

Defence publishes its Zero Tolerance approach to sexual offences

Press release

As part of Defence's commitment to crack down on unacceptable sexual behaviour and sexual offences, a new Zero Tolerance policy has been announced.



This policy aligns the Royal Navy, RAF, and Army under one approach to dealing with incidences, that will be implemented across the UK Armed Forces to enable services to better support victims and secure justice for them.

Key changes to existing policies include that those found guilty of sexual offences are to be administratively discharged from service with no option to serve elsewhere. The policy also stipulates that sexual relationships between instructors and trainees are unacceptable and will result in discharge of the instructor.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Leo Docherty said:

Sexual offences and sexual relationships between instructors and trainees have no place in Defence, or wider society, and a zero tolerance approach will ensure our commitment to providing a better working environment for our serving personnel is met.

We are sending a clear message that the women and men of the Armed Forces must uphold our values and standards.

As we set out in our response to the House of Commons Defence Committee's Report into "Women in the Armed Forces: From Recruitment to Civilian Life", it is a Defence-wide goal to stamp out sexual offences and ensure that the Armed Forces continues to be a place where people are proud to work and have faith in their justice system.

The Zero Tolerance policy is one of a range of measures intended to tackle

unacceptable sexual behaviour in the Armed Forces. It is intended to improve the career experiences of serving personnel, providing clearer, tri service direction to those in a position to prevent and address instances of sexual offence. We have already taken important steps to ensure that all reported offences are subject to prompt, thorough, efficient, and independent investigation. The policy also sends a clear signal to everyone in the Armed Forces that these offences will not be tolerated.

Where proven, personnel convicted of a sexual offence will be discharged from the Armed Forces.

The policy has been produced with input and consultation from a wide range of stakeholders across Defence and the Service Justice System and is just one on a number of new policies being introduced this year to stamp out unacceptable behaviours.

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