



INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Understanding Social Support in Ex-military Personnel
who Deployed to Afghanistan:
The ADVANCE-SOCIAL Study



Thank you for taking part in the Armed Services Trauma Rehabilitation Outcome (ADVANCE) study. We are contacting you again to ask you to take part in a follow-up interview which is being conducted as part of a PhD study at King's College London. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask the researcher, Laura Grover (laura.grover@kcl.ac.uk), if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the project?

The purpose of the project is to better understand the relationships of ex-serving military personnel following deployment to Afghanistan. This includes relationships with friends, family members, colleagues, or other members of the community, and how these relationships support the individual and fulfil their needs. This project aims to understand how these relationships may be affected by having a physical combat injury or mental health problem. From these findings, recommendations can be made for the Ministry of Defence (MoD), National Health Service (NHS) and other charities on how best to support military personnel before, during and after service to ensure optimal health and wellbeing.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You are being invited to participate in this project because you are currently taking part in the ADVANCE study. In our sample, we are including ADVANCE participants who:

- Are aged between 18 and 65 years old
- Have left the military
- Hold a permanent address in the UK

What will happen if I take part?

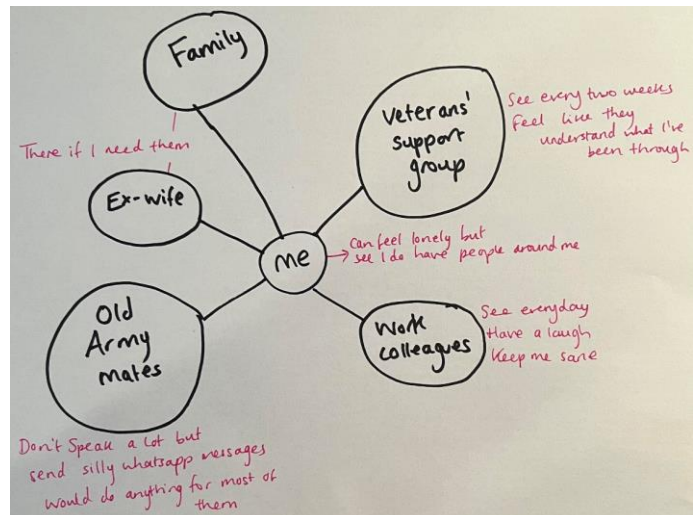
If you choose to take part in the project you will be asked to 1) create a "social network map" and 2) complete an interview. **You can still take part in the interview if you choose not to create a social network map.**

1. Social network map

A social network map involves writing or drawing out your "social network". This may include family, friends, colleagues or others. This is a helpful way to visualise the people who are present in your life and what they do for you. This can be used in the interview to help participants remember key individuals and enables the interviewer to tailor the interview to each participant. It doesn't matter how small or large the network is and examples will be provided along with an instruction sheet (see next page for an example). If you are short of time, you can jot some notes down on an email.

2. Interview

After creating a social network map, you will be asked to participate in an interview via telephone or Microsoft (MS) Teams audio call at a date and time suggested by you and separate from your ADVANCE visit to Stanford Hall. **You will not need to come to Stanford Hall.** The interview will take approximately 60 minutes but will vary according to how much information you are willing to share.



The interview will cover your experiences of support from your relationships. We will be speaking to participants with a range of experiences, including those who:

- **Do, or do not,** have a **physical injury** or **mental health problem**
- **Do, or do not,** have **supportive family and friends** around them

Example questions may include:

- Do you consider yourself to be someone who likes social contact?
- Which individuals, or groups, do you feel most comfortable spending time with?
- Do you feel part of a community of veterans?
- How supported do you feel by your relationships?
- How did your relationships with others change after discharge from military service?

With your consent, the interview will be audio-recorded. If the interview is completed using MS Teams, the camera will be turned off. After the interview, the spoken content will be written up and analysed whilst maintaining confidentiality.

Do I have to take part?

No, participation is voluntary. You should only take part if you want to and choosing not to will not disadvantage you in any way. Once you have read this information sheet, please contact us if you have any questions that will help you make a decision. If you decide to take part we will ask you to sign a consent form and you will be given a copy of this consent form to keep. You can post or email a signed completed consent form to the research team, who will be responsible for arranging and conducting the interviews (laura.grover@kcl.ac.uk). Your consent will be checked again at the time of interview.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

We do not anticipate that there will be risks for taking part in this study. Describing difficult events can, in some cases, be distressing. The ADVANCE signposting information booklet contains information on support services for ex-serving personnel and you may find this helpful if you feel distressed during or after your interview. We will also have a clinician available to speak to anyone who might require additional support.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You may find it valuable to share your experiences of support from social relationships for your own personal development and reflection. If you are interested, the ADVANCE team can send you a copy of the final report so you can see what we have done.

Incentives

As a thank you for your time, you will receive a £25 e-voucher after the interview is complete. This will be sent to you via email or post.

Data handling and confidentiality

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. If you consent to creating a social network map, any identifiable information will be removed when published. The information you share in the interview 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 interview linked with your identifiable information. Your data will be stored in two ways:

1. Identifiable data

The ADVANCE study stores identifiable data such as your name, date of birth, home address, email address and telephone number. This data is stored securely in a password protected database on a Ministry of Defence (MoD) server. The ADVANCE-SOCIAL study will not have access to this data unless you give consent. Consent can be given in written or audio format. If provided in audio format, this will be transcribed and deleted immediately, and the written document will be stored securely. This will not be held beyond one month after the project's completion (i.e. January 2025). The initial contact will come from the ADVANCE recruitment team. Once the study is complete, the ADVANCE-SOCIAL study team will no longer have access to your identifiable data.

2. Pseudonymised data

The term 'pseudonymised data' means that we strip away any identifiers, such as name, home address, date of birth and replace it with a unique study code. The audio file of your interview will be stored under a unique study code on a secure server at the King's Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR). The recordings of the interview may be shared with a transcription company for writing up the interviews, however appropriate agreements will be in place to ensure compliance with UK GDPR.

We will NOT pass your contact details to third parties. **The only exception** is if you indicate that you are at immediate risk to yourself or others, confidentiality may be broken as the researcher is legally obliged to contact the emergency services. Disclosures of violent behaviour or drug use may be considered only if there is immediate risk of harm. We will ask for your location at time of interview to facilitate this and delete it immediately after. The overall findings and results of the study will be published, but your identity and individual responses will be **entirely confidential**. After transcription and data analysis, the audio file will be destroyed. Pseudonymised transcripts will be kept by KCMHR for 20 years as they may use the pseudonymised data in future research (with your consent).

King's College London has a responsibility to keep information collected about you safe and secure, and to ensure the integrity of research data. Specialist teams within King's College London continually assess and ensure that data is held in the most appropriate and secure way. This may include storage of anonymised or pseudonymised data with a contracted GDPR compliant third party storage provider within the UK, where they are assessed as the best data storage option. In such cases the third party storage provider will not have access to any data that could directly identify you. If you would like more information about how your data will be processed under the terms of UK data protection laws please visit the link below. If you would prefer this printed and posted please let us know <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/support/research-ethics/kings-college-london-statement-on-use-of-personal-data-in-research>

What if I change my mind about taking part?

You are free to stop participating at any point of the project, without having to give a reason. This will not affect you in any way. You are able to withdraw your data from the project up to 3 months after completing your interview and we will not retain the information you have given us so far. Three months after your interview, withdrawal of your data will no longer be possible due to the commencement of data analysis.

How is the project being funded?

This project is being funded by the ADVANCE Charity. Key contributors to this charity are the Headley Court Charity (principal funder), HM Treasury (LIBOR Grant), Help for Heroes, Nuffield Trust for the Forces of the Crown, Forces in Mind Trust, National Lottery Community Fund, Blesma - The Limbless Veterans and the UK Ministry of Defence.

What will happen to the results of the project?

The results of the project will be summarised in a PhD thesis and written up into a report that will be publicly available and used in academic publications and presentations. All outputs will use pseudonymised data meaning that you will not be identified.

Who should I contact for further information?

If you have any questions or require more information about this project, please contact me using the following contact details:

Name: Laura Grover; Email: laura.grover@kcl.ac.uk; Contact number: 07731 385537

What if I have further questions, or 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 King's College London using the details below for further advice and information:

PhD supervisor: Professor Nicola Fear, nicola.t.fear@kcl.ac.uk, KCMHR, Third Floor, Weston Education Centre, 10 Cutcombe Road, London, SE5 9RJ

Thank you for reading this information sheet and for considering taking part in this research.