

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

Participant Information Sheet

Ex-Serving Military Personnel's Experiences of Seeking Help for Self-Harm, Suicidal Thoughts, and/or Suicide Attempts

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PhD Supervisors: Dr Sharon Stevelink, Dr Marie-Louise Sharp

Ethical Approval: HR/DP-22/23-33994

Thank you for taking part in Phase 4 of the King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR) Health and Wellbeing Cohort Study. We are contacting you again to ask you to take part in an individual follow-up discussion which is being conducted as part of a PhD study exploring self-harm and suicide behaviours among the UK Armed Forces.

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. Please feel free to ask us if you would like more information, or if there is anything that you do not understand.

1. Who is carrying out the study?

This study is being conducted as part of a PhD being undertaken at the King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR), King's College London. The PhD aims to explore self-harm and suicide behaviours in the UK Armed Forces. The study you are invited to take part in now will be exploring UK ex-serving military personnel's experiences of seeking help for self-harm, suicidal thoughts and/or suicide attempts.

2. Why is KCMHR carrying out this study?

This study is part of our long-term study investigating the health and wellbeing of serving and ex-serving UK military personnel. Although rates of self-harm and suicide behaviours appear to be low in the UK Armed Forces, they have increased in recent years, making it a cause for concern. Little research has investigated self-harm and suicide behaviours specifically in the UK Armed Forces which is something this PhD project aims to address.

3. Who is funding the study?

The research data collected from this study will be used in a PhD study nested in the Phase 4 of the KCMHR Health and Wellbeing Study which is funded by the Office for Veterans' Affairs. However, KCMHR is a fully independent academic research group.

4. Why have I been invited to take part?

You are being invited to take part in this study because you took part in Phase 4 of the KCMHR Health and Wellbeing Cohort Study, you told us you were happy to be contacted again by the research team, and you reported experience of self-harm and/or suicide behaviours in the Phase 4 questionnaire. We are interested in speaking with a range of individuals with different experiences relating to self-harm and suicide behaviours; those who **did and did not seek help**, and those who sought help in a **clinical setting or informally** through friends and family.

5. Do I have to take part?

No, participation is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to take part. If you do not wish to take part in the study you can let us know by emailing, texting, or writing to us. Details of how to opt out or withdraw from the study can be found in point 12 of the Participant Information Sheet.

6. How do I take part in the research?

This study will involve you taking part in a discussion via telephone or Microsoft Teams audio call. A researcher will ask you several questions related to the causes and context of your self-harm and/or suicide behaviours and your experiences of seeking help. For example, “Have you ever experienced self-harm, suicidal thoughts or attempted to take your own life? Can you tell me a little bit more about this?” and “When you realised you were finding things difficult, did you seek any support about your self-harm/suicidal thoughts/suicide attempts?” If you sought help, you will be asked to discuss what challenges you experienced when seeking help and the things that made seeking help easier. If you did not seek help, you will be asked to discuss if there was anything making it difficult to seek help. For example, “Was there anything that put you off or made it harder to seek help? Is there anything that has got in the way?” The discussion will take approximately 60 minutes but may take less time depending on how much information you wish to share. It will be held in a private setting and at a time convenient for you. The discussion will be audio-recorded and all spoken content will be written up and analysed.

We understand this topic may be difficult for individuals to talk about, however we also know that participants value being able to have their experiences heard and their contribution used to help others in the Armed Forces in the future.

7. What are the benefits of taking part in this study?

Participants often find it is valuable to share their experiences. Another benefit is that you will help us to gain a better understanding of help-seeking for self-harm and suicide behaviours among ex-serving personnel of the UK Armed Forces. Additionally, as a thank you for your time, you will receive a £25 e-voucher after the interview is complete.

8. What are the possible risks of taking part?

This discussion will include a conversation about sensitive topics such as self-harm and suicide behaviours. If you feel distressed at any point in the interview, you will be able to take a break or end the interview. You will be provided with a signposting booklet with details of relevant help and support. If you feel distressed during the interview, the researcher will ask you if you would like anyone to be contacted (your sources of support) and give you the opportunity to speak to the study clinician.

9. Who will get to see the information that I share in the discussion 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 information you share in the discussion will be stored separately to your personal details. Only the immediate research team will have access to your information and be able to see the data from your telephone discussion linked with your identifiable information. The recordings of the discussion may be shared with a transcription company for the purposes of writing up the interviews, however appropriate agreements will be in place to ensure compliance with UK GDPR and data protection legislation.

We will NOT pass your contact details (i.e. 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 in the instance that you become distressed and indicate to the researcher that you are at immediate risk to yourself or others, confidentiality will be broken as the researcher is legally obliged to contact the emergency services.

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 10 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 the Participant Information Sheet.

10. What is the lawful basis for the processing of my information?

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 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.

11. Will I get to see the results of this study?

Yes. We will let you know our findings in the Phase 4 Health and Wellbeing Study newsletter. Providing us with an up-to-date email address will help us to ensure you receive the newsletter. In addition, the research team will publish the results on our website, in academic journals and as part of a PhD thesis.

12. How do I withdraw from the research?

It's 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, texting, or writing to us and we will not contact you again about this study. You can also withdraw your data up to 3 months after completing the interview, after which data analysis will have begun. If you do change your mind during the discussion, you can let the researcher know and they will end the discussion. The data from the discussion will be used in analysis unless you let the researcher know that you wish to withdraw.

If you do not wish to take part or wish to withdraw your data, please contact us by email at veterans-study@kcl.ac.uk or write to us at the KCMHR address given in point 13 of this Participant Information Sheet. **Please state your full name and the reference number given in the invitation email, text, or letter.**

13. 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:

Study Team:

Email Address: veterans-study@kcl.ac.uk

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

PhD Supervisor: Dr Sharon Stevelink

Email Address: sharon.stevelink@kcl.ac.uk

Address: Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, 16 De Crespigny Park, London, SE5 8AF

Further information:

Study blog post: <https://kcmhr.org/uk-veterans-experiences-of-seeking-help-for-self-harm-and-suicide-behaviours>

Signposting booklet providing details of help and support: <https://kcmhr.org/pdf/2023-veterans-study-signposting.pdf>

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

Follow us on Twitter: @kcmhr

Independent Advocate for the study:

Name: Gp Capt Alex Bennett

Email: Alexander.Bennett485@mod.gov.uk

Address: Research and Clinical Innovation, HQ Joint medical Group, Academic Department of Military Rehabilitation (ADMIR), DMRC, Stanford Hall, Nottinghamshire, LE12 5B