

Anonymous written evidence submission

Women in the Armed Forces.

I am an Ex-Regular with Service in the Army and RAF. I am currently in the Army Reserve, and have been active with the Armed Forces for over 40 years.

It is important to know that we have already had women serving successfully in the Infantry, W1038275 Sgt Sharon Mary Goodall was an Army Reserve Combat Infantryman in the PWRR and was awarded the QVRM, 12 June 2010, for her bravery on operations. She had passed all the required Infantry Training for her rank including passing 'Senior Brecon' to be an Infantry Platoon Sergeant. Towards the end of her Army Reserve career she was an Instructor of Army Reserve recruits. This was before the lifting on the 'ban' on women serving in close combat!

To address the Terms of reference:

Q: Do female service personnel face unique and or additional challenges in the armed forces?

A: In my experience the armed forces do not impose any additional challenges on female service personnel. For particular roles there may be particular physical standards such as colour perception, or the requirements to reach a fitness standard, these are applied Gender Free. Indeed there is an official Armed Forces Support Network specifically for women.

Q: What about BAME personnel?

A: In my experience the armed forces do not impose any additional challenges on BAME service personnel. There is an official Armed Forces Support Network specifically for BAME.

Q: Are the Government and MOD doing enough to address these challenges? What more could be done? How effective are the strategies/initiatives?

A: Yes by the provision of official support networks for, Women, BAME, and LGBTQ? personnel

Q: What effect has the introduction of the Armed Forces (Flexible Working) Act (2010) had?

A: For the Army Reserve where working is very flexible - little, as the Army Reserve was always flexible in its working.

Q: Do female reservist face unique and / or additional challenges in the armed forces? Are they similar to those faced by regular female personnel?

A: I can think of no unique and or additional challenges that females face over men in both the regular and reserve forces.

Q: Why do female service personnel choose to leave the armed forces? Are the reasons different to why men leave the armed forces?

A: There are many reasons why both men and women leave the armed forces, for regular personnel the ending of the provision of married quarters is going to have a huge effect on retention, for army reserve personnel many stay in until mandatory retirement age!

Q: How easy is it for female service personnel to complain? What are the issues encouraging or hindering female personnel from complaining?

A: Very easy. All personnel both regular and reserve are instructed on the complaints procedures (sic) in recruit training, there is periodic refresher training through Military Annual Training Test for the Army, furthermore information is displayed on noticeboards and published routinely in unit orders. Where complaints are not upheld there is no comeback on the complainant, where complaints are found to be false and even vindictive there is again no comeback on the complainant. I do know of recruit instructors who have been suspended from their jobs due to a complaint which after service police investigation was found to be false, and yet the instructor has still had a verbal rebuke given to them by a senior officer. Nothing happened to the complainant.

Q: Do female personnel face unique and/or additional challenges during transition to civilian life?

A: No, no more than their male counterparts.

Q: What can the Government, the MoD and industry do to address these?

A: Nothing above the support that already existing by Armed Forces Covenant etc.

Q: What are the issues faced by women veterans once they have left the service?

A: Some find adjusting to civilian life difficult, for some joining the Army Reserve helps!

Q: Are the needs of female veterans currently met by available veteran service?

A: Yes, veteran services are provided on a Gender Blind basis.

29 January 2021