Dear Sirs,

Thank you for your contribution to what was a well-informed and constructive Grand Committee Stage of the Armed Forces (Flexible Working) Bill.

I am grateful for the opportunity to set out the Government’s position on the specific question that you raise.

You asked whether the pay of a Service person who has taken up part-time working is reduced on the basis of a seven-day week, a 365 day year, or on the basis of a five day week. In doing so, you also made reference to the pay for Reserve personnel who are only paid for the days that they do.

One of the fundamental principles that underlies the policies we are developing is that they should be above all else fair to both the Regular Service personnel who temporarily works part-time, and those who remain on full-time commitments. As I have mentioned during debates, briefings and in written responses, it is entirely reasonable that if someone wishes to vary their commitment, they should see a commensurate variation in their pay. I am grateful for your support on this position.

Regular Service personnel are currently paid a salary that recompenses them not only for the duties that they perform, but for the fact that they are liable for duty 365 days of the year, seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Any part-time arrangements need to take the unique nature of regular armed force service into account.

As you have already noted, outside operations and exercises, most regular personnel normally have a routine work pattern roughly equivalent to 5 days on duty. However, a unique feature of regular service is that service personnel remain liable for duty on the other 2 days of the week, and are required to report for duty if given a lawful command to do so. You will be aware that service personnel are regularly required to report for duty outside their routine five day working week. There are, of course, a wide variety of working patterns in the armed forces and not all will fall neatly into the above description, but by and large most roles routinely require a routine equating to five days.

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The MOD intends that pay for those who work part-time will be reduced on a proportional basis. For instance, we currently envisage that, in the case of individuals working a routine 5-day a week pattern, they will be able to reduce their commitment by one or two days per routine working week. Those who reduce their working pattern by one day out of five will be paid 20% less and those who reduce their working pattern by two days out of five will be paid 40% less than full-time regulars. To ensure that their total liability for duty is reduced by 20% or 40%, their liability for duty on the days when they are usually off duty will also be reduced by the relevant percentage.

I hope my response is helpful.

A copy of this letter has been sent to all who took part in the debate and placed in the Library of the House.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

THE RT HON THE EARL HOWE PC