



Impact Report 2025

Chief Executive's Welcome

Transition from military to civilian life can often be seen as an end point. But in reality, it is a whole career journey that is shaped by the strength of the systems, policies, and support for personnel and families.

Forces in Mind Trust exists to help strengthen those systems and support. Our focus is not just on generating evidence but ensuring it is used effectively, leading to better outcomes for the Armed Forces community.

In 2025, our work has continued to contribute to how transition is understood, designed, and delivered. This year's report reflects some of the key themes that have supported that contribution:

Strengthening systems through collaboration and convening

Our work has emphasised the importance of connection and partnerships in the effective delivery of support available for the Armed Forces community. By convening and engaging across sectors and throughout the UK, we have helped to strengthen understanding, and to catalyse the

conversations and relationships that are critical to improving policy and service delivery.

Driving a whole family approach

We have emphasised the importance of the whole family in making a successful transition to civilian life. Through our work on wider family issues, and with a particular focus on children and young people, we are deepening understanding of how Service life shapes family wellbeing, to ensure that systems can respond more effectively.

Ensuring the evidence base reflects the whole community

We have continued to amplify the voices of under-researched groups so that policy and practice

are informed by those whose experiences and contribution have too often been overlooked. Some 2025 highlights include publication of research evidence and policy engagement focused on the Gurkha and Fijian communities, and women in the Armed Forces.

Reframing transition as a holistic and through career approach

Our wider focus has been on promoting a more holistic, joined up and through career approach that recognises the connections between employment, health, housing, the criminal justice system and long-term wellbeing.

Across all of this work, our impact is not defined by the reports produced or the events convened but the change these activities enable: better

informed policy, stronger collaboration across systems and organisations, and more effective services for those who need them. Our focus remains clear: that every member of the Armed Forces community has the opportunity to lead fulfilled and successful civilian lives.

Michelle Alston

Chief Executive,
Forces in Mind Trust



Who are we?

Every year, around 15,000 Service personnel and their families leave the UK Armed Forces.

Most Service leavers will transition successfully and go on to lead successful and fulfilled civilian lives. However, a small minority struggle and need additional support when leaving the military. Forces in Mind Trust exists to support this group, with the vision that all ex-Service personnel and their families lead fulfilled civilian lives.

How do we make change?

Forces in Mind Trust is an independent charity, funded by a 20-year endowment from the National Lottery Community Fund.

Using our funds to create lasting changes for the Armed Forces community, we focus on:



Funding and leveraging evidence to strengthen understanding of the barriers to successful transition, identify what works, and support the application of insight into policy and practice.



Bringing together organisations, policymakers and practitioners to catalyse collaboration, innovation and systemic change across the United Kingdom and beyond the Armed Forces sector.



Equipping decision makers, service providers and influencers with the evidence, connections and understanding needed to improve policy, practice and outcomes for Service leavers and their families.



In 2025, we have focused our efforts on where and how we could make the greatest difference to improving transition for the Armed Forces community.

The following four themes highlight how we have put these approaches into practice to drive impact in 2025.

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Our Impact

Strengthening systems through collaboration and convening



What is our goal?

FiMT's goal in this area is to strengthen collaboration across government, local authorities, charities and other organisations and build a shared understanding of the Armed Forces community's needs. By building shared understanding and encouraging coordinated action, we aim to improve the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant and help create a system of support that is more effective, consistent and responsive to the needs of veterans, serving personnel and their families.



Evidence to action: contributing to change in 2025

- More local authorities are adopting the key building blocks of effective Armed Forces Covenant delivery, including Covenant Action Plans and dedicated Armed Forces Champions
- Armed Forces and civilian mental health organisations are working from a stronger shared understanding of potential future mental health challenges, supporting more proactive and coordinated planning for future support
- Local authorities and organisations delivering support to the Armed Forces community have access to practical evidence and guidance to strengthen the support



How did FiMT make a difference?

In 2025, we ensured that robust evidence about the needs of the Armed Forces community reached those who can act on it. Our research informed national policy discussions, supported organisations responsible for delivering the Armed Forces Covenant, and provided practical tools that are helping partners strengthen support for the Armed Forces community. By connecting evidence with policy and practice, FiMT has helped build the knowledge, capability and commitment needed to deliver on the intent of the Armed Forces Covenant, supporting more informed decision making and strengthening the capacity of organisations across sectors to provide effective support to the Armed Forces community.

Strengthening delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant

Through the latest report in our *Our Community Our Covenant* series, we provided evidence on what effective delivery looks like in practice. Drawing on case studies from across England, Scotland and Wales, the research highlighted how local authorities and their partners are translating Covenant commitments into tangible support for the Armed Forces community.

The report is helping policymakers and practitioners identify practical approaches to strengthening local delivery, including effective partnership working. By demonstrating a range of successful models rather than promoting a single solution, it supports organisations to adapt proven approaches to their own local circumstances and needs.

The findings have been translated into practical action through the updated Armed Forces Covenant Toolkit, which provides local authorities and partners with guidance, resources and examples of effective practice to help strengthen support for the Armed Forces community and prepare for the extension of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty.

FiMT has worked directly with local authorities to support improvements in the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant and readiness for the extension of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty. Through individual engagement, co-chairing the Covenant Community Action Group alongside the Ministry of Defence, and presenting findings at the MOD Covenant Conference, we have helped share

practical learning and effective approaches across the sector. The research found increasing use of approaches championed through successive versions of the toolkit, including Covenant Action Plans and dedicated Armed Forces champions; demonstrating growing adoption of evidence-informed practice.

This research provided the foundation for joint fringe events at the Conservative and Labour Party conferences, delivered in partnership with the Royal British Legion and Help for Heroes. These events ensured evidence on the Armed Forces Covenant was brought directly into political discussions, helping ensure that future policy development is informed by practical evidence of what works for the Armed Forces community.



A panel answers questions at the *Our Community Our Covenant and Beyond* event

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Thank you for your ongoing collaboration with my officials to support the communication, implementation, and evaluation of the Covenant’s delivery. This includes your significant contribution through hosting a workshop at the Covenant Conference earlier in June. I trust that this vital partnership will continue to flourish, building on FiMT’s impressive track record of delivering evidence-based research on our Armed Forces Community.

Louise Sandher-Jones MP, Minister for the Armed Forces

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We were really pleased to work with FiMT on joint panel discussions at the Labour and Conservative party autumn conferences in 2025 discussing local delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant. The Covenant has the potential to make a meaningful difference to improving the lives and well-being of the Armed Forces community and the panel events provided a really effective forum for RBL, FiMT and Help for Heroes to share our insights and analysis with politicians, policymakers and other interested individuals. We felt it was an effective collaboration; combining our expertise and reinforcing each other’s work.

Angela Kitching, Director of Campaigns, Policy and Research at the Royal British Legion

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Convening for change

FIMT has helped strengthen planning for future mental health support for the Armed Forces community through a project with Combat Stress and RAND Europe, which explored the future role of mental health services.

This project brought together stakeholders, including from outside the Armed Forces sector, to consider future challenges and planning. Insights from this engagement were shared with over 50 civilian charities and foundations, encouraging stronger collaboration between specialist and mainstream services. Through convening and collaborating, services supporting the mental health of the Armed Forces community are better prepared for future challenges, ensuring that mental health outcomes continue to improve.

Partnership working has also remained central in how we promote better outcomes across the sector. Through our sponsorship of the Working Together Award at the Armed Forces Community Awards, we continue to recognise and celebrate collaborative approaches that improve support for the Armed Forces community. In 2025, the award was won by Cleveland Police for their work with partner charities to support veterans into employment, and improve services tackling homelessness, mental health, and re-offending amongst former Service personnel in Cleveland.



Cleveland Police, winners of the 2025 Working Together Award sponsored by FIMT.

Driving a whole family approach



What is our goal?

FiMT's goal in this area is to shift how transition is understood and delivered – from a focus on the individual Service leaver, to one that recognises the whole family. We want to see this approach reflected in Defence policy, in the design of support services, and in how mainstream organisations engage with Armed Forces families.



Evidence to action: contributing to change in 2025

- Recognition has grown across Defence and the single Services that successful transition depends on supporting the whole family, not just the Service leaver
- New evidence is informing how organisations design transition support and engage with military families
- Greater attention is being given to the experiences of Service children, strengthening the evidence available to improve policy and practice



How did FiMT make a difference?

In 2025, we helped move the needs of military families further into the centre of transition policy and practice. Through research, engagement and collaboration with Defence and third-sector partners, we contributed to growing recognition that successful transition outcomes depend on supporting the whole family, not only the Service leaver. Our evidence is informing how organisations design services, communicate with families and consider family needs within wider transition planning, helping create more inclusive and effective support for Armed Forces families.

Whole family approach

Our work has strengthened recognition across Defence and the single Services that supporting the whole family is a critical factor in a successful transition. Through our funding of the *Living in Our Shoes Revisited* report, FiMT has provided new evidence on the experiences of military families and helped ensure that these experiences are reflected in policy discussions and service design, driving momentum for a more family focused approach.

Building on the influence of the original report, early evidence from this project has strengthened the case for a more holistic approach to transition. We have used these findings to support a shift in policy thinking, working with stakeholders to ensure families can be effectively integrated into Armed Forces people policy, rather than treated as a separate or additional workstream, helping to embed a more family-centred approach across Defence.



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Families are fundamental to the Army's ability to serve effectively, and understanding their lived experience is essential to making well informed decisions. The *Living in Our Shoes Revisited* project is therefore an important and welcome piece of work for the Army. Ongoing engagement with the project team, and close attention to what they are learning, will help shape how we better support Army families and, in doing so, strengthen the people foundations that enable the Army to fight and win wars from the land.

Col Helen Cook, Asst Head Conditions of Service, Army Personnel Directorate

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Research like this from Thinks Insight & Strategy is important to help us understand the needs of RAF families and inform how we communicate with them. Families are central to the RAF's operational effectiveness but we recognise that it is not always easy for them to get the information they need to navigate Service life. We welcome the families' perspectives, evidenced insights, and actionable recommendations in the Thinks' project, which helps us to support a successful transition from a Service career as part of our Leave Well work.

Air Cdre Chris Todd, Head People & Families Support, RAF

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Improving communications with families

Families' engagement with transition support plays an important role in ensuring a successful transition. However, many families still face barriers to accessing information and support. One challenge identified through our evidence is that communication from the MOD and single Services about transition is often indirect through the serving person, limiting how effectively families are reached and engaged.

We are addressing this issue through our project with Thinks Insight and Strategy, where we have adopted a behavioural insights approach to

identify ways of improving communications and engagement with Service families.

Through engagement with Service families, Thinks have developed practical, co-created interventions that offer new approaches to improving families' engagement with transition support. The findings are providing Defence and service providers with evidence based approaches to strengthen communication and engagement, helping ensure that families are better informed and prepared to access support during transition.

Spotlighting Armed Forces children

Children in Armed Forces families are significantly affected by Service life and successful transition for the whole family must include support that recognises their needs. However, there is limited focus on their experience of transition. In 2025, FiMT worked to ensure that the needs of Service children are better understood and reflected in policy, practice and wider support systems.

We have engaged mainstream children and families organisations – including Home-Start, the National Children's Bureau, Action for Children, and #BeeWell – to promote a greater recognition of Service children as a distinct group whose experiences should be better understood; not only within the Armed Forces but in wider public services and civilian organisations. The Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance Impact Centre, launched in 2025 with funding from FiMT, is strengthening the connection between research, policy and practice in relation to Service children. By helping organisations access and apply evidence more effectively, the Centre is supporting improvements in how schools, public services and charities understand and respond to the needs of Service children.

To help drive further change, we have funded Brunel University of London to lead a commission focused on understanding the lived experience of children and young people whose parents are leaving or have left the Armed Forces. By identifying the unique challenges and opportunities associated with having a parent (or parents) in the Armed Forces, the commission will produce recommendations to help improve policy and practice and strengthen support for Service children and young people.



Ensuring the evidence base reflects the whole community



What is our goal?

FiMT's goal in this area is to ensure that groups who have often been under-represented in research, policy and service design are properly understood and reflected in decision making.

By improving the evidence base, we aim to help organisations develop policies and services that better meet the needs of the whole Armed Forces community.



Evidence to action: contributing to change in 2025

- The experiences of non-UK veterans are receiving greater attention within policy and advocacy discussions
- Policymakers have access to new evidence on the experiences of female former Service personnel, helping address longstanding gaps in understanding
- Military charities are drawing on evidence about under represented groups to inform programmes



How did FiMT make a difference?

In 2025, FiMT-funded research on under-researched groups has informed the agenda of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on the Armed Forces Community and its engagement with government. It has influenced new programmes amongst military charities and informed policy development through the submission of evidence by FiMT.

Supporting Gurkha, Fijian and other non-UK personnel

Through our funding of the HEAR study, we have helped increase the awareness and understanding of the experiences of Gurkha and Fijian veterans with key decision makers. The research highlighted both the positive impact of military service and the challenges some have faced, including unfair treatment and the impact of long family separations. By providing robust evidence on these experiences, the study has strengthened the ability of policymakers, charities and advocates to make the case for more inclusive policies and services. This is helping ensure that future support better reflects the diversity of those who have served.

Supporting ethnic minorities in the Armed Forces community

We also widened understanding of the experiences of ethnic minority veterans through a study by the University of Chester. Centring on the experiences of the veterans themselves, the study highlighted both the positive impact of Service life, which included camaraderie and skills gained, and the negative experiences of racism, harassment and unconscious bias encountered by some personnel. These findings have informed engagement with the Ministry of Defence, and are shaping changes to improve the outcomes of past, present and future ethnic minority Service personnel.



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Supporting female veterans

In March 2025, FiMT published the SUSTAIN report with the King’s Centre for Military Health Research, addressing a longstanding gap in understanding of ex-Servicewomen’s transition to civilian life. The report explored women’s experiences during and after service, and identified characteristics associated with better transition outcomes, alongside barriers that could impair successful transition.

Through our submission to the Defence Committee inquiry on women in the Armed Forces, the findings have helped broaden the conversation around women’s transition. It has demonstrated the need

for greater focus on the wider structural and practical barriers women can face, while recognising the skills, experience and value female Service leavers contribute to society.

The evidence is also influencing practice, with Forces Employment Charity drawing on the findings to develop its Military Women Programme, designed to increase women’s engagement in the Armed Forces community and better equip them with the skills to access Forces-friendly employers. This demonstrates how evidence generated through FiMT-funded research is being translated into practical support for ex-Servicewomen.

Reframing transition as a holistic and through career approach



What is our goal?

FiMT's goal in this area is to change how transition is understood across Defence – moving away from a single exit point, towards a through-career process. We want transition to begin earlier, involve the whole family, and connect employment, health, housing and wellbeing, so that individuals and families are better prepared for life beyond service.



Evidence to action: contributing to change in 2025

- Transition is increasingly being understood as a lifelong process that begins during service rather than at the point of discharge
- The Department for Work and Pensions is using research findings to strengthen support for veterans interacting with the benefits system
- Service providers are applying new evidence to improve support for ex-Service personnel with complex needs, including those living with limb-function loss



How did FiMT make a difference?

In 2025, FiMT helped embed holistic transition into systems supporting the Armed Forces community. We have shaped how the Department for Work and Pensions supports the Armed Forces community and ensured that our wide-ranging *Understanding the Transition from Military to Civilian Life* report is used by decision makers to inform transition policy.



Understanding the Transition from Military to Civilian Life

Latest research on transition

Through *Understanding the Transition from Military to Civilian Life* – FiMT has improved understanding across the sector of where transition policy and practice is working well, and where further improvement is needed. This research by QinetiQ and RAND Europe has been important in providing evidence of progress in transition, for example in employment support, including expansion of services provided by the Career Transition Partnership.

However, the findings also recognised the continuing need for a broader and more proactive approach to transition. The evidence highlighted the importance of personnel preparing earlier during their Service career, improving data sharing between organisations, and a through career approach to transition as part of Defence culture. By providing a shared evidence base, the research is helping policymakers and practitioners focus efforts where change can have the greatest impact.

Trauma-informed services

Our work has highlighted the importance of mainstream systems being better prepared to recognise and respond to need in the Armed Forces community. The final report from the University of Salford's *Sanctions, Support and Service Leavers* project was launched in January 2025. It was the first and only substantive study of veterans' experiences of the UK benefits system. The research showed how inconsistent support, delays in accessing medical records, and a lack of understanding of military experience can make transition more difficult for some veterans. FiMT is using the findings to make the case for a more trauma-informed approach within welfare services, ensuring that those who find transition harder feel understood and are supported.

The Department for Work and Pensions has actively worked with the lead researcher on strengthening their services and embedding the research findings into the benefits system. During the project the Department has made a number of changes to support the Armed Forces community. One example is the use of Armed Forces champions that help veterans who face challenges during transition receive support that is more responsive to their circumstances and experiences.

The criminal justice system

FiMT has also contributed to a better understanding of how experiences before, during and after service can influence involvement with the criminal justice system. Our *Lifetime Offending* study, by King's College London, provided the first whole-career evidence examining offending behaviour before, during and after service. By identifying where preventative action and support may be most effective, the findings provide a foundation for organisations across both the justice and Armed Forces sectors to develop more targeted interventions. FiMT has shared the findings with military and justice stakeholders including the Law Society's criminal law committee, to encourage them to translate the learning into good practice.

Limb-function loss

Similarly, FiMT-funded research with Blesma, undertaken by Anglia Ruskin University, highlighted that ex-Service personnel experiencing limb function loss can face different and unpredictable challenges when transitioning to civilian life. This research is already influencing practice with Blesma using the findings to inform its own services, while the

evidence is helping statutory and charitable providers better understand and plan for the needs of this group. As a result, organisations are better equipped to provide enhanced care and support for those with loss of limb function and those around them.

These projects highlight that Service leavers have a diverse range of needs and reinforce the importance of understanding transition holistically.



The Centre for Evidence for the Armed Forces Community, funded by FiMT

In 2025, the Centre for Evidence for the Armed Forces Community, funded by FiMT, strengthened its role as a bridge between research, policy and practice. FiMT's funding of the Centre breaks down barriers to collaboration and makes it easier for policymakers to use the evidence generated by FiMT and others to inform decisions that benefit the Armed Forces community.

The Centre published summaries on housing research and policy in 2025. These summaries brought together evidence on housing pathways, barriers to securing affordable accommodation, risks of homelessness, and the unequal experiences faced by some groups within the Armed Forces. This combination of research evidence with analysis of the support landscape - including devolved statutory guidance, local authority practice and veteran homelessness initiatives – ensured that the Centre provided policymakers and service providers with clearer insight into where support is working well and where gaps remain.

Alongside its regular news articles and its repository of over 10,000 articles, the Centre ensures evidence is visible and available to those who can act on it to build better support for the Armed Forces community. It furthers this aim by acting as a convening bridge between researchers, charities and statutory services at its annual conference. The conference focused on “Understanding and supporting the Armed Forces Community in an evolving world”, ensuring that the sector keeps up-to-date with challenges facing members of the Armed Forces community during transition.



Chair's Message

At FiMT, we have always understood that our role is different from many charities. We do not deliver frontline services. Instead, we seek to improve the systems, policies and services that support the Armed Forces community. Our success is therefore measured not by the number of reports we publish or events we convene, but by the extent to which evidence changes decisions, influences practice and ultimately improves outcomes.

This year, we have seen continuing signs of that influence.

Across Defence, government, local authorities and the charity sector, there is growing recognition that transition is not a single event at the point of leaving service, but a process that begins much earlier and affects the whole family. Evidence funded and championed by FiMT has helped reinforce the case for a more joined-up, through-career approach, one that recognises the connections between employment, housing, health, family wellbeing and long-term life outcomes. This is going to become more important, and I am pleased to see FiMT at the forefront of getting the right policies in place.

We have also continued to broaden understanding of the Armed Forces community itself. Too often,

policy and services are shaped around the experiences of the majority, leaving other voices insufficiently heard. This year, our work has helped bring greater visibility to the experiences of Servicewomen, ethnic minority veterans, non-UK personnel and families, and Service children. In doing so, we have helped ensure that future policy and practice is informed by a richer and more complete understanding of the community it seeks to serve.

Perhaps most importantly, FiMT has continued to strengthen the connection between evidence and action. Whether supporting the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant, informing parliamentary and governmental discussions, influencing service design, or helping organisations work together more effectively, our focus has remained on ensuring that research is

used, not simply produced. I am delighted to see that FiMT is using its remaining time to maximise its impact in this area.

As we move towards the final phase of FiMT's planned spend-out in 2031, the Board is becoming evermore focused on a simple question: what difference will it make that FiMT existed? Increasingly, our attention is focused on ensuring that the evidence, partnerships, capabilities and changes we have helped create continue to improve outcomes long after the Trust itself has closed.

I remain enormously grateful to the Executive team, my fellow Trustees, our partners and the many researchers, policymakers and practitioners who engage with our work. Together, we are helping create a future in which

all members of the Armed Forces community have the opportunity to lead successful and fulfilling civilian lives.

Laura Macleod CB CVO
Chair, Forces in Mind Trust



 the-forces-in-mind-trust

Contact Us

fim-trust.org/contact-form

fim-trust.org



Charity number

1145688

Company Number

07855145

Registered office

Alexandra House, St Johns Street, Salisbury, SP1 2SB

Operational address

Mountbarrow House, 6-20 Elizabeth Street, London, SW1W 9RB

Honorary President

Air Vice-Marshal A J Stables CBE