

26th January 2022

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

FiMT/2202: Identifying and examining the barriers to female veterans making a successful and sustainable transition to civilian life in the UK.

FiMT Background

1. Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) was established in 2012 with a £35 million endowment from the Big Lottery Fund, now The National Lottery Community Fund. Our vision is for all ex-Service personnel and their families to lead fulfilled civilian lives and our mission is to enable ex-Service personnel and their families to make a successful and sustainable transition into civilian life. Our strategy is to provide an evidence base that identifies barriers to a successful and sustainable transition, identifies what works to address these barriers and then use this evidence base to influence policy making and service delivery across the UK.

Context

2. Each year over 1,000 Servicewomen leave the UK Armed Forces¹. The majority make a successful transition into civilian life and would recommend a career in the military to other women², with their lives having been enriched by their time in service. However, some female veterans need, or will need, additional support as a consequence of their unique experience as a Servicewoman which may differ from the needs of ex-Servicemen³ or the needs of the female civilian population as a whole.
3. The majority of UK research on veterans has been conducted with male veterans which has resulted in a lack of evidence available on the potential or perceived barriers that prevent female veterans from making a successful and sustainable transition. The limited evidence that does exist suggests that female veterans may be at a greater risk of certain physical and mental health conditions, in comparison to women who have not served in the military⁴. Research has also found that female veterans are less likely to be employed than male veterans and more likely to be economically inactive. The same research found that female veterans can face a 'double whammy' when seeking civilian employment, experiencing the challenges faced by females in general and those faced by Service leavers in general⁵. There is limited evidence available on the financial and relationship-related barriers and no research on barriers to housing for female veterans. Research has however found that female veterans are less likely to identify as a 'veteran' than their male counterparts and, while it has been suggested that female veterans are more likely to access medical support from mainstream

¹ We Also Served 2021, Anglia Ruskin University

² Protecting those who protect us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life 2021, House of Commons Defence Committee

³ For more information on the unique barriers experienced by ex-Service personnel, please refer to our [Policy Statement on Successful Transition](#).

⁴ We Also Served 2021, Anglia Ruskin University

⁵ Female Service Leavers and Employment 2019, Cranfield University

services than male veterans, they may underutilise veteran-specific services which tend to be 'male-dominated'⁶.

4. Without evidence on the nature and impact of the barriers faced by female veterans in making their transition to civilian life in the UK, it is difficult to assess the relative disadvantage experienced by female veterans compared to male veterans, or the impact of such barriers on female veterans compared to females generally. Equally a lack of evidence impedes understanding of what works to address these barriers, and to know what policy and/or service delivery changes are required to enable female veterans to overcome them, where applicable. This study will seek to fill this gap in knowledge.
5. In addition to the lack of evidence on the barriers faced by female veterans in making a successful and sustainable transition to civilian life in the UK, there is currently no clear national picture of provision (charitable and statutory) which is specifically targeted at female veterans.
6. This study should utilise and build on the [work funded by the Office for Veterans Affairs](#) (OVA) which seeks to better understand the barriers to female veterans accessing veteran-specific support services provided by the government and charity sector. It is intended that this commission will build on the OVA's research by identifying the barriers faced by female veterans in making a successful transition into civilian life, map the support available to them, provide any additional evidence on barriers to accessing support if not already evidenced in the OVA's research, and provide an overview on best practice for supporting female veterans who face barriers in making successful and sustainable transition to civilian life.

Scope

7. In seeking to understand the unique or additional barriers faced by female veterans when making a successful and sustainable transition to civilian life in the UK, this study should look beyond health and wellbeing needs, to examine all potential barriers for female veterans and what works to address them. This should include, but not be limited to, potential barriers related to housing, health, relationships, and finance.
8. This study should have comprehensive Tri-Service representation and bidders should make sure they have robust recruitment methods in place to ensure female veterans from each of the Services take part. Where they exist, this study should seek to highlight differences in the barriers found across the different Services.
9. This project should seek to:
 - Map the support needs of female veterans, identifying where these are unique or more challenging compared to females in UK society generally.
 - Identify the unique or additional barriers faced by female veterans in making a successful and sustainable transition to civilian life in the UK. This should include any specific sub-groups or demographics of female veterans who are most likely to face these barriers.
 - Map the current statutory and charitable support available to female veterans in the UK.
 - Where appropriate, build on the OVA's research by providing additional evidence on the reasons why female veterans may not access support.
 - Examine and map examples of best practice for supporting female veterans, who have previously struggled to make a successful and sustainable transition but who, following specific support, have overcome barriers and improved their outcomes.

⁶ We Also Served 2021, Anglia Ruskin University

Timescale

10. FiMT is seeking to commission this research project by the Spring of 2022 and, although there is no specified completion date, the Trust expects it to be completed and published within 18-24 months of commencement. The proposed timetable for the tendering process is as follows:

- Deadline for submission of EOIs: **5pm on Thursday 24th February 2022**
- Invitation to tender issued: Friday 4th March 2022
- Deadline for submission of tenders: Thursday 24th March 2022
- Interviews: w/c 4th April
- Project start: May 2022

Approximate value of the award

11. The award is expected to be up to £200,000 (including VAT where chargeable) but is subject to negotiation.

Methodology

12. While we welcome additional suggestions on the best way to conduct this research, it should include:

- Qualitative research to examine the lived experience of female veterans from across the three Services and across the spectrum of transition experience to identify the unique barriers female veterans face when making a successful and sustainable transition to civilian life.
- Quantitative research to identify the additional or unique disadvantages faced by female veterans versus an appropriate comparator population such as all male veterans and/or the female non-veteran civilian population. Where this is not possible, the research should be explicit about this and the reasons why.
- A comprehensive review of currently available support e.g. statutory and charitable support services, for female veterans across the UK which are designed to enable female veterans to overcome barriers to a successful transition.
- Qualitative research with key stakeholders with responsibility for statutory and charitable service commissioning and provision available to, or specifically for, female veterans.
- A comprehensive review of the evidence base for, and generated by, existing support to start to identify what might work to address the barriers that have been identified for female veterans, recognising that female veterans are not a homogenous group.

Impact and Influence

13. In line with Forces in Mind Trust's impact approach, where additional disadvantage has been identified, this research should also identify what is currently known about what works to address this additional disadvantage and suggest what needs to happen to effect positive change i.e., remove this additional disadvantage. Recommendations should follow the 'SMART' objectives principle where possible and be mapped onto specific stakeholders at as granular a level of detail as is possible.

14. Through identifying areas of best practice, bidders should consider how best practice can be replicated nationally or developed into a model of good practice for enabling female veterans to overcome barriers to a successful and sustainable transition.

15. All proposals should identify practical ways to ensure effective dissemination of research findings and recommendations taking account of the environment and organisations in which findings and

recommendations would be applied. This could include, but should not be limited to, workshops, case studies, presentations at relevant conferences, and designed infographics and animations. We expect the successful bidder to engage with relevant stakeholders throughout the research to ensure maximum impact and consideration should be given to how best to achieve this. We welcome innovative ideas. The resources and time needed to complete these outputs, including any outsourced design work, should be included within the overall costings.

Intellectual Property

16. In commissioning this research, the title to all intellectual property rights created or developed during this research (“Foreground Intellectual Property”) will pass to Forces in Mind Trust. Forces in Mind Trust will grant the researcher a royalty-free license (and sub-license if required) to use and exploit the Foreground Intellectual Property.

Communication of findings

17. Forces in Mind Trust expects that any findings from this project would be made available in the public domain. This will include posting the final report on our website and the Veterans and Families Research Hub as a minimum but may also include other written outputs such as factsheets, evidence summaries or online blogs specifically targeted to a relevant, non-academic policymaker or service provider. This could also include oral presentations at conferences and meetings with relevant stakeholders. Forces in Mind Trust would also expect consideration to be given to how findings may be published in quality peer-reviewed open access journals.

Lead organisation and named participants

18. The credibility, experience, and expertise of the lead organisation and associated partners are critical to the success of this project, both in terms of access to subjects and the final output. We can fund work from registered charities and registered companies.

Application process

19. All Expressions of Interest (EOIs) will be assessed by the deadline stated above. Any EOIs received after this deadline will not be considered. A detailed Invitation to Tender (ITT) will be sent to all those organisations invited to tender for this research/project.

Ethics

20. Forces in Mind Trust expects all research to be carried out in an ethical manner and bidders must be able to demonstrate how this will be achieved.

Selection Principles

21. FiMT will use the following selection criteria to determine which organisations will be invited to tender:
 - The quality of the EOI. Robust and thorough research is the primary selection criteria.
 - The clarity of the EOI in setting out how the research will be carried out.
 - The likelihood of the EOI’s Impact and Influence proposal to make long-term and sustainable impact.
 - The credibility, experience and expertise of the organisation(s) seeking to deliver this project, both in terms of delivery and in the exploitation of the subsequent findings.

- The experience of conducting research with women and ex-Servicepeople, as well as knowledge of the transition process from the UK Armed Forces.
- Ethical credentials.

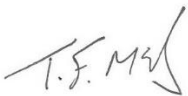
We will endeavour to offer feedback on all unsuccessful EOIs.

Information to be included in the EOI and deadline for submission

22. We expect the EOI to be a maximum of 8 pages and to contain the following information:

- EOI reference number and title.
- Name and details of lead organisation, including postal, email and website addresses, type of organisation (public, private, voluntary and community sector or other) with any registration numbers, telephone numbers, and details for the person point of contact.
- Name and contact details of any other organisation involved.
- An outline of how the research would be carried out or the programme delivered. This should include how access to a cohort/cohorts would be achieved.
- Examples of other work you have already carried out on this subject or in this area and your expertise on this subject.
- A broad indication of cost including the proportion that would be requested from Forces in Mind Trust.

EOIs must be submitted via applications@fim-trust.org by **5pm on Thursday 24th February**. If you have any questions or wish to discuss any aspect of this research/project prior to submission, please contact Isabel Summers, Assistant Head of Policy, at isabel@fim-trust.org.



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