

21st November 2017

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

FiMT/EOI/MH1701 –The mental health needs of serving and ex-Service personnel: A review of the latest evidence and key stakeholder perspectives

FiMT Background

1. Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) was established at the start of 2012 with a £35 million endowment from the Big Lottery Fund. FiMT's vision is that all ex-Service personnel and their families lead successful and fulfilled civilian lives. The mission of FiMT is to enable ex-Service personnel and their families to make a successful and sustainable transition into civilian life, and the Trust's strategy is to provide an evidence base that will influence and underpin policy making and service delivery. By funding high quality, credible research where there is an identified gap in relevant understanding, and by then exploiting the findings, FiMT effects positive change.
2. In 2012, FiMT commissioned a review, in partnership with The Mental Health Foundation, of existing evidence and the perspectives of key stakeholders concerning the mental health of serving and ex-Service personnel (<http://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/20130729-FiMT-MHF-Final.pdf>). The review was published in 2013 and, alongside discussions with key stakeholders in the field, from academia and the NHS to the MOD and military charities, it underpinned the strategy behind FiMT's Mental Health Research Programme (MHRP). The MHRP launched officially in October 2015 with an annual disbursement of £1 million for up to 5 years. Having just passed its 2-year review point, FiMT is keen to move the programme from a primarily reactive application stance to one of proactive commissioning.
3. To help shape the commissioning programme, FiMT wishes to start by commissioning a fresh review of the latest evidence concerning the mental health of UK service and ex-Serving personnel and their families, including the perspectives of key stakeholders, within the context of the MOD's 'Defence People Mental health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2022' (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-people-mental-health-and-wellbeing-strategy>); the results from Phase 3 of King's College London's 'Health and Wellbeing of UK Armed Forces Personnel: A Cohort Study' research (<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/kcmhr/research/kcmhr/healthstudy.aspx>); NHS England's 'Five Year Forward View for Mental Health' (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Mental-Health-Taskforce-FYFV-final.pdf>), and other equivalent NHS documents within each of the devolved nations, where they exist. These stated documents, however, should not be considered an exhaustive list.
4. For more information about FiMT, please visit our website at www.fim-trust.org; for information on the Mental Health Research Programme specifically, please visit <http://www.fim-trust.org/mental-health/research-programme/>

Context

5. Improving our understanding of veterans' mental health, service provision, policy, and effective treatments has been a priority of the Forces in Mind Trust since the Trust's inception. For the small minority

of veterans who suffer mental health related issues, it can have a major impact on their quality of life and that of their families, affecting the ease and success of their transition from military to civilian life. It is therefore important that the Trust retains a keen awareness of the latest knowledge, gaps in knowledge, and areas of concern within the field of the mental and related health needs of veterans (and their families). The MRHP currently has six research priorities, which can be viewed at <http://www.fim-trust.org/mental-health/research-programme/>. To inform the Programme's commissioning interest going forward and to ensure the ongoing relevance of the Programme's research priorities, a full and refreshed systematic literature review, with key stakeholder consultation, is now required.

Scope

6. FiMT wishes to commission a documented, systematic review of relevant high-quality literature (henceforth 'systematic review') on the current scientific environment and changes and gaps in evidence concerning the field of serving and ex-Serving personnel's (and their families') mental health. The review is to include the perspectives of key stakeholders; the successful bidder is expected to suggest which stakeholders they would wish to include, and which aspects of the review they would wish to discuss with whom. This request for expressions of interest (RFEOI) invites recipients to declare an interest in conducting the systematic review. Please see below examples of areas for inclusion in the search:

- Identifying where there is, and is not, a difference between veterans and non-veterans concerning their mental and related health issues
- Highlighting ongoing and new issues or concerns affecting (or likely to affect) the veteran mental health field
- Veteran-specific and mainstream services and interventions that currently exist (or are missing, ineffective or need evaluating) to meet those mental and related health issues identified at the previous two points
- Interventions or methods for reaching veterans who take longer to seek help (or withdraw prematurely from) treatment

Mental health related issues may include, for example:

- Common mental health problems (eg depression and anxiety)
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (eg mild to moderate and complex)
- Alcohol, addictive behaviours and other substance misuse
- Suicide and self-harm
- Mental health of, impact of, and support for families of service personnel on deployment, or veterans in transition (eg where veteran is suffering mental health issues)

7. This type of information, or that deemed relevant by the successful bidder, is expected to provide the foundation for further work that will help FiMT's MHRP answer how the mental health and related needs of UK serving and ex-Serving personnel and their families can be best supported through policy and service provision.

Timescale

8. FiMT is seeking to commission this systematic review in the first half of 2018, for it to be completed and published within 6-8 months of commencement.

Approximate value of the award

9. The award is expected to be in the region of £50,000 to £100,000 subject to agreed scope and subject to negotiation.

Methodology

10. This project requires a thorough, well-structured, robust and comprehensive systematic review covering all relevant peer-reviewed publications (high quality reviews and primary studies), as well as good quality grey literature (unpublished and/or non-peer reviewed) on the mental health needs of serving and ex-Serving personnel and their families, including conducting interviews with key stakeholders, since 2012. A comparison to the FiMT commissioned Mental Health review published in 2013 (as mentioned at point 2 above) should be made to determine the continued relevancy of findings and recommendations made within that report, noting where progress has been made to date. The review should also include ongoing and ‘under consideration’ research in these areas, as far as is practicable, and should provide an indication of the size and relevance of ‘grey’ literature. It will be important for the successful bidder to maintain close dialogue with FiMT as the extent of these areas becomes known (eg PhDs and conference papers may yield a large amount of literature, but be disproportionality poor value).

11. To ensure relevance, papers must have been published in the English language between August 2012 and the latest date of the period in which this review is conducted (earlier papers may be included if particularly informative and still relevant). The review should focus on studies from the UK, but where UK research is relatively limited, studies from other countries can be included, particularly if featuring as useful comparators, bearing in mind the institutional and contextual differences (eg USA, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and some other NATO countries’ literature, as may be identified by the successful bidder). Gaps in evidence should be highlighted, along with recommendations for areas of focus in future research relating to these subject areas. These gaps should be categorized as being due to absence of research, inadequate quality research, or other factors.

12. FiMT is interested to hear proposals from the bidder of an assessment framework that might provide an ‘Impact Factor’ for any research the systematic review identifies; however, the scope and hence cost of such a framework might exceed its value to this work’s end purpose. FiMT’s position on the relative value of longitudinal studies, randomized control trials and independent evaluations is that these are likely to provide the highest practical quality in this field, but other methodologies should be included within the systematic review.

Intellectual Property

13. In commissioning this research, the title to all intellectual property rights created or developed during the course of this research (“Foreground Intellectual Property”) will pass to FiMT. FiMT will grant the researcher a royalty-free license (and sub-license if required) to use and exploit the Foreground Intellectual Property.

Communication of findings

14. FiMT expects that any findings from this project will be made available in the public domain. This will include posting the final report on FiMT’s website and on the Veterans and Families Research Hub as a minimum, but might also include other written outputs such as fact sheets, evidence summaries or online blogs specifically targeted to a relevant, non-academic policy maker or service delivery audience. This could also include oral presentations at conferences and meetings with relevant stakeholders. FiMT would expect consideration to be given to how findings might be published in quality peer-reviewed open access journals.

Lead organisation and named participants

15. The credibility, experience, and expertise of the lead organization and associated partners are critical to the success of this project, both in terms of access to subjects and the final output. FiMT can fund work from registered charities and registered companies which are based in the United Kingdom.

Application process

16. All Expressions of Interest (EOIs) will be assessed by the deadline stated below. 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

17. FiMT expects all research to be carried out in an ethical manner and bidders will need to explain how this will be ensured.

Selection Principles

18. FiMT will use the following selection criteria to determine which organizations will be invited to tender:
- The quality of the EOI. Robust and thorough research is the primary selection criteria
 - The clarity of the EOI in setting out how the systematic review (including stakeholder interviews) will be carried out
 - The credibility, experience and expertise of the organization(s) seeking to deliver this project, both in terms of delivery and in the exploitation of the subsequent findings
 - Ethical credentials
 - Value for money

Feedback on unsuccessful EOIs will be at FiMT discretion.

Information to be included in the EOI and deadline for submission

19. FiMT expects the EOI to be a maximum of 6 pages and to contain the following information:
- EOI reference number and title
 - Name and details of lead organization, including: postal, email and website addresses, type of organization (public, private, voluntary and community sector or other) with any registration numbers, telephone numbers, and details for the person who will be main point of contact
 - Name and contact details of any other organization involved
 - An outline of how the research would be carried out
 - Examples of other work you have already carried out on this subject or in this area and your expertise on this subject
 - An indication of cost, a broad allocation of costs, and what proportion would be requested from FiMT

EOIs must be submitted via applications@fim-trust.org by noon on Friday, 12th January 2018.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss any aspect of this research/project prior to submission, please contact Kirsteen Waller (Research and Support Manager) at rsm@fim-trust.org

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray Lock". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'R' and 'L'.

Ray Lock CBE
Chief Executive
Forces in Mind Trust