



BIG PARTNERSHIP MOVES FORWARD FOR £35 MILLION FORCES IN MIND TRUST

A partnership of forces charities and mental health organisations, led by the Confederation of British Service and Ex-service Organisations (COBSEO), has been given the green light to push ahead with the formation of the £35 million lottery-funded Forces in Mind Trust.

The Big Lottery Fund has today announced COBSEO as the 'preferred candidate' to set up the independent Forces in Mind trust supporting former UK military personnel and their families over the next 20 years.

The £35 million Trust will provide UK-wide long-term support and advocacy for former forces personnel to make a successful transition to civilian life, including those who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. The focus will be on addressing a range of problems that some ex-service personnel and their families can experience back in civilian life, such as poor mental health, family breakdown and alcohol-related problems.

Other work will include commissioning research to improve knowledge of the issues affecting veterans and their families, which will help shape new services and inform national policy. The Trust will also undertake awareness raising campaigns, and provide peer advice and support particularly to those veterans who are most vulnerable.

COBSEO will now begin work to set up the Trust using a development grant of up to £200,000 from BIG. It is planned that the remainder of the £35 million Lottery award will be transferred to the partnership by the end of summer 2011 when the Trust will become operational.

Tim Allan, Big Lottery Fund Committee Member and former Major in the Royal Tank Regiment said: "I am regularly in touch with my former regiment, now out serving in Afghanistan, and am all too aware of the incredibly stressful situations that our young frontline forces face on a daily basis, and of the kind of emotional and mental problems that are going to be building up for so many of these servicemen and women in future years.

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“Making the transition back into civilian life from the strong family community of the armed forces is in itself a hugely significant life changing experience, and I applaud the timing and foresight of the Big Lottery Fund’s Forces in Mind Programme in working to set up vital structures and act as advocate to help ensure that those struggling with a range of difficulties are able to navigate that vital transition towards a more positive future.”

Mike Bray, Secretary of COBSEO, added: “COBSEO, the Confederation of Service and ex-Service Organisations, provides a focus for co-operation and collaboration among the service charities. Our vision for the Forces in Mind programme is to make a positive difference to transition from military service to civilian life for all service men and women and their families. We intend to develop a comprehensive approach, embracing, not only employment, but also welfare, education, healthcare, psychological and housing needs.

“The Forces in Mind programme will provide a unique opportunity to undertake focused research and from that, to identify key areas of need and then directing the funding to address that need. Working in close partnership with the service charities and with other partner and supporting national charities, including the Mental Health Foundation, Centre for Mental Health and Shaw Trust, the Forces in Mind programme will draw on the wide experience of these partners to deliver an integrated and effective solution. Our aim is to give those leaving the armed services and their families the best opportunity to return to civilian life and participate in society.”

Chair of the Big Lottery Fund, Sir Clive Booth, said: “The partnership we have identified to take the Forces in Mind Trust forward has a huge role to play in bringing improvements to the lives of those who have served our country in the armed forces.

“In spite of help available from the Armed Services, Ministry of Defence, NHS and a wide range of charities, there are still gaps in the support available for our veterans and the 20,000 people leaving the forces each year. By investing this £35 million, the Big Lottery Fund is providing the resources for interested parties to use their expertise to organise a succession of interventions and activities that positively inform national policy and practice as well as offering essential direct assistance.”

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As well as working with a number of other contributing members and supporting organisations, the main partner organisations in the COBSEO led partnership are:

- Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) – Forces Help
- Seafarers UK
- ABF Soldiers' Charity
- Veterans Scotland
- Mental Health Foundation
- Centre for Mental Health
- Shaw Trust

COBSEO represents, promotes and furthers the interests of Service and ex-Service men and women of all ranks, and of their spouses and dependants, by all practical, legal and proper means. COBSEO's membership consists of about 167 Service and ex-Service organisations including 65 regimental associations.

The Big Lottery Fund has a long-standing legacy of supporting veterans across the UK. Since 2004 the Fund has given more than £50 million to veterans or projects that involve learning about and commemorating their experiences. This includes our Heroes Return programme that has allowed Second World War veterans to visit the places where they saw active service.

Former Forces Fact File

- Veterans under the age of 24 are up to three times more likely to commit suicide than civilians of the same age (*Source: Manchester University*)
- It is estimated that more Falklands veterans have taken their own lives since the end of the 1982 war, compared with those who died in action (*Source: South Atlantic Medal Association*)
- An estimated 20,000 veterans are in the British criminal justice system, with 8,500 behind bars, almost one in 10 of the prison population. There are more ex-soldiers in prison, on parole or serving community sentences than actually serving in Afghanistan. (*Source: Napo*)
- 32% of families reported their loved one's behaviour had changed as a result of their experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan; two thirds said that the change was negative or very negative (*Source: Ministry of Defence*)
- On average veterans seek help for conditions including post-traumatic stress, alcoholism and depression 14 years after leaving the forces (*Source: Combat Stress*)
- There are an estimated 1,100 homeless veterans in London on any one night, mainly hostel residents but including some rough sleepers (*Source: Centre for Housing Policy, University of York*)
- 18% of serving and former servicemen abuse alcohol, around 13% have mental health conditions and 4.8% of all British troops are affected by post traumatic stress disorder (*Source: King's Centre for Military Health Research*)

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Full details of the Big Lottery Fund programmes and grant awards are available on the website:

www.biglotteryfund.org.uk

Notes to Editors:

- Since 2004 BIG has given more than £50 million to veterans and projects that involve learning about and commemorating their experiences. This includes our Heroes Return programme that has allowed Second World War veterans to visit the places where they saw active Service.
- BIG's current Heroes Return 2 funding scheme, was launched by the Big Lottery Fund in April 2009 in the run up to the 65th anniversary of D-Day, enables Second World War Veterans to make commemorative visits to the Second World War battlefields where they saw action. So far over £7.5 million has been awarded benefitting more than 11,000 veterans, spouses, widows and carers.
- BIG's previous Heroes Return scheme awarded £16.6 million to over 39,000 veterans, spouses, widows and carers to fund similar commemorative trips.
- The **Big Lottery Fund (BIG)**, the largest distributor of National Lottery good cause funding, is responsible for giving out half the money raised for good causes by the National Lottery. BIG is committed to bringing real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need and has been rolling out grants to health, education, environment and charitable causes across the UK since June 2004. The Fund was formally established by Parliament on 1 December 2006.
- Since the National Lottery began in 1994, 28p from every pound spent by the public has gone to good causes. As a result, over £25 billion has now been raised and more than 330,000 grants awarded across arts, sport, heritage, charities, health, education and the environment.

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