

9th January 2022

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

FiMT/2302: Our Community, Our Covenant and beyond

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. FiMT delivers this mission by generating an evidence base that influences and underpins policy making and service delivery, and by strengthening the Armed Forces charities sector through collaboration and leadership, and by building its capacity.

Context

2. The Armed Forces Covenant¹, hereafter the 'Covenant', was introduced in 2011 and is "a promise by the nation ensuring that those who serve or have served in the UK Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly". The Armed Forces Community should therefore face no disadvantage compared to civilians, and in some appropriate circumstances, such as those who have been injured, may be given special consideration. However, some members of the Armed Forces Community can find themselves at a disadvantage and challenges can arise as a result of the demands of serving. Frequent moves in service for example, can result in families losing their place on health waiting lists and disruptions to children's education. Ex-Service personnel may also be injured, physically or mentally, during their time in service or as a result of their service, and may require ongoing support from public health services.

3. Under the Armed Forces Act 2021, the Covenant was further strengthened into law. It placed a legal duty, from 22nd November 2022, on relevant public bodies to have due regard to the principles of the Covenant. The new duty focuses on healthcare, housing, and education with the aim of increasing awareness among public bodies of the unique nature of military service and improving the level of service for the Armed Forces Community wherever they live in the UK. While no new Government funding was attached to the Act, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) has committed to review potential new costs for councils one year after the commencement of the duty. To help organisations to prepare for the new duty, the MOD has also published statutory guidance².

4. In addition to the Covenant, the Armed Forces Community is supported by the Armed Forces charities sector which, on the whole, predates the introduction of the Covenant and goes beyond the principle of no disadvantage. The UK Armed Forces charities sector, made up of over 1,800 national and local charities³, works closely with Covenant signatories, government organisations and statutory provision to provide services to those who require additional or specialist support. The charity sector, along with the statutory support available, provides an extensive web of provision for the Armed Forces Community across the UK.

¹ [Home - Armed Forces Covenant](#)

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-covenant-duty-statutory-guidance>

³ <https://s31949.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/Sector-Insight-Armed-Forces-Charities-web.pdf>

5. In 2016, in partnership with the Local Government Association, FiMT published the first edition of *Our Community, Our Covenant* (OCOC)⁴ which examined how local authorities were delivering pledges under the Covenant and what was working well. OCOC also set out the ‘core infrastructure’ needed for effective delivery of the Covenant and created a toolkit for local authorities. These have proved to be particularly useful for both the MOD and local authorities in describing what good implementation of Covenant pledges looks like and the development needed to get there. OCOC was followed up a year later with a second edition⁵ featuring additional deep dive case studies, further exploration of the delivery of the Covenant in London and reflections on the possible future development of the Covenant.

6. In 2021, FiMT commissioned a third OCOC, *A Decade of the Covenant*⁶, which went beyond examining delivery of the Covenant to assess what impact the Covenant has had on reducing disadvantage for the Armed Forces Community and, for the first time in the series, included Northern Ireland within its scope. This third iteration also provided the opportunity to assess how delivery of the Covenant by local authorities had changed over the last six years. It found that, while more councils had adopted the key elements of the core infrastructure as suggested in the original OCOC project, there had been relatively slow progress on the adoption and regular monitoring of Covenant action plans and fewer councils were able to afford a dedicated Covenant officer than in 2016, with posts dependent on external funding. The research also found that there were differences in how delivery of the Covenant was viewed by military charities and how it was viewed by local authorities, with charities perceiving higher levels of disadvantage for the Armed Forces Community than local authorities, and charities less likely to say that frontline staff were aware of the potential disadvantage faced by the Armed Forces Community. The research did however find that an increasing number of councils were pooling resources to deliver the Covenant across a wider footprint and that one combined authority in particular, was playing a co-ordinating role in relation to delivery of the Covenant across that conurbation. In light of this, the core infrastructure was revised to recognise the role of local authorities in convening local action and local partnerships that will offer economy of scale, consistency and better sharing of best practice.

7. As described above, there may be potential benefits to particular local government structures when it comes to delivering the Covenant, such as a combined authority being well positioned to provide a coordinating role. However, previous OCOC reports have tended to categorise local authorities by the extent and type of Armed Forces Community presence they have rather than looking at the council structures themselves, the resources available and the partnerships in place. The aim of this fourth iteration therefore will be to:

- Build on the findings of *A Decade of the Covenant* to examine how the Covenant and wider support beyond the Covenant, such as that provided by the Armed Forces charity sector, is being delivered at a regional level to the Armed Forces Community.
- Examine how different local government structures (covering the four tiers of local government) impact on an authority’s ability to deliver the Covenant (within a broader local ecosystem of veteran support), especially the ability to work collaboratively with each other and local partners.
- Provide an assessment of how the different structures and governance arrangements facilitate or inhibit ‘good’ delivery of support generally to the serving and veteran community, be it under the auspices of the Covenant or beyond.
- Seek to better understand and inform the local arrangements, resources and partnerships in place that assist provision of support to the Armed Forces Community as well as delivery of the Covenant.

⁴ <https://s31949.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/our-community-our-covenant.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/our-community-our-covenant-improving-delivery-local-covenant-pledges.pdf>

⁶ <https://s31949.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/A-Decade-of-the-Covenant-Digital.pdf>

Scope

8. This research should:

- Identify how the Covenant is being delivered across multiple policy and delivery areas at a regional level across England, Wales, and Scotland. This should include any impact of the new Covenant duty on delivery in both the areas that come under the scope of the duty (health, housing and education) and those that do not.
- Examine the impact of local government structures on Covenant delivery (ie across the generally accepted four tiers of local government). This should include the impact of governance arrangements and electoral cycles on councils' ability to maintain momentum in delivering the Covenant.
- Identify the local arrangements, networks, and partnerships currently in place that support or act as a barrier to local authorities' delivery of support to the Armed Forces Community and the Covenant. This could include local enterprise partnerships, council networks and societies, partnerships with large national charities and smaller local charities, and other voluntary groups such as Citizens Advice. Some of this may have been developed through previous specific funding to deliver the Covenant such as that provided by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. Bidders should consider how they will present this provision in the final report.
- Identify the national and local data and resources available to authorities on the Armed Forces Community, including the Map of Need⁷ data, Census data which is expected to be published just before and during the course of this research, and any insights from the OVA and ONS Veterans' Survey⁸ which is due to be published in 2023.
- Examine how external policy opportunities and challenges, such as changes made during the Covid pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, as well as the strategies implemented to tackle them, impact on the delivery of the Covenant, and organisations' ability to support the Armed Forces Community more generally, in different areas across England, Wales and Scotland.
- Identify examples of best practice, and where possible the costs associated or resources required, and ways in which local authorities can improve delivery of the Covenant, taking into account their specific structures. Where appropriate, a proposal for how best practice can be shared and replicated across local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales should be developed.
- Where feasible, make comparisons with the findings of previous OCOC surveys in order to assess progress and barriers to progress in delivery of the Covenant.

9. This research will focus on, and illuminate, the realities and practices involved in delivery of the Covenant by local authorities and organisations that work with them to both deliver the Covenant and to provide the wider ecosystem of additional support to the Armed Forces Community.

10. This research should cover England, Wales, and Scotland. Given the differences in provision of public services in Northern Ireland and delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant, which was included in the OCOC3 report, and the specific challenges faced by the Armed Forces Community living there, we believe that this would require an in depth and separate study.

Timescale

11. FiMT is seeking to commission this research project by April 2023, 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:

⁷ <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/research/research-impact-at-northumbria/health-impact/mapping-the-needs-of-veterans-across-the-uk/>

⁸ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1119556/6.8151_COVA_Data-Research-Framework_AW_v5_WEB.pdf

- Deadline for submission of EOIs: Friday 17th February 2023
- Invitation to tender issued: Monday 27th February 2023
- Deadline for submission of tenders: Monday 27th March 2023
- Interviews: April 2023
- Project start: May 2023

Approximate value of the award

12. The award is expected to be up to £500,000 (including VAT where chargeable) but is subject to negotiation.

Methodology

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

- Interviews with local authority representatives across England, Scotland and Wales. This should include those responsible for or involved in delivery of the Covenant including, but not limited to, council officers, senior elected members, directors, Armed Forces champions, chief executives and representatives from the Local Government Association, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Welsh Local Government Association. Bidders should suggest an appropriate number of interviews and how they intend to categorise local authorities to ensure a range of local authority structures are included.
- Interviews with key organisations (military and civilian) that work in partnership with local authorities to deliver the Covenant and provide additional support to the Armed Forces Community.
- An assessment of the scale and depth of contribution of small and local charities alongside that of larger, national charities such as the Royal British Legion and SSAFA in working with statutory bodies to deliver collective effect for the benefit of veterans and their families.
- A survey of local authority representatives to allow comparison to previous OCOC surveys on how the Covenant is being delivered and to measure the impact of the new Covenant duty.
- Case studies or ‘deep-dives’ to examine, in detail, how the Covenant is being delivered at a regional level in England, Scotland and Wales and how local partnerships are helping to deliver the Covenant and provide additional support to the Armed Forces Community. This should include engagement with those responsible for delivering the Covenant, other organisations that support the Armed Forces Community, and the Armed Forces Community. Again, bidders should suggest an appropriate number of case studies and how they will be categorised. Ideally, the successful bidder will travel to the case study locations to meet with key individuals in person. Bidders should also consider how best to present the case study findings including an option for high-quality videos or short films. The budget for this should be included within the influence and communication plan (see para 18 below).

Impact and Influence

14. In line with Forces in Mind Trust’s impact approach, this research should identify specific conclusions and practical recommendations for policy and practice. Bidders should consider how they intend to develop the recommendations to ensure sufficient time and resources are invested to this stage of the project. Recommendations should follow the ‘SMART’ objectives principle where possible.

15. Bidders should identify the key stakeholders responsible for delivery of the Covenant in local and national government, as well as those in partnership organisations, and include an action plan for how they intend to connect with these stakeholders throughout and after the project. The project team should set up an advisory group to oversee the project and provide advice and guidance.

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.

18. To increase the reach and impact of the findings, we would like bidders to include a costed influence and communications plan within the proposal. We welcome innovative ideas but this should include written outputs (such as a report, fact sheets, infographics, evidence summaries and online articles), oral presentations at conferences and meetings with relevant stakeholders, and the case study videos mentioned above. The outputs should be targeted at relevant stakeholders including non-academic policymakers, local government, and service providers. Bidders are expected to collate a list of key stakeholders at the start of the research which can be added to or refined during the course project.

Lead organisation and named participants

19. 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

20. 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

21. 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. Please note that the inclusion of serving personnel may require MODREC approval and bidders should ensure that they allocate the time and budget for this accordingly.

Selection Principles

22. Forces in Mind Trust 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 and knowledge of the transition process from the UK Armed Forces, local government and the Armed Forces charities sector.

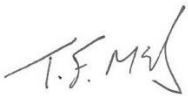
- Ethical credentials.

We will endeavour to offer feedback on all unsuccessful EOIs.

Information to be included in the EOI and deadline for submission

23. 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 by 5pm on Friday 17th February. Please submit applications via the application page on the FiMT website found [here](#). Fill out your details and when you reach the question 'Which programme do you wish to apply for' and select 'REOI Submission'. Later in the form you will find the option to attach documents, please attach your EOI to the second section - 'Upload project outline'. 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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