



THE FORCES IN MIND TRUST AWARDS ITS LARGEST GRANT TO DATE

The Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT), established to help ex-Service men and women make a successful transition back to civilian life, has awarded a grant of £689,453 to Venture Trust – the largest award by FiMT to-date – to fund its Positive Futures project.

Venture Trust is an Edinburgh-based charity that helps people with disadvantaged or challenging backgrounds get back on their feet. It does this through intensive wilderness expeditions and life skills development support, with the aim being to give participants the tools to make positive changes in their lives. That could be anything from finding a home, gaining skills to enable them to get a job, going to college, or getting help with addiction.

During an initial three-year trial, the Positive Futures programme will provide additional support to as many as 120 ex-Service men and women from across Scotland who are struggling to adapt with the transition to civilian life.

This will include those who are unemployed or in temporary accommodation, who struggle with low self-confidence or who have a history of drug and alcohol misuse.

Participants will be supported through a three phase programme. The first phase – referral and engagement – will consist of one-to-one sessions that will provide participants with advice on employment, personal development and, where appropriate, referral to partners such as drug and alcohol treatment services.

The second phase is a specially designed ‘wilderness journey’ - a programme of personal development and learning in the outdoors with frequent one-to-one and group support sessions away from the challenges of everyday life. Over an intensive five day course, participants will be given additional support to develop the transferable skills they need to rebuild their lives and move towards independence and employment.

Participants in the third and final phase will benefit from ongoing support focused on priorities for development including funded internships, employment support and volunteer peer mentoring, particularly to support others to move forward positively with their lives.

The impact of the project will be independently evaluated, with researchers assessing its impact on participants' lives and whether its methodology can be extended.

Ray Lock, Chief Executive of Forces in Mind Trust, said: "The ex-Service community has a diverse range of needs and it is important that they have access to the right kind of tailored support that can ease the sometimes difficult process of transition. We are delighted to be funding Venture Trust, which is our biggest award to date and our second grant award in Scotland. We believe the Positive Futures programme will make a real difference to the lives of ex-Service personnel.

"The project will also involve an independent evaluation of the Programme to generate a robust evidence base. We are keen that the learning from this Programme is used more widely by other service delivers, ensuring that any men and women who have served in the Armed Forces and struggle with the return to civilian life get the support they need."

Mark Bibbey, Chief Executive of Venture Trust, said: "As a former Serviceman, I recognised early on in my time at the Venture Trust that we had the potential to add significant value to the experiences of veterans who are struggling with the transition process, particularly some of those who are proving difficult to engage. Our approach and methodology is unique in terms of what is currently available to veterans and I envisage working closely with the Veterans Scotland community in bringing the programme to fruition. I am very grateful to the Forces in Mind Trust for their support and I much look forward to working with them over the next three years to enable those who participate to realise their potential in society, and to add to our understanding of what works for those struggling to transition into civilian life."

- Ends -

Notes to Editors

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About the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT):

- **FiMT came about from** a partnership between the Big Lottery Fund (The Fund), Cobseo (The Confederation of Service Charities) and other charities and organisations. FiMT continues the Fund's long-standing legacy of support for veterans across the UK with an endowment of £35 million awarded in 2012. Since 2004 the Fund has given more than £88 million to programmes supporting veterans <http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/>.
 - **The aim of FiMT** is to provide an evidence base which will influence and underpin policy making and service delivery in order to enable ex-Service personnel and their families to lead successful civilian lives.
 - **FiMT awards grants** (both reactive and proactive) and commissions research along three key themes: Evidence, Innovation and Collaboration. All work is published to a high standard of reportage to add to the evidence base from which better informed decisions can be made. Read more about those FiMT have helped and reports they have published at the links below:
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- **Useful links**
 - Website: www.fim-trust.org
 - Reports: www.fim-trust.org/reports/
 - Who we have helped: www.fim-trust.org/who-we-have-helped/
 - Twitter: www.twitter.com/FiMtrust
 - 2014 Impact Report: <http://bit.ly/FiMImpact2014>
 - Armed Forces Charities Database: www.armedforcescharities.org.uk

About Venture Trust

Venture Trust believes that people have the ability to make positive changes in their lives for a more productive future. Venture Trust supports people who are struggling with complicated life circumstances such as being 'looked after' by Local Authorities, involvement in offending, homelessness, drug and alcohol misuse, caring responsibilities and other complications in their lives. These situations are often compounded by lack of access to services or low educational achievement, leaving them isolated, marginalised or in poverty. Venture Trust offers a three-phase personal and social development programme, working in communities across Scotland. The programme involves an intensive wilderness-based element, mentoring, and employability support which aims to help people unlock their potential. This may be better communication skills, consequential thinking and building positive relationships with others, growing in confidence and self-esteem, or moving towards education, training and employment. For more information, please visit www.venturetrust.org.uk.