

Priority area: Understanding the changing nature and needs of the Armed Forces community

Challenge 1: How can systems better identify and respond earlier to unmet need amongst the Armed Forces community?

Overview

This challenge focuses on shifting 'system recognition' from one which has a partial and fragmented understanding of need amongst the Armed Forces community, largely based on those who engage with services, to one that is more proactive, data informed and able to identify and respond to unmet need earlier.

We are particularly interested in proposals that use existing evidence and data to improve how systems identify, anticipate and respond to need in practice. This includes strengthening how organisations use insight, indicators and data to support more timely action, improve access and reduce escalation of need.

In the short term, this includes improving how statutory and charitable services identify, understand and respond to unmet need. In the longer term, it will help create more preventative and responsive systems. These systems will be better able to identify and address emerging need earlier. They will also help policy makers and service providers to use clear indicators of need to deliver support more effectively and at the right time.

The challenge

The Armed Forces community is becoming more diverse and more complex. Current understanding and responses to need are often shaped by those who engage with services or are visible in data collection and research. This can result in some individuals being under-identified and under-supported, leading to delays in accessing support, particularly during transition where needs may emerge or intensify or in cases of complex need where a primary need 'masks' significant other issues.

The challenge is not only to improve visibility of unsupported needs, but to ensure this leads to earlier, more effective action in practice.

How can systems improve visibility and respond earlier to unmet need amongst the Armed Forces community?

 The evidence What do we know?	 The challenge What needs to change?	 The change What does success look like?	 The benefit What will people experience?
- The Armed Forces community is becoming more <u>diverse</u> but services and policies have not always adapted to changing needs. - Some groups remain <u>overlooked</u> and <u>under-recognised</u>. - Armed Forces community data is fragmented and often incomplete. - Emerging needs are not always identified early enough, delaying support.	From: Support based on partial or incomplete understanding of Armed Forces community needs. ↓ To: More complete and earlier identification of need and faster responses to changing circumstances.	- Improved recognition and earlier identification of unmet needs. - Better use of evidence to target support. - Timely, accessible and appropriate support interventions. - Practical approaches that can be used by other organisations and inform future policy.	Members of the Armed Forces community get the right support earlier, before problems escalate. Support is tailored to their needs, circumstances, and experiences.

What we are looking for

We are seeking proposals that use existing evidence, data and insight to improve systems, pathways and practice. This may include proposals that:

- Improve how organisations identify individuals or groups experiencing hidden, emerging or unmet need.
- Develop and test indicators or models that support earlier identification of risk and intervention, particularly before or during transition.
- Improve how data, evidence or insight is used within decision making, service design or delivery to identify and respond to need.
- Redesign pathways, referral processes or engagement approaches to reduce delays in identification of unmet needs.

We welcome applications that bring together Armed Forces and mainstream organisations to develop, test or deliver solutions collaboratively.

What we are not looking for

We are not looking for projects where the main purpose is research, evidence generation or increasing understanding of the issue. Projects must demonstrate a clear route to implementation and practical change.

In addition, we are not looking for proposals that:

- Focus solely on scoping or mapping without a clear route to implementation and practical change.
- Provide direct service delivery without potential for wider systems influence or adoption.
- Duplicate existing data collection or needs assessment activity without clearly demonstrating additional value.
- Produce recommendations without testing or embedding practical or operational change.
- Seek continuation funding for existing services.

What success looks like

Projects should demonstrate practical and measurable systems-level change. This could include:

- Improved visibility, recognition and earlier identification of unmet needs within systems and services.
- Evidence that data or insight is being used more effectively to inform decisions, targeting or support.
- Earlier engagement with individuals before needs escalate.
- Tangible improvements in access to timely and appropriate support, particularly around key transition points.
- Scalable approaches that can inform wider policy, commissioning or service design.

We recognise that not all projects will scale nationally within the lifetime of the grant. However, proposals should demonstrate credible potential for wider transferability.

**Grant award**

Applications for up to £250,000 are invited to apply

How to apply

Please provide an outline of the project for which you are seeking funding, this should not exceed two sides of A4. The application will be assessed by our team, and if we believe that it meets the objectives of the challenge, we may invite you to submit a full application.