

**Participant Information Sheet**

**Project/Study Title:** A NATURE-BASED INTERVENTION TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH: EFFICACY OF AN ANGLING INTERVENTION FOR MILITARY VETERANS AND EMERGENCY SERVICE PERSONNEL WITH POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD). RCP – 17262

**ERAMS Ethics reference:** ETH2324-0710. 20/02/2024

**Researchers:** Dr Nicholas Cooper, Professor Sheina Orbell, Dr Mike Rogerson, Dr Mark Wheeler, Dr Guyan Sloane

**What is this and why me?**

This study investigates whether angling in a natural setting can help enhance military veterans' and emergency service personnel's mental wellbeing and reduce their PTSD-associated symptoms. We have invited you to consider participating in this study because either you are a military veteran &/or you work in the emergency services and you have indicated initial interest, after you heard about the study via one of our recruitment avenues, which included information leaflets and verbal descriptions at relevant charities and support groups.

**What will it involve?**

You are invited to participate in a fishing experience with a small group of other veterans that will last two days and one night. Angling coaches will be available to offer you instruction in fishing. If you agree to take part, you will be randomly assigned to either: (a) the 'fishing-first' group (and you will be invited to a fishing event at Great Oakley in Essex on [date to be confirmed here] or (b) the 'wait-list' group (and you will be invited to a fishing event at Great Oakley in Essex on [date to be confirmed here] We will ask you to provide demographic information, contact details, and information about your military history and diagnosis. We will also ask you to complete a short questionnaire to assess your current mental health in relation to PTSD symptoms. Over the coming weeks we will recontact you ask you to fill in several short questionnaires, aimed as assessing your mental health and wellbeing 2-weeks before, immediately before, and 2- and 4-weeks, 6-months and 12-months after the fishing event. If you are in the wait-list group, we will ask you to complete the questionnaires 2-3 months before you fishing event and 4-weeks after it. The questionnaires will include measures of PTSD, depression, anxiety, social function, wellbeing, psychological growth and loneliness.

**Anonymity and Confidentiality of Your Participation and Data***Fishing Event*

As the fishing event is a group event that will be attended by staff and other participants, your participation at the fishing event will not be anonymous and you will be personally identifiable to others in attendance. To protect everybody's confidentiality, all staff and participants are required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement (immediately following the giving of Consent to participate).

*Data*

All data collected through this study will be treated as confidential and will be anonymised and aggregated so you will not be individually identifiable in any reports or publications from this research.

All data that you provide online will be stored only in password-protected databases that are accessible only to the research team. We will use a separate, password-protected 'code-breaker' file to enable us to link data you provide at different times, whilst keeping

your generated data (demographic information and questionnaire answers) anonymised in the main database.

Until data is entered onto the password-protected database, (i) data collected online will be stored on our password-protected Qualtrics website, which uses UK-based servers; (ii) data collected via paper-copies of questionnaires will be kept in locked filing cabinets in University of Essex Offices.

All data will be inputted to the main password-protected database within 4 weeks of collection, at which point, the Qualtrics-stored or paper copy will be deleted / destroyed.

All information collected will be kept securely and will only be accessible by the named researchers (above) and [name to be confirmed], their research associate. Only your anonymised data may be shared in permanent, publicly accessible archives accessible from any country.

### **Are there any potential risks of taking part?**

Potential risks include those commonly associated with outdoor pursuits, such as: slips, trips and falls; waterside safety; immersion in water; waterborne infections; exposure to animal waste; thunder and lightning. Professional fishing coaches will be provided on a ratio of 2 coaches: 1 participant and will give instruction with regard to safe angling.

In terms of mental health, as part of our risk mitigation and safeguarding strategy, a mental health professional will attend to observe and monitor any signs of distress, but no psychological therapy will be offered during the fishing event. The mental health professional's role will be to administer mental health first aid in the event that any participants' PTSD symptoms are triggered during the fishing event.

### **Financial Remuneration**

We are pleased to offer you £50 towards covering your travel expenses incurred attending the fishing experience.

### **Potential Benefits of the Research.**

The purpose of the research is to find out if angling in a natural setting is beneficial. To do this we need to collect information before and after the experience. Your participation will help us to discover if this is useful and potentially beneficial to other veterans in future.

### **What do I do next?**

If you would like to participate in this study, please read the remainder of this information sheet, and then consider and complete the Consent statements that you will find next on this website. If you are using paper copies of these documents, please ask for if needed, and then read and consider the paper copy. Both paper and online versions contain identical information.

### **Can I withdraw?**

Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason and without penalty. If you wish to withdraw, simply close your browser at any time, or contact either Guyan Sloane at [GS16502@essex.ac.uk](mailto:GS16502@essex.ac.uk) or Dr Nick Cooper at [ncooper@essex.ac.uk](mailto:ncooper@essex.ac.uk).

If any data have already been collected, upon withdrawal, your data will be destroyed if possible, unless you inform the researchers that you are happy for them to use such data

Department of Psychology

for the scientific purposes of the project. It will not be possible to destroy any anonymised data that have already been shared on data sharing repositories.

For more information about the study and your rights as a participant in this research please download a copy of the participant information sheet which can be found at this link [insert hyperlink to full information on website here].

This research has been reviewed and approved by a University of Essex Ethics Sub-Committee (ETH2324-0710). If you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of the study or you have a complaint, please feel free to contact us at any time (ncooper@essex.ac.uk).

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If you feel it more appropriate you can speak to the Head of the Department of Psychology (Tel: 01206 873422; e-mail: paulmann@essex.ac.uk), or to the Research Governance and Planning Manager, Research and Enterprise Office (Tel: 01206 873561; e-mail ms21994@essex.ac.uk). Please include the ERAMS reference that can be found at the top of this document. The Data Controller for this research is the University of Essex, and the contact for queries or matters relating to data control is the University Information Assurance Manager (dpo@essex.ac.uk).