

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

FiMT/2501: Understanding the lived experience of Armed Forces children and young people as they transition out of the military and into civilian life

Forces in Mind Trust Background

1. Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) was founded in 2011 with a £35 million endowment from the National Lottery Community Fund to improve transition to civilian life for Service leavers and their families. Our mission is to enable successful and sustainable transition to civilian life. FiMT delivers this mission by funding high quality, credible research where there is an identified gap in relevant understanding, and by then exploiting the findings, FiMT aims to effect positive change.

Context

2. It is estimated that there are currently just over 121,000 UK Armed Forces children¹. Being a member of the Armed Forces community can be beneficial for many children and young people and there are many positive aspects of Service life including financial security, novel experiences and being part of a military community. However, research has also identified that Armed Forces families can face unique challenges such as separation during deployment, educational disruptions, difficulties accessing health care services, and 'hidden' financial costs and challenges².

3. It is not currently known how many Armed Forces children and young people transition out of the Armed Forces each year as a result of their parents leaving service for many different reasons. There is also a gap in evidence on the transition experiences of Armed Forces children and young people upon leaving behind the supporting frameworks and community often associated with being part of the serving Armed Forces community, with existing research focussing on the transition experience of Service personnel and, to a lesser extent, spouses and partners. Where research does exist with Armed Forces children and young people, it tends to focus on educational attainment. Alongside a lack of research on the transition experiences for Armed Forces children and young people, there is also a lack of research conducted directly with Armed Forces children and young people, with research either conducted retrospectively with adult children or with parents and stakeholders working with children and young people. This gap in evidence means that we do not currently know what the transition outcomes are for Armed Forces children and young people, and what their perspectives of transition are. This limits the ability to develop appropriate interventions, initiatives or policies, or learn from what is already working well, to help increase successful transition and prevent unsuccessful transitions if required.

4. This is why we are now commissioning a project **to understand the lived experience of Armed Forces children and young people as they transition out of the military and into civilian life.**

5. It is intended that this project will be used to inform central and local government, statutory services, the Armed Forces charities sector and others in the planning, development, and delivery of support to ensure

¹ Based on figures from the Armed Forces Continuous Attitudes survey, children aged 0-17.

² [Funding for Armed Forces children and young people](#) (DSC & SCiP Alliance), [Examining the financial resilience of UK military families](#) (RAND Europe), [You're in your own time now](#) (Edinburgh Napier University and The University of Edinburgh)

successful and sustainable transition for Armed Forces children and young people. It is expected that a final report will be produced which will outline conclusions and/or recommendations for the above stakeholders.

Scope

6. This project should:

- Examine the lived experiences of UK Armed Forces children and young people as they transition out of the military.
- Examine the outcomes for Armed Forces children and young people who are or have recently transitioned out of the military. These should not only be 'hard' outcomes such as changing housing and education, but also 'softer' outcomes such as identity and belonging.
- Identify any unique challenges experienced by Armed Forces children and young people as they transition from the military to civilian life.
- Identify the factors that inhibit or facilitate 'successful transition' for Armed Forces children and young people and, if required, where interventions are best placed. Bidders should consider the influence of psychological factors and the surrounding social environment on Armed Forces children and young people's ability to successfully transition into civilian life.

7. For the purposes of this study, transition is *the practical, physical and emotional journey that Service leavers and their families make as they move from the Armed Forces back into civilian life. The transition journey is a process of change that is personal to each individual, meaning that it begins and ends at different times.* Transition experiences for Armed Forces children and young people therefore vary greatly, just as they do for Service leavers and partners. Transition out of the Armed Forces may be due to a parent voluntarily deciding to leave. However, it could be due to involuntary discharge, separating parents or bereavement.

8. The aim of this project is to gather information directly from Armed Forces children and young people on their own experiences of transition from the military to civilian life, as well as from those who work closely with them, to inform policies, processes and practices. As the focus will be on transition experiences, the Armed Forces children and young people involved in this study should be going through transition at the time of the research. Whilst the 'transition process' has no defined set start or end date, for the purpose of this study, it should be two years before and two years after they have left the Armed Forces.

9. We are keen to understand the transition experiences of a wide range of Armed Forces children and young people from across the UK and from each of the Services. For the purposes of this study, Armed Forces children and young people are those who are under 21 years old and whose parent or carer serves, or served, as a Regular in the Armed Forces. We invite bidders to refine the scope and sample of this study, to ensure that a range of experiences are captured whilst also enabling meaningful analysis and insights to emerge. This should include consideration as to the ages of participants, but we would suggest including children no younger than eight years old.

10. As we expect this research to be tri-Service and UK-wide, bidders should have experience of conducting research in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and be aware of the different policies, strategies and practices in place that may impact the transition experiences of Armed Forces children and young people. We would encourage a collaboration of organisations from across the UK to help ensure this.

Timescale

11. FiMT is seeking to commission this project by Spring 2025, 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: 24th January 2025
- Invitation to tender issued: 31st January 2025
- Deadline for submission of tenders: 3rd March 2025
- Interviews: w/c 17th March 2025
- Project start: by 1st May 2025

Approximate value of the award

12. We invite bidders to submit applications for awards of up to a maximum of £250,000 (including VAT), dependent on methodology. Bids will be assessed for value for money.

Methodology

13. We invite bidders to consider how best to undertake this research and we welcome suggestions on methodology, recruitment techniques and sampling. We would also like bidders to consider the inclusion of non-Armed Forces children to provide a comparison cohort to help explore where differences exist between the experiences of Armed Forces and non-Armed Forces children.

14. The voices of children and young people should be at the centre of this research and we expect the project to include co-production methods with Armed Forces children and young people in both the design of research tools and in developing any recommendations.

15. A range of statutory and voluntary support services exist to support Armed Forces children and young people. Alongside the voices of children and young people, this research should capture the views of those who work closely with children and young people as well as representatives from organisations who design, develop and deliver service provision and policy aimed at or impacting on Armed Forces children and young people.

16. If bidders are intending to work with services supporting children and young people to help them to recruit participants to this study, consideration (and budget where appropriate) should be given to the resources and time involved in recruitment.

17. **The aim of this research is to empower Armed Forces children and young people and hear their voices to help ensure they make a successful transition out of the Armed Forces.** We would expect bidders to have experience of conducting research with children and young people, as well as be able to show that they understand and adhere to all ethical and safeguarding considerations and guidelines. Bidders should ensure that they balance the aims of the research with the safety and wellbeing of the children and young people who take part.

Impact and Influence

18. 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. Recommendations should be assessed for feasibility and insights from those responsible for their implementation should be sought where possible. Recommendations should also follow the 'SMART' objectives principle where possible.

19. Bidders should identify the key stakeholders responsible for and involved in support Armed Forces children and young people and include an action plan for how they intend to connect and engage 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.

20. 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.

21. Bidders should also consider mechanisms for how best to feedback any impact from the project to the children and young people who take part in the research.

Intellectual Property

22. 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

23. 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

24. 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

25. 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

26. 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 children of Service leavers, it is expected that approval from the MOD Research Ethics Committee (MODREC) will be required. Bidders should be aware of the timescale and resources needed to gain MODREC and any other ethical approvals required.

Selection Principles

27. 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 conducting research with Armed Forces children and across the UK.
- The experience and knowledge of the Armed Forces community.
- Ethical credentials.

We will endeavour to offer feedback on all unsuccessful EOIs.

Information to be included in the EOI and deadline for submission

28. 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 **24th January 2025**. 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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