



House of Commons
Defence Committee

**Protecting those who
protect us: Women in
the Armed Forces from
Recruitment to Civilian
Life: Government
Response to the
Committee's Second
Report**

**Fourth Special Report of
Session 2021–22**

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 30 November 2021*

The Defence Committee

The Defence Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Ministry of Defence and its associated public bodies.

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Fourth Special Report

On 25 July 2021 the Defence Committee published its First Report of Session 2021–22, [Protecting those who protect us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life](#) (HC 154). The Government's response was received on 30 November 2021, and it is appended to this report.

Appendix: Government Response

Introduction

The Government wants to thank the House of Commons Defence Committee for its inquiry: "Protecting those who protect us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life", which made clear that on too many occasions Defence has failed to provide women with the experience they deserve. Our servicewomen needed to tell their courageous testimonies, we needed to hear them, and we will ensure that we continue to hear their voices.

As a direct result of this inquiry:

- We will undertake a six-month sprint to accelerate existing work to deliver a range of new Women's Health Policies, addressing issues highlighted by our Servicewomen and recognising the importance of their health and wellbeing;
- The Chiefs of Staff will lead a six-month sprint to accelerate existing work to address uniform and equipment improvements;
- The Chiefs have commissioned a review of policy to strengthen levers available to dismiss or discharge those who are found to have committed sexual offences or unacceptable sexual behaviour;
- The development of a new Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy will look to address issues such as the use of transactional sex workers, and ensure that the interests of the victim are prioritised;
- We will build trust within the Service Complaints System and Service Justice System through a revised approach to the publication of successful Service Justice sexual offending prosecutions alongside suitably anonymised Service Complaint cases by April 2022;
- Defence will benchmark organisational culture with other Armed Forces, Government departments and private organisations. We will scope hosting an international conference in 2022 with partner nations to share our response, get after programmes that are proven to work, learn and share best practice together with our allies who share similar challenges. This will enable enhanced effectiveness and ensure we work collegiately as we travel together on this journey;
- Defence will work with the single Services to develop new measures to ensure Commanding Officers who, when found by the Service Complaints Ombudsman

to have fallen short of expected standards in handling service complaints, receive appropriate, consistent and robust consequences that appear on their employment records;

- Defence will develop and implement Defence Positive Action Guidance, complimenting and supporting Defence's commitment to achievement through merit; and,
- The Secretary of State and the Minister of State for Defence (Lords) have committed to regularly meet with representatives of our Servicewomen's Networks to understand the impact of changes being made and to enable our servicewomen to hold us to account and to identify opportunities for further continuous improvement.

The Inquiry has also encouraged and enabled Defence to accelerate and expand upon existing and planned work.

Defence continues to build on improvements, remove barriers and identify initiatives to ensure our service women get the support they deserve and encourages women from all backgrounds to join and flourish in the Armed Forces by:

- Continuing to build more independence from the Chain of Command into the Service Complaints System, particularly around sexual service complaints, as highlighted in the Wigston Review;
- Developing a Defence-wide strategy for how rape and serious sexual offences are handled within the Service Justice System, recognising the significance to our people and to the wider service community of the damage caused by sexual offending;
- Establishing the Defence Serious Crime Unit (as first recommended in the Lyons Murphy Review, then built upon in the Henriques Review) headed up by a new Provost Marshal for Serious Crime. This will enable allegations to be reported independently and investigations to be conducted outside of the single Service Chain of Command, thereby improving our capability to deal with the most serious offences and provide improved victim support through an independent Victim and Witness Care Unit;
- The Secretary of State is determined to ensure there is female representation on court martial boards related to sexual offending. The Department is undertaking work to establish how to deliver this;
- Improving our understanding of unacceptable behaviours to enable targeted interventions, including through online collation of Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Advisor Reports, a pan-Defence approach to Climate Assessments, better data and dashboards and the centralisation of the Sexual Harassment Survey, as highlighted in the Wigston Review;
- Retaining and developing our women and giving them greater confidence that they can thrive, have successful careers in the Armed Forces and not be limited

by outdated or regressive policy and practice. Our focus on supporting our servicewomen will also be concurrent to our efforts to increase representation at all levels over time;

- Setting ourselves a stretching and challenging Level of Ambition of 30% inflow by 2030, more than doubling our inflow of women into the Armed Forces. Outreach is important, and we need to start this at a younger age, in more communities;
- Demonstrating, through future recruitment campaigns, the roles available outside of 'traditional' combat roles (including STEM professions), be female focused, and challenge misconceptions about the Armed Forces, similar to the Army's 'A soldier is a soldier' campaign;
- Recognising the importance of valuing and rewarding quality inclusive leadership as a crucial driver for cultural change. The reporting process for Senior Officers (2* and above) is changing in recognition of the wider responsibilities that accrue with increasing rank;
- All senior officers will be assessed against a new leadership objective from this year: 'Role model through visible leadership, positive behaviours including mission command, self-awareness and an appropriate work-life balance' and four new characteristics will be rolled out from February 2022. Consideration is also being given to how this report might be rolled out for OF6 level officers; and,
- Publishing an annual Defence D&I Report to increase transparency of the work being undertaken, share positive examples of change and enable our people to hold Defence to account.

We have already delivered a broad range of initiatives and interventions including:

- We've listened to personnel and delivered meaningful policies that our personnel have told us will improve their personal experience, ranging from improving hair policy, the provision of accessible sanitary products, opening all roles to women and tailored mentoring;
- Recognising and supporting the modern, diverse workforce with the introduction of Flexible Service (FS) and Alternative Working Arrangements (AWA), piloting wrap-around childcare, flexible and parental leave, the internal Future Workplace Strategy and the new Families Strategy; And,
- Practical measures which back up our commitment to tackling and stopping unacceptable behaviour, and where incidents do occur, ensuring they will be dealt with promptly, sensitively, and effectively.

We continue to implement the recommendations from the Wigston Review into Inappropriate Behaviours and the subsequent Gray Review. Of the 49 combined recommendations, 22 have been fully implemented and closed, including updated policies on behaviour, issuing an information booklet on sexual harassment, the Bullying,

Harassment & Discrimination Helpline, launching Active Bystander Training and centralising the Sexual Harassment Surveys commissioned by the single Services. A further 4 have been implemented and continue to be delivered on an enduring basis.

Meaningful and enduring change is our aim and it is starting to happen, and whilst there has been much improvement in recent years there remains a broad range of challenges, issues and unacceptable behaviour that must be addressed. Defence is committed to preventing unacceptable behaviours from occurring and we have zero-tolerance for such behaviour.

We know that our Armed Forces are an environment where our women continue to thrive, and it is encouraging that the report found that nearly 90% of respondents would recommend the Forces to other women. Defence is committed to making the step changes required to create an inclusive environment for all women, enabling us to deliver our Defence outputs, enhance our operational effectiveness and better defend and represent the nation we serve.

These are considerable challenges and Defence will address them through a number of actions. Our formal response to the Committee's report recommendations and conclusions is set out below. We have accepted 33 of the Committee's recommendations, partially accepted a further four recommendations and noted 13 points which are conclusions rather than recommendations. We are not implementing just three of the Committee's recommendations, instead seeking to address the underlying concerns of the recommendations in other ways.

The Committee's findings are highlighted in bold, with the Government's response set out in plain text. For ease of reference, paragraph numbering in brackets refers to the order in which they are presented in the Committee's report.

Further Background

The HCDC inquiry builds on a number of reviews in recent years that have sought to understand and improve some of the most complex areas of service life, many of which disproportionately affect women. The Lyons Murphy Review was commissioned to provide an independent and more in-depth look at the Service Justice system, to assure that it is as effective as it can be for the 21st century. The Wigston Review was commissioned in response to repeated incidents of inappropriate and allegedly unlawful behaviour by serving members of the UK Armed Forces. The Gray Review provided an assessment of progress one year on from the publication of the Wigston Review. The Henriques Review commissioned to ensure that in relation to complex and serious allegations of wrongdoing against UK forces on overseas operations, the UK has the most up to date and future-proof framework, skills and processes in place, and that improvements can be made where necessary.

We are taking forward some 79 recommendations from the Service Justice Review carried out by His Honour Shaun Lyons and Sir Jon Murphy, although the Department has decided not to take forward those which seek to compromise the important principle of concurrent jurisdiction for the civilian and Service Justice systems—which is being clarified and strengthened in the current Armed Forces Bill. Additionally, six of the Service Justice Review recommendations are now proposals in the Bill, including: the

creation of a new and independent regime for dealing with complaints against the Service Police; revised arrangements for the operation of the court martial; and simplifying the process for the correction of any sentencing errors at summary hearing.

Sir Richard Henriques made 64 recommendations, 20 of which relate to the creation of a Defence Serious Crime Unit (DSCU); 18 of these have already been accepted, with the other two remaining subject to further work and consideration. Of the remaining recommendations, eight will be taken forward over the coming months and the remaining 35 require more in-depth consideration to determine how they can be taken forward.

The Wigston Report on Inappropriate Behaviours made 36 Recommendations, 22 of which have been delivered, and four of which are enduring. The remaining recommendations are currently being progressed. Danuta Gray's One-Year On Review of progress made an additional 13 recommendations, four of which superseded those made by Wigston. Three of these have been delivered or are being delivered on an enduring basis. The remaining recommendations are part of ongoing transformation work. All of these recommendations have been accepted.

We note that many of the recommendations in this Inquiry reflect similar themes to the prior Reviews, which Defence is addressing through activities that are existing, planned or which have already been delivered. In response to this Inquiry Defence has also developed a number of additional interventions, alongside expanding and accelerating other existing work.

Joining the Forces – Recruitment and Representation

1. The UK Armed Forces have become more diverse in recent decades. We do not doubt the tremendous opportunities that serving offers. Nonetheless, barriers still affect female recruitment, including an impression that it is harder for women to thrive there. The MOD and single Services have already taken some welcome steps, including on training. While we accept change takes time, it worries us that the female intake target of 15% was missed in 2020 and the share of women among recruits has reduced in the year since then. In our view, change remains “glacial” and the impacts of the MOD's latest initiatives are not being felt yet. The Single Services and MOD must increase their levels of ambition. In addition, we recommend further work to improve women's in-Service experiences (see chapters 3 and 4), including stamping out unacceptable behaviours in some parts of the Forces. We believe improving servicewomen's experiences after joining will positively affect recruitment. (Paragraph 24)

We agree that improving servicewomen's experiences will positively affect recruitment. We are tackling this through a range of actions, which are detailed further in our response.

Recruitment of women is critical to all the Armed Forces and we recognise the need for a step change in our ambition. We will therefore aim to more than double our inflow of women into the Armed Forces, setting a Level of Ambition of 30% inflow by 2030.

Achieving this ambition will be stretching and challenging and will require a Whole Force effort to achieve. This, along with other Defence Levels of Ambition, will be regularly reviewed and monitored through the Department's performance and risk monitoring process.

In order to deliver on this ambition, the Royal Air Force (RAF) have placed significant emphasis on improving the numbers of women applying, ranging from awareness raising events through to ensuring their offer is comprehensive and attractive. The Royal Navy (RN) has developed its accommodation infrastructure to significantly increase capacity for female recruits and the Army has been reviewing its terms of service and career management practices to give women greater confidence that a career will not be limited by outdated regressive policy.

Whilst many women don't experience harassment, it is of deep concern to Defence that, in the 2021 Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS), 11% of women (around 1,800 female UK Regulars as at 1 April 2021¹) were subjected to sexual harassment in a Service environment in the last 12 months, indicating that it is still too prevalent. That is unacceptable. To raise awareness and provide practical guidance, the Defence published a booklet on tackling sexual harassment in 2020 which set out: what sexual harassment is; what to do if you are being sexually harassed; what to do if you witness it or someone reports it you; and where to find support. Defence has also established a 24-hour Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination helpline to assist victims when things do go wrong.

Climate Assessment surveys include a question on whether individuals consider that there is a problem with sexual harassment in their unit and whether individuals have experienced it within the previous year; this will expose hot spots and commanding officers will be required to implement interventions to tackle the problem. In addition, Defence is increasing real time monitoring of issues through the digitisation of D&I adviser reports, which initially went live in July 2021 and will be expanded over the next 12 months. This, along with the centralised management of future Sexual Harassment surveys, will bring these issues into the light, better enabling targeted interventions, improving transparency and enhancing Defence's ability to hold to account through, for example, the Department's performance and risk monitoring process.

2. Recruitment strategies should adequately reflect the wide range of roles, trades and skills needed in the Forces of today and tomorrow, including those to arise from the Integrated Review. These strategies must challenge misperceptions, as well as flagging different entry routes and the wider Service 'offer' (such as education and training, Flexible Service and family support). Female role models from the military must be sufficiently involved in outreach for all Services, building on positive initiatives at single Service level. (Paragraph 25)

Defence agrees the importance of diverse role models in recruitment campaigns to attract the skills that we need today, and in the future, to help both humanise and personalise the opportunity of a career in the Armed Forces. We are already striving to achieve this.

For example, the 2021–2022 Army recruitment marketing campaign is focused on a wide variety of roles and demonstrates the professional skills that can be acquired in the Army outside of 'traditional' combat roles. This has been driven by the requirement for the Army to attract more applicants who are more highly skilled and educated on entry. Future marketing campaigns will continue to follow this narrative. The female focussed campaign also challenges misconceptions about the Army and makes it clear that the

1 This has been estimated by applying the 11% AFCAS finding of women who reported being subject to sexual harassment in a Service environment in the last 12 months and applying it to the 1 April 2021 Female UK Regular Forces strength of 16,470 personnel available in the UK Armed Forces Biannual Diversity National Statistics.

Army defines people by their skills, not sex. While detailed data on this campaign is not yet available, when tested with women (internally and externally) it resulted in positive feedback.

A partnership between Recruiting Group (Capita) and Be Military Fit has the objective of not only increasing the fitness of female applicants, and thus improve pass rates for physical assessment at Assessment Centres, but also using fitness to boost confidence.

The Royal Navy looks to attract interest and application to the RN through a considered approach. Its recent work looks to deliver against two pillars; **Consciously Diverse** 'and **Actively Inclusive**.

The Royal Navy has teams of Attract personnel in six areas across the UK whose role is to increase awareness of opportunity within the Royal Navy, particularly focussed on working with under-represented groups including focused activity for women. The Attract teams work with both pre-eligible and eligible candidates creating sustained, consistent contact and developing strong, trusting relationships within these communities.

The RAF have carried out a full end to end study of their recruitment processes to improve the conversion rate of women applicants for entry into training, and to increase their representation within the RAF. As part of that study, the RAF has introduced enhanced Candidate Relationship Management and have introduced regular women-only virtual coffee sessions to allow candidates to meet other women in the application process, to meet those women candidates that have just passed Phase 1 and to have individually tailored support sessions with specialist recruitment staff. Future work includes revised written communications built into the new Recruitment Information Technology System (RITS) to ensure that messaging is more inclusive in tone. RITS will also send motivational messages to encourage and support candidates through the recruitment pathway. The wording of these messages will be tailored to reflect the sex and ethnicity of the recipient, which the system will tag from the point of application.

Defence also supports the inclusion of its flexible working offer in its recruitment strategies and is working towards introducing further flexibilities, such as job share. Being clear about the Armed Forces' modern, flexible, offer during recruitment can help attract recruits from a broader spectrum of society, which will increase diversity and make the Armed Forces more representative of the society it serves.

3. *Without compromising physical standards for ground close combat roles, the Department must ensure that fitness tests across all Services have due regard for temporary or arbitrary factors that can hinder performance, including hormonal changes linked to pregnancy and menopause and ill-fitting kit (see chapter 3).* (Paragraph 26)

This is important. At the response to 16 (below) we set out the wider context and a broader commitment to our Servicewomen's health.

Defence Instruction Notice (DIN) 01-130 Injury Prevention and Health Optimisation during Pregnancy and Maternity gives direction to commanders, Servicewomen and physical training (PT) staff on the provision of PT during pregnancy and after maternity leave, and also gives perinatal PT advice for commanders.

The DIN established a specialist occupationally focussed women's health physiotherapy service accessible to all Servicewomen. It also directs enhanced education of physical training instructors (PTIs) across Defence, to enable Servicewomen to exercise safely through and after pregnancy, and appropriately recondition and return them to full occupational fitness after maternity leave. Since October 2019, all RN and 955 Army PTIs have received foundation training, and uptake for further specialist training is encouraging across the services. Whilst formal assessment of the uptake of services and impact of the DIN is in progress, and yet to report, anecdotal evidence from social media network feeds demonstrate awareness and that the additional support and service is welcomed.

Personnel who declare pregnancies are graded P4 (medically fit for duty within the limitations of pregnancy) with appropriate single-Service medical employability limitations. This grade is intended to protect both mother and unborn child from the more environmentally extreme exposures of military service. The procedures and guidance for managing the health and safety risks to pregnancy (or breastfeeding) for servicewomen are set out in Joint Service Publication (JSP) 375 Chapter 20 New and Expectant Mothers. This is assured through the Three Lines of Defence set out in the HMT Orange Book. Defence Organisations have primary ownership, responsibility and accountability for their own Safety and Environment Management Systems (SEMS). Director Health Safety & Environmental Protection conducts scrutiny of those SEMS to ensure they comply with the Defence SEMS, including JSP 375, and the Defence Safety Authority (DSA) conducts assurance of Defence Activity. However, the requirement for the manager to conduct a pregnancy-specific risk assessment only applies once they have been formally notified of a pregnancy. Servicewomen, who have informed their Chain of Command of a pregnancy, should not be required to undertake training or testing in relation to otherwise compulsory military fitness standards.

The Army has reviewed its fitness tests and Physical Employment Standards (PES) for all Army roles. PES tests and standards have been developed to reflect the physical requirements² of specific military roles, to improve operational effectiveness, whilst also mitigating against injury risk and/or informing physical training and development for all Army personnel. Both Ground Close Combat (GCC) and non-GCC PES have now been implemented.

The Royal Navy is in the process of reviewing its physical tests. A Physical Employment Standards (PES) based fitness test for Royal Marines Commandos has been developed to reflect the requirements of this specific role. Further PES fitness tests for Royal Navy Sailors and Royal Marines Band Service are currently in development.

The RAF is currently undertaking a thorough review of the RAF Fitness Test. A PES will be developed and implemented for all personnel in the near future with specific PES for the most physically demanding roles.

Recognising the importance of initial training in particular, Defence commits to further Tri-Service cooperation, including through the shared learning and development of approaches, to improve the experience of Servicewomen in initial training. A new forum will be established to enable this cooperation, with the first event being led by the RAF before the end of 2021.

22 Via a Job task Analysis, Primary Physical Actions and Representative Military Tasks were reviewed for all career employment groups.

Defence does not currently specifically address the menopause within medical policy, and instead expect clinicians to apply clinical judgement if a Serviceperson presents with symptoms which should require medical employability limitations. The response to 16 below provides greater detail on the medical support provided to Servicewomen.

In addition, the whole force Menopause Network is raising awareness, improving understanding, highlighting sources of support and providing a safe space for those experiencing menopause, their Chain of Command, colleagues, friends and families to share experiences and learn from each other.

Thriving and Progressing in the Forces

4. Within the military culture of the Armed Forces and the MOD, it is still a man's world. Although many servicewomen are able to cope with this, we do not think they should have to. If the MOD is serious about making the Forces more representative of UK society, it needs to be proactive in making more space for under-represented groups, including servicewomen, and reforming the prevailing culture. The investment that it made to its Diversity and Inclusion team may help, although it is too soon to assess whether this is having the desired effects. (Paragraph 34)

Defence recognises the prevailing culture is often influenced by stereotypes, as highlighted in the recent Lived Experience report³.

“A white male prototype, often characterised by alpha male traits (dominance, assertiveness, a strong physicality etc.) was perceived to be pervasive across Defence (particularly in the military). Female, BAME and white male participants not fitting this ‘mould’ found it harder to fit in and reported challenges developing and maintaining their sense of belonging and advancing their career”

Defence understands that, in order to effectively deliver operational effectiveness, characteristics such as assertiveness and strength are vital. It is also vital that we create a culture where all our people feel they belong, can thrive and achieve their full potential. Defence will benchmark⁴ with other Armed Forces, other government departments, private and Defence organisations to understand effective programmes of work, best practice and take a refined approach to reform culture; delivering more quickly the objectives set out in the Defence D&I Strategy: A Force For Inclusion 2018-2030. This will include hosting a conference in 2022 with partner nations to share our response this Inquiry and enable joint learning, recognising that many allies are on this journey, have conducted detailed research and are developing innovative approaches to these challenges from which we can all learn.

Culture change is not just about policy, it is also about personal experience. Defence supports a wide range of employee networks who provide opportunities for specific groups of people to be heard, to share their personal experience and to consult with, to ensure policy development is comprehensive and creates equal outcomes for all. The networks

3 The Defence Secretary agreed that the Lived Experience Report would be placed in the House of Commons library on 1 February 2021. It can be found at this link: http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2021-0080/Lived_Experience_Summary_Report_REDACTED.pdf

4 Using diagnostic tools such as the Inclusion Diagnostic, People Survey, Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey and Reserve Forces Continuous Attitude Survey.

are supported by Champions and Advocates, senior leaders from across Defence who champion inclusive best practice behaviours, drive change, lead by example and support and challenge our networks. The Secretary of State and the Minister of State for Defence (Lords) have directly engaged with representatives from the Servicewomen's networks, and will continue to do so, in response to this Inquiry.

The importance of listening to the voices of our women in the Armed Forces has been reinforced by the re-energised focus on bringing equality thinking into the centre of the decision-making process across Defence. Complimenting and supporting Defence's commitment to achievement through merit, Defence will develop a Defence Positive Action Guide by mid-2022.

5. There is too much bullying, harassment and discrimination—including criminal behaviours like sexual assault and rape—affecting Service personnel (both male and female), and the MOD's own statistics leave no room for doubt that female Service personnel suffer disproportionately. We were alarmed and appalled that the Army's Sexual Harassment survey of 2018 found that 21% of servicewomen had either experienced or witnessed sexual harassment at work in the previous 12 months. Such a figure should have raised major concerns in the Army but appears not to have done so. The stories that we heard are truly shocking and they gravely concern us. They are also disappointing given the MOD's commitment to ending unacceptable behaviours and the rollout of initiatives like bystander training (see paragraph 55). In particular, we are disturbed by repeated examples of senior ranks failing those they command, by not responding appropriately or even engaging in these behaviours themselves. Some of the language we heard from senior leaders also concerned us, as it appeared to imply servicewomen wanting to progress need to learn to put up with these behaviours. Let us be clear: this behaviour is harming the health, careers and operational effectiveness of our Service personnel and has no place in the military. It also damages the reputation of all Service personnel, the majority of whom conduct themselves with integrity and professionalism. The Forces and the MOD must continue to root out these behaviours and must respond better when they occur. We make specific recommendations on this in both chapters 3 and 4 of this report. (Paragraph 51)

The Chiefs of Staff are fully committed to making the Armed Services inclusive working environments. This is essential for operational effectiveness. They are personally leading programmes to root out remaining unacceptable behaviour in their organisations.

Defence accepts that there has been and remains an issue with women being disproportionately subjected to bullying and harassment in the Armed Forces and continues to take measures to protect all its people. Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston published his report into inappropriate behaviours in July 2019 in which he made 36 recommendations. A team was set up and has delivered 22 Wigston recommendations to date spanning policy, training, communications, leadership and management information areas; four of these are being delivered on an enduring basis and the rest are being progressed. A progress review by Danuta Gray was published in December 2020, which included another 13 recommendations to accelerate progress, four of which have superseded earlier Wigston recommendations. Three of the Gray recommendations have been delivered or are being delivered on an enduring basis, with the remaining actions

forming part of the ongoing transformation work. The delivery of these recommendations is intended to stop incidences of unacceptable behaviour occurring and will enable Defence to do better if they do occur or are alleged to have occurred.

Defence is determined to stop all forms of bullying and harassment and is taking a wide range of actions to deliver this. The new JSP 763 (Behaviours and informal complaints) has been published, as has an information booklet on what to do if you experience sexual harassment, mediation has been reinvigorated across the Services and Climate Assessment surveys mandated across Defence. Where allegations of unacceptable behaviour are upheld, there is a range of sanctions available to the department including disciplinary, administrative or misconduct action depending on the individual's employment status, which can include removal from Service. To support our people, the 24-hour Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination helpline is staffed by counsellors and the Active Bystander Training has been streamed over 98,000 times since June 2020; additionally, personal experience training is being developed for delivery both online and in collaboration with the Networks.

Defence set up the Directorate of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) in April 2021, which brings together D&I, behaviours, Service Complaints and the Service Justice policy areas for the first time. The D&I Directorate has a pan-Defence responsibility for D&I and through cohering the activity and work being undertaken, sharing leading practice, assessing and assuring progress, it will support the delivery of a more inclusive and operationally effective workforce.

6. The work set in motion to reduce unacceptable behaviours by the Wigston Review shows that the MOD acknowledges the problem of unacceptable behaviour. This work is positive. However, progress is slow, and frequently there is a gap between the raft of policy documents in place and actual practice on the ground. We are not yet seeing the significant progress we need. (Paragraph 62)

Cultural change programmes do take a long time to implement; Air Chief Marshal Wigston makes the point in his Executive Summary that some of his recommendations will take up to 10 years of concerted effort to make a difference.⁵

Defence recognises the need to deliver long term culture change, but that it must do so alongside everyday improvements to the personal experience. To do so effectively Defence must better understand that personal experience and hear the voices that have not always been heard. This includes through initiatives that amplify the voices of our women through the Servicewomen's Networks and ensure those voices influence policy and change. It is also vital that Defence understands any gaps between policy and personal experience through improved transparency and insights provided through initiatives such as Climate Assessment surveys and digitised D&I Advisor reports.

Defence is working, with the support of the Analysis Function, to improve data, analysis and management information, which will enable Defence to better monitor progress, measure impact and hold to account.

Whilst a culture change programme should not rely solely on policy, it is important to note that JSP 763 (Behaviours and Informal Complaints) and 831 (Service Complaints) have been updated to embed Wigston Recommendations into policy. They were published in June 2021.

7. We do not underestimate the extraordinary demands and pressures facing military leaders. They operate in a unique environment; training in the Forces is often for combat and is intended to create a fighting force that is able to kill. Nonetheless, this does not excuse unacceptable behaviour. Given the disturbing examples we heard of some leaders failing those under their command, we are concerned that Leaders' courses are not always well-attended, have been disrupted by the pandemic and do not have a clear process for assessing impact. Command courses already cover behaviours, ethics, culture and inclusion, but this existing training does not seem always to be working. Training for leaders must be mandatory, with key performance indicators to assess its impact. (Paragraph 63)

Defence recognises the important role of training in addressing unacceptable behaviour and building a truly inclusive culture. Training is vital, not just to ensure everyone understands what is unacceptable, but also to highlight the importance of positive and inclusive behaviours.

The Wigston Review recommended that an Active Bystander course be developed. The online module went live in Summer 2020, it is compulsory training for all personnel and the Services include their own versions of the training in their portfolios which are mandatory. The online training is delivered by the Defence Academy who continually review the content against feedback and adjust where needed.

Defence recently completed a Training Needs Analysis (TNA) for all D&I training; it details the training requirements for its personnel pertinent to their grade/rank/position. The Services are reviewing their training delivery against the TNA and have been tasked to report on how they will meet the requirements. This work enables the D&I Directorate to set a common standard across Defence and an assurance model is being developed to enable ongoing monitoring of D&I training standards.

In collaboration with the networks and D&I subject matter experts, Personal Experience training is currently being developed. This brings to life the perspective of personnel, who share their stories directly with attendees. Feedback from initial trials of the training suggest that it has a profound impact on attendees, who, perhaps for the first time, are able to truly look through eyes of those they work alongside or lead. Further pilots will be run in November and December 2021 with the ambition to go live in Spring 2022. The training will continue to be developed and expanded to include personal experiences from a wide range of Protected Characteristics.

The Army will review the selection, education and training for commanders at Lieutenant Colonel and above to better prepare them for the challenges of command. The Army will also deliver more focussed education, training and pastoral support to everyone in the Army's training establishments.

8. Adapt performance assessment systems to give greater reward to 'downwardly-looking' leaders and to prevent the progression of individuals who are found to have engaged in unacceptable behaviours or to have responded inappropriately. (Paragraph 64)

Defence recognises the importance of valuing and rewarding inclusive leadership. The reporting process for Senior Officers (2* and above) is changing in recognition of the wider responsibilities that accrue with increasing rank. The Senior Officer Appraisal Reporting 20 (SOAR20) is the new senior officer appraisal form and will be rolled out from February 2022 for the Reporting Period 2022/2023. It takes an approach that increases the emphasis on subject input, subject development, and appraisal against new individual characteristics to reward inclusive leadership.

These outcomes are achieved through the introduction of new mechanisms. Senior officers are required to use multi-source assessment (the Defence 180 Degree Feedback Tool, available since January 2021 to all ranks, has been adapted for senior officers for this purpose) during the reporting period, share and discuss the findings with their line manager and develop action plans, performance against which will be reported on in the appraisal narrative. Senior officers are also required to agree with their line managers those personnel under their command from whom feedback will be sought to ensure that the selection is representative. To avoid delay this has been incorporated into the current SOAR from February 2021.

Under the SOAR20, all senior officers will be assessed against four new characteristics. These have been developed from analysis of military behaviours and characteristics to provide a broad, modern, and objective basis for the assessment of the characteristics required of the most senior officers in Defence. The characteristics are as follows:

- Driving Inclusive Culture. Creates a culture where all personnel are valued and feel they belong and contribute meaningfully to Defence outputs;
- Emotional Intelligence. Understands and manages their own emotions as well of those of others, responding to them to guide thinking, inform problem solving, and maximise individual contributions;
- Consistency. Builds and sustains dependable relationships using actions, tones and approaches that foster trust and ensure staff know what to expect; and,
- Collaboration. Develops highly effective teams whose behaviours and outputs support and enhance stakeholder cooperation and the delivery of common goals.

The SOAR20 will also see all senior officers assessed against a new leadership objective from this year: 'Role model through visible leadership, positive behaviours including mission command, self-awareness and an appropriate work-life balance'. Consideration is also being given to how this report might be rolled out for OF6 level officers.

Defence is committed to preventing unacceptable behaviours from occurring and we have zero-tolerance for such behaviour. Where incidents do occur, they will be dealt with promptly, sensitively and efficiently. Anyone found to fall short of our high standards, to have committed a criminal or disciplinary offence, or to have engaged in unacceptable behaviours can be, depending on the nature of the behaviour, subject to administrative or disciplinary action. Administrative actions range from minor (such as a formal warning) to major (such as termination of service). Punishments following disciplinary action (at a Summary Hearing or the court martial) are also appropriate to the offence; convictions of the most serious offences are very likely to result in imprisonment and dismissal.

Whilst leaders have a vital role in proactively establishing environments in which unacceptable behaviour is eradicated, they nevertheless have an equally vital role in ensuring that the Service Complaints process is credible and is a process in which all Service personnel have confidence to engage irrespective of their rank. Defence's expectations of the role of leaders in this process is unequivocal, but it needs to be strongly reinforced, if necessary, by imposing career penalties. A range of tools are already available to ensure that any shortfall in the Chain of Command's execution of its oversight of Service Complaints are addressed and, if necessary, attract appropriate levels of sanction. Such sanctions can range from appropriate comments in appraisal reports to much greater, less subjective, administrative censures which have direct implications on an individual's suitability for assignments as well as eligibility for promotion. Defence will work with the single Services to develop new measures to ensure Commanding Officers who, when found by the Service Complaints Ombudsman to have fallen short of expected standards in handling Service Complaints and receive appropriate, consistent and robust consequences, that appear on their employment records.

Recognising the importance of building trust in the Service Complaints System and the Service Justice System by demonstrating that action is being taken, the single Services have committed that by April 2022 they will develop and deliver a refreshed approach to the publication of successful Service Justice sexual offending prosecutions and an approach to the publication of suitably anonymised Service Complaints case (ensuring that victims are not identifiable). This also supports the Wigston Review intention to increase transparency of reporting.

9. We support the MOD's efforts to improve the availability of data on sexual harassment specifically, including via AFCAS and an in-depth survey. We note that the tri-service sexual harassment survey will not take place until 2023: two years later than recommended by the Wigston Review. *The 2023 Sexual Harassment Survey must proceed without disruption. Henceforth, the MOD should commit to holding in-depth surveys of this kind every year, to get a handle on whether this specific form of unacceptable behaviour is reducing and whether its initiatives are having the desired effect. It is necessary to involve independent experts in the design of these surveys to reduce the risk of under-counting. The surveys should be designed so as to capture the specific problem of sexual harassment affecting minors (under-18s).* (Paragraph 65)

The RN, Army, and RAF have all commissioned Sexual Harassment Surveys in 2021; the 2021 surveys were carried out separately and will be published by 31 March 2022. In July 2021, the Department agreed to managing all future surveys centrally. Defence is partnering with academia to build on and enhance the current survey, undertaking a pilot in 2022, with a view to delivering enhanced annual surveys from 2023 onwards.

The RAF are conducting work to explore and address key themes associated with sexual harassment, including, but not limited to, the role of leadership, reporting, provision of support, communication, training, education and social media.

There is now a requirement for Climate Assessments to be delivered across all units and in directorates at least biennially. A core set of 13 questions has been agreed across the Services and data from these will be shared with the D&I Directorate. The Climate Assessment survey includes two specific questions on sexual harassment:

- Do you personally believe there is a problem with sexual harassment in your unit/team?
- Do you believe that you have been subject to Harassment in your unit/directorate in the last 12 months?
 - If answered Yes, please identify any protected characteristic that the Harassment was related to from this list - age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation, other, Not Relevant.

10. We have general concerns about how well the MOD and Single Services can measure the reach and impact of new initiatives like the anti-bullying helpline and bystander training. *The MoD and the Services must review, on an ongoing basis, the reach, awareness among personnel, and effectiveness of new initiatives to prevent and respond to unacceptable behaviours. These include the anti-bullying helpline and all forms of training being rolled out. In addition to BHD prevalence (AFCAS/RESCAS) and the sexual harassment surveys, there should be initiative-specific data and indicators to measure whether these are working. For example, questions could be added to the AFCAS and RESCAS on whether Service personnel have heard of the initiatives, on whether behaviours have changed a result, and their overall satisfaction with each of them.* (Paragraph 66)

Defence is working, with the support of the Analysis Function, to improve data, analysis and management information, which will enable Defence to better monitor progress, measure impact and hold to account.

Work is ongoing to develop a behaviours dashboard for the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Executive Committee as a standing agenda item. Individual dashboards are being built and, from these, metrics developed to measure impact.

Defence has committed to publishing an annual D&I report, which will include progress against delivering our Diversity & Inclusion Strategy and increase transparency of the work of the Department.

Initiatives that will provide a rich source of data and insight, which can be disaggregated by protected characteristic going forward include:

- The digitisation of D&I Adviser reports on informal complaints. These were traditionally kept as paper records and not shared outside their unit/base or headquarters. Creating a digital form allows the Services and the D&I Directorate to monitor the types of informal complaints, the demographics of complainants, and if/how they were resolved. This can then be shared to enable focussed interventions and continuous improvement through lessons learned. This went live in July 2021 and 150 reports have been submitted so far;
- Defence's Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Helpline collects information on callers. To date, 410 calls have been received and professional advice given;

- Service Complaint information will be strengthened through the outsourced investigation service and the introduction of a feedback survey for complainants and respondents. Timeliness is monitored through metrics in the Defence Plan and discussed in Department's performance and risk monitoring process;
- After successful pilots, Climate Assessments will be rolled out across Defence in April 2022. There is a core set of 13 questions to be included in all level 1 climate assessments; responses to these questions will be shared with the D&I Directorate for thematic analysis. A closed-loop approach will ensure leaders are personally held accountable for sustaining or improving the climate in their area of responsibility and progress will be tracked by the management chain;
- The three Services will publish their Sexual Harassment Surveys in March 2022; and,
- We will continue to hear the concerns of our personnel and gather qualitative data, through ongoing engagement with the many Staff Networks. These Networks are advocates for the legally protected characteristics, as set out in the Equalities Act 2010.

11. *The MOD must demonstrate that cultural change is a priority by publishing at least every other year an in-depth review of implementation of the Wigston Review recommendations. As the first progress review was published in late 2020, the next review should be released no later than December 2022. For example, we do not believe enough progress has been made yet on Recommendation 2.9.* (Paragraph 67)

Defence has committed to undertake another review into the progress of the Wigston Review recommendations in 2023.

With regard to Wigston Recommendation 2.9, which advocates greater communication and transparency, Defence will publish an annual D&I report. This report will include progress against Wigston and Gray recommendations, along with key data and insights into initiatives and activities across Defence.

Defence publishes the outcome of all courts martial annually and has started to collate information on informal complaints.⁶ We are committed to publishing information on Service Complaints and Civil Service Grievances; however, this must be balanced with the need to respect the privacy of the parties within the complaints system. As highlighted in the response at 8 (above) a new approach to publication of Service Justice and Service Complaints outcomes will be developed.

12. **We support the MOD's recent steps to provide more appropriate uniform and equipment to female Service personnel, including re-designing air crew equipment and trialling better-fitting body armour. However, women have been able to serve in all parts of the military since late 2018, and at least 7 out of 10 roles in each Service have been open for years longer (see paragraph 8). We find it extraordinary that uniforms and equipment are still a problem across all Services. Thousands of female Service personnel, already facing the dangers of military duty, are at greater risk of harm due**

6 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/court-martial-results-from-the-military-court-centres>

to basic failures in their uniform and equipment, which can have consequences for their combat effectiveness and health. Fixing these problems is one of the simplest ways that the Forces can demonstrate they value servicewomen. (Paragraph 74)

13. The Department must continue as a priority to trial and fully roll out safer, more appropriate uniform and equipment for female Service personnel, with a view to reaching all servicewomen (in the Regulars and Reserves) by the end of 2022. The Services should confirm that all the items mentioned in our evidence will be covered by the changes underway. The MOD should also provide a timeline for this change in the response to our report. The trials and roll-out should involve continued consultation with female personnel and relevant Service networks. As far as possible, this procurement should use British manufacturers. (Paragraph 75)

Combined response to 12 and 13.

Defence recognises the importance of appropriate size and fit of uniform and equipment for our women. The Chiefs of Staff will lead a six-month sprint to accelerate existing work to address uniform and equipment issues highlighted by our Servicewomen (noting these issues can also impact some smaller men). Representatives of our Servicewomen will be involved in this work, to ensure their voices are heard. The Secretary of State, the Minister for Defence People and Veterans and the Minister of State for Defence (Lords) will be provided with regular updates on progress. On completion of the sprint, tangible change will have been delivered. This work will include exploring, with rigour, interim solutions for our Servicewomen during the period of design and testing of more complex equipment.

The sprint will bring together insight from a wide range of ongoing initiatives including but not limited to:

- Anthropometric Study. A comprehensive Anthropometric Study is being conducted to capture the changing size information on all Service personnel. This will allow Defence to refine its sizing categories more accurately. Some of the initial work has highlighted potential changes in the anthropometric data of our military population and some of the effects on those of smaller stature;
- Body Armour and Combat Clothing. Trials of a prototype female-fit Scalable Tactical Vest (STV) began in April 2021. In addition, the on-going Virtus Post Design Services (PDS) contract has been used to continuously improve the design of our soldiers' body armour and load carriage. The development of a new appropriately-sized Combat Clothing system to better fit women and female-optimised VIRTUS STV is to be delivered in Spring/Summer 2022. This is being enhanced by the initiation of a Tactical Ballistic Plates (TBP) Project to procure new lighter weight and more ergonomically designed "hard armour" plates for the Virtus body armour in a range of sizes designed to accommodate male and female personnel. An interim solution of a smaller OSPREY plate will be introduced by the end of 2022 and used in conjunction with the female fit STV;
- The Royal Navy Personal Clothing System (PCS). In addition to the new Combat Clothing, the requirements of the standard PCS for all Service personnel are being updated to include a wider range of size and fit that considers both function and form – based on the results of the Anthropometric Study. These sizes will be introduced when the PCS Supply Contract is renewed;

- RAF working dress. In response to a survey of personnel, samples of improved uniform for female personnel are in production; and,
- Flying clothing and equipment. A review of flying clothing and equipment is underway within the RAF Centre of Aviation Medicine to ensure improved and specific considerations for women are taken into account.

14. In joint bases, the variations in single Service regulations over dress may cause confusion and difficulty. Consider harmonising standards over dress and etiquette when multiple services are co-located, to avoid perceptions of unfairness. (Paragraph 76)

The Armed Services agree that, where sensible, a common approach to dress and etiquette will help avoid any perceptions of unfairness. A recent example of such a joint approach was the agreement this summer, after consultation with their Servicewomen, for a new approach to the wearing of longer hair across the Armed Services.

15. We thank the MoD for its decision to offer back-up sanitary products to female Service personnel in austere environments, on exercise and in Phase 1 training establishments, although we wonder what part media coverage of our evidence session played in the timing of the announcement. Given the 'taboo' around menstruation, some servicewomen, particularly in junior ranks, may be too embarrassed to request the supplies from a (often male) senior officer. We encourage the MOD to continue its work with the Chain of Command, Women's Networks and the supply chain to provide sanitary products in all austere environments, exercises and training establishments, taking clear steps to ensure these are genuinely accessible to all who need them. There should be an alternative point of contact to access these, outside of the Chain of Command. Awareness of the effect of menstruation on servicewomen should be part of leadership training. (Paragraph 81)

This project to offer back-up sanitary products commenced in September 2020 and is being undertaken over two phases. A survey on how Servicewomen manage their menstruation whilst in service stated that they preferred to manage their menstruation themselves and did not want sanitary products supplied to them. The survey highlighted that the unmet need was for Defence to provide sanitary and hygiene products to Servicewomen whilst they are working in austere environments, in case they experience an unexpected bleed.

The sanitary provision supply box was launched in June 2021. Demand is being closely monitored by Defence and the commercial partner to ensure that eligibility criteria is being met. The DIN which outlines the criteria for units ordering the sanitary product box gives specific guidance that they must be discreetly situated within units, ships, or submarines and be easily accessible.

The Army will conduct a full confirmatory audit of all female facilities by April 2022 to ensure that they have the necessary sanitary provision, are fit for purpose and appropriately sited.

In Summer 2022, there will be a review of provision to ensure that access to the box is appropriate and is meeting the needs of Servicewomen and they are satisfied that they have been able to access supplies appropriately. The Women's Health Advisory Network and Servicewomen's Networks will be consulted in the interim period to ensure the box is improving the personal experience.

16. We support the work being undertaken to give better consideration of female-specific health needs within Defence health policies, recognising that the evidence base is still growing in some areas. We especially applaud the work of the RAF and Royal Navy to provide more specialised support on ante-natal and post-natal fitness. *The MOD should continue this positive work, particularly when it comes to menopause (which may be less well catered to), and report to us annually on actions taken. The MOD should also consider the accessibility and training of military GPs, to ensure that female Service personnel can access doctors with the right knowledge and understanding to deal with a range of female health needs, regardless of the base location. This will support all Service personnel to access appropriate healthcare.* (Paragraph 87)

Defence commits to undertake a six-month sprint to accelerate existing work to deliver a range of new Women's Health Policies, addressing issues highlighted by our Servicewomen. We will take the very best insights, ideas and experience from across Defence, including what is already being delivered at single Service level. We will ensure that, as we deliver this work, we hear the voices of our Servicewomen. Defence will also consider the importance of appropriate training and guidance, along with the practical delivery of services, to support the roll-out of the new Women's Health Policies. The Secretary of State, the Minister for Defence People and Veterans and the Minister of State for Defence (Lords) will be provided with regular updates on progress.

Military General Practitioners (GPs) in the UK Armed Forces and civilian GPs employed by Defence are trained to the same national GP curriculum and undertake the same UK licensing assessment as National Health Service (NHS) GPs. The national GP curriculum includes consideration of female-specific health needs and the UK's GP licensing assessment tests competence in female-specific health needs. Just as in the NHS, vocational GP training in the Defence Medical Services takes at least three years. During this time, military GP trainees undertake placements in NHS GP training practices and out-of-hours GP settings, as well as within Defence Primary Healthcare (DPHC) GP training practices.

DPHC is currently undergoing an optimisation programme that will see General Practice and community care services grouped and consolidated more effectively to allow patients access to a wider range of services and professionals as we increasingly deliver care at scale. This will benefit all patients, including female Service personnel, who will increasingly have access to a healthcare professional that best suits their specific needs.

Since 2016, the Defence Medical Services (DMS) have run a Clinical Women's Health Conference designed to update GPs and nurse practitioners on the latest women's health guidelines. The most recent of these was in March 2021 and was attended by over 250 delegates. In 2019, DMS introduced a women's health rehabilitation service which is providing excellent support to women that was previously only available in secondary care. These specialist physiotherapists cover the entire DMS network (including overseas).

The DMS has a primary care working group focused on menopause management; they have recently produced a number of health promotion tools, delivered clinical updates at the DMS GP Conference, and they also provide clinical advice to their colleagues. They are also awaiting Defence Research Ethics Committee approval for a number of research initiatives to explore the menopause within DMS patients. The DMS has a GP Specialist

Interest Group focused on women's health, who have coordinated all the above and continue to contribute to DMS policies and working practices in response to the needs of female patients.

The whole force Menopause Network is extremely active, running events to raise awareness, improve understanding, highlight sources of support and provide a safe space for those experiencing menopause, their Chain of Command, colleagues, friends and families. Its pioneering work across Defence is breaking down the 'taboo' of menopause, enabling conversations at all levels and ensuring those experiencing menopause in Defence no longer feel alone.

Personnel who declare pregnancies are graded P4 (medically fit for duty within the limitations of pregnancy) with appropriate single-Service medical employability limitations. This grade is intended to protect both mother and unborn child from the more environmentally extreme exposures of military service. The procedures and guidance for managing the health and safety risks to pregnancy (or breastfeeding) for servicewomen are set out in JSP 375 Chapter 20 New and Expectant Mothers, however, the requirement for the manager to conduct a pregnancy-specific risk assessment is once they have been formally notified of a pregnancy. Servicewomen, who have informed their Chain of Command of a pregnancy, should not be required to undertake training or testing in relation to otherwise compulsory military fitness standards.

DIN01-130 Injury Prevention and Health Optimisation during Pregnancy and Maternity gives direction to commanders, Servicewomen and PT staff on the provision of PT during pregnancy and after maternity leave, and also gives perinatal PT advice for commanders.

The British Army and Royal Navy have active Parents' Networks to support serving parents and their partners. In addition, the whole force Defence Breastfeeding Network and Defence Child Bereavement Network offer peer support to serving personnel and the civilian workforce. The Defence Breastfeeding Network, which has close to 800 members and over 50 trained peer supporters, also advocates and advises on the set up of breastfeeding facilities in units across the UK. The Defence Breastfeeding Network and its chair, Lance Corporal Natasha Day, are finalists in the Women in Defence Awards 2021.

17. The Ministry of Defence must put in place a clear Tri-Service policy on foreign deployment for personnel with pre-school aged children, to give serving parents (male and female) more say over their career paths when they have young children and provide them with flexible working options, whilst not disadvantaging their prospects for promotion. There should be an emphasis on easing the situation of dual-serving couples. (Paragraph 92)

We agree that this is a particularly important issue for Service Personnel who are parents. In March 2021, the Government's published its response to the 'Living in our Shoes' independent commission led by Andrew Selous. This has shaped the new UK Armed Forces Families Strategy (2021-2031), which will be published later this year. The strategy provides a framework for policy makers to reflect the modern and diverse needs of service families, encouraging recruitment and retention to service.

The strategy is underpinned by an action plan setting out the timetable for delivering specific, measurable and improved support for families. Progress will be reported to the

Defence Secretary on a biannual basis, with the first update in spring 2022. Whilst Defence is making efforts to address this, it is important to recognise that Service life is inherently mobile and unpredictable by its very nature.

In April 2019, Defence added to its package of flexible working opportunities by introducing FS policy, enabling Regular Service Personnel to temporarily serve part-time and/or restrict the amount of separation from their home base for a fair reduction to their pay, subject to operational capability.

FS in combination with Defence's Alternative Working Arrangement policies, such as Remote Working, Variable Start and Finish Times and Compressed Working and Leave policies provide a significant suite of options for Service personnel to effectively balance personal commitments as they change throughout their career. This is balanced against the unique nature and demands of Service life, for which Service personnel are already compensated for through certain conditions of service, including but not limited to the payment of X-factor (for factors including danger and separation).

As at October 2021, 370 Service Personnel and their families have benefitted from FS since its launch. Looking at the breakdown of beneficiaries, over 56% of this figure are women. The policy has been well received by the Chain of Command and SP; and the number of rejected applications for FS continues to be small.⁷

Significant support exists to assist families who are posted overseas as part of the routine deployment cycle. When a family accompanies the serving spouse overseas, they can call upon the Defence Children Services (DCS, part of Regional Command) for information about provision for pre-school children that could be available within the overseas location. Over the last few years teams within DCS and the Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding (AFFS) team have worked alongside assigning authorities to deliver information relating to childcare and education provision within countries which can inform decisions on assignments. Furthermore, mechanisms are already in place to ease the burden on dual-serving couples, in addition to FS and AWA; such couples will almost never be operationally deployed simultaneously, given the impact on family. The development of any additional bespoke tri-Service policy on overseas operational deployment, with undue favour given to dual-serving Service personnel with pre-school aged children, may be considered divisive at best and discriminatory at worst.

However, Defence is already looking at building on the successful delivery of FS and exploring options for further changes to Armed Forces Terms of Service (TOS) policy both for Regular and Reserve Service personnel. Future activity will focus on greater modernisation of the general TOS framework for the Armed Forces to improve the perception and, more importantly, the reality of the Armed Forces as a modern employer.

This aims to make Defence a more attractive career choice to a wider range of society, for both current and future generations, increasing the demographic from which Defence can draw its personnel. Additionally, Defence will continue to explore how it can better offer more flexible careers with genuine individual choice to meet personal aspirations,

⁷ These figures are drawn directly from Defence's administrative system for Service personnel. They have not been quality assured to the degree of an official statistic

increasing the attractiveness of service, improving the recruitment and retention of Regulars and Reserves, all whilst ensuring the ability to deliver operational effectiveness and the provision of the Defence Purpose.

Servicewomen are made aware of certain locations that may not provide them the same rights as the UK mainland. There is clear direction that Serving personnel must not suffer any penalty in career terms if they decide that, due to the location restrictions, they are not content to accept the assignment. In such cases, they must be offered an alternative which does not present the same issue, but which offers a similar opportunity for career progression. Guidance and advice is being revised on how to support serving parents and carers in order to ensure that they are able to fulfil their full range of military duties while meeting their obligation to children or dependant adults.

The Navy have undertaken a “Retention of RN Women” sprint, which identified a series of themes relating to support for women through their career, while also noting that not all the themes were specific to women. The Navy has developed a series of initiatives that it will take forward to improve the personal experience, and therefore retention, in response to this work. The Army have committed to undertake PhD level research, starting in January 22, to better understand why women leave the Army.

18. *The Ministry of Defence should roll out the wraparound childcare scheme to all bases and to all Services by the end of 2022, following the pilots. In the roll-out, the MOD should work closely with the Department for Education and equivalent in the Devolved Nations, and local authorities.* (Paragraph 96)

The three existing pilots have thus far been successful with both individual Service families and the Chain of Command; to date, the funding has helped meet the wraparound childcare costs of almost a thousand children. The project remains on track to fully rollout within the UK by the end of 2022 and the Defence team are working closely with Department for Education, and their equivalents, as well as HM Revenue and Customs and HM Treasury to study the impact of the pilots to inform this future roll out.

19. *The Ministry of Defence should undertake a targeted and measurable initiative to improve the uptake and use of Flexible Service, including by men, and report its progress to us by the end of 2022.* (Paragraph 99)

Defence will continue to undertake targeted initiatives to promote FS, such as communications campaigns. FS offers Regular Service personnel temporary part-time working and/or restricted separation from home base for a fair reduction to their pay, subject to operational capability. Defence expected that no more than 1% of the Armed Forces would take FS. Between its introduction in April 2019 and August 2021, 370 Service personnel and their families have benefitted from FS, in line with the anticipated uptake.⁸

As an example of dedicated FS promotion, the FS case study campaign in summer 2020 featured a multichannel blend of Service personnel from a mix of Service, sex, rank, and role and covered various reasons for Service personnel taking FS. The social media for the campaign attracted over 270,000 impressions and nearly 10,000 engagements.

⁸ These figures are drawn directly from Defence's administrative system for Service personnel. They have not been quality assured to the degree of an official statistic

Defence's future initiatives will promote FS alongside other flexible working opportunities for Service personnel, such as AWAs that include Remote Working and Compressed Working. This reduces the risk of Service personnel taking a flexible working option that reduces pay when the required flexibility could have been reached without affecting pay. Defence used this comprehensive approach to promote flexible working to the Armed Forces in January 2021 with its latest revision of Flexible Working and You: A Guide for Service Personnel. The digital booklet was viewed 17,000 times on the GOV.UK website. In June/July 2021, Defence distributed 12,850 copies of the booklet to HIVE information centres and military units.

Future initiatives will be positioned within Defence's wider Future Workplace programme that seeks to build on our experiences during the pandemic and embed new ways of working across the Whole Force. This multi-year pan-Defence programme is Defence's interpretation of the wider government Smarter Working programme. The programme aims to create an environment and culture where Defence's leaders empower its people to work flexibly with access to modern workspaces, reliable technology, and with the digital skills to maximise their potential and deliver the best outcomes for Defence.

As an example of future initiatives, this winter, Defence has planned a series of podcasts featuring a mix of Service personnel's stories of post-pandemic flexible working to help normalise its use, highlight barriers, and challenge more traditional ways of working.

Defence will also run a communication campaign to encourage more Service personnel to record their flexible working arrangements on the Military HR system. This will help to improve the quality of management information available to support the maintenance and future development of these policies. The campaign messaging will align with the Defence Future Workplace Strategy. Upon completion, the campaigns' impacts will be evaluated to inform the next stage of the communications campaign that will be implemented in 2022.

Service personnel awareness and attitudes towards FS will continue to be measured through the AFCAS. AFCAS 2021 shows a high awareness of FS with 82% of Service personnel having heard of the policy. The proportion of personnel who agree that the opportunities offered by FS will be a positive change within the Armed Forces continued to increase to 44% in 2021, up from 41% in 2020. Nearly a third (30%) of Service personnel agree that their immediate superior is supportive of FS, up from 27% in 2020. Over a quarter (28%) of Service personnel agree that the culture in their unit would support FS, up from 25% in 2019.

Take-up of FS and AWAs will continue to be measured through the Joint Personnel Administration system for tri-Service pay and personnel administration. Defence will report on its progress with attitudes towards FS and its uptake by the end of 2022.

20. *The costs and benefits of home working should be assessed, with a view to introducing home working options wherever possible.* (Paragraph 100)

Defence has had a remote working (home working) policy for Service personnel for over a decade and a centralised policy since July 2016. Defence will stress test the impacts of wider remote working for Service personnel in 2021, identifying any policies that may need to be modernised, such as accommodation and allowances, and helping to facilitate and balance home working as it transitions into a post-COVID-19 hybrid working model.

In June 2021, Defence published its internal 'Future Workplace Strategy for the Whole Force'. Within this strategy, Defence recognises and promotes the benefits of working flexibly, which includes home working options. Future Workplace aims to create a working environment and culture where Defence's leaders empower people to work flexibly with access to modern workspaces, reliable technology, and with the digital skills to maximise their potential and deliver the best outcomes for Defence. Options to work flexibly are centred on taking into account the needs of the individual, team, and Departmental priorities—these options have been introduced and are now available wherever possible.

The Future Workplace strategy, and supporting publications, document the numerous predicted positive benefits of working flexibly (including home working). Benefits include: increased productivity, improved work/life balance (potential for more personal/family time), improvements in recruitment and retention, increased diversity and inclusion, less commuting, reduced carbon footprint, and more effective use of the whole Defence estate.

As the strategy is implemented, individual business units will determine how best to weigh up associated costs and benefits at a local level with an opportunity to escalate issues if needed to a central pan-Defence steering group.

21. *The Ministry of Defence should carry out the promised equality analysis of longer or more frequent deployments, as set out in the Integrated Review, and publish these by March 2022, a year after publication of the Review. This should consider opportunities as well as risks.* (Paragraph 103)

An Equality Analysis was conducted for the Defence Command Paper titled 'Defence In a Competitive Age'. This analysis will be published internally to increase transparency across our workforce by making readily available the thinking that has taken place and promote the need for continued work on equality.

Defence is currently undertaking a two-stage review of tour lengths and harmony guidelines. The aim is to assess whether the current system is fit for the way that our Service personnel will operate in the future. As part of this review Defence is required to conduct equality analysis on these potential recommendations and changes. This will assess whether there are any disproportionate impacts that need to be considered and appropriately mitigated.

Defence will have the opportunity to undertake more detailed work to understand the impact of operational deployments on members of the Armed Forces with young children, and on dual-serving couples once the first part of the review has been completed. The current draft of this report specifically recommends further work in this area: '*given the increasing number of women deployed in the military, and their expanding roles in combat and combat support missions, the deployment experiences of female personnel needs to be considered and studied more thoroughly before the full effects of deployment length can be established*'.

22. *Juggling Service life and family life can be hard for all Service personnel, especially for military women, who are more often the main care-giver for children and part of a dual-serving couple. We welcome improvements to the 'offer' for Service families in recent years and the indications that flexibility of Service may be improving. However, we note that the decision over whether to accommodate requests for flexible working*

sits with the Chain of Command; key aspects of a serviceperson's career pivot around this one relationship. It is a priority to enable all Service personnel to access these entitlements (when appropriate) and to normalise their use. (Paragraph 104)

Defence introduced centralised flexible working policy for the Armed Forces in July 2016 and more recently, FS policy in 2019. These policies are aimed at reducing stress, improving work/life balance, and encouraging continued service through changing circumstances. In return, flexible working gives Defence greater agility to deliver its outcomes.

Defence explored the approval process for FS applications during the policy's development. It concluded that the decision to accommodate requests should not sit entirely with the Chain of Command. As a result, applications for FS are decided by an independent approvals authority within each Service that makes the final decision, with advice from the Chain of Command, unit Human Resources and Career Manager. The ability of the Service to maintain operational capability is the primary factor for deciding FS applications. FS arrangements are protected by legislation.

AWAs are also part of the Defence flexible working offer to Service personnel, such as Remote Working, Compressed Working and Varied Start and Finish Times. These are agreed with the Chain of Command but have no legal protection.

Defence periodically reviews its TOS policies and carries out Equality Impact Assessments on new TOS policies it develops. Following this Inquiry's recommendation and as part of its on-going commitment to ensure that all Service personnel can benefit from Flexible Working policies, Defence will review the application and approval process for its AWAs to ensure it continues to support the policy's intentions.

Defence continues to deliver communications campaigns, and strategies, such as its Future Workplace Strategy and supporting 'how to guides', to ensure Service personnel are aware of their access to these entitlements, to normalise their use and to promote a culture where the Government's Smarter Working initiative is embraced in the Armed Forces.

The Army will undertake a rapid study to identify any structural or policy constraints to the advancement of Servicewomen, particularly the timing of career courses/ command assignments, the impact of maternity leave and reporting processes.

23. Female Service personnel—particularly those with children—are under-represented among military leaders in the Regulars and the Reserves. The imbalance is most severe among Senior Officers (OF7/2* and above), where the MOD says it may take over 300 years to improve. We endorse the recent commitments by the Chiefs of Staff and the Gender Balance Working Group. The MOD obviously recognise there are concerns. However, we want to see progress in practice. We struggle to assess the scope, reach and impact of these from the evidence provided. We doubt the Gender Balance Working Group has the resource and status to meet its stated aims. There needs to be a plan to deliver the targets for female personnel in leadership roles. Without these, the Chiefs of Staff's statement is in danger of lacking teeth. (Paragraph 113)

24. *Using measurable Key Performance Indicators, the MOD's new Diversity and Inclusion Directorate must oversee the Working Group, holding it to account on the speed, reach and impact of its work and the Service-specific levels of ambition. It may be necessary for staff from the Directorate directly to take over parts of its work, given that*

Group members perform this role on top of their day jobs. The workstreams of the Group should encompass all the areas that the Chiefs of Staff committed to. The Department should report progress to us annually. (Paragraph 114)

Combined response to 23 and 24.

The Gender Balance Working Group has been ground-breaking. The Working Group consisted of Servicewomen working alongside civilian and military subject matter experts and policyowners. It has gathered data and developed interventions that have been successfully piloted and are currently being transferred for 'business as usual' delivery. The Working Group will wrap up by Q3 2021/2022 and is currently in the process of agreeing governance measures, to confirm future ownership and ensure that the outputs continue to achieve effect.

The 29 multi-level initiatives, across five work strands, include: gender bias analysis in reporting and career course loading; initiation of an ongoing process to remove barriers in job specifications; modernisation of appraisals; new and revised policies such as Lateral Entry and a re-write of the Families Strategy; and, a whole force approach to climate assessments. Sub-working groups have developed and implemented long-term programmes with some examples including male allies training; a pan-Defence mentoring scheme, a 'top flight' talent investment programme and membership to an online development website for every member of the Defence community.

The interventions are reflected in the Cross Defence D&I Action plan, which captures actions and interventions across Defence enabling the D&I Directorate, and Defence Senior Leadership, to monitor progress, impact and enable holding to account. Ongoing engagement with the Servicewomen's Networks, including through regular meetings with the Secretary of State and the Minister of State for Defence (Lords), will ensure the voices of our Servicewomen continue to be heard as these initiatives are embedded into 'business as usual'.

Within the RN, an imbalance of female representation across the current branches and specialisations and the shortfall against target levels of overall female representation has been recognised. First Sea Lord has conducted a review of the forecast of female representation at OF4-6 ranks for 5 and 10 years and what improvements/interventions are planned to improve this. Balancing inflow, throughflow and outflow is essential to achieve the desired end-state, but to do that, time is still needed to grow. Female representation at OF5-6 ranks is now increasing rapidly as the generation who joined a more inclusive Navy in the 1990s reach this rank. To accelerate this trend, they aim to make careers more inclusive ('on ramps' and 'off ramps' to allow individuals to spend time away from full time Service where needed) and be innovative using transparent positive action.

The RN considers its promotion system is fair and equitable, as evidenced through gender equality analysis of promotion data; where women present to promotion boards, they do well against their peers in the selection process. Ensuring they are able to translate recruitment increases into retention and selection to higher ranks is essential. Those specialisations which offer an equitable balance of sea/shore employment result in good promotion flows at both OF2-3 and OF3-4 (and OF5) levels, but with the Warfare and Aviation career pathway more focussed on sea employment, fewer eligible female candidates are being presented to the promotion boards. Work has commenced to review

Warfare, Aviation and Royal Marine officer career pathways to investigate off ramps/ on ramps and other opportunities for transition. The initiatives being considered will be at the heart of the Talent Programme, which will also link to the Pan Defence Skills Framework and Career Field activity, as it moves from concept to delivery. This positive action will be used to ensure the right people are ready for the roles they are selected for. Additionally, we recognise the need for an attraction campaign which we then support with different career paths. Talent Management and analysis of Join Well to Leave Well is considered the way to reach the targets in all specialisations.

The Army is committed to improving the experience of its Servicewomen, to enabling opportunities, removing barriers helping our Servicewomen achieve their full potential. The specific initiatives include the coherence of talent development programmes, reviewing positive action initiatives, improve opportunities for promotion, greater choice in appearance through an updated hair policy and elements of dress, through to a review of the way Army Organisational Culture is measured and reported. Further initiatives due to be implemented will be resourced and prioritised through the executive committee of the Army Board this autumn. Once these are implemented and effects measured alongside wider research to understand Defence and external best practice, it is anticipated that there will be complementary initiatives and actions to be resourced. The Army has also committed to conduct an independent, external audit of Army Culture.

The RAF's focus on supporting and encouraging women has never been stronger. Today, every single specialism across the RAF is open to women. The RAF's commitment to equality is not just words. The RAF has introduced specific initiatives to support women through the organisation to support retention and progression, promotion and career mobility for women, and its D&I strategy has clear objectives, targets and a delivery plan to challenge the status quo. The work is embedded within departments and teams across the RAF, underpinned by guidance and the personal experiences of our personnel, reflected through the RAF Gender Network. In the last 12 months, the RAF has integrated a range of family-friendly employment policies which include: not-for-profit on-site childcare facilities; shared parental leave; extended maternity leave (up to 55 weeks and which may be shared with a partner); Flexible Working (allowing career breaks, reduced deployment liability or reduced weekly hours); and access to military housing for non-married couples.

It should also be noted that, in comparison the UK National gender median pay gap of 15.5%, the median pay gap for the UK Armed Forces in 2020 was 0.78%.⁹

In addition to the official statistics available on the diversity of our personnel, there is a broad range of internal management information available. This is being consolidated to enable greater transparency and more direct comparison with levels of ambition for future inflow and representation across a range of protected characteristics. These statistics and metrics will develop over time to improve our ability to measure progress and conduct assurance. The official statistics will be included in the new annual D&I report due to be published for the first time in 2022, as will improved management information as it becomes available.

9 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mod-gender-pay-gap-reports-2020/gender-pay-gap-report-2020-uk-armed-forces-accessible-version#fn:3>

Responding if Things Go Wrong

25. Two years since our predecessors' report on the work of the Service Complaints Ombudsman, we still have concerns about the functioning of the Service Complaints System and the lack of confidence in it. Our concerns are most acute for bullying, harassment and discrimination complaints, which servicewomen and minority ethnic personnel more commonly make. We understand the importance of the Chain of Command in the Armed Forces, but it is not always appropriate for Commanding Officers to handle these complex cases, nor are they all properly equipped to do so. In some cases, their role appears to be a direct barrier to reporting. We even heard stories of senior ranks closing ranks and brushing complaints under the carpet rather than addressing them. When things go wrong for servicewomen, they go dramatically wrong. (Paragraph 134)

26. Although the Wigston Review identified a pressing need to reform the complaints process, the MOD has not fulfilled the recommendation for a Defence Authority, to handle complex BHD complaints outside the Chain of Command. The new Diversity and Inclusion Directorate does not fulfil this function, due to its limited role in complaint handling. Nor are we convinced that the new standing Decision Bodies and "centralised functions" do either because they are still in the Single Services. Due to a limited mandate, the Ombudsman does not offer an alternative reporting system in the first instance. (Paragraph 147)

27. We heard consistent evidence suggesting the Chain of Command is a point of failure in the complaints system. (Paragraph 148)

28. *The MOD must establish a central Defence Authority, fulfilling the functions as foreseen in the Wigston Review. This should provide a reporting and investigation system, outside of the Chain of Command and outside the Single Services, for bullying, harassment and discrimination complaints. In particular, it should be comprised of specialised staff and remove the Chain of Command entirely from any complaint of a sexual nature (criminal and non-criminal).* (Paragraph 149)

Combined response to 25, 26, 27 and 28.

The D&I Directorate was established on 1 April 2021, bringing together for the first time D&I, complaints and justice policy as well as the Wigston Implementation and Service Complaints and Justice transformation. While Defence has not created a central team to manage the most serious bullying, harassment or discrimination Service Complaints, the role of the D&I Directorate does address 11 out of the 12 sub-recommendations.

The D&I Directorate covers the following roles of the Authority:

- It is independent to the Chain of Command;
- It owns the policy for behaviours, informal complaints and Service Complaints;
- It is bringing together data from across Defence and collating it for analysis;
- The Services are held to account through the Department's performance and risk monitoring process;

- It has reviewed best practice across Defence and written it into policy as a requirement; this is developed with the Services via working groups;
- The 24-hour Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination helpline is in place for individuals to raise concerns;
- It has developed consistency with pan-Defence climate assessment core questions and set up a cell to facilitate civilian areas; mandated mediation and set up the BHD helpline;
- It continues to develop programmes to support victims;
- It has led on minimum training standards which have been set by the creation of a cross-Defence competency framework; and,
- A pilot to allow individuals to clear stories anonymously before they go to the Press is being set up, with the D&I Directorate acting as the intermediary between the individual and the Defence Directorate of Communication.

The Commanding Officer (CO) is key to discipline and operational effectiveness. Although in cases where the CO is implicated, it is set out in legislation, and has always been Defence policy, to transfer the complaint from the CO. The Wigston Review recommended that Service Complaints should be dealt with outside of the Chain of Command for cases of inappropriate behaviour. To address the requirement for appropriate separation of the Chain of Command from certain aspects of Service Complaints, Service Complaints reform will make changes to ensure that further independence is embedded into the system, including:

- The introduction of the new Outsourced Investigation Service, which is outsourced and independent of Defence;
- Admissibility is being decided by centralised Service teams, removing it from the complainant's Chain of Command. The RAF are piloting the process to ensure lessons are learned early, ahead of the necessary secondary legislation for full implementation;
- Independent members are now required to sit on appeal boards for cases of BHD;
- Independent deciding officers will be used to decide on complaints that need Subject Matter Expert decision makers on policy matters, in cases that contain BHD or where the Chain of Command is implicated;
- The Chain of Command will only be decision makers on complaints in a small number of cases, where appropriate; and,
- All Service Complaints of a sexual nature will be required to be fully dealt with outside of the direct Chain of Command through single Service central admissibility, with use of independent investigators outside of the direct Chain of Command (for example through the Outsourced Investigation Service), the use of Independent Members at decision and appeal body stages and use of decision makers from outside the direct Chain of Command.

Defence is committed to ensuring non-criminal grievances of a sexual nature are managed independently of the Chain of Command, but still within their Service. The new JSP 831 directs such complaints must be dealt with outside the Chain of Command.

Criminal matters have always been dealt with by the relevant Service Police. As first recommended in the Lyons Murphy Review, then built upon in the Henriques Review, the establishment of the new Defence Serious Crime Unit will improve capability and victim support for these cases. We must continuously improve by learning lessons from instances where Service Complaints Ombudsman for the Armed Forces finds that a complaint has been managed poorly and will be building in additional assurance into the process to ensure that this is the case.

Defence does not tolerate unacceptable behaviours and any evidence of individuals 'brushing complaints under the carpet' or 'closing ranks' would lead to action being taken that could result in dismissal. Defence's expectations of the role of leaders in this process is unequivocal, but it needs to be strongly reinforced, if necessary, by imposing career penalties. A range of tools are already available to ensure that any shortfall in the Chain of Command's execution of its oversight of Service Complaints are addressed and, if necessary, attract appropriate levels of sanction. Such sanctions can range from appropriate comments in appraisal reports to much greater, less subjective, administrative censures which have direct implications on an individual's suitability for assignments as well as eligibility for promotion. To build on this Defence will work with the single Services to develop new measures to ensure Commanding Officers who, when found by the Service Complaints Ombudsman are found to have fallen short of expected standards in handling service complaints, receive appropriate, consistent and robust consequences, that appear on their employment records.

Criminal matters in the Services are dealt with by Service Police as part of the Service Justice System. The creation of the Defence Serious Crime Unit, headed up by a new Provost Marshal for Serious Crime who sits outside of the current single Service Chain of Command, is a significant step that will improve capability to deal with the most serious offences and provide improved victim support. It will enable serious crime to be reported and investigated outside of the single Service Chain of Command and will contain an independent Victim and Witness Care Unit.

29. *The MOD must make the recommendations of the Service Complaints Ombudsman binding on the Armed Forces and the MOD itself, with a timescale and action plan for implementation of changes where they are recommended.* (Paragraph 150)

Defence values the strong independent oversight that the Ombudsman brings to the Service Complaints process. The Ombudsman's findings are binding on the Defence Council, but it is not necessary to make specific provision in legislation as this is already covered by case law. No specific provision is made in other Ombudsman legislation, where it is standard practice that they make non-binding recommendations.

Recommendations are not binding but have legal consequences. The Defence Council is not able to reject recommendations simply because it does not agree with them; they have to give written cogent reasons for a refusal to accept and/or follow a recommendation. A failure to follow a recommendation can be judicially reviewed.

It is right that recommendations are not binding because there may be a number of ways of responding to a failing and they may raise wider questions of policy, resources or costs. Should a recommendation not be implemented, Defence ensures it publishes the reasons for not implementing that recommendation, in order to be transparent about the reasons for not doing so.

30. It sends entirely the wrong signal that the update to Joint Service Publication 763 (Bullying and Harassment Complaints Procedures), urgently recommended by the Wigston Review in July 2019, still does not have a clear publication date. *The MOD must update the relevant Joint Service Publications (763 and 831) as a matter of urgency, and certainly by the time the Government responds to this report.* (Paragraph 151)

We are pleased to confirm that JSP 763 was published, alongside the Service Complaints JSP 831 and the Civil Service grievance regulations on 27 June 2021.

Defence issued a Defence Information Note in June 2020 on unacceptable behaviours as a precursor to the updated JSP 763 in order to define unacceptable behaviours. The work to rewrite the new JSP 763 was complicated and required a number of new policies be developed and agreed; further complexity was added with the interrelationship with JSP 831, JSP 838 (Armed Forces Legal Aid Scheme) and Civilian Regulations.

31. We are not opposed to local, informal resolution of grievances, but there are risks, as our evidence indicates, in using these processes for complex BHD complaints. *The updated Joint Service Publications on Bullying and Harassment Complaints Procedures and on Service Complaints should each clearly refer to the other, so that personnel who experience bullying, harassment or discrimination are aware that the Service Complaints process is available to them if they do not wish to use an informal process or if the informal process does not successfully resolve the issue.* (Paragraph 152)

JSP 763, JSP 831 and Civilian Regulations for bullying, harassment and discrimination complaints are a suite of interconnected documents that refer to each other and are complementary.

Defence advocates intervention at the earliest point of an issue occurring, in order to prevent escalation. The use of informal complaint resolution is often preferred by personnel, who might not wish to go through the Service Complaints process.

Mediation is now offered when informal complaints are made as a way to resolve the issue constructively. 95% of participants in the RAF's formal mediation said they would recommend the process to a colleague, with 86% saying that it helped clarify their thinking. 76% said that it helped them understand the other side more clearly; after mediation, only 19% felt that they needed to make a formal complaint.

The Army's data indicates that 88% of their mediation sessions are successful and that women are most likely to want to use the service. The Royal Navy has a 77% success rate with mediation.

It is important to note that Personnel are guided to make a formal complaint if the D&I adviser feels that informal resolution isn't appropriate or report the complaint to the relevant Service Police force if it is indicated that a crime might have been committed.

32. While we support reducing delay within the overall service complaints process, we seriously doubt that reducing the appeals time limit from 6 weeks to 2 weeks is the best way to achieve this. This is not where severe delays occur and will work against complainants. We struggle to understand why the MOD chose a step that may further reduce the already low level of confidence that Service Personnel have in the complaints system. *The MOD should amend the Armed Forces Bill 2021 at the earliest opportunity, to retain the 6-week time limits for appeals against the first instance decision of the Decision Body, and for appeals to the Ombudsman.* (Paragraph 153)

Defence does not intend to reduce the appeal period for all Service Persons to two weeks. We wish to have the flexibility to set time limits that are appropriate to individual circumstances. In cases where there are valid reasons where a Service Person needs longer, for example when deployed on active duty or because of health issues, the time period may well remain at six weeks, or longer if there are just and equitable reasons for a further extension. However, where a Service Person is engaged in a role such as a routine office job, we believe that a time period closer to public sector best practice is justified. In such circumstances it would be unfair to others involved in the process, such as the respondent to the complaint, to have to wait an additional four weeks to find out if the case will be appealed.

Lodging an appeal is not a complex task requiring the complainant to provide additional evidence or complex documents at that time, they will only be required to signal their intention to appeal and to state which of the grounds that will be set out in regulations they wish to appeal on.

It should be noted that the Armed Forces Bill presently before Parliament does not itself set a minimum time limit of two weeks for Service Persons to submit an appeal, it provides Defence with the ability to set out in regulations a time period for appeals that must be at least two weeks, but which can be longer and can set out the circumstances where different time limits will apply.

Changes to the way that appeal time limits are determined is only one element of a much wider programme of transformational change to the Service Complaints System. To make this change however requires primary legislation. The inclusion of this measure in the Armed Forces Bill is for that reason only and does not indicate that it is of greater significance than other changes which are being made through amendments to policy, practice, training and guidance.

33. *The MOD should resource Service Complaints teams better to reduce significant delays in the system.* (Paragraph 154)

As part of Service Complaints reform, the Service Chiefs agreed to improve the delivery of Service Complaints teams to ensure delays in the system were reduced, which included uplift in resources in areas such as investigation and independent decision markers. To improve delivery ahead of legislative change the RAF have piloted the approach to central admissibility and have seen improvements in the time taken to decide on complaints. This is one of multiple improvement trials that the RAF is undertaking which seek to put the person at the heart of the process, including a case conference trial for non-complex

Service Complaints, which was seen to result in one matter being completed in less than a week. Results of these trials are being shared with Army and Royal Navy for consideration and potential roll out, as appropriate.

Defence anticipates this will need to be regularly reviewed, as when our people become more confident in the system and more willing to speak out, there will likely be an increase in complaints. Over time, as culture change interventions embed and lessons are learned from Service Complaints, the numbers of complaints should reduce. This will be monitored through Department's performance and risk monitoring process with the single Services to ensure lessons are learned and teams are appropriately resourced. We will also build further transparency through new digital approaches to monitor the delivery of the system, and ensure we hold ourselves to account and build further confidence in the system.

34. We do not believe that the problems highlighted by the Lyons Review in the handling of sexual offences in the Service Justice System have been fully resolved. While we accept there is a limited set of circumstances where it may be appropriate for the Service Justice System to be used for UK-based sexual offences (for example when there are offences both in the UK and overseas), this must require the Attorney General's consent. There may be other compelling reasons, such as the young age and vulnerability of the victim, when it is more appropriate for the civilian justice system to hear these cases. In our view, the fact that a UK case may involve a victim and a perpetrator who are both Service personnel is not a sufficient reason for the Service Justice System to be used. (Paragraph 175)

35. *The MOD must implement the recommendation of the Lyons Review, that the Court Martial jurisdiction should no longer include Rape and Sexual Assault with penetration, except when the consent of the Attorney General is given. The Government should also consider the Lyons Review recommendations to place all Domestic Violence and Child Abuse cases in the civil jurisdiction when committed in the UK. This does not prevent cases with cross-jurisdictional elements (i.e. offending both in the UK and overseas) being heard in the Service Justice System. (Paragraph 176)*

36. *The MOD must update their guidance so that the new Defence Authority (see paragraph 149) refers all sexual offences and domestic violence involving service personnel in the UK to the civilian police. (Paragraph 177)*

Combined response to 34, 35 and 36.

Defence does not agree that it is necessary—or practical—for the Attorney General to consent to sexual offences being handled in the Service Justice System when they occur in the UK.

In a written ministerial statement on 12 November 2020 (UIN HCWS577), the Defence Secretary explained that he had given full consideration to the Lyons Review recommendation on the jurisdiction for murder, manslaughter and rape offences in the UK. He had concluded that the existing principle of concurrency between the Service and civilian jurisdictions should be maintained. As a result, the Secretary of State was not content to accept the recommendation in the Lyons Review which would undermine the principle of concurrency between the Service Justice System and civilian justice system which is set out in the current legislation.

Introducing an Attorney General consent function would not improve the decision-making process in relation to jurisdiction. The Attorney General's consent ordinarily concerns whether a prosecution should take place and arises at the end of the investigatory process. In relation to a decision on whether a case should be tried in the Service Justice System, the Attorney General would likewise not be able to take an informed decision until the investigation had taken place and the case considered by prosecutors. This means that decisions will in practice have already been taken on whether the Service Police and prosecutors or civilian police and prosecutors take on a particular case. In this scenario, the Attorney General will either be endorsing decisions already taken or reversing them. In the former case, it is hard to see what the Attorney General consent function adds. In the latter, there is a real risk that a decision at this late stage in the process would result in the case not being prosecuted in either the Service or civilian systems. There is no easy way to transfer a case between systems once it has been referred for a decision on prosecution.

The Government's approach is that decisions on jurisdiction in individual cases are best left to the independent Service Justice and UK civilian prosecutors using guidance they have agreed between them; working closely with the Service and civilian police forces. The guidance is designed to cover all types of offending where there is concurrent jurisdiction.

This is supported by clause 7 of the Armed Forces Bill 2021 which will place a duty on the Director of Service Prosecutions and the Director of Public Prosecutions in England and Wales to agree a protocol on the handling of cases where there is concurrent jurisdiction. There are equivalent provisions for the Director of Service Prosecutions and Lord Advocate to agree a protocol for Scotland, and for the Director of Service Prosecutions and the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland to agree a protocol for Northern Ireland.

Through early engagement between police and prosecutors in both systems, it will be possible to ensure the case is allocated to the most appropriate system at the earliest opportunity. This measure seeks to bring some much-needed clarity, at all levels, on how decisions on jurisdiction are made.

They may wish to consider the wishes of the victim or the possible impact of the intervention on operational duties. Clause 7 contains the additional safeguard that the civilian authorities will always have the final say if prosecutors are unable to resolve a disagreement over handling. Defence will have no role in deciding where particular offences should be handled.

As first recommended in the Lyons Murphy Review, then built upon in the Henriques Review, the creation of the new Defence Serious Crime Unit, headed up by a new Provost Marshal for Serious Crime, is a significant step that will improve capability to deal with the most serious offences and provide improved victim support. It will enable serious crime to be reported and investigated outside of the single Services and will contain an independent Victim and Witness Care Unit. The new Provost Marshal will be outside of the single Service Chain of Command.

The Secretary of State is determined to ensure there is female representation on court martial boards related to sexual offending. The Department is undertaking work to establish how to deliver this. The number of women within the volunteer pool has traditionally been low in comparison to the number of men, meaning that boards tend

to have greater numbers of men. However, a measure in the current Armed Forces Bill means that the pool of eligible board members will be widened to OR 7 and will therefore capture more women. The Secretary of State believes more should be done and work is underway to deliver female representation on court martial boards for certain types of offending.

Recognising that sexual offending is incompatible with Service, in September 2021 the Chiefs of Staff commissioned a review of policy to explore strengthening the levers available to dismiss those who are found to have committed a criminal sexual offence.

Defence is also developing a new Sexual Exploitation and Abuse policy, which will address the issues such as the use of transactional sex workers.

37. Using the data provided by the MOD, we struggled to account for the pathway followed in the Service Justice System's handling of sexual offences and had to follow up to receive further information. We appreciate this data was provided in a short timeframe, but it gives the impression that centralised data collection is poor. The MOD must ensure that it follows its own Sexual Assault Pathway with specialist services (such as Rape Trauma Kits, timeframe for action on collecting forensic evidence need to be adhered to, and specialist training for commanding officers) for all victims who have faced sexual assault. (Paragraph 178)

Defence agrees that there is an opportunity to improve the way in which important data about the pathway for handling sexual offences is collected and recorded. Defence is exploring ways in which we might be able to build this into the next iteration of the Service Police Investigation System.

More widely, we have recently announced our intention to develop a Defence Strategy for preventing and dealing with cases of rape and serious sexual assault. It will draw on best practice in the civilian justice system and reflect our commitment to supporting survivors and ensuring their wellbeing. We accept that Commanding Officers have a vital role to play in supporting victims of sexual assault and this is something we will be covering in our strategy. We are fortunate that the Victims' Commissioner sits on our Service Justice Board and look forward to engaging with her on this important work.

38. The MOD's sexual offences bulletin should be expanded to include new data on the pathway followed, for example the share of allegations that resulted in a Forensic Medical Examination, the share of FMEs conducted within 24 hours of a report and the share of referrals to crisis counselling. (Paragraph 179)

Defence agrees that our annual Sexual Offences Bulletin could benefit from the addition of further information relevant to the pathway followed. We will begin gathering additional data now and throughout 2022, publishing this 2022 data in 2023.

39. For the limited investigations into sexual offences still conducted by the Service Police, the Government should implement urgently the recommendations within Appendix H of the Service Justice System Policing Review (Part 1), which focus on improving how the Service Police investigate Domestic Abuse and Serious Sexual Offences. (Paragraph 180)

Defence fully accepted all the recommendations in Appendix H of the Service Justice System Review (Service Justice System) Part 1. We have already made progress on a number of recommendations made in the audit and are working urgently on the others to ensure that our processes and policies are shaped to deliver cases that are handled appropriately, and victims get the support they need. Policy review work has also been undertaken to ensure that recommendation delivery is aligned with the Defence Domestic Abuse Strategy. This includes appointment of a new Defence Senior Domestic Abuse Awareness Champion.

To this end Defence has undertaken a comprehensive review of its guidance on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences in JSP 931 (Whole Force policy on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence). This work has been coordinated by the Defence Domestic Abuse Working Group in liaison with Single Service Domestic Abuse leads, Tri Service Police Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence representatives and external Domestic Abuse and Safeguarding agencies and charities.

The new policy, which is being finalised and will be published in due course, adopts a multi-agency approach in tackling and investigating incidents of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence and incorporates the new statutory definition of Domestic Abuse and measures from the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Under the new guidance, the Defence position will be for the Chain of Command to refer all incidents of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence to Service Police. This will supplement the existing legal obligation on Commanding Officers to report to the Service Police such matters where they constitute an offence listed in Schedule 2 to the Armed Forces Act 2006 or concern “prescribed circumstances”.

Where the decision is taken to investigate the offence in the Service Justice System rather than the civilian system, the Service Police will lead the investigation fairly and impartially, and record information accordingly with due regard to the information management policies of Defence. In addition, the revised policy provides direction on the requirement for Service Police investigations into Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences to adopt a multi-agency approach and engage civilian police and safeguarding agencies in the process of investigating and sharing information. Service Police are now directed to refer to a separate statutory body where required, especially if there are safeguarding concerns for children or adults at risk.

The Domestic Abuse Audit recommendations in Appendix H of the Service Justice System also called for more detailed and meaningful recording of data on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences investigations. In response, Defence has undertaken a widescale review of its Service Police Information Systems and is due to trial an upgraded system with greater inter-functionality between Service Justice System agencies and alignment with civilian policing systems that will capture and share more accurate data on investigations involving sexual violence and domestic abuse. This is considered a considerable step in improving case management and safeguarding of victims in Service Police investigations.

Defence has noted the observation about the limitations of Service Police powers in issuing Protection Notices and Orders and will give careful consideration to options for achieving the same outcome.

40. When personnel experience BHD, including criminal offences, their experiences of receiving support vary too much. For instance, it is not acceptable that victims of crime have not heard of the MOD's Victims' Charter. We have doubts about the quality and consistency of support offered by key individuals in both the complaints and the justice system, including the Chain of Command, Assisting Officers, Harassment Investment Officers and Victim Liaison Officers. We also heard stories of these individuals coming under immense pressure themselves when trying to fulfil their role. We support the MOD's commitment to improving training for commanding officers to offer the right support. (Paragraph 191)

Defence agrees that it is not acceptable that victims of crime in the Service Justice System have not heard of the Victim's Code, which sets out very clearly what support must be provided and which part of the Service Justice System is responsible for providing it.

Following recommendations from the Service Justice System, it is our intention that in all cases investigated by the Service Police, the responsibility for delivering the rights of the victim should remain with the Service Police and, where appropriate, civilians working alongside Service Police throughout the case. This will include an initial Victim Needs Assessment and a clear explanation of their rights (in written form) under the Code.

Our Code of Practice is currently under review and will be updated, where possible and appropriate, to reflect changes made to the new civilian justice system Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales. We will be adopting the '12 Victims' Rights' contained in the new Code and will ensure the provisions properly reflect the Service environment for victims and for those who support them.

41. *The MOD's specialist support must reach those who need it in practice. It must also advertise forms of external support to personnel, in case they do not wish to use that offered by the MOD.* (Paragraph 192)

Defence accepts that we need to do more to make sure those who need support are provided with it and this includes doing more to promote our Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

When our Code is revised, it will include an annex listing internal and external sources of assistance and welfare support. This will contain contact details for a number of organisations that exist to provide assistance and support to people who have experienced being a victim of crime, including sexually related crime. Our aim is to ensure that those who need specialist support can get it, from whoever they believe is best placed to deliver it.

42. *All individuals—Chain of Command, Assisting Officers, Harassment Investment Officers and Victim Liaison Officers—with a key role in handling complaints must receive structured training to allow them to complete this role and to refer personnel to appropriate support. Should the MOD accept our recommendation to create a central Defence Authority (paragraph 149), the workload of these individuals should also reduce.* (Paragraph 193)

A programme of work to fulfil recommendations relating to Service Justice System recommendations on Victim and Witness care is fully underway in Defence. The Service Justice System agencies, Service Police and safeguarding agencies are being consulted to

support the development and implementation of a coordinated and consistent level of care to all victims of crime across Defence policing, which will comply with legislative obligations and national best practice.

In particular, Defence is committed to developing and implementing a bespoke Service Justice System Victim and Witness Care Unit (VWCU), as recommended by the Service Justice System.

43. It is not completely clear from the evidence whether personnel are able to self-select an Assisting Officer or whether this individual is always assigned by the Chain of Command. Provided the officer is of appropriate seniority, we support offering an option for personnel to self-select an Assisting Officer, so that it can be an individual in whom they have greater trust. (Paragraph 194)

Individuals can self-select an assisting officer or they may ask their Chain of Command to assign one.

Transition and Resettlement

44. The evidence base is improving, but large-scale quantitative research is still needed on the situation and needs of female veterans, as is further academic research. The MOD should commission large-scale research in 2022 on the situation of all veterans, with dedicated analysis of differences by sex and gender, ethnicity, housing situation and other characteristics. This can use the 2021 Census, the consultation of the Department of Health and Social Care on the Women's Health Strategy and other sources. (Paragraph 201)

The Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) was established in October 2019. As part of the Cabinet Office, the OVA is the lead for UK Government efforts to ensure the United Kingdom is the best place in the world to be a veteran. We welcome the Committee including female veterans in this inquiry, and recognising their service to the UK.

The Government recognises the need to improve data collection and analysis in order to inform policy supporting the veteran community, including improving our understanding of the needs and experiences of female veterans. We will seek to ensure there is sex-differentiated data analysis and reporting, as well as ensuring research is either appropriately balanced or reported appropriately. For the first time ever, the 2021 Census in England and Wales asked whether individuals have previously served in the UK Armed Forces. This information, once published, will help the Government and local communities better understand the situation for all veterans living in England and Wales, including female veterans. For example, the census data will tell us about female veterans' employment status, health, and to some extent housing status. We will use this information to assess whether veterans are at a disadvantage compared to non-veterans, and will be able to refine the cohort to see whether specific groups, for example female veterans, are disproportionately disadvantaged. This information will help us tailor support for veterans.

The OVA will also be publishing an updated Strategy for Our Veterans Action Plan later this year, where we will set out further ways we will improve data collection and analysis on the veteran community, including specifically on female veterans.

45. Male and female veterans face common challenges in transitioning, but there are differences, which veterans' services should take into account. We are also concerned that many ex-military women feel their Service is not recognised. Female veterans' situation is directly affected by the legacy of their Service. *The MOD and Forces should do more to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of female veterans, including servicewomen who go on to work in the defence industry. Specific initiatives could be public memorials and blue plaques, support for female veterans' networks and initiatives in Women's History Month.* (Paragraph 210)

The Government fully agrees it is important to recognise and celebrate female veterans and their Service to the UK. The Minister for Defence People and Veterans regularly engages charities and organisations that support, and/or advocate for female veterans, and his continuing commitment to championing female veterans will be reflected in future engagement. We are also carefully reflecting on the recommendation about specific initiatives. We will consider how best to use existing initiatives such as Women's History Month to champion female veterans, and we will ensure that any proposals for monuments or memorials that were supported in future were inclusive.

46. We fully support the Government's efforts to improve support for all veterans, but there remain gaps in specialised services. The Government must ensure available services are more accessible to women, including, where necessary, via female-specific services. It is also necessary to acknowledge the legacy of veterans' Service in affecting their situation in later life. (Paragraph 222)

47. *Both transition services and veterans' services should ensure that both women and men can benefit fully from them, as the female veteran population will only grow. This may require greater female representation in the day-to-day running of the services, gender-specific points of access and better adaptation to the differing health, employment and other challenges of female veterans. This recommendation applies to both statutory services and those in the voluntary sector.* (Paragraph 223)

48. *Building on the work of the 'Salute Her' service, the Ministry of Defence should recognise 'military sexual trauma' and fund greater provision of female-specific, specialist support services for veterans with in-service experiences of sexual harassment, assault and rape.* (Paragraph 224)

Combined response to 46, 47 and 48.

Female veterans are currently able to access all support services that are available to the veteran community as a whole, for example: through NHS care pathways for mental and physical health; employment and transition support through Defence; and, housing support through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, together with the relevant agencies in the Devolved Administrations. Additionally, there are services specific to female veterans available through voluntary organisations. As civilians, female veterans also have access to regular services provided to the population as a whole, both statutory and those provided by the charity sector. However, we recognise the role of further research in understanding whether the services currently available fully meet the needs of female veterans.

Data collected indicate that female veterans tend towards using NHS mental health services in place for the general population, rather than bespoke services for veterans.

Female veterans make up 5% of those referred to the bespoke Complex Treatment Service and Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service within the NHS,¹⁰ and 18.7% of veterans referred to Improving Access to the Psychological Therapies Services (IAPT, available for the general population). Comparatively, it is estimated that currently 11% of the veteran population is female.

There is an intent within Government to improve the data on female veterans (see response to recommendation 44 on evidence and data). Having more accurate information on the female veteran community will help us to plan future policy to ensure that all veterans have the support and services they need. We recognise that female members of the Armed Forces community can face a unique set of challenges, and there is a specific question in the Women's Health Strategy 'Call to Evidence' on female veterans. NHS England and Improvement (NHSEI) also launched the Armed Forces Forward View, which commits to better understanding the physical and mental healthcare of women veterans to ensure that NHS England's services are appropriate, inclusive and accessible. This includes responding to recommendations from existing research. To oversee implementation of this commitment, NHSEI has established a serving and ex-Service Women Health Improvement Steering Group.

The current Career Transition Partnership (CTP) offering is tailored to individual need regardless of sex, age or rank. All Service leavers have the freedom to choose the resettlement activity that they wish to undertake after discussing options with their individual career advisor. CTP offers a broad range of courses for all Service leavers. The CTP already has a high level of female representation within the organisation. Within the CTP transition and training hierarchy, women account for ~80% of staff members and eight of the 11 Transition managers are female. The CTP Senior Management Team has seven members, of whom four are female. Recent research conducted by Defence into the CTP service, indicates that any differences in employment outcomes for female veterans using the CTP are in line with the sex differences seen in the comparable non-veteran population. This includes civilian industries worked in, those taking up further education, and those who are economically inactive due to family commitments.

The OVA manages a Veterans Advisory Board, which brings together sector representatives from Government, charities and other organisations. This Advisory Board monitors and reviews how we are delivering the Strategy for Our Veterans, and considers broader veterans' issues. When we have improved data on female veterans (see response to recommendation 44 on evidence and data), we will be able to use the Board to better understand where female veterans may need additional support.

The vast majority of services for veterans are run independently of Her Majesty's Government, for example by charities or independent bodies. While Government cannot mandate who runs these services, we will encourage service providers to take note of your recommendation about female representation.

Finally, we want to acknowledge and welcome the publication of Anglia Ruskin University's 'We Also Served' report, examining the health and wellbeing outcomes of female veterans living in the UK. This report has, along with the HCDC's own report, shone a light on the experiences of female veterans, and the Government is committed to continuing to learn about the experiences of female veterans and ensure this is reflected in future policy.

10 Now encompassed within Op COURAGE, along with the Veterans Mental Health High Intensity Service.

Defence does not use the term 'Military Sexual Trauma'. What we have done is make it absolutely clear we have zero-tolerance of unacceptable behaviour. All allegations are thoroughly investigated, and all victims supported appropriately. Where incidents do occur, they will be dealt with promptly, sensitively and efficiently. We recognise the great courage it takes to come forward and report a sexual offence. Service personnel can have full confidence that allegations are thoroughly investigated; Commanding Officers must always refer any allegations which have a sexual element to the Service Police. Anyone found to fall short of our high standards or to have committed an offence is dealt with appropriately, up to and including imprisonment and dismissal.

The Armed Forces are addressing sexual assault and harassment through a range of actions, including awareness campaigns and training on consent. In 2020 we published a leaflet on sexual harassment and how to report it, and started a 24-hour Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination helpline to offer support and advice. In June 2021 we introduced new and updated policies on behavior and complaints, making them easier to understand, more accessible and reinforcing our zero-tolerance policy. Defence will also assess the findings of the Services' sexual harassment surveys to plan interventions.

The Government plans to make the United Kingdom the best place to be a veteran anywhere in the world, including for those whose Service was affected by sexual violence. We recognise that such experiences can have profound and enduring impacts on an individual both during their Service and as a veteran. Veterans, and their families, are offered a gold standard of tailored support, such as Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service. This Government is continuously working to identify and draw upon lessons from other countries for both our serving and veteran populations.

49. *There should be a recognition of gender-specific needs and services in the Armed Forces Covenant. We endorse the recommendation (not yet accepted) of the 2021 Armed Forces Bill Committee to add a metric to the Annual Report on the Armed Forces Covenant on the experiences of veterans by sex or gender and by other protected characteristics. This should be part of the reporting on every chapter.* (Paragraph 225)

As the Government made clear in its response to the Armed Forces Bill Committee's recommendation, Defence already reports progress against this intent through Department's performance and risk monitoring process, as well as mainstream Defence feedback mechanisms and regular localised Climate Assessments, all of which are subject to regular review by the Chief of Defence Staff and the Permanent Secretary. The recent Defence Command Paper sets out our intent to tangibly, rapidly and significantly improve the personal experience of all those working in Defence, including those with Protected Characteristics.

Overall Conclusions

50. *The Armed Forces can and do provide a fulfilling career for servicewomen, with vast opportunities. But the Services are failing to help women achieve their full potential.* (Paragraph 226)

We recognise that there is considerable work to do to create the fair and inclusive organisation we aspire to; our response to this report has demonstrated the wide range of activity and programmes of work underway to achieve this. These are being delivered

through multiple organisations across Defence from policy teams through to the single Services. These focused activities and programmes will deliver improvements and help our Servicewomen to achieve their full potential, often through removing the 'treacle' which hampers progress. For example work is currently underway to agree further improvements in areas such as career management and access to housing and education of children of dual serving couples.

As part of these programmes to enable women to achieve their full potential, we are addressing barriers in job specifications, examining the viability of military job sharing and bespoke mentoring opportunities. The Women's Talent Development Programme identifies and accelerates the career path of our top female talent and strengthens the diversity of the leadership pipeline.

Improving the personal experience of all of its employees is a RN Transformation outcome. New crewing patterns and career pathways are in design that will enable personnel to have greater ownership over their careers, including recognising periods of time where individuals require periods of stability, for example to raise a family, without it adversely impacting on career paths. Recent work investigating the retention of women in the RN has resulted in work strands that seek to improve specifically, the personal experience and therefore representation of women at all ranks. However, it is not women alone that must be considered, but personnel in dual service couple relationships where policy changes can impact on retention.

The RAF encourages women from all backgrounds and cultures to join and flourish by providing tailored mentoring and positive action pathways, alongside wrap-around childcare and flexible working. This enables women to access their expert training with valuable qualifications, and to engage with opportunities to be part of some of the most exciting projects in the Air and Space business. Their Gender Action Plan has the core aims of enabling women to feel included and to reach their full potential, through bespoke women's talent management pathways, and development programs which increase access to full careers in the RAF. Their Gender Network is dedicated to mentoring and increasing the visibility of role models, including the British military's only 3-star female officer, an RAF engineer, and more recently, the appointment of the first female lead in the military operational environment.

The Army's levels of ambition, governed through the Department's performance and risk monitoring process, represents the commitment to improving the experience of its servicewomen. There is a focus on enabling opportunities and removing barriers which will help servicewomen achieve their full potential. At every board, the female cohort is considered, and every effort is made to ensure that each appointment has a representative field of runners. There have been updates to appearance and review of in barracks uniform to ensure comfort and choice. The optimisation of the employee support networks, through dedicated networks support posts and the appointment of a 3* Gender Champion at Executive Committee of the Army Board level, will ensure that there is an advocate for our Servicewomen and challenge policy development at the most senior levels. The Army is committed to ensuring that it is a demonstrably inclusive employer.

51. We welcome some steps by the Services in recent years—particularly, more support for (male and female) personnel with family responsibilities and the rollout of Flexible Service to Regulars and (soon) Reservists. However, there are gaps between the many

policy documents and practice on the ground. Moreover, the MOD's actions often give the impression that it is not a priority to make the necessary cultural changes, especially to the complaints system. When things go wrong, they go dramatically wrong—making it all the more worrying that this is not being focused on. (Paragraph 227)

Defence is absolutely committed to ensuring the Armed Forces are a diverse and inclusive environment where all our people can achieve their potential. There is significant focus across Defence to transform culture, to prevent unacceptable behaviours from occurring and to ensure that, where incidents do occur, they will be dealt with promptly, sensitively and efficiently.

This includes initiatives to improve data, analysis and management information, amplify the voices of our people and ensure better understanding of the personal experience to enable interventions where policy is not being reflected on the ground.

In order to ensure that policy is translated into practice on the ground, governance mechanisms have been implemented at all levels, including at the very top. The Service Chiefs are held to account through the Department's performance and risk monitoring process for the delivery of their levels of ambition and D&I action plans. The second annual Chief's Commitment was published across the department in July 2021, demonstrating their personal and collective commitment to delivering this change.

The Service Chiefs, along with their Civil Service counterparts, have pledged their personal and organisational commitment to delivering the Cross Defence D&I Action Plan and levels of ambition; these are also nested within specific departmental business plans. Furthermore, the publication of the first D&I Annual Report in 2022, which will enable transparency, demonstrate the progress made to date, both in the Armed Forces and across the whole force, as well as indicate future areas of focus.

In June 2021, Defence published its internal 'Future Workplace in Defence' strategy which makes achieving a vision of greater flexibility and realising the benefits of Smarter Working a Defence priority. The strategy was endorsed by the Defence Executive Committee and the Defence Chiefs. Future Workplace is about a fundamental shift in Defence's military and civilian cultures and behaviours, affecting how individuals interact with colleagues internal and external to Defence and creating better work life harmony. It's about Defence optimising its use of its estate and making the best use of tools and technology to enable its workforce to work more securely and flexibly whilst boosting wellbeing, inclusiveness and connectedness with one another.

It's a multi-year pan-Defence programme underpinned by three key principles: People, Place and Technology. A series of flexible working-related messages for Service personnel will be promoted during 2021/22 to ensure that they have access to guidance and policy documents to enable opportunities for flexible working. Key messages will include:

- Work is an activity, not a place. Your workplace could be wherever you deliver effective results and the best outcome for Defence. Linking to Defence's Future Workplace Strategy;
- Could you be working smarter? Find out how modern workplaces and working patterns can help us reach peak performance. Linking to 'Working beyond 2021: A guide for Smarter Working Leadership in Defence';

- Our future ways of working start today. Flexible working opportunities are available for SP; and,
- Working Flexibly? Tell Defence. You and your team must record flexible working arrangements on JPA.

52. The legacy of serving affects female veterans for years to come, sometimes negatively. We want all our veterans to feel proud of their Service. Ex-military women need better recognition and support within transition and veterans' services. (Paragraph 228)

We have noted, and will look to incorporate further support for women during the transition process as we review the Defence Holistic Transition Policy (JSP 100) in due course. Defence and OVA are working together to ensure that we provide the best possible outcomes for female veterans in the UK, and that no woman is disadvantaged compared to either the general population or her male counterpart.

The Government recognises there is more that can be done in support of the UK's female veterans, and will continue to collaborate across Government, the charity sector and academia to deliver on the outcomes set out in the Strategy for our Veterans, of which female veterans are a crucial population.

53. Senior leadership in the Armed Forces and the MOD should be bold and unequivocal in solving these challenges. (Paragraph 229)

Senior leadership in the Armed Forces and across the wider Defence Enterprise are committed to delivering meaningful and lasting change and improving the personal experience of Women in the Armed Forces and our Veterans.

HCDC Women in the Armed Forces Report – Recommendations Grid

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
1	24	Accepted	New & existing	<p>BHD Helpline launched (W)</p> <p>2020 Sexual Harassment Booklet setting out what it is, what to do and how to report (including for those who may witness it). (W)</p> <p>Single Service initiatives to improve Servicewomen’s experiences.</p>	<p>30% Level of Ambition for inflow of women into the Armed Forces by 2030.</p> <p>Expansion & use of digitised D&I adviser reports (Live July 2021) to improve real-time monitoring of issues.</p> <p>Centralised management of Sexual Harassment surveys</p>
2	25	Accepted	Existing	All Services have recruitment campaigns / programmes that focus on attracting Women into the Armed Forces.	<p>Continuing work to introduce further flexibilities, such as job-share, which will support attraction, as well as retention.</p> <p>Future recruitment campaigns will demonstrate the roles available outside of ‘traditional’ combat roles, like STEM professions, be women focused, and challenge misconceptions about the Armed Forces, similar to the Army’s ‘A soldier is a soldier’ campaign.</p>

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
3	26	Accepted	New	<p>Defence Instruction Notice (DIN01-130 Injury Prevention and Health Optimisation during Pregnancy and Maternity)</p> <p>Joint Service Publication (JSP) 375 Chapter 20 New and Expectant Mothers</p> <p>Whole Force Menopause Network raising awareness</p> <p>All Serviced reviewing / have reviewed fitness tests</p>	<p>Six-month sprint to accelerate existing work to deliver a range of new Women's Health Policies, addressing issues highlighted by our Servicewomen, recognising the importance of their health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Establishment of a Tri-Service forum to enable cooperation, shared learning and development of approaches to improve the experience of Servicewomen in initial training.</p>
4	34	Conclusion not recommendation	N/A	Existing Networks and Network Champions and Advocates	<p>Defence to develop a Defence Positive Action Guidance, to support our commitment to achievement through merit by mid-2022.</p> <p>Defence will benchmark organisational culture with other Armed Forces, Government departments, private organisations.</p> <p>Defence will scope hosting an international conference in 2022 with partner nations to share our response, learn and share best practice together with our allies who share similar challenges.</p> <p>Ongoing future engagement by Secretary of State and Minister of State for Defence (Lords) with Servicewomen's Networks.</p>

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
5	51	Accepted	Existing	<p>Wigston Report on Inappropriate Behaviours (July 2019); of the 36 Recommendations, 22 have been delivered of which 4 are enduring and the rest are being progressed. (W)</p> <p>Danuta Gray 1 year on review (Dec 20); additional 13 recommendations; four of which superseded Wigston. Three have been delivered or are being delivered on an enduring basis with the remaining actions part of ongoing transformation work.</p> <p>Updated JSP 763 (Behaviours and Informal complaints) (W)</p> <p>2020 Sexual Harassment Booklet. W)</p> <p>Climate surveys mandated across Defence. (W)</p> <p>BHD Helpline launched.</p> <p>Mandated Active Bystander training & SP equivalent. (W)</p> <p>D&I Directorate launched (W)</p>	Delivery of Personal Experience training for delivery online and by relevant networks.

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
6	62	Conclusion not recommendation	N/A	Recognise culture change takes time. (W) Climate Assessments. (W)	Analysis Directorate supporting work to improve data, analysis and Management Information (MI) to better monitor progress and hold to account. Expansion & use of digitised D&I adviser reports (Live July 2021) to improve real-time monitoring of issues.
7	63	Accepted	New & existing	Active Bystander Training (W) Training Needs Analysis (TNA) completed for all D&I training. (W) (G)	Defence D&I training TNA review by single Services who will report on requirements enabling D&I Directorate to establish a common standard and develop assurance model. Delivery of Personal Experience training for delivery online and by relevant networks. The Army will review the selection, education and training for commanders at Lieutenant Colonel and above to better prepare them for the challenges of command. The Army will deliver more focussed education, training and pastoral support to everyone in the Army's training establishments

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
8	64	Accepted	Existing	180 Degree Feedback tool available to all ranks and has been adapted for Senior Officers (W)(G)	<p>Rollout of SOAR20 (Feb 22) including four new characteristics plus leadership objective.</p> <p>Defence will work with the single Services to develop new measures to ensure Commanding Officers who, when found by the Service Complaints Ombudsman to have fallen short of expected standards in handling service complaints, receive appropriate, consistent and robust consequences that appear on their employment records.</p> <p>Defence will amplify publication of successful Service Justice sexual offence prosecutions & anonymised Service Complaint cases (April 2022)</p>
9	65	Accepted	Existing	2021 Sexual Harassment Survey undertaken. Results to be published by end of FY 2021/2022. (W)	<p>July 2021 agreement of centralisation of future SH Surveys - launching 2023.</p> <p>Two sexual harassment focussed questions included in biennial Climate Assessments</p>

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
10	66	Accepted	Existing	Data and insight now collected from D&I Adviser informal complaints, BHD hotline, Outsourced Investigation Service and Network engagement. (W)	<p>Analysis Directorate supporting work to improve data, analysis and MI to better monitor progress and hold to account.</p> <p>Publication of annual D&I report (2022)</p> <p>Development of behaviours dashboard for ExCo</p> <p>Rollout of climate assessments and centralised sexual harassment surveys.</p>
11	67	Accepted	Existing	Annual publication of all court martials (W)(G)	<p>2023 progress review into Wigston Review recommendations.</p> <p>Publication of annual D&I report (2022)</p> <p>Defence will amplify publication of successful Service Justice sexual offence prosecutions & anonymised Service Complaint cases (April 2022) (as per serial 8)</p>
12	74	Conclusion not recommendation	N/A	Response combined with serial 13 below.	

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
13	75	Accepted	New & existing	Various focussed programmes already in existence within each of the Single Services.	The Chiefs of Staff will lead a six-month sprint to accelerate existing work to address uniform and equipment improvements.
14	76	Accepted	Existing	Launched revised Hair policy for Armed Forces (July 2021)	Work will continue across Armed Forces.
15	81	Accepted	New & existing	Sanitary provision supply box introduced (June 2021)	Review of sanitary box provision Summer 2022, including consultation with Servicewomen's Networks & Women's Health Advisory network. Army will conduct a full confirmatory audit to ensure necessary sanitary provision.
16	87	Accepted	New & existing	JSP 375 Chapter 20 New and Expectant Mothers A Defence Instruction Notice (DIN01-130 Injury Prevention and Health Optimisation during Pregnancy and Maternity) Defence Medical Services provide / operate numerous clinical programmes and services Whole Force Defence Menopause, Child Bereavement & Breastfeeding Networks	Six-month sprint to accelerate existing work to deliver a range of new Women's Health Policies, addressing issues highlighted by our Servicewomen, recognising the importance of their health and wellbeing.

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
17	92	Accepted	New and existing	<p>'Living in Our Shoes' report (March 2021)</p> <p>Launch of Flexible Service policy (April 2019)</p> <p>Support provided by Defence Children Services</p>	<p>Further modernisation to Armed Forces Terms of Service for Reg & Reserves</p> <p>UKAF Families Strategy 21-31 and Action Plan</p> <p>Navy initiatives in response to "Retention of RN Women" sprint.</p> <p>Army PhD research into why women leave the Army.</p>
18	96	Accepted	Existing	Wrap Around Childcare Pilots successful.	Wrap Around Childcare on track for wider rollout within UK by end 2022
19	99	Accepted	Existing	<p>Flexible Service policy (April 2019) & ongoing comms campaign</p> <p>Publication of 'Flexible Working and You' Guide</p> <p>Future Workplace Strategy for the Whole Force (June 2021)</p>	Defence to report progress on uptake of Flexible Service and Alternative Working Arrangements by the end of 2022.
20	100	Accepted	Existing	<p>Centralised SP Home-working policy (2016)</p> <p>Future Workplace Strategy for the Whole Force (June 2021)</p>	

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
21	103	Accepted	New & existing	<p>Equality Analysis conducted for Defence Command paper to be published internally.</p> <p>Currently undertaking equality analysis on recommendations and changes from two-stage review of tour lengths and harmony guidelines.</p>	
22	104	Conclusion not recommendation	N/A	<p>Centralised SP Home-working policy (2016)</p> <p>Future Workplace Strategy for the Whole Force (June 2021)</p> <p>Flexible Service policy (April 2019) & ongoing comms campaign</p>	<p>Defence will review the application and approval process for Alternative Working Arrangements to ensure it continues to support the policy's intentions.</p> <p>Army will undertake rapid study into structural or policy constraints to the advancement of service-women.</p>
23	113	Conclusion not recommendation	N/A	Response combined with serial 24 below	
24	114	Accepted	New & existing	<p>Gender Balance Working Group and the transfer to BAU of 29 initiatives across five work strands.</p> <p>Cross Defence D&I Action Plan to enable coherence and holding to account.</p> <p>Focus across all Single Services on representation, retention, promotion and talent.</p>	<p>Publication of annual D&I report (2022)</p> <p>Army will conduct an independent external audit of Army culture</p> <p>Ongoing future engagement by Defence Secretary of State and Minister of State for Defence (Lords) with Servicewomen's Networks.</p>

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
25	134	Conclusion not recommendation.	N/A	Response combined with serial 28.	
26	147	Conclusion not recommendation.	N/A	Response combined with serial 28.	
27	148	Conclusion not recommendation.	N/A	Response combined with serial 28.	

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
28	149	Partially Accepted	N/A	<p>D&I Directorate established (April 2021) which is independent of Chain of Command and addresses 11 out of the 12 sub-recommendations from the Wigston Review.</p> <p>The Service Complaints JSP 831 has been updated (June 2021) (W)</p> <p>Independent members are required to sit on appeal boards for cases of BHD.</p> <p>The RAF are piloting a centralised Service team for admissibility, removing admissibility decisions and decision making on the Service Complaint from the complainant's direct Chain of Command. (W)</p>	<p>Service Complaints of a sexual nature will be dealt with through single Service central admissibility, using investigators outside the direct Chain of Command (e.g. through the Outsourced Investigation Service), use Independent Members at decision and appeal body stages. (W)</p>
29	150	Partially Accepted	N/A	<p>Stature of Ombudsman findings already covered by case law and binding on Defence Council.</p> <p>No provision for binding recommendations within other Public Sector organisations.</p> <p>Failure to follow recommendations can be judicially reviewed.</p> <p>Recommendations are non-binding but already have legal consequences. If the Defence Council refuse to accept them, they must provide written cogent reasons for doing so and failure to follow a recommendation can be judicially reviewed.</p>	<p>Defence will work with the single Services to develop new measures to ensure Commanding Officers who, when found by the Service Complaints Ombudsman are found to have fallen short of expected standards in handling service complaints, receive appropriate, consistent and robust consequences, that appear on their employment records.</p>

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
30	151	Accepted	Existing	JSP 763 published 29 June 2021 alongside JSP 831 and CS Grievance procedures. (W)	
31	152	Accepted	Existing	Published 29 June 2021 alongside JSP 831 and CS Grievance procedures. (W) Early intervention is advocated and initial indications are that the provision of mediation is having a strong, positive impact. (W)	
32	153	Rejected	N/A	Proposed reduction is just one part of a wider programme of transformation which is designed to reduce delays and improve the Service Complaints system for all. Defence does not intend to reduce the appeal period for all Service Persons to two weeks. We wish to have the flexibility to set time limits that are appropriate to individual circumstances. In cases where there are valid reasons where a Service Person needs longer, for example when deployed on active duty or because of health issues, the time period may well remain at six weeks, or longer if there are just and equitable reasons for a further extension.	We will develop guidance for instances where it would be just and equitable for a longer time period for appeal, such as if the individual is deployed on active duties or in the case of certain health issues.

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
33	154	Accepted	Existing	<p>Single Service Complaint teams received an uplift in resource as part of review to improve the delivery of SC. (G)</p> <p>Defence anticipates increased demand as confidence and trust in the system grows.</p>	Further transparency through new digital approaches to monitor delivery.
34	175	Conclusion not recommendation.	N/A	Response combined with serial 36.	
35	176	Rejected	N/A	Response combined with serial 36.	

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
36	177	Rejected	N/A	<p>Secretary of State has given full consideration to the Lyons Review recommendation on the jurisdiction for murder, manslaughter and rape offences in the UK. (L)</p> <p>Decisions on jurisdiction in individual cases are best left to the independent Service Justice and UK civilian prosecutors using guidance they have agreed between them; working closely with the Service and civilian police forces. The guidance is designed to cover all types of offending where there is concurrent jurisdiction</p> <p>Clause 7 of the Armed Forces Bill 2021 will place a duty on the Director of Service Prosecutions and the Director of Public Prosecutions in England and Wales to agree a protocol on the handling of cases where there is concurrent jurisdiction. There are equivalent provisions for the Director of Service Prosecutions and Lord Advocate to agree a protocol for Scotland, and for the Director of Service Prosecutions and the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland to agree a protocol for Northern Ireland.</p>	<p>The creation of the Defence Serious Crime Unit, headed up by a new Provost Marshal for Serious Crime, will improve capability to deal with the most serious offences and provide improved victim support. (L) (H)</p> <p>The Secretary of State is determined to ensure there is female representation on court martial boards related to sexual offending. The Department is undertaking work to establish how to deliver this.</p> <p>Chiefs have commissioned a review of policy to strengthen the levers available to dismiss/ discharge those who are found to have committed sexual offences or other sexual unacceptable behaviours.</p> <p>Development of a new Sexual Exploitation and Abuse JSP which will address issues such as the use of transactional sex workers.</p>
37	178	Accepted	Existing	Development of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Strategy.	<p>Publication of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Strategy.</p> <p>Next iteration of Service Police Investigation System to include enhanced data on pathway for handling sexual offences.</p>

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
38	179	Accepted	New & existing	Gathering additional data going forward. (W)	Data will be published in 2023.
39	180	Accepted	Existing	<p>Progress made on recommendations from SJSP Review (Part 1)</p> <p>Policy review work already undertaken</p> <p>Defence Domestic Abuse Strategy</p> <p>Appointment of Defence Senior Domestic Abuse Awareness Champion</p> <p>Reviewed guidance on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Offences in JSP 931 (Whole Force policy on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence) in conjunction with Defence Domestic Abuse WG, sS leads & external charities.</p>	<p>Publication of revised JSP 931 (Whole Force policy on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence).</p> <p>Trial upgraded Service Police Information system (improved inter-functionality between SJS agencies & alignment with civilian policing systems).</p> <p>Defence will give careful consideration to the observation about Service Police powers to issue Protection Notices and Orders.</p>
40	191	Accepted	New		Code of Practice under review and will be updated to reflect changes made to the new civilian justice system Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales, including the adoption of '12 Victims' Rights'.
41	192	Accepted	New		Code of Practice under review and will be updated to reflect changes made to the new civilian justice system Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales. This will include an annex listing internal and external sources of support.

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
42	193	Accepted	Existing	A programme of work to fulfil recommendations relating to SJSR recommendations on Victim and Witness care is fully underway in Defence. (L) (H)	Defence is committed to developing and implementing a bespoke Service Justice System Victim and Witness Care Unit. (L) (H)
43	194	Accepted	Existing	Individuals can self-select an assisting officer or may ask their Chain of Command to assign one.	
44	201	Accepted	Existing	Office for Veterans Affairs' (OVA) established 2019 2021 Census question addition regarding service with AF strengthens dataset and adds to MI.	Publication of updated 'Strategy for Our Veterans Action Plan'
45	210	Accepted	New & existing	Regular MinDPV engagement of relevant charities and organisations who support and/or advocate for Service-women veterans.	We will consider how best to use existing initiatives to champion our ex-military women.
46	222	Conclusion not recommendation.	N/A	Response combined with serial 48	
47	223	Accepted	N/A	Response combined with serial 48	

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
48	224	Partially Accepted	Existing	<p>Defence does not use the term 'Military Sexual Trauma'.</p> <p>Defence has made it clear that there is zero-tolerance of unacceptable behaviour.</p> <p>Op COURAGE: Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service</p> <p>Women veterans are currently able to access all support services that are available to the veteran community as a whole</p> <p>Updated JSPs, BHD Helpline and Sexual Harassment booklet. (W)</p>	
49	225	Partially Accepted		<p>Progress already reported through the Department's performance and risk monitoring process, Defence feedback mechanisms and localised Climate assessments, reviewed by the Chief of Defence Staff and Permanent Secretary. (W)</p> <p>Defence Command Paper sets out intent on improvement of lived experience incl. those with Protected Characteristics. (W)</p>	Veterans Strategy Action Plan 22-24 (December 2021)

Recommendation Serial	Para	Status	Accepted Recommendations; Existing or New Policy	Existing and planned policy/ initiatives	New and expedited policy/ initiatives
50	226	Conclusion not recommendation.	N/A	N/A	
51	227	Conclusion not recommendation.	N/A	<p>See also responses to serials 17, 19, 22 within the report.</p> <p>Flexible Service policy (April 2019) & ongoing comms campaign</p> <p>Future Workplace Strategy (June 2021)</p> <p>Chiefs held to account through Department's performance and risk monitoring process</p> <p>Chiefs' Annual Commitments (July 2020 & 2021)</p>	Publication of D&I annual report (2022).
52	228	Accepted	Existing	Ongoing collaboration across Government to improve the experience.	Review of Defence Holistic Transition Policy.
53	229	Conclusion not recommendation.	N/A	Senior leadership committed to delivering meaningful and lasting change.	

KEY

(W)	As highlighted in the Wigston Review
(G)	As highlighted in the Gray Review
(H)	As highlighted in the Henriques Review
(L)	As highlighted in the Lyons Murphy Review