

**Written evidence submitted by the Ministry of Defence
Women in the Armed Forces: Ministry of Defence Follow Up Responses**

Specialist Support for Complainants

1. Can you please provide a detailed overview of the specialist support available for those who make Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination complaints?

There is a variety of support available for people raising Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination (BHD) issues and those who wish to make a complaint. We encourage everyone experiencing unacceptable behaviour to seek support from a source they feel most comfortable with, which for military personnel includes:

- The whole force 24-hour BHD helpline;
- Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Advisers and Practitioners;
- Chain of Command / management chain;
- Welfare staff;
- Padre / chaplain;
- Defence's 24-hour mental health helpline in partnership with Combat Stress; and,
- Army personnel can call the 'Speak Out' helpline

In September 2020, we launched a new whole force BHD helpline for anyone in Defence to use. The helpline provides both emotional support and clear options for next steps, as well as signposting to wider sources of support. Run by an external provider with professionally qualified advisers, this helpline provides all Defence people with expert advice and support which should foster increased confidence in the reporting system. The BHD helpline will signpost people back to an appropriate point in their Service to make a complaint. This includes points outside the chain of command.

By establishing a third-party anonymous helpline where callers can retain anonymity and be directed back into their organisations, outside the chain of command, we considered this fulfilled the Wigston recommendation to introduce anonymous reporting and the Gray Review agreed. The helpline ensures that people receive support by speaking to someone directly, preferable to an online anonymous reporting tool with limited follow-up options which we considered.

We train Diversity and Inclusion Advisers through the Defence Leadership Centre, at the Defence Academy. These individuals provide confidential and impartial support for people experiencing unacceptable behaviours or wishing to make a complaint. Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Advisers offer impartial advice on the complaints processes, both the ways to make an informal complaint, including how to access mediation services, and ways to make a formal / Service Complaint. We have expanded the roles of Advisers to clearly cover civilian personnel to ensure a whole-force approach.

Individuals making a Service Complaint can choose to be supported by an Assisting Officer (AOs) of their choice or request that one is assigned. AO's support the individual throughout the complaints process. Our reforms to the Service Complaints process now mean that potential Complainants can access an AO before they submit a Service Complaint to benefit from their advice and support.

2. How is this support advertised and at what stage[s] is the support offered?

Across Defence we use multiple channels, both internal and external, to raise awareness of the support available to individuals.

We have run communications campaigns to advertise the BHD helpline on social media, internal communications channels, standing order briefings and on gov.uk. To maintain and improve

awareness, we will be launching a new campaign to reach further within Defence as getting the message down throughout the organisation is taking longer than we would like.

D&I Advisers and Practitioners terms of reference require them to make locally available the details of who they are, as well as maintaining a notice board which signposts people to various sources of support, this is important as many of our personnel do not routinely work at a computer or have online access.

In updating our policies, we have clearly outlined sources of advice and support, in both the Defence Instructions and Notices (DIN) on 'understanding unacceptable behaviour' and through a whole-force sexual harassment leaflet.

Support is available at any stage to personnel wanting to discuss an issue relating to unacceptable behaviour, including any such behaviour they have witnessed that makes them feel uncomfortable, or where they believe a colleague has been made to feel uncomfortable. Any party involved in a complaint can discuss the matter with D&I Advisers or chose an AO to represent and support them. The decision maker will nominate an AO for any party who has not nominated one. We have now brought forwards access to an AO before a Service Complaint is made.

We accept the observations of the Service Complaints Ombudsman for the Armed Forces (SCOAF) that we need to do more to support people, especially considering their wellbeing and mental health throughout the Service Complaints process. Efforts to speed-up investigations, and ultimately the length of time it takes to decide on a complaint will likely reduce the impact that making a complaint can sometimes have on Complainants. We have ensured that decision makers on Decision and Appeal Bodies are aware of the implications the process can have on an individual's mental health and encourage them to signpost individuals to agencies that can support them. A list of support will be available in the forthcoming updated version of Joint Service Publication (JSP) 831 (Service Complaints). Support is also signposted by the Service Complaints Secretariats on the single Services intranet pages and current JSP 831.

3. In particular, can you explain in more detail the planned updates to JSP 763 and when this update will be complete?

Policies are being aligned across the whole force on behaviours and grievances, including Service Complaints. This will see many of the recommendations from the Wigston and Gray reviews embedded into policy.

JSP 763 has now been updated and agreed whole-force, it will be the defining policy on behaviour and informal complaints resolution for everyone working in Defence. Updating this policy, as the Gray Review noted, is a substantial piece of work requiring pan-Defence engagement. It has necessarily taken time, but it is important we get the policy right and conduct thorough engagement so that it commands acceptance across the Whole Force, is fit for purpose and meets the needs of Defence. Both JSP 763 and an updated JSP 831 will be published in Summer 2021 alongside a new Civilian Formal BHD and Victimisation Complaints Policy and Procedures.

Aligning policies and procedures across Defence on complaints and grievances is complex due to the varied nature of our personnel's terms and conditions of employment or Service. All changes to JSP 763 have been designed to reduce complexity and make the policy easy to navigate, such as the use of plain English. To simplify our policies, we have separated out the formal complaints aspects from JSP 763. For Service Personnel, this has been embedded into JSP 831. This means that all information about Service Complaints and how to make one, no matter the subject of the complaint, will now be contained in JSP 831. This will improve the user experience and avoid the confusion of having to use two different policy documents for one process. This reform was welcomed by the previous SCOAF in her annual report. Additional work to improve JSP 831 will see updates to Annex F through which an individual makes a Service Complaint, to make the document more user friendly and draw out the pertinent points of the complaint to help achieve the

timely resolution of complaints. An easy-read guide, simplifying and making the policy understandable is also being developed.

At the same time, we have created a new Civilian Formal BHD and Victimisation Complaints Policy and Procedures. This is also aligned to both JSP 763 and JSP 831 and will enable the grievance systems to work better together and avoid confusion where grievances span different Services. Our policy reforms make these procedures interdependent and therefore they need to be launched simultaneously. A wide communications campaign is planned for their release.

Recognising the need for an interim solution whilst JSP 763 was fully updated, a DIN entitled 'Understanding Unacceptable Behaviour' was issued in July 2020. This provided updated definitions of unacceptable behaviour and Defence specific examples. It reminded personnel of our high values and standards, raised awareness of the support available to them and how to report incidents of unacceptable behaviour.

JSP 763 remains the Whole Force authoritative policy on behaviour and is broader in scope. It has been revised into two parts, the first outlining behaviours, and the second on informal grievance resolution. The new JSP 763 contains improvements to the informal grievance resolution process, which we hope will enable issues to be resolved faster, at the lowest possible level, meaning people may not feel the need to make a Service Complaint or civilian formal grievance. The changes to JSP 763 include:

- Outlining positive behaviours, reiterating our values and standards, corporate standards and the Civil Service Code so that our Personnel and leaders are aware of the behaviour expected;
- Updating all our definitions, including that of bullying in line with Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) which removes intent and more detailed definitions of victimisation in line with the Equality Act 2010. A range of relevant examples to clarify that behaviour such as unwanted name calling or mocking individuals based on hair colour for example, is unacceptable and the impact of micro behaviours is included;
- Incorporating the Service Test and the Armed Forces Social Code of Conduct to strengthen expectations of behaviour;
- Bringing domestic abuse under the umbrella of unacceptable behaviours and reinforcing our policy on safeguarding;
- Strengthening and expanding policy on our expectations of online behaviour;
- Strengthened policy outlining our zero tolerance of initiation ceremonies;
- Introducing a 'Prevention' section aimed at stopping unacceptable behaviour from happening in the first place. This highlights training requirements, mandates the provision of D&I Advisers and Practitioners, sets out the core principles of climate assessments, reiterates the importance of setting a responsible alcohol culture and of completing equality analyses to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty;
- Providing simplified guidance to complainants and respondents in the informal complaints resolution process;
- Introducing a personal record template if someone feels unable to report an incident but may wish to note the details to recall at a later time;
- Introducing a template for someone to write to their Commanding Officer or senior manager to ask for support resolving an issue; and
- Updated reporting requirements for D&I Advisers which will contribute to MOD's efforts to improve its metadata on understanding instances of lower severity (in line with Wigston recommendation 1.1).

We recognise that banter is a common part of Service life but can easily over-step the mark. In updating JSP 763 we have outlined how the drip effect of such subtle behaviour can build up over time which may amount to bullying.

In seeking to reduce the delay in complaints of BHD being concluded, we have developed a new policy on investigations which has affected multiple procedures. The new approach has been embedded into JSP 831 and the Civilian Formal BHD and Victimisation Complaints Policy and Procedures. The new approach will see remote interviewing used as a default and improved timeframes for completing investigations as an outsourced model is piloted this summer. Speeding-up the investigation process, and ultimately the time it takes to make a complaint, will help to build trust in the system.

Army Deployments

4. What consideration have you given to how the longer, more frequent deployment of the Army specifically will affect the recruitment and retention of female Service personnel?

The Army has begun to consider the implications of the Integrated Review for women as well as other groups with protected characteristics. They have also considered the focus on digital and cyber skills and have been considering whether this will impact our Levels of Ambition (LOA) from a STEM perspective. More widely, all flexible working initiatives and policies, whilst not specifically focussed on women, do increase the attractiveness of the organisation and bring new opportunities while serving to dial up and down commitment. Programme CASTLE, the Army's personnel transformation programme, work will add further dimension to flexible employment opportunities. CASTLE will reach initial operating capability in August 2023 and full operating capability August 2025. It is however delivering change right now and will continue to do so throughout the programme's development.

Although CASTLE's work is not specifically looking at issues surrounding the recruitment and retention of women and operational tour or deployment lengths, there is more general work in train. Over the next five years, within a Defence frame, the Army will transform itself into a Digital Age force, driven by demand and talent; from data-poor to data-rich. CASTLE will deliver attractive, competitive, relevant and sustainable career pathways, maximising diverse talent, and enhancing agility. A significant aspect of the programme is focussed on improving the Army's organisational supply, in short, making the best use of people. This will be marked by matching skills to demand, not by cap-badge structures and rigid delineation between regular, reserve and veteran.

The Army will make far greater use of a spectrum of service that allows people to dial up and down their commitment, including re-joiners and lateral entrants. We will make it easier for servicewomen to decrease and increase their contract, or commitment, at whatever stage of life they need it. Career progression, alongside a fundamental review of how the Army offers value and reward, will enable remuneration by skill as well as rank, with specialisation becoming an increasingly attractive career choice. CASTLE will create the conditions for all Army personnel to join well, serve well, leave well, and re-join well.

The Army have currently made no assessment of the impact of longer and more frequent deployments on the retention on servicewomen; there is nothing that is currently impacting on workforce plan assumptions. Future analysis will be focussed upon:

- Interrogating AFCAS questions on deployments and job satisfaction/retention intentions, breaking down by gender/dual serving. A historical look over the past 10 years would be more appropriate to capture the period of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq C period, where there were more frequent deployments;
- A look at the Flexible Service (FS) surveys, breaking down by gender/dual serving. This asked if and why people might be interested in FS;
- Identifying take up rates of the Flexible Duties Trial and FS (majority were women).

The Army have identified that longer deployments might require changes to policy, as they will be much longer than a routine overseas training exercise, but will not have 'operational' status and therefore may not qualify for the full suite of Deployed Welfare Package and other support that comes with deployment on a named operation. There is a requirement, therefore, to consider how

welfare support (both for those deployed and the families at home) can be optimised for those on non-operational but lengthy deployments. No particular impact on servicewomen has yet been identified, however the retention (more generally) of servicewomen is an area of focus.

In April 2021, the MOD issued terms of reference for a review of Operational Tour Lengths across all three Services. The review will address, amongst other factors:

- The effect of the nature of the task on the ability of personnel to sustain operations (both high tempo and enduring) and the attendant impact of tour lengths on Stress Management and Resilience;
- Through-career impact of tour lengths on retention, specifically: willingness to deploy; the ability to maintain family support for serving personnel; and the ability to deliver a suitable allowances package to ensure deployments remain attractive.

Sanitary Products

5. Can you explain further the MOD's new policy to provide female service personnel with tampons and other sanitary items when serving abroad? Specifically, can you tell us when the policy will be fully rolled out, where it will apply, how women will be able to access these items and what information you have distributed to female Service personnel about this change?

From Summer 2021, the MOD will ensure access to sanitary products for all Armed Forces personnel whilst working in austere environments, on exercise and in Phase 1 training establishments. The MOD will provide a box of sanitary supplies, containing a variety of sanitary products including sanitary towels, tampons, wipes, disposal bags and underwear which will provide supply for approximately 10 personnel to access when required.

The decision to provide sanitary products was based on what personnel told us in the Defence People Menstruation Survey, held throughout December 2020. Periods are deeply personal and a wide range of experiences and preferences for period management were reported by personnel. The majority of the respondents stated they wanted to choose their own sanitary products to manage their menstruation, rather than have the MOD routinely supply products for every period.

Although Personnel stated that, in general, they prefer to manage their menstruation using their chosen method and product brands, the survey highlighted the unpredictable nature of periods, and that accessibility of sanitary products could often be difficult whilst working in austere locations and on exercise. It was concluded that the unmet need is for backup supplies of sanitary provision in environments where products are not easily accessible. Such supplies would not be routinely provided to service personnel but would be available when needed.

The MOD engaged with a task group of subject matter experts, consisting of colleagues from D&I, Women's Networks, defence equipment and logistic support to decide the best option to provide back-up supplies of sanitary products to personnel whilst they are working in remote locations. Consultations concluded that delivery through a box of supplies, would most meet this need, and that the boxes should be kept small, to supply approximately ten personnel, to ensure that they can be placed in discreet locations for accessibility. The MOD continues to be actively engaged with the Women's Networks, logistics supply chain and chain of command to ensure that the boxes will be available to personnel in the most appropriate manner.

The procurement of supplies has begun, and the boxes will be available by Summer 2021. A DIN will be released prior to rollout to inform MOD personnel and the MOD will work with Women's Networks to advertise the availability of the boxes to personnel.

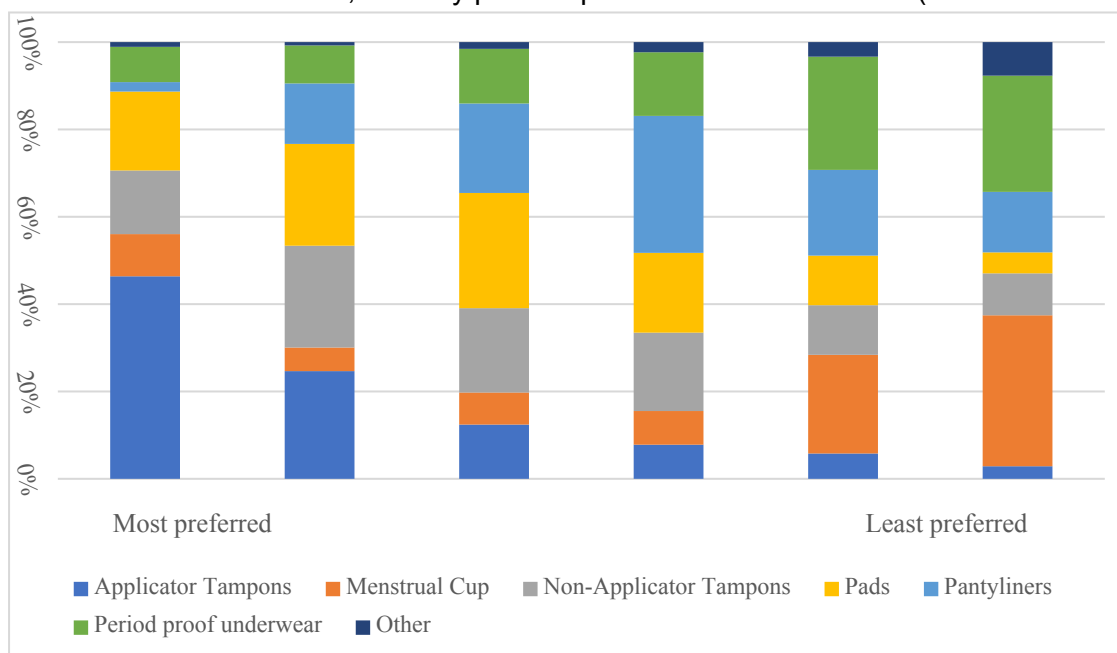
6. Can you outline further the consultation you undertook with Servicewomen on this issue (e.g. how many Servicewomen, when, for how long) and the detailed results on their preferences?

Throughout December 2020, the MOD ran an online survey for all Armed Forces personnel who menstruate to gain an understanding of what they feel about periods in Service life, and how the MOD can support this. 1,264 personnel completed the survey. Primary analysis has been conducted and the findings highlight that personnel prefer to choose their own product to manage their periods but require access to supplies whilst working in remote locations and they have unexpected bleeds. Following these results, Women’s Networks were consulted and we have worked with Defence Logistics and D&I to find the best method of distribution.

Sample of findings from the preliminary analysis of the Menstruation Survey:

- 82% of personnel did not want a standard provision of sanitary products, and thematic analysis demonstrated that personnel prefer to choose and bring their own products;
- 90% of respondents brought their own products whilst deployed or on exercise;
- Free text comments showed that personnel did not want MOD-supplied products because they would not meet their specific personal needs;
- Thematic analysis highlighted the unpredictable nature of periods and the unavailability to sanitary products whilst deployed/on exercise;
- Free text comments suggest that accessible supplies should be available in toilets or washing facilities in a similar way to how soap and toilet roll are provided, and access should be via medics, medical centres, or a discrete supply to avoid potential embarrassment, such as an emergency box with relevant supplies;
- One respondent quoted, “I think provision of sanitary products is only really an issue when things don't go according to plan. I don't think issuing products prior to deployment is useful as most women will make their own provisions according to their preferred product. It would be more useful to have a store of emergency products held somewhere so you can get some in an emergency”;
- When personnel were asked to rank their preference for sanitary products, applicator tampons and sanitary pads received the highest rankings followed by non-applicator tampons and panty liners. On operational deployments or exercises, 68% of respondents used tampons (47% applicator tampons, 21% non-applicator tampons), 43% used sanitary pads and 24% used pantyliners.

UK Armed Forces Personnel, sanitary product preferences in rank order (December 2020):



7. Is work still ongoing to make it “commonplace” for camps to supply sanitary items as Minister Heapey suggested, for instance work to improve supply chains for these items?

MOD provision will be based on what personnel told us that they wanted, to have access to sanitary supplies whilst deployed in austere environments, on exercise and in training establishments. The MOD will review this provision in June 2022 to monitor uptake and understand usage, ensuring that the MOD is meeting the needs of Armed Forces personnel.

Sexual Offences in the Service Justice System

8. Can you explain the arrangement further and what aspects are shared between the two forces?

The most common form of civilian facility used by the service police are Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC). It is here that forensic medical examinations are conducted by specialist trained forensic practitioners and specialist victim support service are offered and provided. Additionally, this is the most common place for the Achieving Best Evidence interview (ABE) of the victim to take place.

Where required the Service Police will periodically utilise civilian police facilities such as ABE suites in which evidence may be recorded in a non-threatening environment if this was not achieved at the SARC.

The Service Police sit on the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) Regional Rape Working Group through which best practice, new legislation and new National Plans are shared. For example, the Rape Pathway, Sexual Offences Investigations Logs and Sexual Offences Liaison Officers (SOLOs) have been introduced into the Service Police following introduction by the Home Office Police Forces (HOPF).

The Service Police do have formal arrangements with the HOPF to use their facilities, for example the Royal Military Police (RMP) have Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with circa 20 HOPF which allows instant access to their SARC facilities. All other HOPF in England and Wales will allow access on request. The SARC provides trauma kits and SOLOs to deal with Victims; however, the Service Police do have generic sexual offence examination kits (Early Evidence Kits) which are part of their general response equipment. They also hold Forensic Medical Examination (FME) Kits, but these are used only in emergency situations such as on deployed operations where a SARC facility is not available and transit to a SARC is not achievable.

Finally, the Service Police utilise the National Crime Agency (NCA) when seeking advice in complex cases and where they may offer advice on best practice.

9. If a Service person makes a live allegation of rape or sexual assault, does a referral for forensic medical examination and specialist support always occur immediately?

In cases of penetrative sexual offences, an FME will always take place immediately if the victim consents to this. The Service Police always seek to gather forensic evidence as soon as possible as it degrades over time. However, a complainant must consent for this to take place as the Service Police take a victim-centred approach and complainants may decline or may wish to take time to decide if they wish to go ahead with an FME. It should be noted that not all live sexual assaults would require an FME as no evidence could be obtained, for example for a sexual touching over clothing, which is still classified as a sexual assault, no FME would take place as it is invasive and would not yield forensic evidence. It is worthy of note that in some circumstances the geographical location of a victim is such that there may be a delay in obtaining an FME, but for penetrative sexual offences an FME will always be an immediate line of enquiry.

10. Can you provide the details of the 'Rape Pathway' which is followed when a rape allegation is made?

The 'Rape Pathway' is a Four Phase approach which has the aim of ensuring that complainants are informed about the process and what actions are likely to take place at each step of the process and why. The extract below is taken directly from the Support Leaflet given to victims:

- Phase 1: Once a report has been made to the police, they will take necessary action to ensure your safety. You will be asked to recall the events to an officer so that they understand what has happened. You may be asked to complete a medical examination or asked to allow the officer to download your phone (where necessary). Completing Phase 1 means that Service Police can start their investigation, and they can protect you and other people from harm. The Service Police will support you throughout this phase and will offer you a referral to more specialist support, such as those listed overleaf;
- Phase 2: Over the next month or so, the Service Police will continue their investigation. For example, they may speak to witnesses or ask you about relevant records about you held by other organisations. They will normally interview the suspect too. You will be kept updated and you can continue to access support. By completing Phase 2, the Service Police have more information about your crime;
- Phase 3: At this point, it may feel like things slow down. The Service Police will be aiming to build a case against the suspect which may take some time, but you will be kept updated. If there is enough evidence, the police may consult the Service Prosecution Authority and ask them to assess the evidence too. Whatever the outcome, by the end of Phase 3 the investigation will normally be completed;
- Phase 4: A decision will now be made about whether there is enough evidence for the offender to go to court and face a trial. Whatever the outcome, both the Service Police and support agencies will support you throughout this process. A successful trial may result in the offender receiving a sentence from the court, and probation can continue to manage this person with conditions even once they are released. However, even if the trial is unsuccessful, you can continue to access specialist support for as long as you need it. Once Phase 4 is finished you will have completed the Service Justice process and begin the process of moving on.

11. What proportion of Service personnel who make a rape or sexual assault allegation are referred for forensic medical examination within 24 hours?

In accordance with investigative doctrine, for any recent assault that is penetrative a referral will always be considered immediately in order to ensure that forensic evidence is captured. All investigators are familiar with the services provided by the SARCs and operate in accordance with strict forensic recovery timelines set by the Forensic Medical Council (FMC). Attendance may take place at any time within the forensic window for an examination pertinent to the offence detailed by the victim and the recovery of samples are detailed by the FMC.

The 24-hour timeline is particularly important when considering the effects of drugs or alcohol, but there is a greater window to obtain DNA or trace evidence through an FME. It should be noted that victims can be examined at any time within the 14-day window for an FME for certain samples to be recovered. However, it is not uncommon that they take a few days to decide if they wish to make a complaint or undergo an FME as victims are often vulnerable, traumatised or in need of medical treatment and may require specialist support before consenting to an FME.

It should also be noted that some victims refuse to undergo an FME or delay reporting the offence to the Service Police thereby missing the 14-day forensic window. As such, data about the number of cases in which an FME took place within 24 hours may not provide an accurate picture. It should be noted, as mentioned above, that it would not be appropriate in all cases of sexual assault to undertake FME.

Estimated figures are provided below. This information (in this and other tables) is not held as part of official statistics. As such each individual case has had to be manually checked in a short period and thus some accuracy may be compromised.

Number of investigations into non-historical sexual offences (non-penetrative)	Number of investigations into non-historical sexual offences (rape/penetrative)	Number of referrals to FME within 24 hrs (penetrative offences)	Number of additional FME referrals within the 14 day forensic window after 24 hrs. (penetrative offences)
80	27	7	3

12. What proportion of Service personnel who make a rape or sexual assault allegation are referred for specialist support (such as crisis counselling) within 24 hours?

In accordance with Investigative Doctrine, all victims of sexual offences are provided with a victim Support Leaflet and information about specialist support services at the time that they make their complaint. Victims of penetrative sexual offences will as a matter of course be taken to a SARC where direct access to specialist support is available. SOLOs meet with victims at the outset of investigations and they again discuss the support available with the victim. It should be noted that the Service Police provide information about support services but do not make referrals without the consent of the victim. Referrals may not take place within 24 hours as a victim may wish to take time to decide whether they wish to proceed with a complaint and whether they wish to be referred for specialist support. It is observed that, while victim support is available, victims do not always take up the offer, may refuse such support from the outset or may choose other support instead. However, any individual making a complaint will be provided with the details of specialist support at the time the complaint is made.

Number of investigations into non-historical sexual offences (non-penetrative)	Number of investigations into non-historical sexual offences (rape/penetrative)	Number of referrals made to specialist support (penetrative)	Number of complainants signposted to specialist support/ provided a victims' leaflet (penetrative)
80	27	19	25

13. During 2020 the Service Police began 161 investigations into sexual offences, of which 26 were for Rape specifically. (15 of these 161 investigations were into historical offences). How many forensic medical examinations were conducted as part of the 146 (non-historical) investigations?

As previously mentioned, not all sexual offences require an invasive FME as this would not provide evidence. The table below separates out the penetrative and non-penetrative offences as this may provide a more accurate picture of the number of FMEs that have taken place. Please note that the term 'historic' has now been replaced with 'non-recent' by the NPCC.

Number of investigations into non-historical sexual offences (non-penetrative)	Number of investigations into non-historical sexual offences (rape/penetrative)	Number of forensic medical examinations conducted for these investigations (penetrative)
80	27	9

14. How do you explain the low conviction rate for rape in the Service Justice System?

The levels of convictions secured in the Service Justice System (SJS) is not readily comparable to those in the civilian Criminal Justice System (CJS). Such assessments are not clear cut as the way the data is recorded differs between the civilian and service system and is not straightforward to make a meaningful statistical or data comparison between the SJS and the CJS.

The SJS Review by HH Shaun Lyons made it clear that it is not possible to make accurate comparisons of the outcomes in the SJS and civilian CJS as the relatively low number of cases in the SJS makes it more likely to fluctuate. The small data base in the SJS means that variances have a disproportionate effect on percentage values which can subsequently lead to false conclusions. Statistics for 2020 were published on 25 March 2021, with two convictions from eight (25%) Court Martials for the offence of rape. Between 2010 and 2019 the annual conviction rate for rape at Court Martial ranged from 4% to 75%. This demonstrates that small numbers can make a large difference in determining how the SJS is performing in securing convictions. The 10-year average is 23%.

However, in so far as measurement is possible, a significantly higher proportion of reported rape allegations result in charges being brought in the SJS compared with the CJS. It is acknowledged that the conviction rate for rape offences brought in the Court Martial is lower than for other sexual offences; however, the same is true for the CJS.

Female Veterans

15. Can you explain how you assess the needs of female veterans within the MOD's Transition Services and what steps you take to meet them?

All Defence Transition Services (DTS) clients undergo a robust assessment of their individual needs using a holistic framework, which aims to take account of the varied challenges they may be facing in their transition to civilian life. This assessment then facilitates a package of support to the individual, regardless of gender, which is available up to two years post-discharge (and longer in exceptional circumstances).

The MOD's resettlement provision is designed to help all personnel leaving the Armed Forces prepare to make a successful transition to civilian employment or achieve the wider vocational outcome they seek. Resettlement services and support is provided through the Career Transition Partnership (CTP) and is available to all Service Leavers, regardless of time served. CTP support is provided on an 'opt in' basis with all Service leavers given the opportunity to register with the CTP prior to leaving the Service.

The CTP both supports candidates in their transition to civilian life, either into a fulfilling second career, retirement, further education or self-employment, and raises awareness amongst employers of the talent pool available to them.

CTP supports all Service leavers who register with them in their transition from military to civilian life with a programme of activity suited to the aspirations of the individual. This takes many forms including skills development workshops, CV writing, seminars, resettlement training advice, vocational training courses, career consultancy, one-to-one guidance and support in finding a job. It also includes access to work experience placements in order to allow Service leavers to gain experience in a civilian environment. CTP works closely with employers to source quality and appropriate vacancies and facilitate employer events that are targeted at Service leavers.

For women on maternity leave specific provisions are in place, giving them early, or delayed, access to resettlement as appropriate to an individual's circumstances and preferences.

Far from stopping at the end of their military career Service Leavers can continue to access support from the CTP for up to two years post-discharge, allowing individuals to re-engage for additional support if required, or if their circumstances change.

16. Does the Ministry now accept the term 'military sexual trauma'?

Whilst we are aware that the term 'Military Sexual Trauma' (MST) is used elsewhere as a means of referring to cases of sexual assault or sexual harassment which occur whilst in service, the MOD has made no formal decision to do the same. What we have done is to make it absolutely clear

that there is no place for this behaviour in the Armed Forces. All allegations will be thoroughly investigated, and appropriate support provided to victims, be they serving or veteran. The Service Police do not recognise the term MST and instead use the terminology as set out in the Sexual Offences Act 2003.