

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

FiMT/2301: Understanding the transition from military to civilian life

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. Each year around 15,000 people leave the UK Armed Forces¹. The vast majority of Service leavers and their families make a successful transition into civilian life, with their lives having been enormously enriched by their time in service. However, successful transitions are not necessarily easy, particularly when viewed via wider metrics that go beyond resettlement services, employment trajectories, and the personal planning of the Service leaver themselves. When understanding success in holistic terms, it often requires the setting of firm foundations for longer term stability and the successful transition of the whole family and dependants. Some ex-Service personnel and their families will require additional support during their transition journey and evidence has shown that barriers to accessing appropriate support remain, whether that is because of quality and availability of support or because of issues relating to the stigma of taking the initial step to seek help². For the minority of Service leavers who have a difficult transition, there can be significant costs as a consequence, both to the individual and their family, and to the public purse.

3. There has been significant progress made over the last decade to better support Service leavers and their families to transition into civilian life. This has included the introduction of resettlement provision for Early Service Leavers, the creation of the Defence Transition Services as part of the MOD's new Holistic Transition Policy and the introduction of the Veterans' Gateway and the Office for Veterans' Affairs. The MOD's Career Transition Partnership has also enhanced its offering and will re-contract its resettlement support services in October 2023. Despite this progress, research continues to show that not all Service leavers and their families make a successful transition to civilian life and significant challenges remain. This is why we are now commissioning a project **to examine what the transition process looks like for the Armed Forces Community today, whether its supportive reach has extended as far and as widely as it could or should, and what more could be done to enable ex-Service personnel and their families to make a successful transition into civilian life.**

4. It is intended that this project will be used to inform central and local government, the Armed Forces charities sector and others in the planning, development, and delivery of support needed to ensure successful and sustainable transition for ex-Service personnel and their families. Where necessary the outputs may also

¹ Quarterly service personnel statistics, MOD

² Stigma and Barriers to care in service leavers with mental health problems, Kings College London, 2017

be used to influence national policy changes, which could be across a wide range of issues, such as finance, employment, wellbeing, and housing. The outputs will also be used to help inform FiMT's priorities and strategic approach to delivering its mission over the next decade. It is expected that a final report will be produced which will outline conclusions and/or recommendations for the above stakeholders.

Scope

5. This project should examine:

- How the transition process currently works across each of the Services.
- How the transition process is communicated to Service leavers and their families.
- How the process is viewed by stakeholders and recent Service leavers and their families.
- The progress that has been made over the last ten years in the transition support available. Where possible, this should include the impact of key initiatives and services.
- Where challenges remain. This should include an analysis of the potential impact or cost of not addressing those challenges.
- The value to the Armed Forces Community and society of improving the transition process, enabling a successful and sustainable transition for all ex-Service personnel and their families.

The project should also consider:

- Where support could or should be improved or resources invested, and how.
- The current UK external environment and its impact on transition. In particular, how it may exacerbate or help to mitigate unsuccessful transition outcomes and subsequent societal costs. This should focus on areas where Service leavers and their families may be impacted to a greater extent than their civilian counterparts.

6. This project will be required to take a comprehensive and holistic view of all the factors, beyond employment, that are now widely known to contribute to successful transition including the need for sustainable accommodation solutions, the penalty of personnel leaving with unresolved or service attributable health conditions, and the need for stable finances and positive relationships to be able to withstand the challenges likely to be encountered. The HARDFACTS³ assessment tool, used by the MOD, could be a starting point for considering which factors to include.

7. In depth ethnographic research with Service leavers to examine their experiences of transition was recently conducted as part of our *Lifting Our Sights*⁴ report. The successful bidder should build upon the *Lifting Our Sights* work, which also produced an archetypal Transition Journey model constructed from the personal testimonies of those who have been through the transition process, as well as other relevant research, to understand how the current transition process works and how it is viewed by the Armed Forces Community. While we do not require this project to include a survey of Service leavers and families, we would like bidders to ensure that Service leavers, ex-Service personnel and their families are consulted.

8. This research should include the experiences of a diverse range of cohorts within the Armed Forces Community such as female, ethnic minority, Early Service Leavers, Non-UK, and senior non-commissioned officer (SNCO) cohorts. There may be other cohorts too which should be included in the criteria.

9. Families play an important role in transition and go through a transition of their own when their serving member leaves the Armed Forces. Families have recently been the focus of several important reports

³ Health, Accommodation, Relocation, Drugs & Alcohol, Finance, Attitude, Children & family, Training, Support Agencies

⁴ *Lifting Our Sights*, Future Agenda, 2021

including *Lifting the Lid* and *Living in Our Shoes*⁵. The MOD also recently published its Families Strategy for 2022 to 2032. This project should therefore examine these and other relevant reports to understand the transition challenges faced by Armed Forces families. In particular, bidders should consider the reports' recommendations, and the potential consequences, and societal cost, of not responding to them. When identifying possible support available for families, bidders should note that it cannot be assumed that families will be entitled to support via the Career Transition Partnership when it is relet in 2023.

10. Alongside a review of strategies and reports relating to Armed Forces families, this project should examine relevant strategies and reports relating to veterans' transition, including the Strategy for Our Veterans and the subsequent Veterans' Strategy Action Plan. This should include an examination of recommendations and consideration of potential consequences of not responding to them or failing to meet their objectives in the intended timeframe.

11. Transition does not occur in isolation, and it is important that those developing transition policy and resettlement services take into account the external environment into which Service leavers and their families transition. The external environment will not be the same for every Service leaver and will often depend on a range of factors, such as where they decide to live and work and their socio-economic background. This research should therefore consider the cost of unsuccessful and successful transition within the external contexts it may occur. The research should take into account the challenges and opportunities faced by the UK (relevant to the Armed Forces Community) over the last decade as well as the current and possible future challenges, the strategies deployed to tackle them, and what they might mean for both those going through transition as well as the organisations responsible for providing support to them. Such challenges might include a post-Brexit and post-Covid economy, regional disparities, regeneration of towns and communities, healthcare and housing shortages, the cost-of-living crisis and the UK's current status in the world.

12. The focus of this project should be on transition in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland from all the three Services of the UK Armed Forces.

13. Resettlement⁶ focuses to a large extent on employment support which is accessible up to two years before an individual is due to leave service. It continues for up to two years post-discharge (and possibly longer if an individual is wounded, injured or sick). Transition however is much wider and relates to the significant and life-changing process that affects the whole family. There is therefore no set 'timeframe' for transition, and it will often depend on the unique circumstances of the individual and family. This research should focus on all aspects of transition, including the longer-term emotional and practical elements, rather than the narrower and time-bound Resettlement process.

Timescale

14. FiMT is seeking to commission this project by July 2023, and although there is no specified completion date, the Trust expects it to be completed and published within 24 months of commencement. The proposed timetable for the tendering process is as follows:

- Deadline for submission of EOIs: **Friday 28th April 2023**
- Invitation to tender issued: Monday 8th May 2023
- Deadline for submission of tenders: Friday 30th June 2023
- Interviews: July 2023
- Project start: September 2023

Approximate value of the award

⁵ Living in our Shoes, MOD, 2020

⁶ [Tri-service resettlement manual \(JSP 534\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/684441/Tri-service_resettlement_manual_(JSP_534).pdf)

15. The award is expected to be in the region of £400,000 but is open to negotiation.

Methodology

16. We would like this project to include consultation with key stakeholders involved in the transition process and we welcome suggestions on how best to conduct this. We are particularly interested in deliberative methods that inform practical strategies, rather than just research of current issues. Stakeholders should include, but not be limited to, Service leavers, recent veterans (less than five years) and their families (over 18 at the time of the research), Cobseo cluster leads, representatives from the Single Services, employers, relevant government departments and organisations in the statutory and voluntary sectors that support Service leavers and their families.

The project should include:

- A comprehensive review of literature relating to transition from the Armed Forces to civilian life for ex-Service personnel and their families in the UK. This should include the transition experiences of a range of cohorts including ex-Servicewomen, Non-UK, minority ethnic, and LGBT+ veterans. The review should also include an assessment of recommendations from the existing literature to determine whether there are any key recommendations that remain feasible and relevant but have not yet been put into practice.
- An in-depth examination of the current transition process for ex-Service personnel and their families, including the identification of the statutory and voluntary transition services that exist to support the community. This should take into account any differences in how the transition process is delivered in reality across the three Services and between the UK's four nations. Bidders should consider how best to portray this process in the final report.
- A comprehensive analysis of the contemporary external environment into which Service leavers and their families transition into, cognisant of regional variations across the UK.
- An analysis of the progress made to improve transition for Service leavers and their families. Bidders should give consideration to how the Strategic Goals for 2030 in *Lifting Our Sights* and 2028 Outcomes in *the Strategy for our Veterans* could be used as a benchmark for this progress to be measured against.
- An analysis of the consequences of failing to effectively support Service leavers and their families when transitioning, including a failure to respond appropriately to key recommendations.
- A 'value' analysis of the potential impact of 'getting transition right' for both Service leavers and their families and society. We welcome ideas on how best to approach this and the previous point.

Impact and Influence

17. In line with Forces in Mind Trust's impact approach, this project should identify specific conclusions and practical recommendations for policy makers and practitioners, which take account of external factors and societal opportunities and challenges, to effect positive change aimed at improving transition for the Armed Forces Community. Recommendations should follow the 'SMART' objectives principle where possible.

18. Bidders should identify the key stakeholders responsible for improving transition for ex-Service personnel and their families and include an action plan for how they intend to connect with the stakeholders throughout and after the project. At a minimum, the project team should set up an advisory group to oversee the project and provide advice and guidance.

19. All proposals should identify practical ways to ensure effective dissemination of the research 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 project 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

20. In commissioning this project, 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 successful bidder a royalty-free license (and sub-license if required) to use and exploit the Foreground Intellectual Property.

Communication of findings

21. 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 FiMT Research Centre website 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.

Lead organisation and named participants

22. 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

23. 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

24. Forces in Mind Trust expects all projects to be carried out in an ethical manner and bidders must be able to demonstrate how this will be achieved. As this research will include serving personnel as participants, it is expected that approval from the MOD Research Ethics Committee (MODREC) will be required.

Selection Principles

25. Forces in Mind Trust will use the following selection criteria to determine which organisations will be invited to tender:

- The quality of the EOI.
- The clarity of the EOI in setting out how the project will be conducted.
- 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.

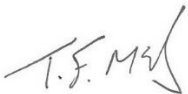
- Ethical credentials.

We will endeavour to offer feedback on all unsuccessful EOIs.

Information to be included in the EOI and deadline for submission

26. 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 project would be conducted 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 28th April 2023**. 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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Forces in Mind Trust