



Design Principles for Tackling Loneliness within the Armed Forces community

Focusing on **REACH** and **SERVICE DESIGN** in the creation of services to support Armed Forces individuals experiencing loneliness



Contents:

1. Exploration of Armed Forces loneliness
2. Background and Approach
3. A snapshot of what works to reach Armed Forces individuals experiencing loneliness
4. A snapshot of the service design that works to support Armed Forces individuals experiencing loneliness

Armed Forces Loneliness

Loneliness has been defined as **“a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship,** which happens when there is a mismatch between the quantity and quality of the social relationships that **we have, and those that we want”**.

The majority of the ex-service community do not experience loneliness and most transition well to civilian life after their service. Research from RBL found that loneliness can affect those in the Armed Forces community of all ages, and they found in one of their research samples that **25%** reported feeling **lonely or socially isolated ‘always’ or ‘often’** (2018).

The projects on this grant were given the aim of **tackling loneliness and reaching underserved communities**. This toolkit serves as a framework for projects to implement to **most effectively tackle loneliness**. We acknowledge that not all of these recommendations can be implemented nor can they suit every project. We also acknowledge that as loneliness is a subjective feeling it is not experienced in the same way for everyone, so projects have to be mindful of the varying degrees of loneliness within veteran populations.

Background and approach

The AFCFT commissioned **Neighbourly Lab, the Campaign to End Loneliness and the King's Centre for Military Health Research** to conduct a year long evaluation of the 60 projects on their **Tackling Loneliness Grant**.

During our evaluation we sought to discover how these projects were effective in supporting and reaching out to Armed Forces individuals experiencing loneliness who might be harder to serve. In discovering the various elements of '**what works**', we have created this toolkit. It is to be used by the AFCFT, current grantholders and future grantholders to discover how they can maximise the efficacy of projects. It is also an output to celebrate many of the successful projects on this grant.

This toolkit is separated into two sections

- 1. What works to reach lonely Armed Forces individuals**
- 2. What works in service design to support lonely Armed Forces individuals**

The breakdown of these sections shall be explained further in the following slides.

What works to reach lonely people in the AF community

To explain what we mean by **reach** this is a project's ability to target and be clear on the beneficiaries they wanted to support; having the ability to maximise their reach and to make services easy to access.

What works **to reach** lonely people in the AF community

From our research the **three key mechanisms** we have identified which when implemented can ensure maximum reach to lonely members of the Armed Forces Community are:

1

**Communicate
clearly who
you are
seeking to
serve**

2

**Be creative in
how you reach
out to people**

3

**Become part
of the
community**

1 **Communicate clearly who you are seeking to serve**

In the development of your project ensure that you have communicated who your target cohort is and how/why your support is tailored to them.

What works to reach lonely people in the AF community

1

**Communicate
clearly who you
are seeking to
serve**

Result

- Ensures reach to target cohort
- Service becomes inclusive and welcoming for target cohort
- Beneficiaries develop stronger relationships with other who have similar needs/experiences
- Support becomes more impactful as it is more targeted

1

Communicate clearly who you are seeking to serve

Project examples of what **success looks** like in terms of **reach** for these projects

Fighting with Pride

They have a clear and welcoming message that anyone who is/was in the Armed Forces during and after the LGBT ban is welcome to their support. Everyone at the organisation has lived experience as an LGBT veteran which works to highlight who their target cohort is.

WWTW

They have formed established referral pathways, in which referees know exactly what support is on offer and to direct the right people into the service. This allows them to reach the people they have the skills and expertise to serve.

Kent Coast Volunteering

They created a community centre that is used solely by Gurkha Veterans and their families. The centre is designed to be a place where people from this community can come together and connect through their shared culture and background.

1 Communicate clearly who you are seeking to serve

Examples of how projects have done this and what that feels like for **current beneficiaries**

"I go to the centre at 10 am everyday and spend about 3-4 hours there, I like to go because I know I will connect with others in my community to share my sorrows, happiness and to just connect with those from my culture. The centre really makes me feel less lonely". (Folkestone Nepalese Community Centre Beneficiary)

"The project is great because we are all veterans but we are all also suffering with a hearing or sensory loss, so we all understand each other. For me it is like a family because I know we are all going through something similar". (DSN Beneficiary)

1

Recommendations for communicating clearly who you are seeking to serve

1

Prioritise the research and development phase of a project

- Uncover what the problems and context are for your target cohort.
- Develop a knowledge base to know how to clearly reach out and deliver the most impactful and practical support for the target cohort

2

Communicate who you are seeking to serve on all external channels

- External communications to potential beneficiaries are clear on who can benefit from support, so beneficiaries can access support easily
- External communications to potential referral partners are clear so they can easily refer the right beneficiaries in

3

Prioritise impact and not numbers

- Focus on having the right people in your service to provide tailored support
- Do not focus on reaching lots of people or reaching quotas but rather reaching those who can most benefit



2

Be creative in how you reach out to people

When developing your outreach strategy expand upon traditional forms of communication by thinking creatively about how to target more underserved cohorts.

What works to reach lonely people in the AF community

2

Be creative in
how you reach
out to people

Result

- Expands reach to those that have never/struggled to access support
- Maximises an organisations reach across various spaces.
- Brings new/innovative methods of outreach.

2

Be creative in how you reach out to people

Project examples of what **success looks** like in terms of **reach** for these projects

Adferiad

Standing out in supermarket foyers or post offices to reach out directly to AD people in the places that they go to and are not traditionally veteran spaces. Reaching out not just to veterans but also their families to let them know that their support is there.

Veterans in Crisis

Formed relationships with local businesses and trained their staff who could let Veterans in Crisis know if there was a veteran in need of their support. It means they can reach out to veterans who might not be known by statutory services and who have perhaps slipped under the radar.

Thistle Health and Wellbeing

Using previous beneficiaries who have been through their services before to work with current beneficiaries as volunteers. To build trust through the success of previous people on the programme.

2 Be creative in how you reach out to people

Examples of how projects have done this and what that feels like for **current beneficiaries**

"Fighting with Pride came to my attention when their book was released which was a bit of a different way to find an organisation. For me reading the stories of other people in the same situation as me made me feel as though I wasn't alone as there were some people out there who had had similar experiences or worse than me. This really made me want to connect with the organisation and be a part of it." (Fighting with Pride Beneficiary)

"I heard about the National Creative Project through my experiences going down to the centre in Brighton. I used to go down there for a week and the connections that I made there led me onto the craft projects that were going on during lockdown" (Blind Veterans UK Beneficiary)

Recommendations for how to be creative in how you reach out to people

1

Develop a creative outreach strategy

- Develop a strategy during your research and development phase which is tailored to the communities you are trying to reach
- Find out what works on the ground for you and your beneficiaries

2

Share outreach strategies amongst others

- Share your outreach strategies with others in the community and discover what works

3

Considers reaching out in non-AF spaces

- If you can reach out to AF people in the places that they would go to in their daily lives, to reach those that do not have the confidence to access support or do not have the networks to know what support is out there.

3 Become part of the community

Prioritise networking with other organisations to form connections, share knowledge and work in partnerships to build a shared community of practice.

What works to reach lonely AF people

3

**Become part of
the community**

Result

- Enables projects to reach more beneficiaries.
- Opportunity to share knowledge and expertise amongst others.
- Promotes collaboration and not competition.
- Allows beneficiaries to be better served through combined weight of organisations.

3

Become part of the community

Project examples of what **success looks** like in terms of **reach** for these projects

Sale Sharks

Partnership working has been crucial to their success, especially as a civilian organisation to get their name out there and to reach more beneficiaries. They now work formally with WWTW which has established them in the AF network.

DMWS Herefordshire

They have been working in partnership with Herefordshire council to build a community hub, by combining their expertise they have enabled knowledge and resources sharing and to reach more beneficiaries.

Carterton Family Centre

Together with Brize Norton RAF base they combined their networks to reach out to RAF families and lone parents. Through their combined resources they have established a beneficiary base and provided a centre where veteran families can connect.

3

Become part of the community

Examples of how projects have done this and what that feels like for **current beneficiaries**

"I've been involved in the project for 2 years now and I heard about it through WWTW. With these sorts of projects when you hear about it from big organisations and ones that are run by veterans you feel more comfortable giving something a go that they recommend". (Sales Sharks Beneficiary)

"I was referred into the project through the NHS. Through the support of the NHS they knew I wasn't ready for employment and that I was bit down, they knew that I could get into WWTW and it has been brilliant for me". (WWTW Beneficiary)

1

Take time to network

- Reevaluate on the benefits of networking and sharing knowledge and expertise
- Bake in time to take up networking opportunities and introduce your service to others

2

Take time to think on your strengths and potential gaps

- Reflect upon the strengths of your organisation and how they can strengthen the work of other service providers
- Reflect upon potential gaps and how they could be met through partnership working to maximise impact

3

Think expansively about potential allies in the sector

- Reach out to non-veteran organisations to maximise your referral reach and combine your knowledge across varying sectors



What works **in service design** to support lonely AF people

To explain what we mean by **service design**, it is the way in which a project is developed and run to support AF people who are experiencing isolation and helps them to alleviate it.

What works in **service design** to support lonely people in the AF community

From our research the **three key mechanisms** we have identified which when implemented can ensure that projects are most effective when seeking to tackle AF loneliness are:

1

Have a clear
theory of change
on how to tackle
loneliness

2

Commit to
co-production
with
beneficiaries

3

Build upon
beneficiaries
capabilities

1 Have a clear theory of change on how to tackle loneliness

Organisations develop a clear understanding of what loneliness is and develop a theory of change strategy to alleviate it.

What works in the service design to support lonely AF people

1

Have a clear theory of change on how to tackle loneliness

Result

- Organisations understand their impact on alleviating loneliness.
- Enables clear explanation of project goals.
- Demonstrates awareness of the importance of grant objectives.
- ToC and strategy leads to better impact on beneficiary loneliness.

1 Have a clear theory of change on how to tackle loneliness

Examples of what **success looks** like in terms of **service design** for these projects

WWTW

When they begin their programme of support for beneficiaries they conduct a life satisfaction spider chart. This assessment allows them to develop tailored support to alleviate a beneficiaries loneliness and track a beneficiaries progress.

DMWS

For their case management and 1 to 1 support they collect demographic data and get beneficiaries to perform a series of questionnaires to identify their needs. This allows them to create a theory of change to support a veteran out of their loneliness.

Thistle Health and Wellbeing

They conduct a 10 week lifestyle management which focuses on stress, pacing and energy management in a solution focused way. Each stage of the course has a clear method in how it seeks to alleviate loneliness and improve a beneficiaries life.

1 Have a clear theory of change on how to tackle loneliness

Examples of how projects have done this and what that feels like for **current beneficiaries**

“Throughout this course I learned so much about how to take a step back and learn of ways to improve my own life. At the end I saw such an improvement within myself and the structure of this course made me realise that I am not alone” (Thistle Health and Wellbeing Beneficiary)

“Our project is about solutions focused journalism which involves leading with something positive to empower listeners. Our show drip feeds to our listened that over time they can be empowered to think about they can do something different and to give them the confidence to approach services to help tackle their loneliness” (Prison Radio Association Project Lead)

1

Recommendations for having a clear ToC on how to tackle loneliness

1

Harness your organisations skill set to tackle loneliness

- Identify what your organisation is brilliant at and how that can transfer over to tackling loneliness
- Utilise the specific tools embedded within your service to develop a 'theory of change'

2

Determine whether support is preventing or alleviating loneliness

- Decipher where support aims to intervene on the spectrum of loneliness
- Determine when and how you deliver support and how intense service delivery is

3

Collect beneficiary needs data

- Collect data on beneficiaries at the beginning of service delivery to target loneliness needs
- Collect data to measure distance travelled



2

Commit to co-production with beneficiaries

Services developed and delivered with the input and opinions of beneficiaries, so that they are involved in project outputs.

What works **in the service design** to support lonely people in the AF community

2

**Commit to
co-production
with
beneficiaries**

Result

- Develops a better service for beneficiaries.
- Gives veterans autonomy and control of the support they receive.
- Leads to a sense of empowerment and a feeling of responsibility.

2 Commit to co-production with beneficiaries

Examples of what **success looks** like in terms of **service design** for these projects

Scotty's Little Soldiers

In the development of their project they consulted with the children/parents to get their feedback on their experiences of the project in order to discover what the barriers are to engagement. With this feedback they altered the way that the project was run to suit the needs of their beneficiaries.

Matthew Project

In their veterans drop-in groups beneficiaries are consulted on what activities they want to take part in. Beneficiaries are given autonomy over the events and military related activities that they go to, which gives them a sense of responsibility and ownership over the project.

Age UK Wolverhampton

They host veteran friendship group meet ups which take place once a week. The groups are managed by the beneficiaries themselves to ensure that they are self sustaining and so veterans feel that it is their own group.

2 Commit to co-production with beneficiaries

Examples of how projects have done this and what that feels like for **current beneficiaries**

"I love the environment at our weekly get togethers and I would never miss it because we get to decide what we want to do and it really feels like you're part of something" (Matthew Project Beneficiary)

"I enjoy that in the hobby circles we can decide what we want to get involved in and what we want to make"
(Blind Veterans UK Beneficiary)

Recommendations for committing to co-production with beneficiaries

1

Ask beneficiaries what they want

- Consult beneficiaries in the early stages of service delivery to discover what they want/need so that they feel that their opinion is valued

2

Ask for feedback

- Regularly consult with beneficiaries as the service delivery progresses to discover whether they are happy or if they would like changes to be made

3

Give beneficiaries some control

- Allow beneficiaries to take control or lead some parts of the support service if possible

3 Build upon beneficiaries' capabilities

Beneficiaries are given the opportunity to use their skills to help others both in and outside of the project through peer to peer engagement.

What works in the **service design** to support lonely AF people

3

**Build upon
beneficiaries'
capabilities**

Result

- Empowers beneficiaries to value their own skills.
- Beneficiaries build their skill set to support others with similar needs.
- Creates a strength and asset based approach rather than leading from a weakness lens.

3

Build upon beneficiaries' capabilities

Examples of what **success looks** like in terms of **service design** for these projects

WWTW

Through their case management support they offer beneficiaries the opportunity to get involved in volunteering. Volunteering options include getting involved in food deliveries or helping other veterans with their gardens. This type of project blurs the lines between receiving help and helping others.

Ripple Pond

They have created a platform for carers of veterans to receive support. They have helped beneficiaries to set up clubs like book clubs or dog walking groups etc to support one another through their shared experiences.

3 Build upon beneficiaries' capabilities

Examples of how projects have done this and what that feels like for **current beneficiaries**

"I enjoy being part of this project it's like being welcomed into the military family again and I help one of the guys a lot. Through this I have learnt the right terminology to use to support him. I feel that I am giving back by helping him" (Sale Shark Beneficiary)

"The veterans on our course tend to bond really well more so than any other course. Due to their shared experiences and sense of camaraderie they really help one another out whilst on the course and even after. Many people make friends for life to support one another on their journey as civilians" (Venture Trust Outreach Coordinator)

1

Encourage peer to peer support

- Create an environment where beneficiaries can support one another

2

Encourage the sharing of skills and knowledge

- Create a strength based environment where beneficiaries share their own skills and knowledge with one another

3

Encourage beneficiaries to help others

- Encourage beneficiaries to utilise their skills to help others both in and outside of the service
- If possible encourage previous beneficiaries to become volunteers

Thank You!

We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who helped us during this evaluation including the grantholders, beneficiaries and the AFCFT.

