncertainty

The way that CICA paid Sue also failed to meet her needs.
"A particular issue for me was taking intermittent payments. This affect my financial planning for the future as it was never really clear on what the final outcome would be or what to expect. I reflect that I should have waited for the final sum rather than accepting bits of payout along the way. This would have benefited me in a more positive way."

The Need for Accessible Information and Support

Sue suggests improvements to the system to support people better.
"There should be a clearly accessible list outlining what support is available, what survivors can expect from the process, and guidance on how the system works—especially financial support to assist in long-term planning."

Trauma Support and NHS Access

Sue discusses trauma support.
"In terms of trauma support, I didn't need to access this myself, but I was offered it. I was lucky that I worked for the NHS, so I also knew how to access support if I needed it and knew how the NHS system worked. Being severely injured in Hospital offered the teams looking after me lots of time to ensure that I was supported, and that I had support on leaving Hospital. I do know there was a disconnect between those severely injured and those who had less visible injuries. From talking to fellow survivors, this was not as easily accessible for them or perhaps in some cases, not being made available at all."

The role of victim support

Victim support played a crucial role in supporting Sue and her family.
"My family and I did have volunteer support from Victim Support. They were fantastic in offering not only support for me as a survivor, but also for my family in managing a situation where their family member had been a victim of terrorism, and violence. I am forever grateful

for their knowledge and kindness."

The Meaning of Closure

Sue considers the meaning of closure in a very personal response.
"When thinking of the subject of closure, If I am honest, I am not sure what 'closure' means. Is that acceptance of an incident? Is it moving forwards with your life? Or does it mean forgiveness? I cannot comment more widely than the feelings of myself, as it is not my place to do so, and is clearly for an individual to decide how they feel about any given situation and move forward in anyway that is right for them."

Marking the 20-Year Anniversary

Every year as the anniversary encroaches, Sue continues to reflect on the events of the day.
"With the 20-year anniversary imminent, my thoughts immediately are with those who are no longer alive, and to their families and loved ones who still suffer as a result. Further thoughts are always given to the bravery of those who entered a tunnel to save our lives, those that worked tirelessly in the emergency response and aftermath of 7/7, and to those that continue to suffer because of the events of that day."

"I reflect on this day, as I always do, that my life is for living to the best I can, because I was lucky to be given the opportunity to do so, unlike those that were senselessly murdered on that day."

Survivors against terror

Conclusion:

From Surviving to Campaigning for Change

These voices tell a painful but vital story. These are people who survived the worst of days—terrorist attacks that changed their lives forever. Some lost loved ones, some were injured, all emotionally scarred. They witnessed horrors no one should see. All have carried the invisible weight of trauma, often in silence
.
They each experienced different forms of support, gaps, and barriers. But one thread runs through every account: the lack of consistent support when people needed it most

Top of that list is the failed mental health response- a response that has been inconsistent, under-resourced, and often re-traumatising.

Time and again, survivors speak of:

- Being handed sleeping pills or told to “go swimming” instead of trauma support.
- Facing panic attacks on public transport.
- Finding healing only years later through privately funded therapy or luck.
- Navigating complex systems alone at a time when just surviving each day was a battle.

It doesn’t have to be this way.

Survivors Against Terror is campaigning to fix this broken system. Drawing on the experience of survivors themselves, we’ve set out a clear Mental Health Policy that demands:

- **Immediate psychological triage and support** for all
- **Long-term, trauma-informed care**, not just a few weeks of generic therapy.
- **A dedicated point of contact** to help survivors navigate services, entitlements and paperwork—especially when grief and trauma make those tasks overwhelming.
- **Proper funding and national standards** so that support is not based on postcode or persistence.

Beyond mental health, media intrusion and dehumanising compensation systems come up time and again. On media intrusion SAT will shortly publish new guidelines for media organisations which we hope media organisations will use to help reduce the harm that has been inflicted.

On compensation - a much needed review into the broken CICA system seems to have been shelved by the government. We are trying to understand why and what happens next

but the status quo cannot be an option.

Survivors shouldn't have had to campaign for the care they deserved from the start. But they do. And now, they are using their stories not just to heal but to drive systemic change so that the next time tragedy strikes, the response is one of compassion, structure, and care.
As Sarah reflected, *"Closure for me has been raising awareness of mental health recovery, supporting others, and knowing I'm looking after myself the best I can."* That is what Survivors Against Terror stands for: not just survival but recovery, dignity, and a better path forward for every person affected by terrorism.

Let no future survivor be left without the care, dignity, and recognition they deserve.

To support the campaign please visit:
survivorsagainstterror.org.uk