

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

FiMT/EOI2010: Understanding the Influence and Effect of the UK Veterans Strategy in Improving Future Outcomes for Veterans

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 a successful 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. The Veterans Strategy¹, hereafter the Strategy, was launched in November 2025 setting out the UK Government's ambitions for supporting veterans and to establish an implementation framework under which the nation would be empowered to deliver upon identified strategic outcomes. The Strategy sets out the Government's new vision for veterans and plans to respond to them as set out in the earlier published Strategic Defence Review² challenging the whole of society to 'think differently about those who have served in the Armed Forces, their offer and their potential.'

3. The Veterans Strategy was launched following a series of previous announcements that support the ex-Service community. However, separately, in May 2025, the Government announced the launch of a new programme of veteran support called VALOUR³. Intended as a new national programme, VALOUR is led by the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) within the Ministry of Defence, with the aim of improving how services are coordinated at national, regional and local levels, to make it easier for veterans across the UK to access timely, appropriate and where possible local care and support.

4. Closely allied to the principles of the Veterans Strategy, the Armed Forces Covenant⁴, 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. 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. That new duty focused 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) committed to review potential new costs for councils one year after the commencement of the duty and also published statutory guidance⁵ to assist local authorities to prepare for the new duty. The Covenant Duty will be further expanded by the Armed Forces Bill 2026⁶ which includes extra provision for the Covenant, expanding the existing Covenant Legal Duty

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/veterans-strategy/veterans-strategy>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-strategic-defence-review-2025-making-britain-safer-secure-at-home-strong-abroad>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/valour-information-and-next-steps>

⁴ <https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-covenant-duty-statutory-guidance>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-bill-2026>

to cover a wider range of policy areas and bringing the UK and devolved governments within scope, alongside local authorities.

5. It is the intention that the Veterans Strategy and VALOUR are supported not just by Government and public sector statutory provision, but also by the charities sector, predominantly the Armed Forces charities sector. The latter already works closely with Covenant signatories, government organisations and other services to provide an extensive network of support. All these entities also work closely with each other to ensure the ex-Service persons community and their families continue to be recognised by and within wider society as well as receiving necessary support. The Veterans Strategy articulates three core themes, two of which are defined as **Celebrate** and **Support** in acknowledgement of the collective effort outlined above. The third core theme is identified as **Contribute**, aiming to ensure that the unique skills, experiences and values of veterans are understood and are, where possible, used to benefit national security, the economy and the UK.

6. In sum, the Veterans Strategy has a broad and complex remit, covering public perceptions, value-based judgements of practical and subjective worth of ex-Service personnel through to empirical performance assessment of current support service delivery. At this stage, formal evaluation will be challenged by not least the lack of a clear and widely accepted set of data and evidence or of common metrics across the Strategy themes. Nevertheless, there is value in assessing the influence and effectiveness of a Veterans Strategy with a view to informing future progress.

Aim & Objectives

7. **The aim of this project is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the influence and effectiveness of the UK Veterans Strategy as a strategic mechanism for shaping the organisations, systems and partnerships that contribute to improved outcomes for veterans.**

The objectives of this project are:

- Explore if and how the Strategy influences and strengthens governance, coordination and collaboration within the wider veteran landscape.
- Establish the contribution and linkages of various complementary programmes (eg Covenant delivery and VALOUR) to the collective achievement of the Strategy's vision and outcomes and the opportunities to improve transition to civilian life for ex-Service personnel and families.
- Examine the nature, scope and interconnectedness of the network of existing activities and services and how they contribute to each of the core themes of the Veterans Strategy, including cross-Government initiatives and activity as well as those of non-governmental organisations.
- Consider how better to synthesise data and evidence collection in order to support objective measurement of Strategy objectives.

Scope

8. The project should take into account:

- How the Strategy will be and is being delivered across the UK (including in devolved governments) and across multiple delivery domains (for example (under **Support**) health, housing, employment support, social care support; (under **Celebrate**) national recognition events; and (under **Contribute**) strategies harnessing the qualities and values that the ex-Service community represent toward the wider national benefit).
- Existing regional and local arrangements that deliver against Strategy outcomes, including local partnerships, third sector, academic, business and community networks or statutory and charitable partnerships.

- Where relevant and appropriate, the vision and implementation of the Covenant with regard to the ex-Service community in comparison to the vision and outcomes of the Strategy in order to assess where future alignment or coherence might be beneficial. Particular consideration should be given to alignment and coherence in relation to the opportunities to improve transition to civilian life for ex-Service personnel and families.
- National and local data and research resources including insights from the Armed Forces Annual Covenant Report, evidence presented to parliamentarians and Select Committees and publicly available YouGov and OVA Veterans' Surveys.
- The policy and strategic opportunities and challenges attendant to achieving further impact from the Strategy and of potential ways forward to address both.

9. The project should focus on, and illuminate, the realities and practicalities involved in delivery of the Strategy by national and local government, non-statutory and third-party organisations and wider authorities to understand the effectiveness of the Strategy as a mechanism for improving outcomes, and to inform and identify the wider ecosystem which impacts upon the Armed Forces Community.

10. The project should cover delivery of the Strategy in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The research should take account of any other studies ongoing that inform or overlap this research space, especially those evaluating Covenant delivery.

Timescale

11. FiMT is seeking to commission this research project by January 2027 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: by **3pm, Friday 13th November 2026**
- Invitation to tender issued: 18th November 2026
- Deadline for submission of tenders: 12th January 2027
- Interviews: w/c 2nd February 2027
- Project start: project start March/April 2027

Approximate value of the award

12. The award is expected to be up to £175,000 (including VAT where chargeable) but is subject to negotiation.

Methodology

13. A range of statutory and voluntary services exist to support the Armed Forces community, as well as a range of organisations that routinely conduct research and collect data with the community. This project should capture the views of those who work closely with the community in order to understand the influence and effect of the Veterans Strategy and to understand the practical considerations around further expansion, implementation and sustainability. We invite bidders to consider how best to undertake this project and we welcome suggestions on methodology but in developing a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the Strategy, we expect the project to include:

- Interviews with national Veterans Commissioners, Local Authority Armed Forces Champions and Covenant representatives across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to build understanding of the utility and effectiveness of the Veterans Strategy as viewed at a local and national level.

- Interviews with key organisations (military and civilian, statutory and charity) that work in partnership to deliver directly or in principle upon the Strategy and provide support to the Armed Forces Community. Bidders should suggest an appropriate number of interviews and consider how statutory and non-statutory activity might be measured and evaluated with respect to measuring the future impact of the Strategy.
- Interviews with MOD/OVA with regard to understanding key outputs, core performance indicators and principles behind the Strategy.
- Interviews with OGDs regarding their understanding of the responsibility and requirements imposed by the Strategy and steps intended to support alignment and compliance.
- The use of case studies or real-world examples to indicate how the Veterans Strategy could evolve as a mechanism for improving outcomes for the Armed Forces community.
- Examination of how to synthesise data and evidence collection in order to support objective measurement of Strategy objectives and hence evidence supporting a progression toward future positive impact.

Impact and Influence

14. The intended output from this project is a comprehensive and authoritative report on how effectively the Veterans Strategy is in shaping activity toward improving outcomes for veterans and clear recommendations on how it can influence and ultimately achieve future positive impact.

15. In line with Forces in Mind Trust's impact approach, this project should identify specific conclusions and practical recommendations for policy and practice. Bidders should consider how best to secure engagement that helps to ensure that the Veterans Strategy is as meaningful and supportive of successful and sustainable transition from military to civilian life as possible. Recommendations should follow the 'SMART' objectives principle where possible.

16. Bidders should identify the key stakeholders responsible for delivery of the Strategy 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.

17. All expressions of interest should identify practical ways to ensure effective dissemination of and engagement with the project outputs 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. 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

18. 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

19. Forces in Mind Trust expects that any findings or outputs from this project would be made available in the public domain. This will include posting the final report on our website and the Centre for Evidence for the

Armed Forces Community, funded by FiMT website as a minimum. It may also include other written outputs such as fact sheets, 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

20. 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

21. 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

22. 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

23. 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 similar projects. This includes experience and knowledge of assessing and developing inclusive wellbeing measurement frameworks and working with the Armed Forces community and/or support sector.
- Ethical credentials.

We will endeavour to offer feedback on all unsuccessful EOIs.

Information to be included in the EOI and deadline for submission

24. 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 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.

25. EOIs must be submitted by 3pm, Friday 13th November 2026. 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 amber@fim-trust.org or hp@fim-trust.org



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