

Defence response to the 'Women in the Armed Forces' Report

Press release

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) response to Parliament's Defence Sub-Committee's report into 'Women in the Armed Forces: From Recruitment to Civilian Life' has been published.



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Women play a vital role in the armed forces, and it is not acceptable that in certain areas they still face disadvantage.

The report makes a number of important recommendations, and MOD has accepted 33 of them, partially accepted a further four recommendations and noted 13 points which are conclusions rather than recommendations. The MOD is not implementing just three of the Committee's recommendations but are instead seeking to address the underlying concerns of the recommendations in other ways.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

While almost 90% of women who engaged with this inquiry said they would recommend a career in the Armed Forces, it's clear further change is needed.

I am grateful to all the women who contributed to the Defence Committee's report, we've listened carefully and are implementing bold changes in response.

Having tested the recommendations with our own Service Women's Networks, we are embracing almost all of them – and in many cases actually taking them further.

I look forward to continuing to work with them to hold all three services to account, and ensure we see meaningful progress.

These new policy changes build on the work already underway as a result of the [Wigston Report](#) published in 2019 which made significant progress in addressing the disparity in treatment between men and women in Defence, the [Danuta Grey review](#), which followed a year later to review the progress underway.

New commitments announced today include:

- Undertaking a 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.
- The First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff Sir Ben Key, Chief of the General Staff of the British Army Sir Mark Carleton-Smith, and Chief of the Air Staff Sir Mike Wigston, 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.
- Building 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 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.
- The Secretary of State and the Minister of State for Defence (Lords) have committed to regularly meet representatives of MOD's Servicewomen's Networks to understand the impact of changes being made, to enable servicewomen to hold it 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, including:

- 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 its 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](#), which will enable allegations to be reported independently and investigations to be conducted outside of the single Service chain of command, improving our

capability to deal with the most serious offences and provide improved victim support through an independent Victim and Witness Care Unit.

- Undertaking work to ensure female representation on court martial boards related to sexual offending.
- Setting a stretching and challenging level of ambition of 30% inflow by 2030, more than doubling the inflow of women into the Armed Forces.

The MOD is working towards meaningful and enduring change for all its Defence people. Defence is committed to creating an environment for all, standing together as a community and challenging unacceptable behaviour when it occurs.

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