



**FiMT** Research  
forces in mind trust Centre

# Putting evidence at the heart of decision making for the benefit of the UK Armed Forces community

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Impact Report  
2022-2024



# Welcome to the FiMT Research Centre

Message from the Co-Directors

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Ruth Harris  
Co-Director



Professor  
Nicola Fear  
Co-Director

We are currently at a time of rising geopolitical instability, a time when we must continue to invest in understanding and supporting our Serving and ex-Service Armed Forces community.

Those who serve have chosen to dedicate their lives to the safety of our nation, overseas territories and allies through the various roles and responsibilities they undertake whether in the Royal Navy, Army, or Royal Air Force, full time and/or as reserve forces. The nature of military Service and a Service life, however, means those who serve, and their families, have experiences which differentiate them from civilians and the experience of a 'civilian life'.

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Many of these differences and experiences from military Service mean ex-Service personnel and their families bring great value to society and their civilian life. However, the experience of transition and adapting and adjusting to post-Service life is a process requiring time, making adjustments, and building a new sense of familiarity and comfort in a new life. This is a process which will be different for everyone. There will be specific challenges, where individual, community, societal, pre-Service, in-Service, and post-Service experiences play a role in the journey and outcomes of those going through it.

The Armed Forces Covenant, established in 2011, is a promise by the nation that those who serve or who have served in the UK Armed Forces, and their families be treated fairly and are not disadvantaged by their Service. Thus, it is for all of us to work together to ensure those who serve, and their families, experience successful transitions to civilian life.



The role the Research Centre plays, is by working towards **our vision** that:

**Evidence is at the heart of decision making for the benefit of the Armed Forces community**

Evidence-informed decision making means that policy and practice designed to support the Armed Forces community will be more likely to be effective.

Using evidence to inform decision making can be a time-consuming process and requires a level of understanding of different kinds of research and evidence, as well as how best to use it.



This is why **our mission** is to:

**Provide an accessible, digestible, and trusted evidence base and to connect and equip all to use it to make evidence-informed decisions, for the benefit of the Armed Forces community.**

As we approach the halfway mark of our current grant agreement and funding from Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT), it is with great pleasure that we report on the impact of our work to date since September 2022 to January 2025 and how we have been working towards realising our vision and achieving our mission.

**Ruth Harris and Professor Nicola Fear**  
Co-Directors, FiMT Research Centre

# Providing an accessible, digestible, and trusted evidence base

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The best decisions are often informed decisions – those where relevant information has been gathered giving greater control and understanding of the likely outcome.

In the case of supporting the Armed Forces community, that means decision making that is informed by an understanding of the current research evidence and existing policy and service provision and what has/has not worked. Achieving a full understanding can often be challenging! With an average of 200 new international research papers about the Armed Forces community published each month, to be accessed, read, and digested, can make evidence-informed decision making an overwhelming, time consuming, and complex process.

To address this, the first part of our mission is to provide an accessible, digestible, and trusted evidence base for all to use to inform their work and drive towards our shared goal of supporting the Armed Forces community.

To achieve this, we have several mechanisms and outputs accessible via our [website](#) and shared via our social media and newsletter:



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**Online repository of evidence**



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**Regular news articles**



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**Research and policy summaries**





## Online repository of evidence

A comprehensive searchable **repository** provides access to evidence and reports about the Armed Forces community and transition to civilian life. Updated each month using robust methodology, the repository can be used confidently by all to identify and access relevant evidence. An easy-to-use search tool including key words, themes, author, year of publication, country of origin, methods used, and if it has been peer reviewed, makes finding evidence relevant to your needs easy.

**7,400**  
documents

in the repository

**200**  
new international papers

added each month on average

**1,037**  
users

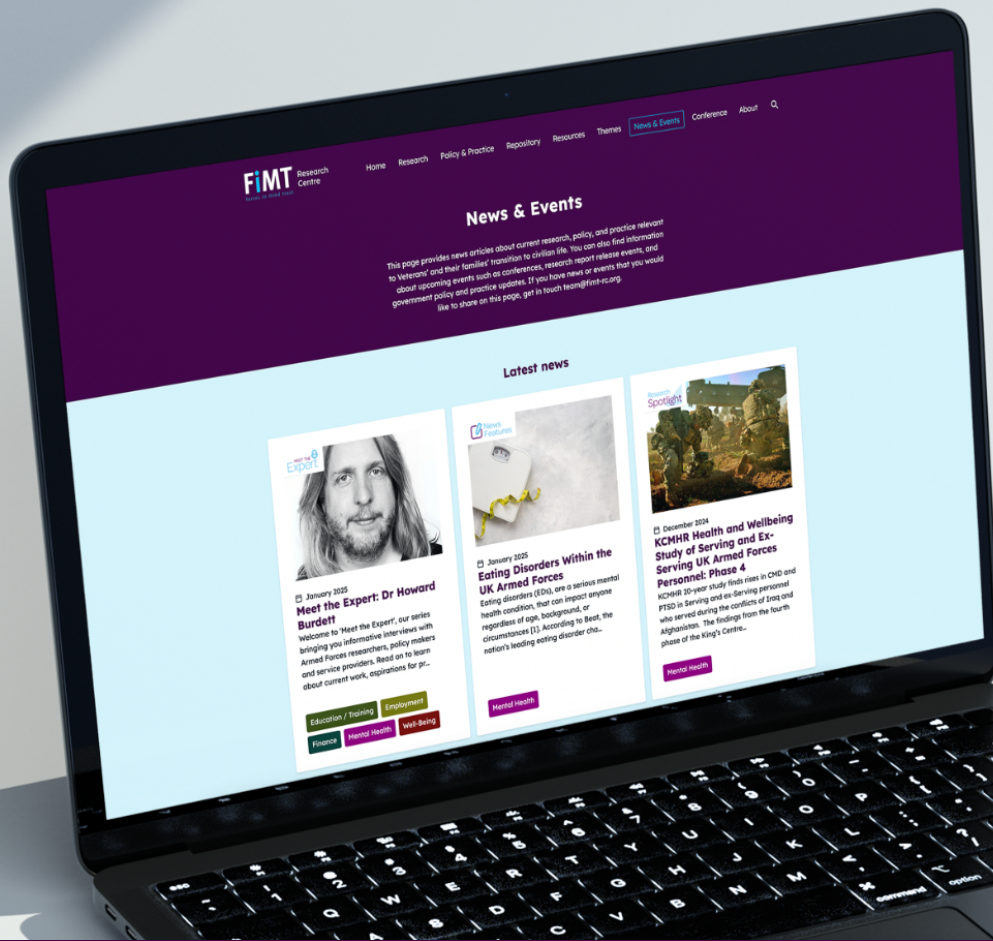
accessing the repository each month, on average



The research repository has become the go to place to search for evidence to help inform papers and evidence to help planning of clinical services. Being able to access the research landscape so readily and comprehensively is hugely time saving and extremely helpful.

**NHS Clinician**





I use the news articles to keep up to date with research developments that are happening in the broader research field.

Early Career Researcher



## Regular news articles

We regularly publish **news articles** to provide digestible updates and insights about current research, highlight gaps in existing evidence and understanding, raise topics that require focus, and increase awareness of experts across the Armed Forces community sector including researchers, policy makers and deliverers, and service and support providers and commissioners. We regularly publish three types of news article. News Features provide an overview and summary of available evidence on topical areas of importance for the Armed Forces community. Research Spotlight articles provide lay summaries of recently published research findings and evidence. Meet the Expert articles introduce experts working across the Armed Forces community in research, policy, or practice, raising awareness of who is who and doing what.

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We regularly publish news articles to provide digestible updates and insights.

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# 17

## News Features

published

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### Most read News Feature

[Chronic pain among UK ex-Service personnel: Is there a need to know and do more?](#)

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# 14

## Research Spotlight

articles published

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### Most read Research Spotlight

[KCMHR Health and Wellbeing Study of Serving and ex-Serving UK Armed Forces Personnel: Phase 4](#)

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# 18

## Meet the Expert

articles published

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### Most read Meet the Expert

[Article with Professor Gerri Matthews-Smith from Edinburgh Napier University](#)



The post-Service employment summaries have helped in supporting the evidence from our own employment survey, to demonstrate the impact of Service life on the careers of spouses and partners.

**Third Sector Service Provider**



## Research and policy summaries

**Thematic research and policy summaries** provide easy digestible access to up-to-date research evidence and an overview of current policy and service provision, across nine core transition outcome areas (education, employment, family and relationships, finance, housing, justice system, mental health, physical health, and well-being). A robust methodology is used to create the summaries meaning they are an accurate and trustworthy source of information which can be used to inform and transform policy, practice, and future research priorities.

## Post-Service employment



**Research summary**  
has been accessed

**561**  
times

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**Policy summary**  
has been accessed

**408**  
times

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Using content from the summaries is powerful since it is credible, strategic, and relevant/supportive to our overall narrative for supporting Veterans in the justice system.

**Third Sector Service Provider**



## Justice system



**Research summary**  
has been accessed

**333**  
times

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**Policy summary**  
has been accessed

**231**  
times

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## Conducting research

As well as providing access to evidence in digestible and easy to use ways, we also generate new evidence on areas that have been identified as a gap by the sector, and that others are not already working on or expert in. Our first piece of research has been **the OUTCOMES study**, which is investigating the perceived value of having served in the UK Armed Forces. The intention of this research is to grow evidence of the positive aspects of Serving to balance the narratives in research and evidence that often focus on the challenges and negative experiences.



# Connecting and equipping all to use the evidence

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In order for evidence to be used effectively, it is important that those who produce evidence and those who use evidence are connected. This includes working together and collaboratively and for all to be aware of what research is happening to minimise unnecessary duplication and maximise effective growth of knowledge and understanding. Additionally, it is important to ensure all are equipped with the skills to appropriately use evidence to inform their decision making and work. We therefore work to connect and equip the sector via various mechanisms.

## Connect

### Annual conference

Each year, we host our **annual conference**, with presentations of current topical evidence involving the Armed Forces community, panel discussions, along with ample opportunities for networking. The conference brings together approximately 220 individuals from within and outside the Armed Forces sector across research, policy makers, policy deliverers, policy influencers, support service providers and commissioners.

### Conference 2025: “Understanding and supporting the Armed Forces community in an evolving world”

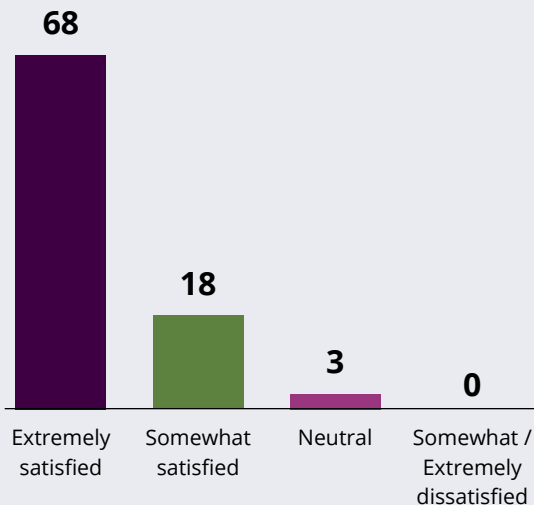
Our next conference is in London on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2025. Find out more here:



### Conference 2024: “Research with impact for ex-Service personnel and their families”

#### OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH THE FiMT RESEARCH CENTRE CONFERENCE 2024

(of 89 responses)



#### 2024 CONFERENCE DELEGATES PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS



Armed Forces



Government



Research



Service provider



Student



Veterans healthcare provider





## Research community and ongoing research

On our website, we have two pages designed to help raise awareness of who the experts doing the research are ([research community page](#)) and what research is currently being conducted ([ongoing research page](#)). This allows people to identify experts in the field that they may want to connect with to collaborate, or seek expert advice or consultation from, and to have an awareness of what research is ongoing to minimise duplication, maximise knowledge growth, raise awareness of what evidence is in the pipeline, and encourage collaboration among those with shared interests.



As I begin to plan my next steps career wise, I intend to use the directories to help strategise about potential research and/or networking opportunities.

**Early Career Researcher**



## Equip

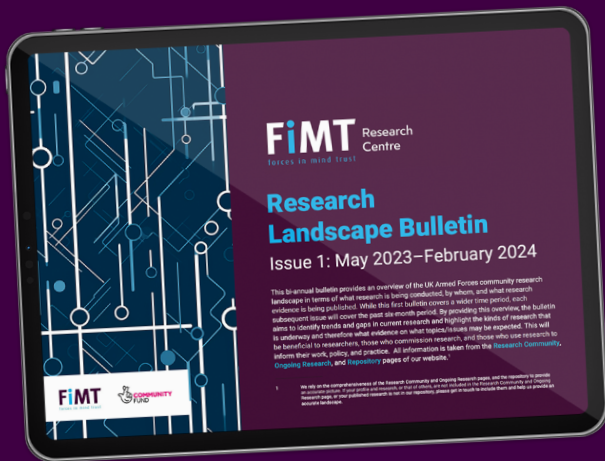
### Resources

To enable growth of knowledge and understanding about research processes, methods, good practice, critical appraisal, and translation of research into action, we provide an ever-growing range of **resources**. To date, we have published a **Guidance for Conducting Inclusive and Equitable Research**, and a resource documenting the Method for **Updating the FiMT Research Centre Online Repository**. We have more resources in the pipeline for 2025, including a Research Jargon Buster due to be released Spring 2025.



The inclusive research guide was helpful when reviewing evaluation plans for current ongoing projects we fund. Specifically, the research design and grant writing section that discusses burden on participants which has been important to consider when commissioned providers are working with older and vulnerable members of the Armed Forces community.

**Third Sector Service Provider**



## Research landscape bulletin

Drawing on the content of the repository and the research community and ongoing research page, twice a year we publish a **Research Landscape Bulletin** which provides an overview of the landscape of research in terms of what research is being conducted, on what topics, and by whom, and what evidence is being published. The bulletin identifies trends in published and ongoing research, highlights what topics are currently being researched and what evidence is therefore in the pipeline, and what gaps in evidence may exist that may need to be addressed.

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The **most recent bulletin** was accessed

**197**  
times

## Advising and connecting with those working with and interested in the Armed Forces community

In addition to our outputs, we are also available to provide advice to those working with and interested in the Armed Forces community, in the context of research and evidence. This often takes the form of people getting in touch to ask about the existence of evidence on particular topics, to sense check if a perceived gap in evidence is an area of importance and is in fact a gap, to ask for recommendations on potential partnerships for collaborating on research and evaluations, often from service providers seeking a research partner, as well as advice on the conduct of research with the Armed Forces community, such as overcoming challenges to participant recruitment, and from non-researchers seeking expert insights on certain evidence and its potential value, use, and possible limitations to be aware of.



Having such a recognised competent authority from who to seek professional opinion and advice instils greater objectivity in the sectors approach to both commissioning and interpreting research products.

**Third Sector Organisation**

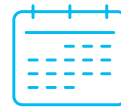
# Looking ahead

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It has been a busy and productive time over the first two and half years of our running the Research Centre, with plenty of evidence demonstrating how we are working to achieve our vision and mission and how we are having a positive impact for the Armed Forces community.

Our focus for this initial period was to build trust in the Research Centre, develop our credibility, and raise the profile of all we do, which we believe we have successfully achieved.

As we begin to embark on the second half of our current funding, while continuing with the same momentum and quality outputs, we also move some focus to widening our engagement within and outside the Armed Forces sector, to become a widely recognised and trusted source of evidence and information about, and for, the Armed Forces community.



## Things to look out for in 2025 and beyond

- Continued regular news articles (Ongoing)
- “New Study Spotlight” – a fresh addition to our regular news articles highlighting research that recently started (Spring 2025)
- New Resource: Research Jargon Buster (Spring 2025)
- Next Research and Policy Summaries: Housing (Summer 2025)
- Upcoming Resource: ‘How to use evidence and get the most from the FiMT Research Centre repository’ (Winter 2025)
- Workshop: Translating evidence into action (2026)

## 2027 and beyond

We also have our sights on the future of the Research Centre after our current funding from FiMT ends and securing our sustainability beyond September 2027. We are developing an ambitious strategy for what the Research Centre will look like by 2027 and beyond and how we can grow our outputs, become more responsive to the needs of the Armed Forces community in terms of evidence and research, and become the go to place for evidence, insights, and research resources for, and about, the Armed Forces community.

The Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) Research Centre aims to ensure that evidence about the experiences and needs of Serving personnel, ex-Service personnel, and their families is at the heart of decision making so that it can inform and transform policy and practice to enable successful transition to civilian life post-Service. The FiMT Research Centre is run by a consortium of RAND Europe and the King's Centre for Military Health Research at King's College London, under a grant agreement with the Forces in Mind Trust until September 2027.

**For more information: [www.fimt-rc.org](http://www.fimt-rc.org)**

Funded by FiMT



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Delivered by RAND and KCMHR

