

## **MONARCH Study Update and FAQs – June 2024**

I am delighted to post the third FAQ document for the MONARCH Study. This primarily covers progress and developments since the previous iterations, but also includes answers to questions I am asked about MONARCH.

My role involves managing relationships with charities within the Armed Forces Charity Sector to ensure as much data is made available to the Project as possible. I'm here to keep you updated, answer any questions you may have, and to take back suggestions for future developments to Professor Matt Kiernan and his team. Do get in touch with me at [meri@mericonsulting.co.uk](mailto:meri@mericonsulting.co.uk) if there is anything I can help with, that you'd like to discuss, or if you'd like to become involved.

Meri Mayhew

Charity Stakeholder Relationship Manager to the MONARCH Study

### **1. What has happened with the MONARCH Study since the last FAQ document in March 2024?**

There have been a number of important developments since March 2024. These include:

- a. **Growing the dataset and aggregation.** At the time of writing, the dataset has data on over 70,000 individuals. This number continues to grow as more charities share their data. As well as adding new data, the team at the University of Northumbria continue to develop, test and improve the process of data cleaning, labelling and aggregation.
- b. **Development of the interactive dashboard.** The main output of the MONARCH Study will be an interactive dashboard, and this is being developed based on the feedback from the focus groups held in late 2023. A prototype should be available for testing with a small number of people in the next few months.
- c. **Data Strategy Working Group (DSWG).** This important Group continues to meet quarterly to help inform and guide the work of the MONARCH Study (more below).
- d. **NHS data.** The University has been working up an application to the NHS seeking ethical approval to share data with the MONARCH Study. This is just about to be submitted.
- e. **Cobseo Executive Committee meeting.** Professor Matt Kiernan and I were delighted to be invited to update the Cobseo Executive Committee about the MONARCH Study at their meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

### **2. What is the process if I am thinking of sharing my organisation's data?**

The process is as follows:

- a. An initial call with me – and potentially other members of the MONARCH Team - to explain more about MONARCH, and to answer any questions you have. We're all happy to answer as many questions as you have and there are no silly questions!
- b. If you are happy to proceed to the next stage, then a Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) needs to be signed by your organisation and the University of Northumbria. This is to ensure strong governance and compliance in data management before any data is shared.

- c. With a DSA fully signed we can move on to consider the process of sharing data. At this stage you will also be invited to join the Data Strategy Working Group – see below.
- d. We start with a small test sample of data to make sure everything works and is clear before a full dataset is shared. This test sample is currently sent direct to the data team at Northumbria University in the form of a password protected excel spreadsheet (see the next question about the data sharing mechanism). We ask that you do not do anything to try and process the data yourself – please send data in as raw a form as possible for the Team to process. They have lots of experience in receiving data recorded in different ways and from different systems.
- e. The team at Northumbria will work through this small dataset and come back to you with any questions or to seek clarification. This may be fairly straightforward and just involve a couple of clarifications, or there may be something more fundamental the team need to understand about how you collect and record your data.
- f. When everything is clarified from the sample data then a full dataset is requested. This would be for data from around 2018 (or later depending on data available) up until the end of 2023.
- g. The team at Northumbria will then incorporate your full dataset into the MONARCH dataset.
- h. At the end of the process you will be given the percentage of data that could be used in the MONARCH dataset from the data that you shared. This figure is not shared with anyone else. We hope this is helpful as an indication as to the completeness and accuracy of your data.

The timeline for the process is entirely to suit you. There is no time pressure as we know lots of organisations have little capacity to support this. We are keen to minimise the work we ask of you.

### **3. What data will I be asked to provide?**

We ask for some essential data, including that a person has received assistance (either financial or non-financial), and then as much of the desirable data as you collect. We know that not every organisation collects everything we are capturing, and so it's not a problem if you don't collect everything listed. The current data requirement table is included in the annex for information – please note the distinction between 'essential' and 'desirable' data. This table changes evolves in response to the data that policy makers and service delivers need. For example, we are just revising the table to collect data about nationality so that more can be understood about the non-UK cohort.

### **4. How often will I be asked to provide data?**

At the moment we are asking for data annually as this is considered an appropriate frequency to provide information about trends over time. This frequency may change in the future if, collectively, it is felt to be more useful.

### **5. What is the future plan for data collection?**

As explained above, data is currently collected via a password-protected excel spreadsheet. We are currently exploring the use of a secure portal so that data can be uploaded securely by the data provider, and then retrieved securely by the team at Northumbria.

## 6. What is the Data Strategy Working Group (DSWG)?

Organisations sharing their data have an extremely important role to play in several ways. Firstly, the role of the Working Group is to use their collective experience and knowledge to help shape the data collection by the charity sector to ensure that the best possible resource is provided for those organisations providing services for members of the Armed Forces Community. This could include providing feedback on what is already being collected, or ideas for what could be delivered in future.

A second objective is for the Group to consider how to operationalise the information provided by MONARCH so the sector can evolve from 'reacting' to those seeking help, to acting earlier in order to 'prevent' veterans becoming in much greater need of assistance. In time this will improve the lives of beneficiaries and reduce the cost and workload of the charity sector.

The third objective is for members of the Working Group to continue to monitor the sector environment for other data initiatives and feed back to this Group so that MONARCH can remain as relevant and effective as possible.

The DSWG is chaired by Sir Andrew Gregory of SSAFA, with virtual meetings held quarterly.

## 7. Can I visit the University of Northumbria to understand more about MONARCH and to see a demonstration?

Absolutely! We have been pleased to welcome several visitors to Northumbria (Coach Lane Campus, Newcastle) to learn more about MONARCH. If this is something you would be interested in doing, then please let me know so I can make the arrangements.

## Annex A. Data requirement table (February 2024)

A dataset of **raw transactions**. Each transaction should include:

Variable	Format	Reason
<b>Essential Data:</b>		
Service Number	String	Hashing – Uniquely identifying a person across charities
Date of birth	dd/mm/yyyy	Hashing – Uniquely identifying a person across charities
Gender	Male/Female/Other	Hashing – Uniquely identifying a person across charities
Service	Army/RAF/Navy	Hashing – Uniquely identifying a person across charities
Assistance provided/needs met/transaction reason	E.g., Mobility, debt, counselling, etc.	Basic statistical unit on which we base the count of needs
Type of assistance	Financial/Non-Financial	It is important to understand the kind of service and assign a label
Date of assistance	dd/mm/yyyy	Location of need of the veteran in time

<b>Desirable Data:</b>		
Amount spent		Reporting
Date of payment	dd/mm/yyyy	Location of need of the veteran in time
Date of case opened	dd/mm/yyyy	Location of need of the veteran in time
Management system	E.g., Mosaic/CMS/Other	It is important to find the same transaction in different datasets and avoid double counting
Management system ID	E.g., Mosaic ID, CMS ID.	It is important to find the same transaction in different datasets and avoid double counting
Beneficiary	Veteran / family member/service personnel	Know the beneficiary of the assistance provided
Marital Status	Single / Married / Widowed / Other	Risk factor analysis
Postcode (full)		Risk factor analysis
Accommodation type	Apartment / House / Homeless	Risk factor analysis
Homeowner/Renting		Risk factor analysis
Rank		Risk factor analysis
Employed	Yes / No	Risk factor analysis
Type of employment	Full time/ part time / self employed	Risk factor analysis
Job		Risk factor analysis
Place of birth (postcode, complete)		Risk factor analysis
In receipt of other benefits (statutory)(yes/no)	Yes / No	Risk factor analysis
Type of benefit received		Risk factor analysis
Branch/Corps/Regiment/Profession in service		IE what was their job in service. Occupational exposure classifications
Town of enlistment		Possible risk factor
Other		Anything else you think could be a possible risk factor