

Anonymous Written Evidence Submission¹

I believe there are certain pressure on women in the military that are not expected of our male peers that hinder progression and promotion. These include:

- 1) Women in the military are more likely to strike up romantic relationships with other personnel in the military. This then leads to male peers often having access to female personnel's romantic relationships or sexual history and then this is used against a woman in her progression. Whilst arguably, no reference to these incidents occur in reports, a woman faces a double standard compared to a man as their sexual history isn't considered as relevant to public opinion. Sexually promiscuous women are often seen as the downfall to hard working men, and if they do progress there is a consensus that it is because of their sexuality that they have done so. More education and onus on men to control the discussion on female sexuality needs to be established in military culture.
- 2) Women are often seen as more emotional than men, which is considered weak. However, arguably, showing emotion leads to strength. I have sometimes entered rooms where I may appear nervous and have had older men tell me 'try not to cry' whilst I am briefing them. I was not about to cry. I told them to stop being so patronising, and they quickly realised their misjudgement. However, it is easy to see where someone who wasn't strong willed would be overcome by this type of belittling, which does not help retention on females in the military. Education needs to be enforced on men that they do not need to tell me how they think I am feeling.
- 3) My CoC in the [...] force goes up to Gp Captain level and no one in my CoC right up to CAS from there is female. The only females I have under my management are at SAC level. Women do not often have role models and cannot see something to aspire to that is not a man.
- 4) More should be done that men should not feel threatened by a strong woman. A woman may be different but diversity within an organisation brings different perspectives which create strength. This opinion is not emphasised in the military. Instead the opinion is any woman who joins must reach the same standard of a man and essentially must become a man to succeed. This reinforces opinion that the military is a man's world and one opinion succeeds. Often women will go along with a man's viewpoint in the military as it is easier to be the same.
- 5) Additionally I am BAME. I have never seen a BAME woman hold a senior leadership position in the RAF. This might not be true, but certainly within the [...] force I have never seen a BAME female officer.

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¹ Minor redactions made to protect contributor's identity. These are marked with "[...]"