

The National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health (NCISH)
Suicide in former service personnel of the UK armed forces
Study summary

This study will update the previous work of the National Confidential Inquiry into Suicide and Safety in Mental Health (NCISH) which examined rates and risk factors for suicide in individuals who had left the UK Armed Forces between 1996 and 2005. You can read more about this earlier study [here](#). Since then there has been no systematic investigation of suicide in UK veterans. It has been suggested that veterans may be a potentially vulnerable group for multiple reasons, including traumatic life events, experiences whilst in Service, the difficulties associated with the transition to civilian life, mental health difficulties and high rates of homelessness and alcohol and substance misuse.

The main aim of this current study is to investigate suicide risk amongst those who have left the UK Armed Forces. Specifically we want to:

- Investigate age-specific rates of suicide in veterans and compare these with rates in the serving and general populations;
- Identify risk factors, characteristics, and contact with health or other support services among veterans;
- Describe patterns in suicide rates in veterans and compare these with patterns in the serving and general populations;
- Use coroners' records (or police death reports in Scotland) to understand the factors related to suicide.

To do this, we will conduct the study in two phases.

Phase one

We will conduct a retrospective UK-wide cohort study linking information held by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) on (i) all personnel discharged from the Armed Forces (from 1996 to 2018) and (ii) all suicide deaths amongst serving personnel (from 1997 to 2018) with information held by NCISH at the University of Manchester on (i) suicide deaths in the general population and (ii) suicide deaths of people who had been in contact with specialist mental health services in the previous 12 months.

Phase two

We will gather information on the factors related to suicide from coroners' records (in England and Wales) and police sudden death reports (in Scotland) on approximately 200 veterans who died by suicide between 1st January 2007 and 31st December 2017, as identified in phase one.

It is hoped that this study will provide a clearer estimate of the number of veterans who die by suicide in the UK and identify key risk factors that could help us inform suicide prevention in veterans. A report of the findings will be shared amongst those responsible for delivering services to both serving and military veterans, ensuring relevant initiatives/action plans are put in place to address any adverse findings.