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**Female Veterans Transformation
Programme Lead**

**Female
Veterans**
TRANSFORMATION
PROGRAMME



Hannah West

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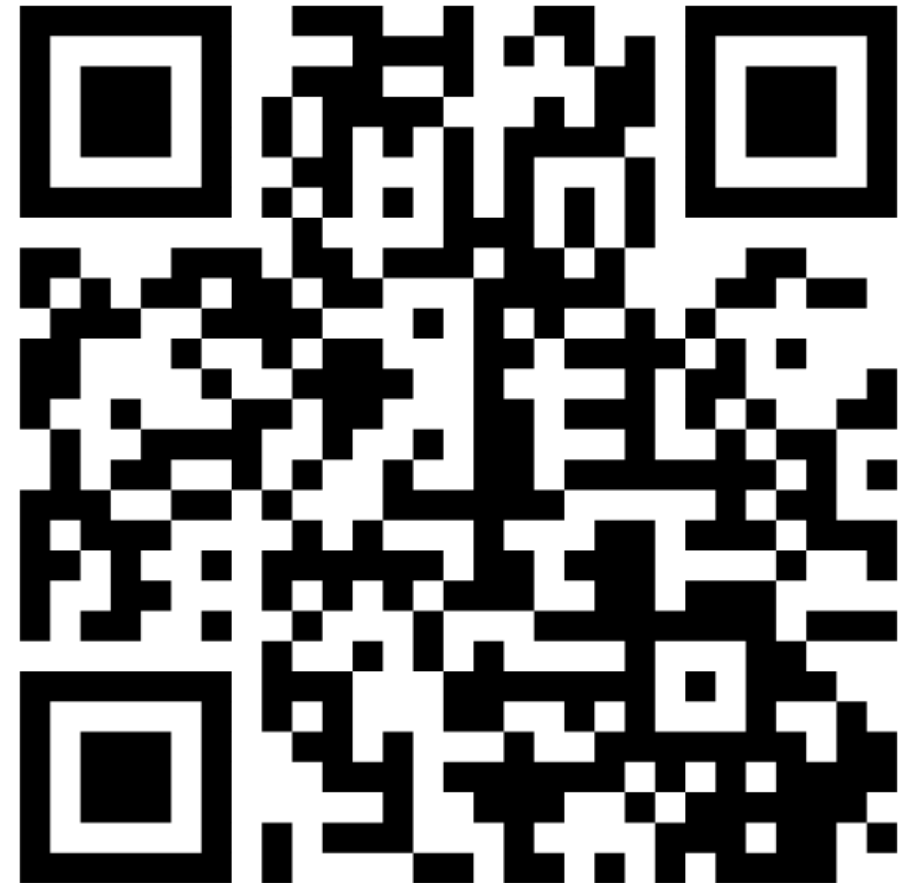
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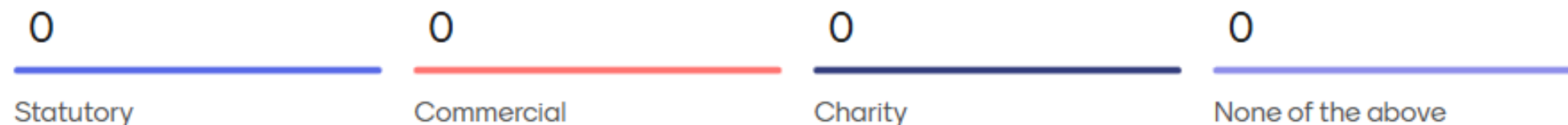
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What sector do you represent?





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CMWR Presentation



Where do you work?

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What sector do you represent?

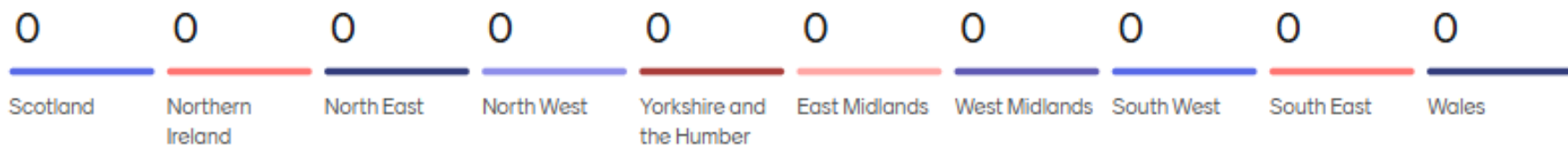
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Military Commercial Charity Non of business

Where do you work?

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0
Scotland Northern Ireland North East North West Yorkshire and the Humber East Midlands West Midlands South West South East Wales

What are the top 3 things you think female volunteers wanted to see in future service provision?
3 responses

What are the top 3 things you think are important for female volunteers to hear they are communicated with?
3 responses



Delivery Plan

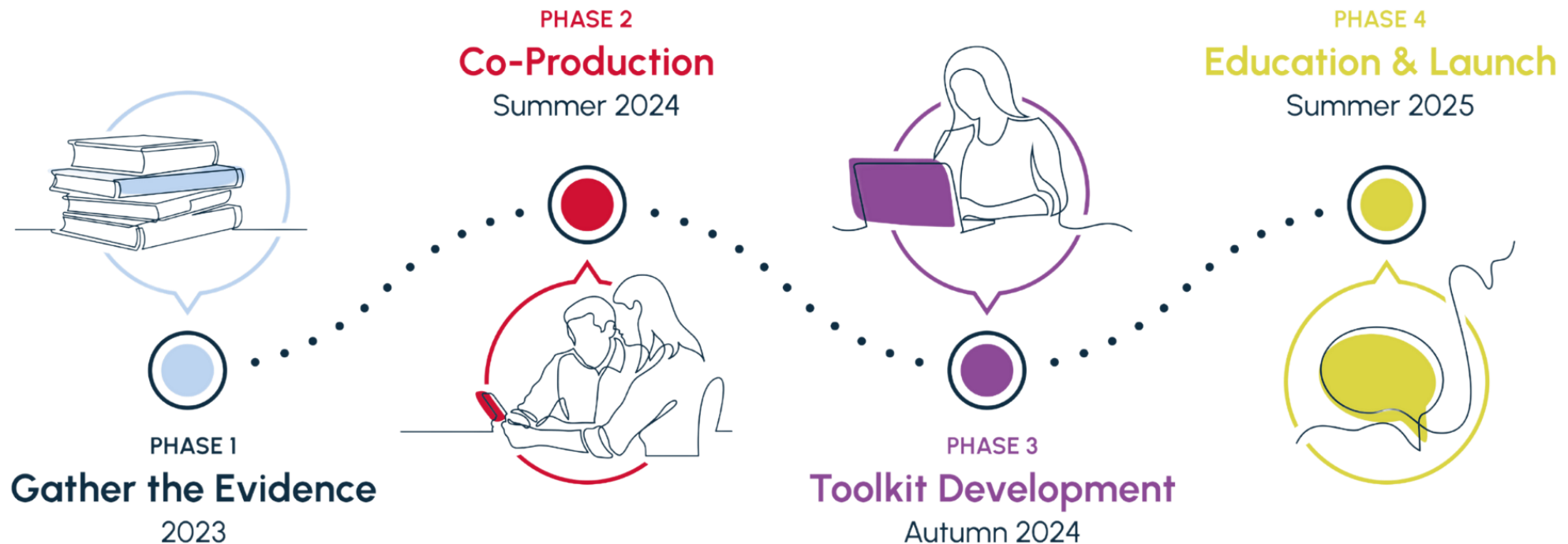


Funded by AFCFT and NHSE for a 3-year project to design and deliver a Female Veterans Toolkit ensuring it is available to all charities, commercial and statutory organisations.

The aim is to transform the sector to ensure that the needs of female veterans are considered in the design and the delivery of services at every level.

Project is being hosted by the WRAC Association and reports to the COBSEO Female Veterans Cluster.

Working across the UK and tri- service



Phase 1

- Evidence Review & Statement of Need published www.fvtp.org.uk
- Employed Hubble to create the branding
 - Veteran and military spouse led
- Launch Day: 8 March 2024 (International Women's Day)

Statement of Need

What the evidence tells us are the needs of female veterans

Female Veterans TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

IDENTITY

Women often do not identify with the term 'veteran' and face specific, complex and multi-layered issues as a result of their service.

Less than **31%** of women who have served identify as a veteran¹

WHAT DO FEMALE VETERANS NEED?

- Recognition of the specific needs of female veterans
- Empowerment for women to define their military service in their own terms
- Services should inquire about military service inclusively, rather than using singular terms like 'veteran'
- Special attention to the impact of Services Bans (marriage, pregnancy, and gay bans)
- Provision of support for those negatively affected, especially LGBTQ+ individuals

ACCESS TO SERVICES

Women often don't access veteran facing services as they are seen to be male dominated and not able to meet their needs.

WHAT DO FEMALE VETERANS NEED?

- Women need to feel welcome, equal and able to access veteran support services
- Services should be personalised based on the individual's needs and what matters most to that person
- Professionals need to have greater awareness, understanding of the specific needs of women and respond in a way that makes a difference to them

BULLYING, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND SEXUALLY INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOURS INCLUDING ASSAULT AND RAPE

A significant percentage of women have faced or witnessed one or more of these issues during service.

85% felt that they were treated differently to their male counterparts

73% of women reported witnessing or experiencing sexual discrimination²

WHAT DO FEMALE VETERANS NEED?

- The widespread and insidious impact of this issue needs to be acknowledged and accepted across the sector so women feel seen and heard and therefore supported in a way that reduces shame and stigma
- Where appropriate and needed, services should be female only, delivered by women

DISTRUST AND MORAL INJURY

Women often feel betrayed and let down by the Military as they did not respond to their needs, complaints and requests for help and support.

WHAT DO FEMALE VETERANS NEED?

Recognition that this may affect interaction or lack thereof with services.

TRANSITION, EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCE

60% of women feel they had received little support or preparation for life as a civilian³

44% of women reporting being unemployed for long periods of time⁴

WHAT DO FEMALE VETERANS NEED?

Women need better and more targeted support during transition to find appropriate and sustainable employment taking into account caring responsibilities.

Resulting in:

- Fewer financial struggles
- Less impact on mental health due to loss of identity
- Less likely to get involved in criminal activity

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

'Women in the British Army have been found to be seven times more likely than men to suffer from musculoskeletal injuries.....they are ten times more likely than men to suffer from hip and pelvic stress fractures⁵

Women are often left with long term impact on their physical and mental health as a result of service.

WHAT DO FEMALE VETERANS NEED?

- Women's specific health needs as veterans need recognising and professionals to have a better understanding of the potential causes
- Women need to feel confident to declare their military service and be supported into specific Armed Forces pathways where appropriate and wanted

AREAS OF LITTLE EVIDENCE

There are many areas that still are largely under researched and therefore no practical action is being taken to improve the situation.

Only 2% of veteran research focuses on females⁶

WHAT DO FEMALE VETERANS NEED?

More research and data capture is needed to better understand specific issues for female veterans such as the criminal justice system, race and faith, care services, loneliness, digital poverty and accessibility and Reservists

¹Source: Gender, Military Service and Health Survey, 2019. ²Source: Gender, Military Service and Health Survey, 2019. ³Source: Gender, Military Service and Health Survey, 2019. ⁴Source: Gender, Military Service and Health Survey, 2019. ⁵Source: Gender, Military Service and Health Survey, 2019. ⁶Source: Gender, Military Service and Health Survey, 2019.

To find out more visit www.fvtp.org.uk

Phase 2 Consultation & Co-production



We wanted to make sure we heard and responded to the views and opinions of female veterans those that support them. Co-production is based on the question 'What does good look like?' – : focused

2 stage process Online questionnaire & focus groups

- 51% Army, 23% RAF, 21% Royal Navy and 5% were Reservists
- Responses across all ranks
- Responses from various lengths of service from 0-5 years to over 30 years
- Responses from those that left in the last 4 years through to before 1960
- Response from across all of the UK, highest proportion from the South West
- 25% stated they have a disability
- 2% were from ethnic minorities
- 13% were LGBTQ+



Co-production Overview

Identification of key themes

- **Awareness** – Better branding, imagery and promotion of services to female veterans so they feel welcome and understand what is available for them.
- **Diversity** – Understanding the needs of ALL female veterans and ensuring they 'see themselves' in the service provision. This includes female veterans of all ages, all ranks and lengths of service, for ethnic minorities and for LGBTQ+ veterans.
- **Recognition** – Continue or begin to ask 'Have you ever served' to identify female veterans and open a conversation that is specific to their needs.
- **Inclusion** - Better access to services across the whole of the UK, both face to face and online. Where appropriate these should include, childcare/child friendly environments and places that feel safe.
- **Education** – Better education for all service providers about the needs of female veterans
- **Support** – All services to be delivered in a person-centred way, recognising some don't want separate gendered services. However, there is wider recognition that for some, female only services/provision is essential (i.e. for those that have experienced sexually inappropriate behaviours, including rape and sexual assault).



- Infographic and report can be found here

What Good Looks Like for Female Veterans

Female Veterans TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

A checklist for services and organisations

We have heard from over 800 female veterans and they have told us that good looks like the following...

Understanding the needs of ALL women veterans and ensuring they 'see themselves' in the service provision.

RECOGNITION

- We are aware and recognise that women serve/have served in the British Armed Forces
- We ask the question 'Have you ever served?'

This will help identify female veterans and open a conversation that is specific to their needs.

There is also a need for EVERYONE to understand that women also served and to reduce stereotypes. Many people are still not aware that women have served in the military in all roles and therefore assumptions and stereotypes still exist which stop women asking for or being offered support.

DIVERSITY

- We are aware that female veterans may have different needs to men
- We recognise that female veterans are a diverse group and includes:

- All ages
- All ranks
- All lengths of service
- Ethnic minorities
- LGBTQ+ veterans

25% of respondents said that they had a disability

Needs of female veterans can include physical and mental health, housing, access to support services, employment and training, social and financial support, and more. There will be more that we need to know or see one time and we need to ensure support is available.

AWARENESS & COMMUNICATION

- We ensure we promote our services to female veterans in a way that makes them feel welcome
- We ensure branding, imagery and language is appropriate to female veterans

Many women don't know what's available or don't feel that they are allowed/want to access it.

SUPPORT

- We offer support in a person-centred way, based on what matters to the person
- We work collaboratively with other services/organisations to provide the right support for the person (We don't have to know/do everything on our own!)

Some women want to access existing services alongside men but want to feel that this is an option (they don't always feel they can).

However, there is wider recognition that for some issues and some women, female only services are essential. (i.e. for those that have experienced sexually inappropriate behaviours, including rape and sexual assault.)

ENVIRONMENT

- We provide our services to female veterans in safe and appropriate environments

Better access to services across the whole of the UK

online & face to face

Where appropriate these should include, childcare/child friendly environments.

EDUCATION

- We provide access to additional training for staff where needed to better support female veterans

Some services admit they are still lacking knowledge

This also includes understanding why you should ask 'Have you ever served?' and knowing what to do with that information.

To find out more visit www.fvtp.org.uk



CMWR Presentation



All responses to your question will be shown here

Each response can be up to 200 characters long

Turn on voting to let participants vote for their favorites



Choose a slide to present

What sector do you represent?



Where do you work?



What are the top 3 things you think female voters are worried in case of future tax cuts passed?

What are the top 3 things you think are important to female veterans in how they are represented with?



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What are the top 3 things you think are important to female veterans in how they are communicated with?

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Choose a slide to present



What good looks like?



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- We recognise that female veterans are a diverse group and includes:

- All ages
- All ranks
- All lengths of service
- Ethnic minorities
- LGBTQ+ veterans

25% of respondents said that they had a disability

Needs of female veterans can include physical and mental health issues relating to bullying, discrimination, harassment and sexually inappropriate behaviour including rape and sexual assault, housing, employment and finance, caring responsibilities etc. Often there will be more than one need present at any one time and we need to ensure support holistically.

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Communications Checklist



Communications checklist

When asking women how services could be improved, communication was one of the most significant issues. This checklist provides some ideas of things you can think about or action to better communicate and engage with female veterans.

Female Veterans
TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

1 Decide what you want to communicate to female veterans

- ☐ Plan your communication campaign to include what you want to communicate, to which groups and how you are going to do this. Remember many female veterans have a lack of awareness of what support is on offer as it's not promoted to them.
- ☐ Identify SMART objectives (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound)
- ☐ Understand your audience by acknowledging the specific needs of female veterans.
- ☐ Veterans are often perceived as male, which can make women feel excluded from services or not welcome. Communication should reflect a commitment to inclusivity and ensure female veterans feel represented and included.
- ☐ Involve female veterans in the design and development of any communication to ensure it is fit for purpose.

2 Remember these top tips:

- ☐ Establish a consistent tone
- ☐ Communicate regularly
- ☐ Be clear and concise
- ☐ Be polite and respectful
- ☐ Be responsive to enquiries. Female veterans tell us they are really bad at asking for help and it often takes a crisis to reach out, so a quick response is essential.

3 Be clear about who is eligible for this service provision.

- ☐ It is especially important if the provision is a female-only space that the definition of female-only is made clear in communications material.

4 Use simple and inclusive language

- ☐ Many women do not identify with the term 'veteran' and therefore use of other terms and language should be used - ex-service, ex-military.
- ☐ Ask the question 'Have you ever served in the British Armed Forces?' to better engage with female veterans.

5 Use inclusive and welcoming imagery

- ☐ Use images of women in both military and non military settings.
- ☐ Consider using a montage of images to show the diversity of the female veteran experience or alternatively use animation or graphics if you need to protect identity.
- ☐ Have images of real women that represent diversity of the female veterans (by age, race, service, rank, sexuality, religion, disabilities, service job roles i.e. combat experience or not and civilian jobs roles, mothers, carers etc).
- ☐ The use of female imagery helps challenge stereotypes and assumptions and therefore increases awareness that women also served.

6 Think about your colour scheme

- ☐ Whilst you may be restricted by your own branding, we recommend using tri-service colours alongside colours not associated with the military.
- ☐ Avoid excessive use of pink, and also khaki (which alienates Navy and RAF communities given its strong association with the Army).

7 Decide what communications channels to use to reach out

- ☐ Recognise that many female veterans use word of mouth to identify suitable and safe services.
- ☐ Consider digital illiteracy especially amongst the older female veteran community.
- ☐ Consider stakeholders outside of the veterans' sector to reach 'hidden' female veteran communities i.e. via sports, arts, faith groups.

8 Review your effectiveness - what works and what doesn't?

- ☐ Ask female veterans to take a look at your draft communications material and provide feedback.



The best communications strategy and materials cannot substitute for a welcoming and inclusive environment, especially in that first interaction with a female veteran.



Pairs discussion



- What are the things that you already do?
- What are the things you need to do?
- What are the things that you've learnt?





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What one practical thing are you going to do to improve services for female veterans?

All responses to your question will be shown here

Each response can be up to 200 characters long

Turn on voting to let participants vote for their favorites





Announcement!!!



How can you help us?



- Critical friends
- Toolkit Testers
- Case studies/best practice examples
- Female veteran positive role models

Contact:

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staceydenyer@fvtp.org.uk





Defence Research Network

www.defenceresnet.org

- Peer-to-peer support network
- Masters, PhD, Early Career Researchers
- Interface between policy-practice-academia
- Diverse interests ranging from the history of airpower, counterinsurgency, veterans and families, and cybersecurity



www.womenveteransalliance.com/global-alliance/

- Global Alliance of women veterans organisations
- Next meeting is 1 May
- Sharing outcomes of this conference with international partners
- Interested? Email stacey.denyer@fvtp.org.uk

Thank you

