

26<sup>th</sup> January 2022

## REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

### FiMT/2201: Improving life skills in the UK Armed Forces

#### Forces in Mind Trust 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. Life skills contribute to the promotion of personal and social development, the prevention of health and social problems and even the protection of human rights<sup>1</sup> in the sense of facilitating the practice and reinforcement of psychosocial skills in a culturally and developmentally appropriate way. While there is no agreed definition of life skills, the World Health Organization has identified five basic areas. These include decision making and problem solving, creative and critical thinking, communication and interpersonal skills, self-awareness and empathy, and coping with emotions and stress. Other organisations have taken a more practical approach, focusing on financial awareness, digital awareness, effective networking, employability and skills development<sup>2</sup>. For those transitioning out of the Armed Forces, having a strong set of life skills is crucial:

*A good transition is one that enables ex-Service personnel to be sufficiently resilient to adapt successfully to civilian life, both now and in the future. This resilience includes finance, psychological, and emotional resilience, and encompasses the ex-Service person and their immediate families<sup>3</sup>.*

3. The majority of ex-Service personnel and their families make a successful transition into civilian life and leave with valuable experience and skills. Some struggle however, and a lack of 'life' or 'civilian' skills are phrases sometimes used to describe an overall naivety or lack of awareness of the norms and practices understood by civilian society<sup>4</sup> which can contribute to poor outcomes during transition. Even for those who are well-prepared practically, the cultural differences can come as a surprise. Previous research has identified several areas where ex-Service personnel and their families are unprepared and lack the tools to address or overcome challenges encountered in civilian life<sup>5</sup>. These include:

- Finance. There can be relatively low levels of financial literacy and numeracy within the Armed Forces, particularly for those who join the military from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Service leavers can have a limited understanding of the costs of civilian life, have poor finance and

---

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organisation, 1999

<sup>2</sup> [barclayslifeskills.com](http://barclayslifeskills.com)

<sup>3</sup> [The Transition Mapping Study](#)

<sup>4</sup> [How Counter-Insurgency Warfare Experiences Impact upon the Post-Deployment Reintegration of Land-Based British Army Personnel](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Lifting Our Sights: The Transition Journey](#)

debt management skills and lack the understanding of how this may impact on them and their family<sup>6</sup>.

- Housing. For those who use Service accommodation, the relatively low cost and general availability of housing provision within the Armed Forces means that Service leavers and their families can leave with minimal understanding of the civilian housing market and can have unrealistic expectations. They can struggle with the higher cost of civilian housing and the practicalities of maintaining a tenancy such as paying bills and budgeting<sup>7</sup>. The myth that Service personnel have automatic access to social housing on discharge also remains for some within the serving community.
- Employment. Some Service leavers have unrealistic expectations of the civilian labour market, and the level of pay and seniority they can expect. They can also lack employability skills such as networking, interviewing and CV writing<sup>8</sup>. Some partners and spouses may also have a limited understanding of civilian employment if they have been economically inactive while their partner was serving.
- Emotional adjustment. The transition process can be a culture shock for Service leavers and can lead to adjustment difficulties for personnel and their families who are moving from a tight knit social environment with a strong sense of purpose, identity and camaraderie to a new civilian home where they may need to adapt to new roles both within and outside of the home.

Research has also highlighted a broader deficit in 'life skills' which is associated with a wider lack of resilience to be able to cope with normal bureaucracy and personal administration, to understand how to find and access avenues for help and support such as welfare benefits or social services<sup>9</sup>, of allowing set-backs to multiply and compound themselves to the detriment of family, or of losing the sense of worth and self-confidence that underpins basic coping mechanisms.

4. In 2019, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) published its Defence Holistic Transition Policy<sup>10</sup> (JSP100) with the aim of supporting and empowering service personnel and their families to transition successfully into civilian life. As part of the policy, the MOD committed to developing a tri-Service 'Life Skills' package for personnel to help them prepare for, and understand, the civilian world. The package will be developed together with monitoring and assessment tools so that interventions for vulnerable personnel can be introduced where needed. The MOD is currently developing the Life Skills package and it is intended that this project will inform policy development.

## Scope

5. As highlighted above, previous research has shown that some ex-Service personnel and their families can lack the life skills needed for a successful transition into civilian life. The objective of this project is therefore not to duplicate previous studies or to prescribe a mandatory curriculum. Instead, it should critically review and assess the existing evidence on life skills, prioritise those that are most relevant to the Armed Forces Community, and present well-evidenced and justified options for what a successful life skills programme might look like for serving personnel and their families in the UK Armed Forces.

---

<sup>6</sup> [Better Understanding the Support Needs of Service Leaver Families](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Working Together to Meet the Housing Needs of Ex-Service personnel](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Longer-term Employment Outcomes of Ex-Service Personnel](#)

<sup>9</sup> [The Veterans Advocacy People](#)

<sup>10</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/979344/JSP100\\_Parts1And2\\_V1.1\\_Apr\\_21\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/979344/JSP100_Parts1And2_V1.1_Apr_21_.pdf)

6. This project should seek to answer the following questions:

- What are 'life skills'?
- Which life skills are most important for Service personnel and their partners/spouses in ensuring they make a successful and sustainable transition to civilian life? What are their main concerns in being able to adjust both individually and as a family?
- What is the current life skills deficit in the Armed Forces Community, and what accounts for this deficit?
- What support is currently available already to develop or improve life skills for adults generally? (ie Within and outside of the Armed Forces)
- 'What works', ie what strategies and approaches, including engagement strategies, have been successful for other demographics in improving life skills for adults generally? (ie Within and outside of the Armed Forces)
- Which monitoring and assessment tools could be used to measure the effectiveness of any future life skills programme for serving personnel and their partners/spouses? This should include the measurement of short and long-term outcomes using both qualitative and quantitative techniques.

### **Timescale**

7. 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 12 months of commencement. The proposed timetable for the tendering process is as follows:

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

### **Approximate value of the award**

8. The award is expected to be up to £150,000 (including VAT where chargeable) but is subject to negotiation.

### **Methodology**

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

- Include a comprehensive review of literature relating to life skills and the deficit of life skills within the UK Armed Forces Community.
- Survey serving personnel and Service leavers, who are still going through Resettlement, as well as their spouses/partners to assess the current levels of life skills within the Armed Forces Community.
- Review existing evidence on the effectiveness of existing programmes, practices and policies in improving life skills for adults. This should include the effectiveness of programme curriculum as well as engagement techniques and activities.
- Review existing evidence on the effectiveness of monitoring and assessment tools in measuring the success of life skills or similar programmes.

## **Impact and Influence**

10. In line with Forces in Mind Trust's impact approach, this research should identify specific conclusions and recommendations to effect positive change aimed at improving life skills within the Armed Forces Community. Recommendations should follow the 'SMART' objectives principle where possible.

11. 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 and designed infographics and animations. We expect the successful bidder to engage with relevant stakeholders throughout the research, especially (but not exclusively) those already tasked with writing policy or delivering support to serving persons and their families, 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**

12. 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**

13. 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 fact sheets, 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. We 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**

14. 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**

15. 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**

16. 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. It is expected that approval from the MOD Research Ethics Committee (MODREC) will be required, and bidders should consider the time, cost and resources needed for this process.

## Selection Principles

17. Forces in Mind Trust will use the following selection criteria to determine which organizations 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 and knowledge of the different components that make up 'life skills', as well as the transition process from the UK Armed Forces.
- Ethical credentials.

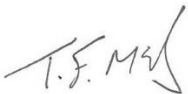
We will endeavour to offer feedback on all unsuccessful EOIs.

## Information to be included in the EOI and deadline for submission

18. 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 email to [applications@fim-trust.org](mailto:applications@fim-trust.org) by **5pm on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022**. 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](mailto:isabel@fim-trust.org).



Tom McBarnet  
Director of Programmes  
Forces in Mind Trust