



Defence Committee

Chair, Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP

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Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP
Secretary of State for Defence
Ministry of Defence
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22 September 2020

Dear Secretary of State.

The Defence Select Committee has agreed to create a sub-committee to inquire into *Women in the Armed Forces: From Recruitment to Civilian Life*. This will be chaired by Sarah Atherton MP.

We understand that under the provisions of 2019DIN05-14 Contact with Parliamentarians serving members of the Armed Forces may not speak to parliamentarians without specific authorisation. If this DIN is applied, the sub-committee would therefore be prevented from taking evidence, oral or written, from serving women.

I would be grateful if you would consider granting special dispensation to allow serving female military personnel to submit written evidence to, and to appear before, the sub-committee. As I understand, these restrictions have been lifted in other situations.

This is a time-sensitive issue and I would ask for a reply by Friday 9 October. Without a dispensation we will proceed with alternative arrangement for obtaining evidence from anonymised serving women, potentially through questionnaires or third-party advocates.

I am copying this letter to Johnny Mercer MP, Minister for Defence People and Veterans.

Yours,

Rt Hon. Tobias Ellwood MP
Chair of the Defence Committee