

**COMMITTEE FOR WOMEN IN NATO**  
**UNITED KINGDOM NATIONAL REPORT 2009**

**Policies (changes/new policy affecting women in uniform)**

1. In 2008 the UK Government commissioned a review to identify ways of achieving proper recognition for members of the UK's Armed Forces to ensure that the unusual demands of serving in the Armed Forces did not result in unfairness for those who serve; to recognise the special sacrifice made by some Service personnel and their families; and to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by what they do.<sup>1</sup>

2. A number of new measures were introduced, including a review of the Armed Forces' Compensation Scheme; improved healthcare provision for Service personnel and their families; a scheme to promote home ownership through affordable housing; education and training opportunities for Service leavers with six year's service; and support to families. Of particular relevance to Servicewomen was an undertaking that career managers would provide a period of stability and avoid posting women undergoing assisted conception in order to give the treatment the best possible chance to succeed.

3. Dealing with Sexual Harassment Over the past three years two surveys have been carried out on the prevalence of sexual harassment of women in the Armed Forces. The first, a census, was carried out in 2005 and the second (a sample) was conducted in 2007, together with a similar survey of men. The surveys were conducted as part of an action plan to "Prevent and Deal Effectively with Sexual Harassment of Women in the Armed Forces". The action plan was developed as part of an Agreement with the former Equal Opportunities Commission (now the Equalities and Human Rights Commission) which started in 2005 and concluded in Jul 08. A follow-up Sexual Harassment Survey of all Servicewomen and a sample of Servicemen started in Feb 09.

4. During the three year period of the Agreement with the Equal Opportunities Commission several important policies and procedures were introduced and work continues to determine methodologies to audit these policies to assure consistent implementation and effect. Research is on-going and an independent benchmarking exercise of policies will take place over the next few months. Additionally, and as part of general work in connection with the care of trainees, there is an on-line survey which is completed by all trainees (male and female) as they leave their Phase I and Phase II training. This covers all aspects of training and welfare including food, accommodation and facilities, and more specific questions on treatment and equality and diversity issues.

5. The Armed Forces acknowledge that there is still work to be done in translating policies and procedures into meaningful change on the ground. It is recognised that changing people's behaviours and attitudes, as well as raising awareness will take time. To this end the Ministry of Defence and the Equalities and Human Rights Commission have entered into a new Partnership Agreement covering a wide range of equality and diversity issues. As a first stage, an Action Plan is being developed in consultation with an Expert Working Group of external advisers.

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<sup>1</sup> The report, entitled "*The Nation's Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their families and Veterans*", was published in Jul 08 and can be found at <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/CM7424/document/cm74/7424/7424.pdf>

6. Service Complaints Commissioner A Service Complaints Commissioner was appointed in 2008 to provide oversight of a new Service complaints process which came into effect on 1 Jan 08. The Commissioner is independent of the chain of command and reports directly to the Secretary of State. The Commissioner's role is to review the fairness, effectiveness and efficiency of how complaints are handled. In addition she provides an alternative point of contact for individuals and third parties to raise concerns they may have, which for whatever reason they feel unable to raise with the chain of command.

7. The Commissioner published her first annual report for 2008 on 4 Mar 09<sup>2</sup>. The report acknowledges that the new complaints process is well designed, but there is scope for improvement. For example, she recommended that complaints should be dealt with proactively and at the lowest appropriate level. During her first year in office the Commissioner received nearly 200 enquiries, reflecting the increasing awareness of her role.

### Organisation

8. The following table shows the total percentages of women by rank in the UK Armed Services as at 1 Jan 09.

	Total % of All Personnel	Naval Service	Army	Royal Air Force
<b>OFFICERS</b>				
OF10	-	-	-	-
OF-6 to OF9	0.6	-	-	2.3
OF-5	3.4	0.3	3.9	5.2
OF-4	5.3	3.1	5.5	6.9
OF-3	10.2	8.3	10.0	12.5
OF-2	15.3	13.0	13.7	18.6
OF-1/OF-(D)	17.0	16.0	15.5	20.4
<b>Total % of all Officers</b>	12.0	9.6	11.1	15.1
<b>OTHER RANKS</b>				
OR-9	3.7	2.9	4.7	2.6
OR-8	4.3	0.1	4.9	* <sup>3</sup>
OR-7	4.8	4.0	5.7	3.9
OR-6	8.5	7.6	7.9	10.2
OR-4	11.6	10.8	9.9	15.1
OR-3	8.6	-	9.0	*
OR-2/OR1	9.5	12.7	6.0	15.4
<b>Total % of all ORs</b>	8.9	9.6	7.3	12.8

Notes: No Services have personnel at NATO Rank OF-10.

<sup>2</sup> The Service Complaints Commissioner's Annual Report 2008 can be found at <http://armedforcescomplaints.independent.gov.uk/newsandpublications.htm>

<sup>3</sup> \* Denotes not applicable

The Royal Air Force has no personnel at NATO Ranks OR-3 or OR-8.  
The Naval Service has no personnel at NATO Rank OR-1.  
Figures less than 100 have been left un-rounded so as not to obscure the data.  
Percentages have been calculated from un-rounded figures.  
Due to the rounding methods used, figures may not always equal the sum of the parts. When rounding to the nearest 10, numbers ending in 5 have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent systematic bias.

(Extracted from Defence Analytical Services Agency Tri-Service Publication 9: UK Regular Forces Rank Structure at 1 Jan 09)

## **Recruitment**

9. Recruitment to the UK's Armed Forces is generally gender free and there are no separate recruiting targets for women. This means that recruitment is seen to be fair and unbiased as the best candidates are recruited, regardless of their gender. Since 1 Jan 08 the proportion of females in the UK Regular Forces has risen by 0.3% for Officers and remains stable since 1 Jan 08 for Other Ranks at around 9.0%. At 1 Jan 09 females accounted for 12.0% of Officers and 8.9% of Other Ranks.

10. The Armed Forces continue to encourage women to join through recruitment campaigns which raise awareness of the benefits of a career in the Armed Forces, particularly in terms of opportunities for training and the acquisition of professional qualifications, and to dispel fears and myths about life in the Services. Women are being encouraged to consider branches and trades (particularly technical specialisations) where they are traditionally under-represented.

11. Single-Service recruitment initiatives include:

- The Naval Service uses positive female role models, who are successful sportswomen, such as Lieutenant Commander Penny Clark RN, who competed in sailing events at the 2008 Olympic Games.
- The Army's Recruiting Group focus on women has continued into 09 driven by the decreasing number of applications received from women. Recruiting activities have focussed on young women's magazines as well as articles in national newspapers on motherhood in the Army. The sixtieth anniversary of the creation of the Women's Royal Army Corps was celebrated in Feb 09.
- The Royal Air Force continues to implement strategies with regard to gender-specific awareness training, building upon the work strands which began in 08. The early engagement strand (engagement with girls aged 13) has been developed to include initiatives from the commercial sector such as close cooperation with Women in Science and Technology, Sponsorship of the United Kingdom Resource Centre for Women's Annual Conference entitled "*Tomorrow's Women, Tomorrow's World*", specific gender focussed marketing activity and sponsorship of Female Young Engineers Competition. The development of a Joint Roadshow for pre-teens with British Aerospace Systems aims to challenge gender stereotyping.

## **Retention**

12. There have been a number of improvements to “family friendly” policies to aid the retention of female personnel. (See paras 18, 19 and 20 below)

### **Areas From Which Women Are Excluded**

13. The majority of posts in the UK’s Armed Forces are open to women: 71% of posts in the Naval Service; 70% of posts in the Army and 97% of posts in the Royal Air Force. Women serve in all specialisations except those where the primary duty is to close with and kill the enemy. These roles include: the Royal Marines General Service (as Royal Marine Commandos); the Household Cavalry and Royal Armoured Corps; the Infantry; and the Royal Air Force Regiment. For health and safety reasons women do not serve in submarines or as mine clearance divers.

14. On 24 May 09 the Ministry of Defence announced that a review is to be carried out of the current policy which excludes women from ground close-combat roles. The exclusion of women from these roles is consistent with the European Commission (EC) Equal Treatment Directive, which does not preclude such exclusions where they are proportionate, appropriate and necessary for the purpose of guaranteeing public security. However, the UK is bound by EC law to reassess periodically occupations from which women are excluded to decide whether, in the light of social development, there is justification in maintaining the exclusion. The UK is required to notify the EC of the results of such reassessments periodically, but at least every 8 years. The results of the last review of this policy were published in 2002 and as it is now 7 years since they were published the Ministry of Defence has decided that it is appropriate and timely to review the current policy.

15. The review will comprise:

- a review of recent literature on the on the effectiveness of mixed gender teams in a combat environment;
- an assessment of women’s roles in recent operations and an examination of the attitudes of the men and women who have served in Theatre, together with those of the commanders on the ground, in order to assess the potential impact of mixed-gender teams on team cohesion and combat effectiveness;
- consideration of the experience of other nations in employing women in ground close-combat roles.

It is expected that the review will be completed in early 2010 and once the results have been evaluated we will publish our conclusions.

### **Most Popular Programmes or Disciplines Chosen by Women**

16. The most popular specialisations chosen by women are:

Royal Navy: Logistics, Medical, Communications

Army: Logistics, Medical, Military Police, Clerical/Administration

Royal Air Force: Administration, Air Traffic Control, Fighter Control, Intelligence, Catering

Women are disproportionately over-represented in some specialisations and this can potentially lead to problems. We are looking to see what might be done to mitigate the effects of occupational segregation.

### **Training and Physical Fitness**

17. There have been problems with injuries among female recruits, particularly Pelvic Stress Injuries (PSIs). In Apr 06 the Army introduced single-sex platoon training for women entering the 14 week Common Military Syllabus (Standard Entry) course. This followed research into the injury risk factors for female recruits when compared to their male counterparts during Phase 1 training. The move to single sex training was endorsed by a subsequent study that identified significant reductions in medical discharges and training injury rates in female recruits following the introduction of gender streaming.

18. The Royal Air Force has introduced further refinements to its physical training regime to reduce PSIs. The nine week Recruit Training Course at RAF Halton now has a two week Pre-Conditioning Course (PCC) and single-sex flights which were introduced with effect from 18 Mar 09. The problem of female over-striding has been remedied by the introduction of a 27 inch (68.58 cm) pace for all marching other than on the parade square. A parallel approach has been taken to the Officers and Aircrew Training Unit (OACTU), to ensure that input and output standards are appropriate; physical demands are analysed; and that conditioning is made available to cadets who require it.

### **Deployments**

19. The UK Armed Services are currently operationally deployed in many locations worldwide. There are no restrictions on women's deployment overseas, unless they are pregnant or there are local cultural sensitivities involved. Women in roles such as Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC), media, interpreters, medical and police are increasingly serving alongside male colleagues in front-line roles. In Jun 08 the first British female soldier was killed in Afghanistan.

### **Career Development**

20. Current highest ranks achieved by women are: Royal Navy OF5, Army OF6, Royal Air Force OF6. Attainment of 2\* rank and above has tended to depend on operational experience or experience in the Combat Arms and at present there are no women in these ranks. However, as women are increasingly deploying on operations women may attain these higher ranks with time. Continuing difficulties in reconciling family (especially child and elder care) commitments with Service commitments to go to sea or deploy overseas remain obstacles to career advancement for many women.

21. The Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, the Red Arrows, has recently recruited its first ever female pilot to fly as part of the 2010 display team. Flight Lieutenant Kirsty Moore of Number XIII Squadron, RAF Marham, will join the display team and begin training for a three year tour in September 2009.

## **Maternity and Paternity Leave**

22. Servicewomen may opt to leave the Service on the grounds of pregnancy. However, if they choose to remain in the Service following pregnancy the Services' maternity policy is to provide supportive arrangements to enable a Servicewoman to accommodate pregnancy and maternity absence within her career. All Servicewomen, regardless of their length of service, are entitled to 52 weeks of maternity leave. Those who have served for a qualifying period are also entitled to 39 weeks of Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) of £123.06 per week. Women who have served continuously for a year and who intend to return to duty following maternity leave are entitled to full pay during the first 26 weeks of maternity leave followed by 13 weeks at the lower SMP rate. Women may return to duty for up to 10 days during their maternity leave for training purposes without bringing their maternity leave to an end. Improvements to maternity leave were introduced in Oct 08 which allow women on maternity leave to accrue annual leave and public holidays during the whole 52 weeks of their maternity leave.

23. In Apr 09 the UK Government introduced a Health in Pregnancy Grant for all pregnant women, including Servicewomen, who are at least 25 weeks pregnant and who have received the appropriate health advice. The grant aims to provide financial help to support the general health and well-being of women in the later stages of pregnancy, and to help them to meet wider costs in the run up to the birth. The grant is set at £190.

24. As mentioned in paragraph 2 above, a policy is being formulated to enable Servicewomen who are considering accessing assisted conception services to be offered a period of stability with regard to postings in order to give the treatment the best possible chance to succeed.

25. Similar arrangements to those for maternity leave and pay are in place for Servicewomen (and men) who adopt a child. Qualifying Service personnel are entitled to 52 weeks adoption leave, 39 weeks of which are paid.

26. Qualifying Servicemen (ie those who are the biological father of the child or have (with the mother) the main responsibility for the child's upbringing) are eligible for paternity leave. Currently, two weeks' paternity leave (ie 14 days) may be taken, paid at the basic weekly pay rate.

## **Initiatives to Improve Work-Life Balance**

27. The UK's Armed Forces operate a salary sacrifice system to help parents pay for childcare. This enables Service personnel to convert a proportion of their salary into childcare vouchers which can be used to pay for registered childcare. This provides Service personnel with opportunity of saving up to £1,200 a year on their childcare costs through reduced tax and National Insurance contributions.

28. Workplace nurseries are provided at a number of Ministry of Defence locations and these provide a limited number of places on a first-come basis.

29. Other initiatives to improve work-life balance include:

- Career breaks (time permitted is over 3 months and up to 3 years)
- Special unpaid leave (up to 93 days)
- Variable start/finish times of the working day
- Home working (short-term)
- Compressed hours (working longer on some days to allow an earlier finish on other days)
- Annual leave entitlement has changed with effect from 1 Apr 09 so that Service personnel have an increased allowance of 38 days' leave, 8 of which are public holidays.

## **Conclusion**

30. We continue to look at ways of improving the recruitment and retention of women in the Armed Forces. Our Armed Forces continue to be involved in a wide range of demanding tasks at home and overseas. The contribution of Servicewomen, alongside their male counterparts is vital to the operational effectiveness of the Armed Forces.