

Participatory Research Fund Project Reservist Servicewomen

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Overview:

Within research that considers the needs of reservists broadly, there is little discussion of the needs of reserve servicewomen, thus a significant research gap exists in our understanding of their experiences, the challenges they may face, and how to best support this cohort. The limited research available suggests reserve servicewomen face gendered challenges; 'complex gender dynamics' within reserve service, tensions between military work, civilian work, and family life, challenges with career progression, and being more likely to be subject to bullying, discrimination, or harassment than men.

Aim and objectives:

To address this crucial research gap, this PPIE aimed to direct the planning and design stage of the research grant application focused on the needs and experiences of reservist servicewomen.



Funding of £4215 was used for:

This PPIE aimed to direct the planning and design stage of the research grant application. We held a series of 4 workshops and 2 follow-on meetings to explore the needs and experiences of reservist servicewomen and highlight salient differences from the experiences of their regular servicewomen and reservist servicemen counterparts.

Within workshops and meetings, we considered:

- **What do you think are the differences between reservist and regular servicewomen's experiences?**
- **Are there differences in the support available to reservists and regular servicewomen?**
- **What are the most important questions to explore first?**
- **Discuss various approaches to and outcomes of project ideas**

Do you want to know more or be involved?
Email us on: abigail.wood@aru.ac.uk

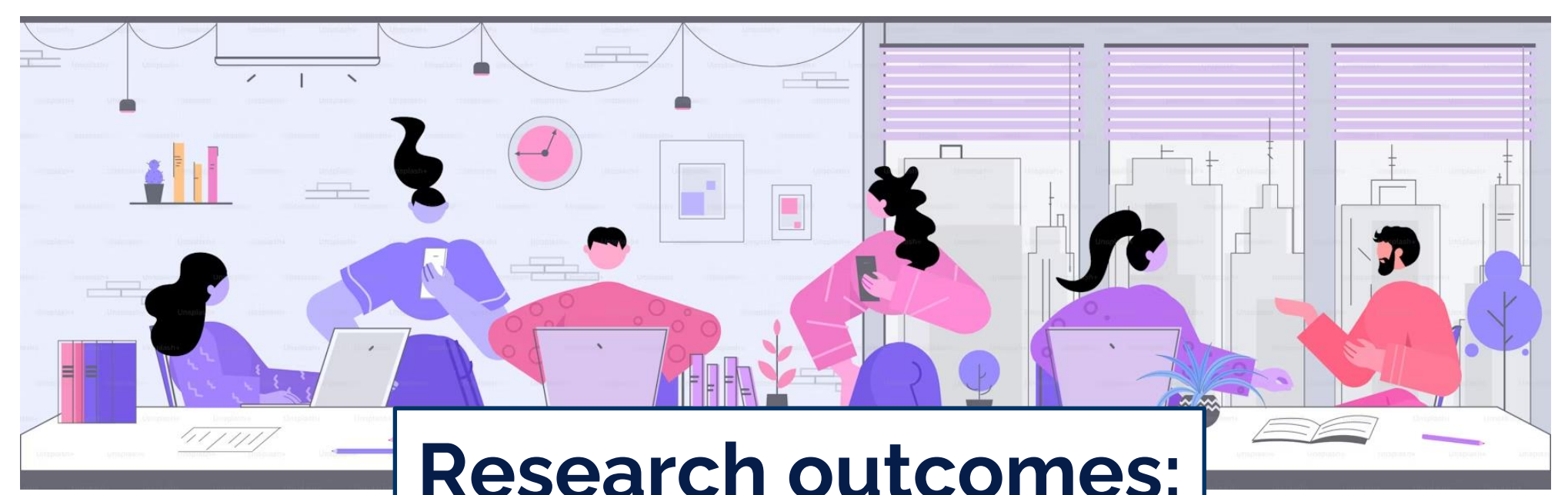
Stakeholders involved:

Our stakeholders were current and former reservist servicewomen.

This included representation across different branches, ranks, and age groups.

Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement elements:

Within the 4 workshops and meetings, a mixture of discussion and activities were undertaken. These activities included using question/topic prioritization exercises utilizing the ranking tool from poll everywhere, and employing impact/ 'effort' matrixes to help stimulate discussion. In between meetings, PPIE group members were able to provide further contributions via email.



Research outcomes:

A plethora of salient differences between the experiences of reservist servicewomen and their counterparts were described by the PPIE group. From this, the group felt there were many important topics to consider in a future research agenda including but not limited to:

- How reservist servicewomen manage work/life + work/work balance
- How accommodation & facilities meet women's needs incl. hygiene and maternity needs.
- Developing training regarding women's needs
- Why do women join the reserves and why do they leave?
- Exploring support with returning to work and fitness post-partum
- Aging: the perception of older women in the reserves and exploring differing support needs

At the end of the prioritization exercise, the question that was considered the most urgent topic for exploration was:

Impact of reserve service on women's physical health

The group also provided feedback and raised important points to consider regarding the research design:

- We asked the group whether a women-only sample or an all-gender sample with a focus on gender during analysis was preferable. After a discussion of pros and cons, a consensus emerged on a women-only approach.
- Ensuring proper consideration of age, rank, and other intersections.