

Maximising talent through diversity and inclusion

The events of recent months have provided a stark reminder of the inequalities that continue to exist in our society, within the UK Armed Forces and within defence as a whole. It is mission critical for defence, if we are to safeguard the security, stability and prosperity of our nation, that we recruit and retain the most able people drawn from the broadest diversity of thought, skills and background. While we have made some progress on matters of diversity, inclusion and inappropriate behaviour, we are clear that if we are to improve the diversity and inclusion of our work force we must take urgent action to access and maximise all our talent.

We are determined to make a collective commitment as follows:

We will set targets and we will be held to account for delivering the policy, process and behavioural changes required to deliver the levels of ambition that each Front Line Command has set for 2025. To drive transparency and accountability, each Front Line Command will publish publicly its levels of ambition and associated delivery plans by September 2020. To enable this, we are committed to resourcing our D&I teams with high quality military and civilian staff and we will provide increased funding for our D&I programmes.

We will modernise the promotion system so that it fairly maximises everyone's potential and where emotional intelligence (EQ), integrity and behaviours are considered equally alongside objective delivery. To drive this change, we will conduct an independent review of promotion boards (to report in early 2021), refresh our current appraisals process, and review all job specifications to remove arbitrary barriers to progression, expanding our talent pools.

We will modernise the career structure and associated terms and conditions of service to make it more flexible, focusing more on potential. Recognising the increasing requirement for specialist career streams, it must enable initiatives like lateral entry that can accelerate the growth of a more diverse workforce. Building on the recommendations within the Wigston Report, we will champion positive action pathways (for example, the Women's Development Programme), and we will use our D&I champions and networks as critical partners throughout.

We believe it is critical that everyone has confidence in the Service Complaints system, both to report their experiences, but importantly to trust that where evidence of inappropriate behaviours is presented, swift action will be taken. Following the release of the Service Complaints review findings in Autumn 2020, we will take personal ownership for implementation of the recommendations. We will also work to ensure parity and coherence with the civilian grievance system to drive a unified culture that has zero tolerance at its core.

We each have a responsibility to drive change within the Front Line Commands and within defence. We must embed D&I into our culture. We are committed to setting a personal example; genuinely to improving the lived experience for everyone; and regularly engaging with our D&I agenda by being held formally to account by publishing a report every 6 months. We are all determined to deliver this agenda and to taking demonstrable action with immediate effect.

Signed by