

Positive

Pathways

Programme

ARMED FORCES  
**COVENANT**  
**FUND TRUST**

# CONSULTATION REPORT

*Sonia Howe, Director of Policy  
Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust*



## In the Autumn Budget 2018; the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced £10M to support Veterans' Mental Health and Wellbeing needs.

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust was asked by HM Government to deliver this funding. We ran a consultation to share our ideas about what types of projects this programme might support through grants, and to ask

- ◆ What types of activities will have the best impact on wellbeing
- ◆ How we can ensure that projects connect veterans with other good types of support to aid their own recovery journey
- ◆ How we can support organisations to run good projects



There is support for a range of activities to be supported through the programme. There is particular support for activities that are outside

# 23%

of responses were from Armed Forces Charities



***Local projects were seen as important***

# 21%

of responses were directly from veterans

**It's important that organisations have experience in working with people with mental health needs**

*Its also important that veterans taking part in projects get to develop lasting friendships*

# 35%

of responses highlighted the importance of choice for veterans

## Summary

There is broad support that the programme should support a range of activities. There is particular support for sporting activities and activities where people are outside. When asked to consider if it is better to fund more smaller projects or fewer larger projects respondents preferred that the programme supported more smaller projects. There was limited support for residential activities.

Giving veterans a range of choices was a strong emerging theme; along with opportunities for veterans to be active. There was considerable support for themes enabling projects that take part outside; and it was felt that this could have a positive impact on wellbeing. Respondents also felt that projects should achieve good outcomes for veterans. The two characteristics of projects that were felt to be most important was that organisation was experienced in supporting people with mental health needs and that veterans could develop friendships that would last beyond the project, which linked to wider themes about tackling isolation.

Respondents felt that it was better to fund more projects, even if it meant that they were smaller. Through analysis of free text responses there was also support for funding smaller organisations through this programme rather than larger organisations. Local provision was considered to be important; and the needs of geographically isolated veterans were raised.

## What was the programme idea that we asked about in the consultation?

Up to £9M will be delivered as grants to organisations through this programme

We asked interested organisations to help us to shape this programme to put veterans in the driving seat of their own recoveries, and suggested that the programme will fund projects that could be

Offering something different to engage in?

Offering the chance to develop new skills?

Offer a sense of achievement or daily wellbeing?

Maybe also provide the opportunity to learn new skills by participating in enjoyable activities?

We proposed that running programme in this way might help us to make more grants to a wider range of organisations, and help ensure that veterans have more choices of projects that are local to them.

We suggested that we might fund four different types of projects, and asked respondents to tell us about what they thought. The types of activity suggested were

Sport: adventurous and other sports including adaptive and disability sports

Art/Culture: such as music, theatre or drama projects

Getting outside: gardening, out of doors activities such as forestry or bees

Heritage: including conservation or archaeology

We also highlighted that activities could be supported to be part of a pathway of recovery.

This means that the organisations running the projects should have good awareness of mental health needs and know to provide appropriate support if people are not well. We would also like projects to be connected with other organisations that can provide more specialist services. We would like veterans to be supported to get to the right places to meet their own, personal needs.

## Views on the funding themes

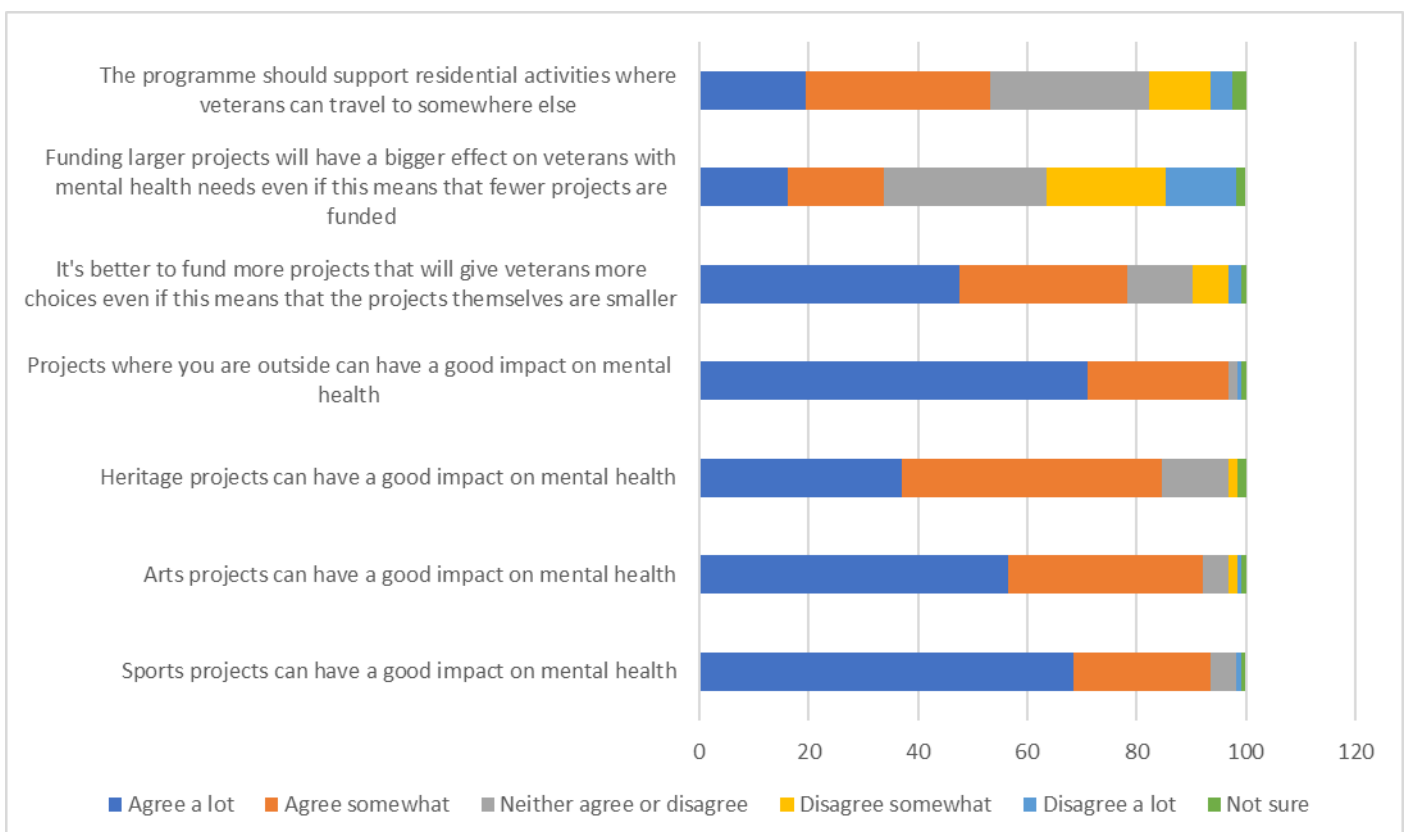
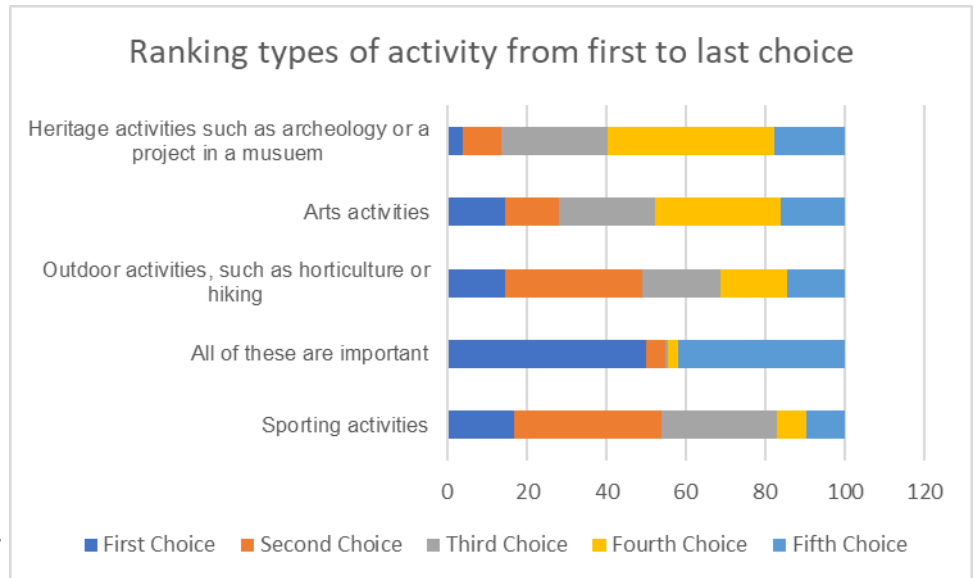
There is good support for funding a range of activities. When asked to rank five options of supporting sports projects, projects that are outdoors, arts projects, heritage projects or all of these projects. There's broad support for all the activities suggested, but support for heritage and arts related projects is slightly lower. Sporting activities were a popular choice.

While the 'all of these activities' option was first choice for half of all respondents, this was a polarised option, as respondents would either typically choose it as a first or last choice. When using a weighted approach, sporting activities came out on top, as just over half chose this option as their first or second choice.

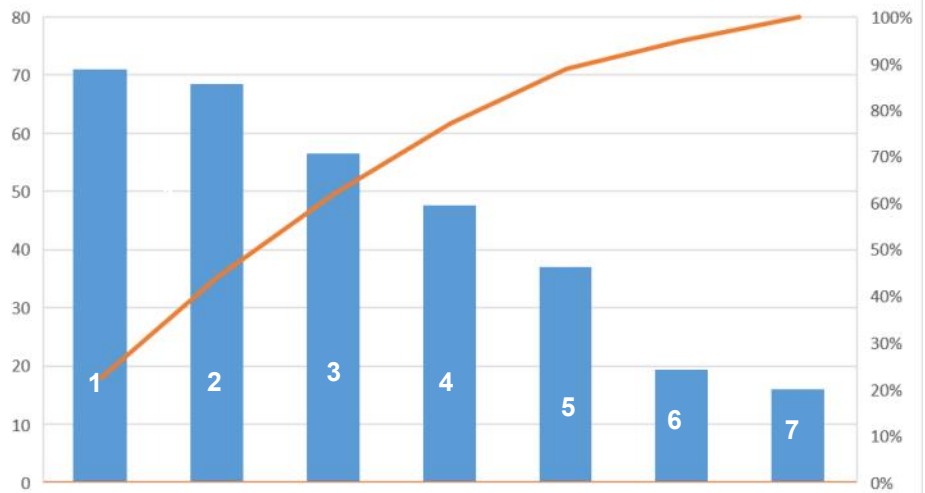
This preference on type of activity was explored more fully with a series of questions where respondents could choose six options to a range of statements ranging from 'agree strongly' to 'disagree strongly'; and including 'not sure' as an option.

Heritage and Arts based activities were in the lower end of the scoring range when respondents ranked their choices from one to five, there was support for the statements that 'Heritage projects could have a good impact on mental health' and 'Arts projects can have a good impact on mental health'.

Concepts that scored highest were for projects where veterans were outside, sports projects and arts projects. Two questions sought the views of respondents on the size of grants, with two conflicting statements— *Funding larger projects will have a bigger effect on veterans with mental health needs even if this means that fewer projects are funded* or *It's better to fund more projects that will give veterans more choices even if this means that fewer projects are funded*. There was considerably more support to fund more, smaller projects over more larger projects. The theme of importance of choice for veterans came out strongly within free text responses.



1	Projects where you are outside can have a good impact on mental health
2	Sports projects can have a good impact on mental health
3	Arts projects can have a good impact on mental health
4	It's better to fund more projects that will give veterans more choices even if this means that the projects themselves are smaller
5	Heritage projects can have a good impact on mental health
6	The programme should support residential activities where veterans can travel to somewhere else
7	Funding larger projects will have a bigger effect on veterans with mental health needs even if this means that fewer projects are funded



*Veterans are individuals with a broad range of interests and services should be designed to optimize choice and be person centred*

Each veteran is an individual and at a particular time in their life. Their ability to engage and interact with activity will depend on their mental health and environment at a specific time.

The chart above gives a breakdown of agreement in relation to a range of statements.

Respondents were asked in relation to their ranking of 1-5 from most to least important, with the four categories of activity plus the option that all were important, to tell us why they had ranked the activities in the way that they had. When these free text responses were analysed, a number of key themes emerged, as shown in the table.

Many respondents highlighted the importance of giving veterans choices of activities, to meet both personal preferences that the veterans may have and to meet a range of needs within the veteran community. A high number of responses also discussed the importance of being active, and being outside. There was some particular support for arts based activity, and a range of different themes relating to mental health recovery, existing research and the need for an evidence base.

Themes from free text responses	Count
Importance of choice	43
Active participation	16
Being outdoors	15
Benefits of arts	9
Linked to mental health recovery	5
Reducing isolation	4
Benefit of sport	3
Wider community integration	3
Benefits of sport	3
Being a team	2
Multiple needs	2
Research into benefits of being outdoors	2
Clinical recovery	2
Benefit of art and sport	1
Art supports calmness and mindfulness	1
Promote creativity	1
Ability to contribute back to society	1
Mental stimulation	1
Gut feeling	1
Positive activities	1
Having an evidence base	1
Promote independence	1
No response given	1
Benefit to wider community	1
Skills development	1
Connecting to five ways of wellbeing	1
Encourage creativity	1
Good evidence for mental wellbeing in sports and arts	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>124</b>

*Different people have different needs and respond to different stimuli. we are not all the same and treatment pathways need to reflect this.*

**What's most important to fund? Themes that appeared in two or more responses**

Theme	Count
Local support	9
Storytelling	8
Team building	8
Skills development	6
Importance of choice	6
Outdoor activities	5
Veteran led	5
Reducing isolation	4
Pathway development	4
Outcomes for veterans	3
Being outside	3
Left blank	3
Families and carers	3
Small charities	3
Arts based projects	3
Public speaking skills	2
Animals	2
Music production	2
Education	2
Person centred	2

We asked the question *What types of projects do you think are most important to fund and why? You can also suggest other categories of projects that we have not listed above.*

Respondents could give a free text response.

There was support for locally based projects, and a degree of support for arts based projects that encompassed storytelling or public speaking. Comments attached to these responses suggested that they were given by veterans with personal experience.

Previously occurring themes of being outside, reducing isolation and having importance of choice reappeared in these responses, but there were also new themes of being veteran led. There were also comments relating to a need to support families and carers, and support for small charity provision, which may be complimentary to the responses that were supportive of localised provision.

Projects which give veterans their voice back; storytelling and public speaking perhaps

Small changes can make a big difference. Local projects that don't cost a lot but build those reconnections with likeminded people and stretch someone both physically and mentally.

We also asked the question *What types of projects do you think are least important to fund and why? You can also suggest other categories of projects that we have not listed above.*

Respondents could give a free text response.

Respondents were most likely to leave this option blank, with an additional two respondents indicating that they were unsure, so 22% of respondents did not submit a view. Earlier themes of having a good range of choice for veterans were revisited; and some respondents highlighted particular themes around sports, arts and heritage projects which they considered to be of lower priority.

Of note was the 6.5% of respondents that specifically stated that large projects should be avoided, and an additional 3.2% which advocated for funding to not be spent on large charities.

Some respondents highlighted the importance of ensuring that the focus was not just on the activity. These comments related to dynamic, adventurous type activities, with a concern that the activity should have lasting benefits.

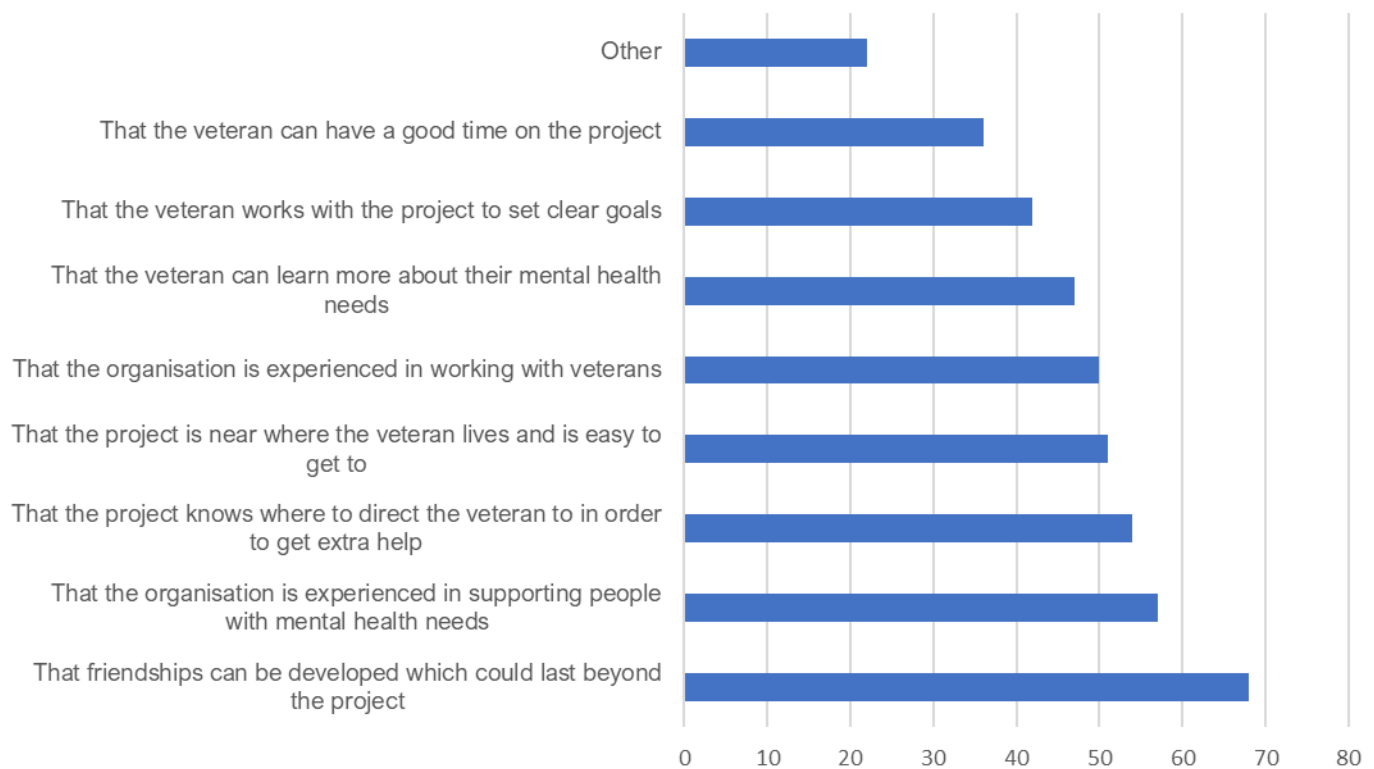
**What types of projects do you think are least important to fund and why? Themes that appeared in two or more responses**

Theme	Count
Left blank	25
Alternatives to sport	10
importance of choice	9
Avoid large projects	8
Avoid projects with limited outcomes	8
Avoid all the focus on the activity	5
Arts a lower priority	4
Avoid large charities and organisations	4
Avoid heritage projects	3
Avoid residential projects	3
Unsure	2
Avoid activities that are solo participation	2
Avoid veteran only projects. Promote integration	2
Avoid projects that don't challenge all participants	2

Large scale projects. A broader mixture of projects will have a wider appeal

Any project that is more about 'the experience' than the veterans is not useful and may in fact be harmful

**Please choose which elements of a project will have the biggest impact on improving the mental health of a veteran participant. Please choose up to 3**



In this question, we asked respondents to rank the three statements that they considered to be most important for having a positive impact on mental health improvements for veterans taking part in project. Respondents could add a free text 'other' option in addition to selecting their top three of the eight statements presented. There was most support for the statement on veterans being able to form lasting friendships, which provides a consideration point that projects may benefit from exploring reducing isolation. Respondents also felt it was important for organisations receiving funds to have experience in working with people with mental health needs; and this was also the most frequently selected first choice with 18% of respondents selecting this first.

The free text other options have been reproduced; and thee contain themes of personalised approaches, risk management and achieving good outcomes.

**What suggestions were made in the 'other' category?**

Giving the veteran a sense of purpose such as helping others
It's available in module form so they can dip in & out to allow them breathing space to relax if needed
Local includes online community and project is sustainable to ensure veteran confident they can stay engaged and supported as long as they need help;
Ongoing support and sustainability
Supporting the veterans to excel in a supportive environment;
That family members are involved
That the project is developed to meet a need and not to promote 'neediness'.
That the project provides a clear trajectory to an improved life, rather than just respite in isolation
That the project will take the Veteran forward in their Recovery, in a way that is demonstrably meaningful to them
That the projects can improve the ability of the wellbeing and activity of family and carers to further longer support the Veteran away from the project
That the veteran feels like they're contributing to something bigger.
That the veteran has had comprehensive clinical assessment, diagnosis and is in treatment by qualified specialists capable of assessing the risk to the veteran of undertaking project activities, and that the project's operators are able to manage client risk
That the veteran knows they are not just a number (or a money cow to be milked)
The project allows for someone to be accompany the veteran to activities until they have built their confidence to do things alone and the project to have the capacity for a friendly follow-up one and three months following
The project helps veterans connect with what is important to them and helps them gain the skills needed to maintain good wellbeing e.g. Resilience, independence, connections, sense of belonging;
The veteran and the veteran's family can learn about their mental health and they can address communication and relationships
The veteran can have their individual needs met through the project
The Veteran must be supported all the way through by a link adult
The veteran, where appropriate is involved in designing the service according to their needs
The veterans feel part of the project and belong to the community
The veteran can learn how to manage their trauma symptoms
The Veteran's needs are met

**How can we best support veterans with a range of ages, genders, interests and mental health needs?**

**VARIETY SO THERE IS A CHOICE OF PROJECTS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL**

**From my own point of view I suffer the most with loneliness.**

WHILE THE BASICS REMAIN THE SAME GEOGRAPHIC AREA NEEDS CHANGE. LONDON HAS TRANSPORT, RURAL NORFOLK DOESN'T. LET THE SMALLER PROJECTS GIVE YOU FEEDBACK AS TO WHAT IS NEEDED IN THEIR COMMUNITY AFTER ALL THEY LIVE AND BREATHE WHAT IS ON THEIR DOORSTEP.

Look outside of existing services to community based organisations with full networks of support. This would enlarge service provision many fold and begin to set a new template for ex-service personnel to re-engage in their local community.

A VARIETY OF SMALLER PROJECTS ALL ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

This is a huge question! My understanding is that the vast majority of people leave the forces successfully. I think this money would be best spent to support the smaller cohort who need more support. I'd also say the earlier in the transition process the better. A question in the grant application might be to ask how the project would proactively approach people who may need extra support, rather than waiting for a crisis to occur.

I think having a wide variety of programmes funded and available to veterans will help them choose what suits them best. Not all veterans, especially injured veterans, will be able to or interested in sporting activities. So having arts focused programmes or outdoor programmes not focused on only sport will help veterans choose what suits them best.

Ensure funding, especially core funding for such as rent and staff salaries is available for a range of organisations such as small charities and Community Interest Companies.

*Ensure there are clear referral processes into the activities. Marketing the activities. Activities must be of a wide range to appeal to the varied individuals. Provide a mentor to support the veteran in the early stages as often it is actually getting the person to engage in the activity in the first place.*

Timely assessment and therapy. Waiting lists are still too long

**Integration with the local community is important to help veterans feel part of their community and the environment they live in.**



## What else is important?

We asked organisations that run activities for veterans who took part in the consultation to tell us about any good practice ideas or challenges in reaching ex service personnel. Answers varied, and some were contradictory. Some organisations had experienced success in reaching veterans over social media, others did not advocate this as a good approach. Regimental associations were mentioned as being a useful source of potential referrals, and there were some contributions that explored co-design, building trust with veterans, keeping promises and building up referrals through word of mouth. There were also themes that had previously been explored in the consultation such as the needs of geographically isolated veterans. Drama and performance activities were discussed as a way of breaking down barriers, and the use of humour was also identified.

We asked veterans that took part in the consultation to tell us what would be most appealing or important for them in accessing an activity based project that offers support with mental health needs. Answers varied; and included provision of specific support to meet wider health needs; being able to find information through social media with referrals through Facebook and army colleagues. One veteran highlighted a project that they feel has helped them to reduce their risk of suicide. There were supportive comments of smaller organisations. There were also comments relating to the consideration of veterans in geographically isolated areas.

Themes from the question please tell us anything else that you would like us to know, or think about regarding the Positive Pathways Programme	Count
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Supportive of programme	13
General	9
Programme criteria	9
Programme criteria- size of organisation	4
Programme criteria- outcomes	4
Prevention	4
Effectiveness of treatment	3
Extra support	2
Wrong priority	2
Local appropriateness	1
Length of funding	1
Full cost recovery	1
Transition	1
Programme criteria- social enterprise	1
Funding in NI	1
Sustainability	1
Programme criteria- mental health delivery	1
Collaborative working	1
Bereaved families	1
Programme criteria- joint working	1

We asked a final catch all free text question inviting responders to tell us about anything other comments that they had. 13 of these comments were directly supportive of the proposed design of the programme. Comments included *We are very excited by this initiative which will address the issues of loneliness and mental health and I genuinely think that you are on the right lines.* Two comments felt that the programme was exploring the wrong priority *Sadly I think the emphasis is misguided. Whilst clearly acknowledging that outside activities are important. The emphasis should be on treatment and assessment.*

Comments in the general category included specific comments regarding projects that might apply for a programme of this type.

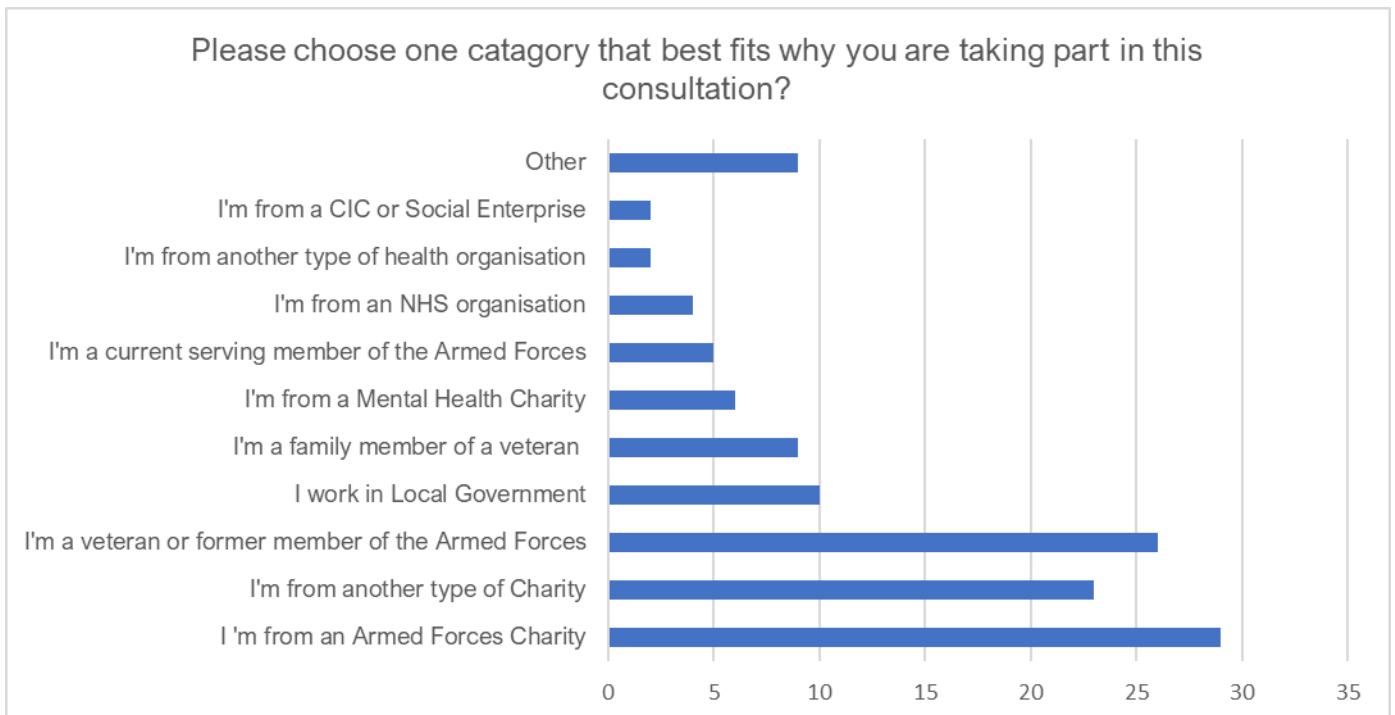
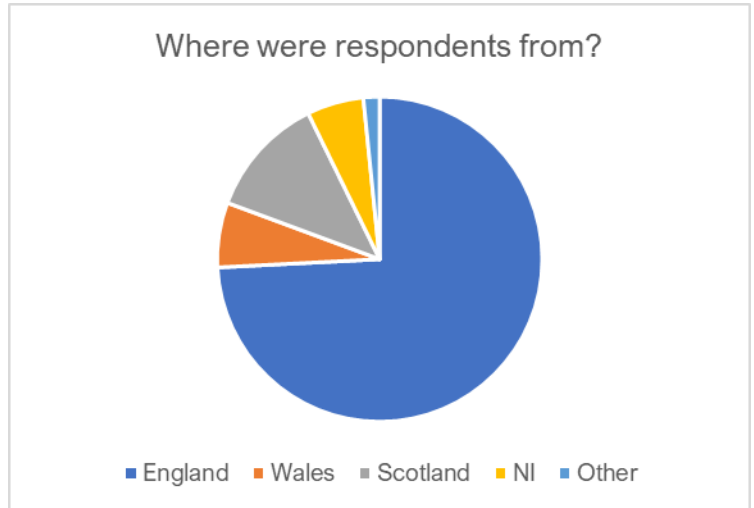
A number of comments gave suggestions for the programme design, and this included comments suggesting that funding be distributed to smaller organisations rather than larger organisations and that the outcomes of applicant projects should be considered. There were also suggestions that social enterprises might be supported.

## Who took part in this consultation?

124 responses were received for this consultation; all received through an online questionnaire. Most respondents were from England, but there were responses from across the UK.

For organisations that took part in the consultation, 45 were from England, and 38 were UK wide. There were 12 responses from organisations stating that they were from a Scottish based Charity, 6 from Wales and 4 from Northern Ireland. There was a small group of other organisations, but when analysed, these were organisations that operated in two countries within the United Kingdom, but were not UK wide.

The largest category of respondents were from Armed Forces Charities at 23% but there were 26 responses directly from veterans, equating to 21%. Family members from veterans were 7% of the response group. Responses were received from a range of organisations, as detailed in the table below.



The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust would like to thank all of the organisations and individuals who took part in this consultation.

The consultation findings are important, and will be used to shape the final design of the Positive Pathways Programme and the application guidance.

The Positive Pathways Programme will open for applications in May 2019.



## ***About us***

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust manages the grant programmes funded by the Covenant Fund.

We also run wider funding programmes that support the Armed Forces Community. The Positive Pathways Programme is part of the £10M Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund.

You can find out more about our work at [www.covenantfund.org.uk](http://www.covenantfund.org.uk)



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**Contact us**

**[positivepathways@armedforcesfunding.org.uk](mailto:positivepathways@armedforcesfunding.org.uk)**

**[www.covenantfund.org.uk](http://www.covenantfund.org.uk)**

**Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust**

Chairman: Helen Helliwell; Chief Executive: Melloney Poole

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Registered Address: 7 Hatherley Street London; SW1P 2QT