

Ministry of Defence announces further crackdown on unacceptable behaviour in the Armed Forces

Two more policies and a new strategy have been announced today as part of Defence's commitment to crack down on unacceptable sexual behaviour in our Armed Forces.

The new procedures, will build on measures already introduced by the Ministry of Defence to tackle unacceptable sexual behaviours in the UK Armed Forces and improve the experience for everyone, and in particular women in the Armed Forces. The policies and new strategy have been created alongside the [Zero Tolerance policy: Discharge for sexual offences and sexual instructor-trainee relationships](#) that was announced earlier this year as part of the wide-ranging programme of work that has been delivered across Defence

Minister for Defence People, Leo Docherty said:

Abusive, discriminatory or predatory behaviour has no place in our Armed Forces and these measures send a clear message that these types of behaviours will not be tolerated.

As a forward thinking and modern employer, the Armed Forces are a place where our serving personnel can thrive, and we will continue to expect the highest values and standards of each and every one of them.

Key details of the publications include:

Zero Tolerance to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy: Sexual exploitation and abuse involves sexual activity where there is an imbalance of power. This policy supports Defence's commitment to crack down on unacceptable sexual behaviour and prohibits all sexual activity which involves the abuse of power, including buying sex whilst abroad. The policy will ensure that every allegation will be responded to, no matter where the allegation takes place, and introduces a presumption of discharge for anyone found to be engaging in the targeted behaviours, including buying sex whilst deployed outside the UK.

Tackling Sexual Offending in Defence Strategy: This strategy prioritises victims and aims to reduce the prevalence and impact of sexual offending in the Armed Forces. This will be done through the application of preventative measures such as awareness-raising, training and better understanding the most prevalent types of offenders. Survivors who do not think they will be believed will be reassured and encouraged to come forward and seek support, and the adoption of recommendations from reviews into the Service justice System will encourage increased reporting, engagement and successful

prosecutions.

Zero Tolerance to Unacceptable Sexual Behaviour Policy: A Victim/Survivor Focused Approach: This applies to all UK Armed Forces personnel and follows the recently published Zero Tolerance to Sexual Offending and Sexual Relationships Between Instructors and Trainees policy which introduced mandatory discharge for anyone convicted of a sexual offence. This new policy places greater emphasis on the support for victims, with a presumption of discharge from the Armed Forces for any person who behaved in a sexually unacceptable way. This policy builds trust and confidence in Defence's ability to deal with unacceptable behaviours and demonstrates that supporting people who are victims of unacceptable sexual behaviour is a top priority.

These new measures demonstrate significant progress against the recommendations made by Rt. Hon. Sarah Atherton MP in her report ['Protecting Those Who Protect Us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life'](#).

In parallel to these new publications, an extensive programme of work has been delivered across Defence as part of the [Government's Response](#) to Sarah Atherton's Inquiry. This includes training developments around the concept of consent, transformation of the Service Complaints system, the stand-up of the Defence Serious Crime Unit HQ, delivery of improvements to uniform and equipment for women, and the Servicewomen's Health Improvement Sprint, which will ensure our Armed Forces are delivering against being a truly inclusive employer.

Read the [Ministry of Defence policies to tackle unacceptable behaviour](#).