



## Health and Wellbeing Cohort Study of Serving and ex-Serving Personnel of the UK Armed Forces: Phase 4

King's Centre for Military Health Research, King's College London

### Participant Information Sheet

(Version: 4.2p/ 01/08/2023)

**Principal Investigators:** Professor Sir Simon Wessely, Professor Nicola Fear, Dr Sharon Stevelink

**Ethical approval:** The study protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee (Ref: 2061/MODREC/21).

**Study Supporters:** The Principal Personnel Officers (Second Sea Lord, Commander Home Command and Air Member for Personnel), as well as SSAFA, Help for Heroes and the Royal British Legion, fully support this study.

Thank you for taking part in the previous phase of our Health and Wellbeing Cohort Study. We are contacting you again to ask you to take part in the next phase of the study. Before deciding whether to take part, we would like to give you information about the study and how you can take part if you wish to do so.

### **1. Who is carrying out the study?**

King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR), King's College London.

### **2. Why is KCMHR carrying out this study?**

This is the fourth phase of our long-term study investigating the health and wellbeing of serving and ex-serving UK military personnel. Last time we found that, although a minority of you were experiencing some health concerns, most of you were doing well. We are contacting you now to see if your health is the same or has changed and also to see how you are doing more generally. It is really important for us to continue to follow your health during your military career, but also after you have left the military. Indeed, many of you will now have left the Armed Forces and we are interested to know more about your experiences of leaving and life after the military.

### **3. Who is funding the study?**

The study is funded by the Office for Veterans' Affairs. However, we are a fully independent academic research group.

### **4. Why have I been invited to take part?**

You are being invited to take part in the study because you previously took part in our Health and Wellbeing Cohort Study (Phase 3, 2014-16), and you told us that you were happy to be contacted again by the research team.

### **5. Do I have to take part?**

No, participation is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to take part. However, to understand more about the pluses and minuses of military life, the health and wellbeing of personnel and how people do when they leave the military, it is important for us to hear from as many people as possible. Therefore, **your participation really counts**. If you do not wish to take part in the study you can let us know by emailing, phoning, or writing to us. Details of how to withdraw from the study can be found in point 15 of the Participant Information Sheet.

### **6. What are the benefits of taking part in this study?**

The main benefit is that you will help us to gain a better understanding of the health, wellbeing, and experiences of serving and ex-serving personnel. This will help to inform policy and may help to ensure that serving and ex-serving personnel get the support they need in the longer term.

## **7. How do I take part in the research?**

Taking part in the study involves completing an online questionnaire, or if you would prefer, you can complete a paper version of the questionnaire. It will take about 45 minutes to complete but may take less time as not all sections will be relevant to you. If you wish to complete the questionnaire online, you can find the link in the invitation email if you received one or your personal login details in the invitation letter. If you partially complete the questionnaire online, it is possible to return to the questionnaire using your specific invitation link to continue filling out your responses. If your questionnaire is partially completed, we will send one prompt to encourage you to complete the questionnaire. If we do not hear from you, we will attempt to make contact through a courtesy call or by letter depending on the contact details you have provided, to understand if you have experienced any technical issues, have queries about the study, or do not wish to proceed further.

As a thank you for taking part in our study, there will be an opportunity to enter a prize draw to win between £25 and £1000. (Prizes: 1 x £1000, 2 x £500, 5 x £100, 5 x £50, 10 x £25). We estimate that approximately 4500 participants may wish to take part in the prize draw. Entering the prize draw will be on an opt-in basis for those who complete the questionnaire.

## **8. What is being asked in the questionnaire?**

The questionnaire asks about your military background, mental health and wellbeing, physical health, your memory, health behaviours, civilian employment, finances, accommodation, families and relationships, social support, loneliness, possible injuries, and the impact of the Afghanistan withdrawal on your wellbeing.

## **9. I feel fine and don't have any problems. Would you still like me to take part?**

Yes, we would like to hear from people who are well and feel that things are going okay, in addition to those who may feel unwell or are experiencing difficulties, to enable us to understand how people are doing.

## **10. I have left Service. Would you still like me to take part?**

Yes, many of you will have left Service and we are keen to hear from you so that we can learn more about the impact of your military career, and your experiences of leaving Service and settling back into civilian life. This will help inform policies for ex-serving personnel and help to ensure that support is available to those who need it.

## **11. Who will get to see the information that I give in the questionnaire and how will my information be stored?**

Your data will be processed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. A database of information has been created and will be kept for future needs of the study.

All data will be regarded as confidential and stored securely. The answers you

give in the questionnaire will be stored separately to your personal details. Only the immediate research team will have access to your information and be able to see your questionnaire responses linked with your identifiable information. If you complete a paper version of the questionnaire, we will share your paper questionnaire responses with a data entry company for data entry purposes. However, all personal identifiers will be removed before sending questionnaires for data entry and appropriate agreements will be in place to ensure compliance with UK GDPR and data protection legislation. We may share deidentified datasets with other research institutions, however, we will never share your questionnaire answers linked with information that would identify you (i.e., your name or date of birth).

We will NOT pass your contact details (address, email address or phone number) to third parties including the Office for Veterans' Affairs and the UK Ministry of Defence. **The only exception** is that we may use a bulk text messaging service to contact you. This will involve using your phone number and no other identifiers. Appropriate agreements will be in place, and we will ensure compliance with UK GDPR and data protection legislation.

The overall findings and results of the study will be published, but your identity and individual responses will be **entirely confidential**. Records will be held for 20 years, and you have the right of access to your records at any time. For further information about the right to see the information we hold about you, please see our Privacy Notice. Details can be found at the end of this information sheet.

## **12. What is data linkage, and will my information be linked in any way?**

Data linkage involves bringing different sources of information together - matching a person's records from one source of information with one or more other sources of information. With your consent, we may need to obtain additional details from your records to help our research. In order to do so, we will need to use information that identifies you (name, sex, date of birth, address, NHS number or Service number) to request your records from central or national information centres, such as medical records, benefit information or records about offending and convictions. This will be done securely and will only involve using your personal identifying information and NOT your questionnaire responses, which will remain completely confidential. Any data we obtain will be stored securely. We will only carry out these data linkages if you consent for us to do so. We will provide updates about data linkages on the study website (details below).

## **13. What is the lawful basis for the processing of my information?**

The lawful basis is:

**Article 6(1) (e) of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR):** processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of the official authority vested in the controller.

**Article 9(2) (j) of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR):** processing is necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or

historical research purposes or statistical purposes in accordance with Article 89(1) based on Union or Member State law which shall be proportionate to the aim pursued, respect the essence of the right to data protection and provide for suitable and specific measures to safeguard the fundamental rights and the interests of the data subject.

#### **14. Will I get to see the results of this study?**

Yes. We will send you a newsletter letting you know about our findings. Providing us with an up-to-date email and postal address will help us to ensure you receive the newsletter. In addition, the research team will publish the results on our website and in academic journals.

#### **15. How do I withdraw from the research?**

It is up to you to decide if you want to take part in this study. If you do not wish to take part you can let us know by emailing, phoning, or writing to us and we will not contact you again about this study. You can also withdraw your questionnaire responses after you have taken part up until the end of data collection (31/08/2023). You can withdraw from the study at any time before this date, even if you begin the online questionnaire and then decide you do not want to take part.

If you do change your mind during the online questionnaire, you can close the browser, but please note that your questionnaire responses will be retained unless you contact us to let us know that you would like to withdraw your questionnaire data.

If you do not wish to take part or wish to withdraw your questionnaire responses, please contact us by email at [kcmhr-cohort@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:kcmhr-cohort@kcl.ac.uk). You can also phone us on +44 7723 476249 or write to us at the address given at the end of this Participant Information Sheet. **Please state your full name and the reference number which can be found on the barcode label on the questionnaire or in the invitation email if you received one.**

#### **16. What are the possible risks of taking part?**

We don't anticipate any risks by you taking part in this research however some survey topics may cause you distress as they cover sensitive issues i.e., mental health, health behaviours and relationships. Although we think it is unlikely, in the event of you suffering any adverse consequences as a result of taking part in this study, participants will be eligible to apply for compensation under the UK Ministry of Defence No Fault Compensation Scheme. You can contact the research team for further advice and information; our contact details can be found at the end of this Participant Information Sheet.

The research team will not act upon the information about your health that you provide in the questionnaire. However, links to a Signposting Booklet providing details of organisations offering information, advice and support will be provided

in the questionnaire should you feel distressed in any way or be experiencing any difficulties. This will be available on the study website, and you can request a hard copy of the booklet by contacting the research team. Please see below for details.

### **17. What if something goes wrong?**

If this project has harmed you in any way or if you wish to make a complaint about the conduct of the project, you can contact the research team. Alternatively, you can contact the Independent Advocate for the study. Contact details are given below.

**If you have any questions and would like to get in touch with the research team, here are our contact details:**

**Email Address:** [kcmhr-cohort@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:kcmhr-cohort@kcl.ac.uk)

**Phone Number:** +44 7723 476249

**Address:** King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR), Third Floor, Weston Education Centre, 10 Cutcombe Road, London, SE5 9RJ

**Further information:**

**Study website:** <https://kcmhr.org/phase4-health-and-wellbeing/>

**Signposting Booklet providing details of help and support**

<https://kcmhr.org/pdf/2021-p4-support.pdf>

**Privacy Notice:** <https://kcmhr.org/phase-4-privacy-notice/>

**Follow us on Twitter:** @kcmhr

**Independent Advocate for the study:**

**Name:** Group Captain Alex Bennett RAF

**Email:** [Alexander.Bennett485@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Alexander.Bennett485@mod.gov.uk)

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