

TIN 2.101 Defence Inclusivity Phase 2: The Lived Experience Final Report

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

Acronym	Definition
ACAS	Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service
AF	Armed Forces
AFCAS	Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey
BAME	Black Asian and Minority Ethnic
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
CDSM	Contact Details and Study Management
CS	Civil Service/Civil Servant
D&I	Diversity and Inclusion
DE&S	Defence Equipment and Support
DHCSTC	Defence Human Capability Science and Technology Centre
Dstl	Defence Science and Technology Laboratory
EDIA	Equality Diversity and Inclusion Advisor ¹
F&C	Foreign and Commonwealth
HOCS	Head Office and Corporate Services
HQ	Headquarters
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
JFC	Joint Forces Command
KIS	Key Indicators of Success
LGBT	Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender
MIDIT	Means of Identifying Internal Talent
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MODREC	Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee
MS	Microsoft
NHS	National Health Service
NI	Northern Ireland
OCS	Officer Cadet Survey
OR	Other Ranks
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RAF	Royal Air Force
RIC	Regimental Inclusion Council
RM	Royal Marines
RN	Royal Navy
RTS	Recruit Trainee Survey
SCS	Senior Civil Service/Servant
SDSR	Strategic Defence and Security Review
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
T&C	Terms and Conditions
TLB	Top Level Budget
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

¹ Formally known as Equality and Diversity Advisor.

Definitions

BAME	Black Asian Minority Ethnic (used to refer to members of non-white communities in the United Kingdom ²).
Bullying	<i>“Characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, and abuse of or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipients” (AFCAS, 2018).</i>
Discrimination	<i>“Can occur when a person is treated less favourably because of race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, gender reassignment, age or disability. Discrimination can also occur where a policy or practice which applies to everyone unreasonably disadvantages a person on the basis of the characteristics mentioned above” (AFCAS, 2018).</i>
Diversity	Diversity refers to identities based on membership in social and demographic groups and how differences in identities affect social relations in organisations... <i>“[it is] a mixture of people with different group identities within the same social system” (Nkomo and Stewart, 2006, p. 520).</i> Specifically, diversity includes <i>“the differences in experience created by social factors such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation” (Andersen and Taylor, 2007, p. xvii).</i>
Foreign and Commonwealth	Foreign nationals recognised by the Armed Forces are those from the Republic of Ireland and Nepal. Commonwealth nationals are those from any of the 53 member states that make up the Commonwealth nations. Zimbabwe, Gambia and Fiji are no longer part of the Commonwealth but are included in the Commonwealth category with respect to the military (Greene, 2016).
Harassment	<i>“Includes unwanted conduct...and is intended to or has the effect of violating another’s dignity or creating a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment” (AFCAS, 2018).</i>
Hegemonic masculinity	A practice that legitimises powerful men's dominant position in society and justifies the subordination of women and other marginalised ways of being a man (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).
Inclusion/exclusion	<i>“The concept of inclusion-exclusion in the workplace refers to the individual’s sense of being a part of the organizational system in both the formal processes, such as access to information and decision-making channels, and the informal processes, such as social gatherings and lunch meetings, where information exchange and decisions informally take place”. (Mor Barak, 2005, p. 149). “The inclusion-exclusion continuum is linked to important psychological processes ... and a general perception that one’s life has meaning. This is particularly relevant for members of disadvantaged groups who may suffer the psychological consequences of being excluded” (Mor Barak, 2008, p. 251).</i>
Marginalise/marginalisation	<i>“To relegate to the fringes, out of the mainstream; make seem unimportant”</i> https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/marginalize

² <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/BAME>

Prejudice	<i>“An individual-level attitude (whether subjectively positive or negative) toward groups and their members that creates or maintains hierarchical status relations between groups” (Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick and Esses, 2013, p. 7).</i>
Protected characteristics	<i>Under the Equality Act 2010, it is “unlawful to discriminate, harass or victimise someone because they have or are perceived to have a ‘protected characteristic’ or are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic”...“The ‘protected characteristics’ under the Act are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex and sexual orientation”.³</i>
Racism	<i>Racism has been defined as “the presumed biological or cultural superiority of one or more racial groups [which] is used to justify or prescribe the inferior treatment or social position(s) of other racial groups...” (Clair and Denis, 2015).</i>
Sexism	<i>“Sexism consists of attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and practices at the individual, institutional, and societal level that involve negative evaluations of people or promote unequal treatment based on gender” (Swim and Becker, 2010, p. 578).</i>
Stereotype	<i>“Associations and beliefs about the characteristics and attributes of a group and its members that shape how people think about and respond to the group” (Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick and Esses, 2013, p. 8).</i>
Unconscious bias	<i>The attitudes or stereotypes that affect people’s understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favourable and unfavourable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual’s awareness or intentional control. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness. Rather, unconscious or implicit biases are not accessible through introspection.</i>

³ https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/ea_legal_definitions_0.pdf

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Research Requirement and Study Aims

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) understands that a diverse and inclusive organisation is one that is stronger, healthier, more cohesive and resilient. Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) drives performance, it leads to better decision making and problem solving, increased flexibility to react to environmental changes and reduces the risks of group think⁴, all of which are mission critical to meeting existing security challenges and threats (Defence Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, 2018-2030; Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2013). The MOD wants to reap the benefits that a diverse workforce brings; reflect the society it serves and, in doing so, achieve its Defence Strategic Equality Objectives. However, despite continued efforts, Defence recognises that it struggles to recruit and retain people from backgrounds not traditionally associated with Defence, namely females and Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) personnel.

To address this, the MOD commissioned a robust Whole Force qualitative study (unprecedented in scope and scale) to better understand the Lived Experience⁵ of females and BAME personnel⁶, in comparison with white males, to inform actions to improve the representation of these minority groups across Defence.

1.2 Summary of Key Findings

Being female and/or BAME negatively impacts the Lived Experience. Gender and ethnicity were found to impact the experiences of MOD personnel to a large extent, with BAME females facing the most challenges. However, gender and ethnicity were not the only characteristics that impacted people's experiences. Other factors (such as social class, age, position within the organisation) also had an effect.

A white male prototype is pervasive and undermines inclusion. A white male prototype, often characterised by alpha male traits (dominance, assertiveness, a strong physicality etc.) was perceived to be pervasive across Defence (particularly in the military) and was undermining efforts to change internal climates. This impacted white males who did not conform to this norm, as much as it did females and BAME personnel, who all found it harder to fit in and reported challenges developing and maintaining their sense of belonging and advancing their career.

Issues faced/experiences of minority groups are often unseen. White males were sometimes 'blind' to the issues faced by minority groups, suggesting disadvantage as a function of gender or ethnicity was no longer a problem. White males did not perceive female and BAME under-representation to be a current barrier to their inclusion or progression; the MOD was viewed as a meritocracy in which everyone could progress. This stance often masks underlying and subtle forms of exclusion; it allows the 'blame' or responsibility for the absence of female and BAME personnel in senior positions to lie with those groups, failing to recognise structural barriers or 'white male privilege'.

Some open resistance to D&I exists. Some military white males (particularly in the Royal Marines and Army) were resistant to females joining previously male only units, raising concerns that increased female participation equated to a lowering of (physical) standards. Other white males expressed resentment that scarce resources were focused on D&I issues at the expense of other, more critical areas (e.g. equipment).

Discrimination in various forms persists. More blatant forms of discrimination towards females and BAME personnel were found to have been largely replaced with more subtle, latent, behaviours such as being ignored, excluded, overlooked, questioned, micromanaged or not cooperated with. However, blatant racist and sexist behaviours were still found to exist within Defence, and often remained unchallenged.

Evidence of structural discrimination.⁷ Unintended consequences associated with policy implementation leading to unfairness were uncovered. Evidence of structural discrimination impacting on females and BAME

⁴ Group think is a psychological phenomenon in which the desire for harmony/conformity within a group results in irrational or dysfunctional decision-making outcomes.

⁵ The term 'Lived Experience' refers to a person's first-hand experience in everyday events.

⁶ As directed by the Statement of Requirement. Other protected characteristics/minority groups were out of scope of this research.

⁷ Structural discrimination is seen to occur when policies of the dominant race/ethnicity/gender and those who control and implement them are neutral in intent, but nonetheless discriminatory in application (see Pincus, 1996).

personnel was apparent. A lack of investment in infrastructure and equipment, impacted to routinely exclude females, whilst MOD budget cuts were perceived by those on lower salaries (often, but not exclusively, females and BAME personnel) to disproportionately affect them because of their structural location within the organisation. In the absence of workforce planning that takes account of the resource implications of policies designed to improve working conditions for some, others reported having to bear that resource shortfall (e.g. covering maternity leave) to the detriment of their own Lived Experience. This was sometimes found to breed resentment and resistance to change within majority groups.

Leaders have a pivotal role to play in creating an inclusive environment. Leadership was perceived to be accountable for inconsistent messaging and responses. Senior leaders were seen as representing one of two extremes: passionately engaged and role models for good behaviours or paying lip service to D&I. Line management/the Chain of Command was pivotal in determining how inclusive working environments were by accepting (or not) inappropriate behaviour (noting that sometimes the poor behaviour came from managers). It was evident that the right communications were needed and personnel needed to 'live' the messages. However, although leadership is key, all personnel within Defence own the problem that ultimately means Defence is operating below par.

Driven, integrated and committed investment is needed to affect changes to lowering barriers to D&I and negative experiences. Ultimately, Defence needs to take sustained action and invest resource to realise positive change; D&I will not improve organically over time without targeted action and investment.

1.3 Method

The study adopted a qualitative, cross-sectional design to explore the Lived Experience of Civil Service and Service personnel (Regulars and Reservists). Data were captured from participants across the course of the Human Resources lifecycle (from recent joiners to those soon to be leaving) via face-to-face/telephone/video call interviews. A total of 405 interviews were conducted with female and BAME participants, as well as white male participants (to enable comparisons within and across groups). The interviews were recorded and transcribed (or detailed notes were taken in lieu of recording). Data analysis revealed nine themes: organisational trust justice and loyalty; negative treatment and experiences; organisational change; joining and early experiences; career; work, family and wellbeing; influential working relationships; belonging and social identity; and organisational culture. The findings were interpreted in light of relevant theory, literature and the wider Defence context.

1.4 Options for Action

There is no single (or simple) solution to addressing D&I; whilst some approaches might be suitable in some contexts they are less suitable in others. The best approaches are those which are tailored to a given organisation. With this in mind, a list of six suggested focus areas is provided below. Areas of focus were derived from key principles on organisation-specific approaches to improving D&I ([REDACTED]) in conjunction with the specific findings from this research, evidence from the literature, learnings from what other organisations have done to address similar challenges, and the expertise of the team.

1. Challenging/changing the culture of the organisation.
2. Clarity in organisational communication.
3. Reviewing recruitment, selection and induction processes.
4. Reviewing leadership and management behaviours.
5. Implementing new policies and practices (or reviewing existing ones).
6. Increasing opportunities for education and training.

Whilst the literature suggests that attention should be paid to all six areas, the one likely to have most significant impact on improving D&I is 'culture change'.

2 Navigating the Report

This project was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved liaising with stakeholders to scope and outline possible research design options. The second phase involved piloting the approach before embarking on the main study.

2.1 Available Reports

For those interested in the research design options, outcomes of the pilot study and lessons and observations relating to the conduct of the research, further information is available. These reports are most likely to be of interest to those interested in the detail of how the research was planned, conducted and analysed.

- **Research design options report:** [REDACTED]
- **Pilot study report:** [REDACTED]
- **Lessons and observations report:** [REDACTED]

2.2 Report Structure: How to Read the Report

This report details the findings from the main study. Due to the size and scale of the study there is a vast body of data and information to relay; as such this report is very detailed. Some sections will be of greater use/interest to particular readers than others. For ease, the report is divided into four parts (in addition to the Executive Summary), with suggested audiences for each:

- **Part One** is 24 pages long and has been produced with, for example, **senior leaders** in mind. It focuses on the key messages from the study⁸. It explores what new insights have emerged from the data as well as highlighting enduring issues which these data reinforce. It also provides a brief overview of the technical approach and reminder of the relevance and benefits of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) to Defence. Part One signposts to Part Two so that readers can 'deep dive' into areas of interest as desired.
- **Part Two** provides detailed information on the study findings for stakeholders (e.g. **D&I representatives, policy desk leads, and researchers**) to explore. The data are presented by nine themes. For ease, more information on the content of these themes is presented in Table 2-1. In Part Two, the findings are situated in a Defence and wider societal context via two timelines. These outline how events that have occurred during the study timeframe and/or the data collection period might have consciously or subconsciously shaped participants' perceptions and attitudes. They also enable the findings to be interpreted by the reader within the appropriate context. The findings are further discussed and interpreted in light of theories/literature on minority representation in organisations within each theme.
- **Part Three** presents a list of options for action for stakeholders (e.g. **D&I representatives and policy desk leads**). Information is also provided in relation to the likely impact of taking the action; the evidence that underpins the suggestion for taking the action and an indication of the scale and depth of impact that could be seen if the action was taken. It is suggested that this could be used by stakeholders to help inform planning and investment decisions.
- **Appendices** outline more detailed information about the study, including the method (Appendix A), communication channels used to recruit study participants (Appendix B), research materials (Appendices C–G), sample information (Appendix H) and further information about the timelines (Appendix I). The Appendices are likely to be of most interest to **researchers**.

Table 2-1: Overview of theme content

⁸ Please note that unless a specific group (i.e. white females or Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) participants or military males) is referenced in the write-up, the finding is common to all participants. Also note that the term 'military' is used to refer to both Regular serving personnel and Reservists. Where the finding only applies to one group this is specified.

Theme Name	Content
Organisational trust, justice and loyalty	How the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is perceived to have treated others, encompassing sentiments of trust, fairness, commitment, justice and loyalty that exist across the organisation. Includes: pride in the MOD; whether the organisation is meritocratic; issues around trust and fairness and considerations for remaining or leaving.
Negative treatment and experiences	Various forms of negative treatment and associated impact and consequences. Specifically: the invisibility of discrimination; structural and positive discrimination; bullying; sexual and racial harassment; and challenging negative treatment.
Organisational change	The perceived nature/extent of change within the MOD that has occurred, or needs to occur, with respect to gender and ethnicity. Particularly: rationale for change; achieving change; barriers to change; evaluation of the change agenda; and recommendations for change.
Joining and early experiences	The participant employment journey from attraction to the organisation through recruitment to on-boarding and initial training. Specifically: reasons for joining; views of others about joining; recruitment and selection processes; on-boarding and initial training; and expectations versus reality.
Career	Barriers and enablers to career progression in the MOD, including: career decisions and job choices; person-organisation fit; career management and support; career progression; performance appraisal; impact of family on career; and personal and professional development.
Work, family and wellbeing	The impact of work demands in relation to key life events upon perceptions of work-life balance and well-being, specifically: pregnancy and maternity/paternity; work-life balance and psychological and physical wellbeing.
Influential working relationships	How leaders, managers and key influential others are central to shaping the everyday experiences of personnel and attitudes towards D&I, including: senior leadership and organisational culture; line management as a source of discrimination and/or inclusion; and role models and mentors.
Belonging and social identity	The extent to which individuals feel like a valued, accepted and legitimate member in their domain. Covers: facilitators of belonging; barriers to belonging; social activities and belonging; visibility and isolation; strategies for managing difference; and other characteristics that impact upon belonging.
Organisational culture	Perceived organisational culture (values, beliefs, practices, rituals and customs) and sub-cultures across the MOD that act to shape members' attitudes and behaviours. In particular: perceptions of a diverse and inclusive organisation; the MOD "family" and implications for D&I; the MOD as a hierarchal organisation; informal cultural practices that include and exclude; and subcultural differences across the MOD.

Part One

Summary of Findings

3 Summary of Findings

3.1 Context and Study Aims

The benefits of having a diverse and inclusive organisation are well-documented and compelling. Diverse and inclusive organisations have a better competitive edge and often achieve higher financial performance. D&I policies bridge the ‘talent gap’, enabling organisations to find the right talent to drive future success. A workforce with a greater variety of backgrounds, talents, and experiences enables increased adaptability and flexibility and promotes creativity and innovation (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2013; Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt and Jonsen, 2010; and Herring, 2009).

The MOD understands these benefits and acknowledges the direct contribution of D&I to operational effectiveness in its Defence D&I Strategy (2018-2030). The Strategy states that D&I policies drives performance, leads to better decision making and problem solving, increases flexibility to react to environmental changes and reduce the risks of group think⁹, all of which are mission critical to meeting existing security challenges and threats. It is clear that D&I is relevant to everyone in Defence, not just minority groups.

Whilst there has been some progress, achieving a diverse and inclusive workforce presents a challenge for a host of reasons; communication and cultural barriers, the prevalence of a particular demographic group, and the ability to manage a diverse workforce, being dominant issues for Defence. Despite continued efforts, the MOD struggles to recruit and retain people from backgrounds not traditionally associated with Defence, such as females and BAME personnel. In recognition of this, the MOD commissioned a robust Whole Force large-scale qualitative study (unprecedented in scope and scale) to provide rich insight into the day-to-day experiences of these underrepresented groups, in comparison with the white, male majority within Defence¹⁰.

3.2 Technical Approach

Prior research relating to D&I issues exists but has typically been small-scale, segmented (with more known about issues pertaining to the Regular Service compared with Reservists and Civil Servants (CS)) and largely quantitative (with data typically gathered via questionnaires) in nature. In recognition that an alternative approach was required to reveal deeper, more subtle insights and to provide fresh thinking on the topic, a Whole Force, qualitative study was scoped, designed, piloted and implemented over the course of four years.

Qualitative research is well established in the social sciences domain; it is a widely used and highly valued means of exploring the social world. Qualitative approaches can elicit the range of issues that underpin a topic therefore allowing a depth of understanding about the subject to be captured. This differs to quantitative approaches which typically seek to understand the prevalence of a phenomena using statistical analysis of numerical data. Whilst these are complementary approaches (one is not superior to the other) qualitative data is sometimes dismissed as being ‘anecdotal evidence’ or ‘individual perceptions’ rather than reality. However, it is essential to highlight that an individual’s perception of a situation is their reality; it is valid because it informs their experiences. The rigour of qualitative research comes from its iterative nature and critical reflection. Qualitative research can produce a wealth of data whilst maintaining context. Nuances within the data are more likely to be uncovered in qualitative studies compared with other approaches (see Silverman, 2001, Blaikie 2009, Robson, 2011). Aggregate analysis of individual experiences and perceptions therefore provides a rich dataset from which recurrent themes or ‘patterns’ can be identified and a valid basis upon which actions for change can be identified. With this in mind, it is important to be aware that qualitative approaches are well used in the MOD and wider government. Such studies have provided robust and rich evidence to support significant policy and procedure change across a wide range of issues including

⁹ Group think is a psychological phenomenon in which the desire for harmony/conformity within a group results in irrational or dysfunctional decision-making outcomes.

¹⁰ Capturing data from white males enabled the identification of issues that were pertinent across the sample and impacted the quality of everyone’s Lived Experience.

adult learning, child loneliness, impact of tax changes, and barriers to investment in low carbon markets.¹¹ In this context, a qualitative study which delivered a nuanced and context laden understanding of factors affecting the experiences of MOD personnel was needed.¹²

The work described here used a qualitative, cross-sectional design to explore the Lived Experience¹³ of Armed Forces (AF) personnel (Regulars and Reservists) and those in the CS. Data were gathered via face-to-face/telephone/video-call interviews with females and BAME personnel, as well as the white, male majority¹⁴, to enable comparisons within and across groups. Personnel were selected to take part based on demographic information, ensuring a variety of experiences were captured. A total of 405 interviews were conducted over the course of a year (from June 2017 to June 2018); these were recorded and transcribed (or detailed notes were taken in lieu of recording). The research team analysed the data using thematic analysis (identifying nine themes from the data), and interpreted the findings in light of the wider Defence context, previous related research/literature and relevant theoretical models.

More information about the technical approach can be found in the Appendices. In particular:

- Method (Appendix A).
- Communication channels used to recruit study participants (Appendix B).
- Research materials (Appendices C–G).
- Sample information (Appendix H).
- Information setting the findings in context (Appendix I).

3.3 Research Questions and Summary Response

The research was designed to address the following questions:

- To what extent do gender and ethnicity influence the Lived Experience of MOD personnel?
- What are the positive aspects of the Lived Experience and how can these be exploited?
- What are the negative aspects of the Lived Experience and how can these be addressed?
- How can these findings be interpreted in light of theories/literature on minority representation in organisations?

In brief, the study found that gender and ethnicity impacted the experiences of MOD personnel to a large extent. Whilst some positive aspects of being female and/or BAME within Defence were noted (being recognisable/memorable by senior leaders or feeling that Defence provides them with social and economic mobility and better opportunities than other organisations); across the Whole Force, gender and ethnicity were significant contributors to the negative experiences and organisational barriers that personnel faced, with BAME females facing the most challenges. However, gender and ethnicity were not the only demographic/background variables that impacted people's experiences. Other factors (such as social class, age, position within the organisation) also had an effect. It was evident that anyone who did not fit the white male prototype, often characterised by alpha male traits (dominance, assertiveness, a strong physicality etc.) was likely to experience unique challenges, attributed to their social identity, in navigating the organisation. This included some white males (white males not being a homogenous group).

3.4 Key Findings

Expanding on the information provided above, key findings from the study have been categorised and reported below, according to whether they are 'new insights' or 'enduring topics' (following this the data are

¹¹ Information obtained via a memo from Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) which detailed evidence collected from across government departments by MOD Government Social Research Head of Profession.

¹² The robustness of the qualitative data was assured through the use of Tracy's (2010) eight 'big tent' criteria which include: worthy topic; rich rigor; sincerity; credibility; resonance; significant contribution; ethics; and meaningful coherence.

¹³ The term 'Lived Experience' refers to a person's first-hand experience in everyday events.

¹⁴ The employee group who identify as 'white' as a racial classification specifier and 'male' as a sex classification specifier where being white and male is the most common, or majority, employee group.

summarised by theme, see Table 3-1). This division has been used to aid understanding of which findings are new/unseen and therefore not fully appreciated and/or addressed, and those which either reinforce existing research evidence or reflect what is generally known and understood by Defence. Enduring topics warrant attention as they present as persistent issues not yet fully resolved. Both new insights and enduring topics have been presented chronologically to aid flow and comprehension of the findings, rather than by importance or prevalence.

3.4.1 New Insights

D&I will not necessarily improve organically over time. There was a common perception amongst participants, that young people are more open-minded and inclusive than older generations. This viewpoint was commonly shared across the sample with many believing that new-entrants were central to achieving D&I change (see Sections 5.3.1, 5.3.2). However, the study found that some younger participants still held sexist/racist views (see Section 5.2.4, 5.2.5) suggesting that further future improvements cannot be presumed. Consequently, Defence needs to take sustained action and invest resources to realise positive change; D&I will not improve organically over time without targeted action and investment. As supported by [REDACTED], *“a step change in activity and its impact will be needed to make any marked difference”* (p. 70) to increasing the numbers of female and BAME personnel within Defence.

Invisibility of the D&I issue to some white males. Across the sample there was general consensus that female ‘issues’ have gained more traction than BAME ‘issues’; the presence of a greater number of females in senior positions was seen as evidence for this (see Sections 5.3.4, 5.7.3). However, some white males were sometimes ‘blind’ to the issues faced by minority groups, such as the subtle and everyday nature of some negative treatment, resulting in a view that disadvantage as a function of gender or ethnicity was no longer a problem (see Sections 5.5.4, 5.9.1, 5.2.1). Some white males did not perceive female and BAME under-representation to be a current barrier to their inclusion or progression; the MOD was viewed as a meritocracy in which everyone could progress (see Sections 5.8.1, 5.2.1, 5.1.2). This resonates with the concept of colour-blindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2014), where individual efforts and merit are viewed as more important than race in determining social outcomes (see Section 5.2.1). This stance often masks underlying and subtle forms of exclusion; it allows the ‘blame’ or responsibility for the absence of female and BAME personnel in senior positions to lie with those groups, failing to recognise structural barriers or ‘white male privilege’.

A white male prototype is pervasive and undermines inclusion. A white male prototype, often characterised by alpha male traits (dominance, assertiveness, a strong physicality etc.) was perceived to be pervasive across Defence (particularly in the military). Female, BAME and white male participants not fitting this ‘mould’ found it harder to fit in and reported challenges developing and maintaining their sense of belonging and advancing their career (see Sections 5.3.1, 5.5.2, 5.8.2). This ties in with the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (see Section 5.8.2) which proposes to explain how and why men maintain dominant social roles over women, and other gender identities, which are perceived as feminine in a given society. Studies have shown how hegemonic masculinity places men as superior to women (Connell, 1987) and how male-dominated workplaces are likely to engender ‘masculinity contests’ where top job performance is conflated with masculine gender performance. Whilst not a new concept Defence studies have not looked at the issue through this lens before. This concept was supported by females across the sample who argued that their skills were undervalued and they were continually required to prove their competence (see Section 5.8.2). Literature on females in male-dominated sectors highlights how this requirement for females to continually prove their competence negatively impacts their experiences at work (Fernando, Cohen, and Duberley, 2018); their confidence (Martin and Phillips, 2017); and their likelihood of remaining (Powell, Bagilhole, and Dainty, 2009). This macho¹⁵ environment also negatively impacted help-seeking behaviour. Many Regular serving participants (both male and female) spoke of a reluctance to seek help for mental health and physical health issues because of the perceived incongruence between help-seeking and the culture (see Section 5.6.3). This suggests that personnel may not be getting the support they need as well as potentially continuing to work on tasks when they may not be fully fit to do so.

Paternal figures shaping females’ careers. Some white, military females, whose fathers had previously served, were discouraged by them from joining certain Services/branches of the AF for fear of isolation or

¹⁵ “Masculine in an overly assertive or aggressive way...A man who is aggressively proud of his masculinity”
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/macho>.

negative treatment. This served to perpetuate stereotypes and reinforced the funnelling of females into certain branches/roles (see Section 5.4.2). Once within the MOD, females reported that they often experienced patriarchal management styles. Whilst well-intentioned, some females spoke of the detrimental impact of this protection in the form of marginalisation, suspicion from peers, and career steerage which could potentially be career limiting (see Section 5.9.2).

Limited access to networks and a lack of support. Research indicates that BAME personnel often have networks concentrated at lower levels of an organisation, thus restricting their opportunities to receive guidance from more senior personnel (McDonald, 2011; Tomlinson, Muzio, Sommerlad, Webley and Duff, 2013). In this study, a lack of common interests, leading to limited socialising, excluded BAME participants from accessing informal networks. This was a disadvantage because informal networks were found to be a key facilitator in the career progression of white personnel (though they rarely identified this) (see Section 5.5.3). More generally, military Foreign & Commonwealth (F&C) BAME, CS BAME and older participants (typically those in junior grades) felt they lacked sufficient support to progress their careers. This lack of support often led to a desire from BAME participants (and females) to encourage diversity and to “empower” others from minority backgrounds (e.g. through career coaching; encouraging others to stand-up for themselves) (see Section 5.7.3).

Concerns about positive discrimination. Concerns and misconceptions that females and BAME personnel were being advantaged by positive discrimination were raised and viewed negatively by all (including minority groups). This is despite clear evidence (statistics/information on representation of females and BAME personnel) to the contrary (see Section 5.2.2).

Evidence of structural discrimination. Whilst not spoken about directly, evidence of structural discrimination presented itself. Structural discrimination is seen to occur when policies of the dominant race/ethnicity/gender and those who control and implement them are neutral in intent, but nonetheless discriminatory in application (see Pincus, 1996). Structural discrimination appeared to be impacting females and BAME personnel more negatively than white males. For example, a lack of investment in infrastructure and equipment, impacted to routinely exclude females, whilst also (in some instances) compromising females’ safety. Furthermore, MOD budget cuts were perceived by those on lower salaries (often, but not exclusively, females and BAME personnel) to disproportionately affect them because of their structural location within the organisation (see Section 5.2.2).

Specific needs of females not being recognised. A lack of investment in attending to the needs of females challenged the notion of organisational commitment to female inclusivity. It was apparent that females’ needs were not ‘designed’ in to the workplace: Poor resources for military females (including facilities and accommodation) impacted upon their sense of value (see Section 5.8.2). Further, female issues such as the effect of childbirth on fitness levels of Regular serving females (see Section 5.6.1) and accommodating CS females changing needs during the menopause (see Section 5.3.3.2) were felt to be poorly understood, and as such were not accommodated by the Services/CS. Difficulties faced by a minority of Regular serving and CS females in the workplace during pregnancy and the insufficiency of policies to provide protection to females on return to work after maternity leave were also noted (see Sections 5.6.1, 5.6.2).

The ‘glass ceiling’ affects a broad set of groups. Aside from gender and ethnicity, social class was identified as having an impact upon people’s ability to fit into senior levels of the MOD. Those from working class backgrounds (particularly in the CS) described a current culture of elitism and snobbery that exists at higher levels of the organisation. Those with working class backgrounds sometimes felt there was a “*glass ceiling*” in terms of how far they were likely to be able to progress (see Sections 5.5.2, 5.7.1, 5.8.6).

3.4.2 Enduring Topics

Defence is viewed as inclusive but not diverse. Across the sample, participants cited numerous and varied examples of positive D&I related change that had occurred since the year 2000. However, many females and BAME participants still spoke of a failure to recognise specific issues affecting them and felt that their voices were not always heard in relation to these (see Section 5.3.3.2). Although the majority of participants did not see the organisation as diverse, many across the sample argued that it was inclusive (see Section 5.9.1) (adding support to the Civil Service People Survey (2017) which reported that 76% of participants agreed that the organisation respects individual differences in terms of culture, working style, background and ideas). In this study, this assertion was often supported by examples of the accommodation of different

needs (i.e. dietary requirements, the ability to practice different religions), networking events and cultural days (see Sections 5.8.1, 5.9.1).

Pockets of open resistance to D&I.¹⁶ Some military white males (particularly in the RM and Army) expressed concern that increased female participation equated to lowering of (physical) standards (see Sections 5.3.3.2, 5.3.3.3). Others (white males) expressed resentment that scarce resources were focused on D&I issues at the expense of other, more critical areas (e.g. equipment) (see Section 5.1.2). There were instances where participants felt that senior leadership failed to challenge or respond to these unintended consequences of D&I initiatives, e.g. by failing to respond to negative comments about D&I initiatives on the Defence Intranet blogs. This lack of action undermined participants' beliefs that the organisation was truly committed to D&I.

Reasons and support for joining vary by group. Across the sample, reasons cited for joining the AF reflected findings in other attitude surveys (Recruit Trainee Survey (RTS), Officer Cadet Survey (OCS), 2017/18). F&C BAME participants often viewed joining the AF as an opportunity for social and economic mobility whilst reasons for joining cited by United Kingdom (UK) BAME military were more akin to their white counterparts (e.g. the opportunity for travel, challenge, adventure or 'do something different') (see Section 5.4.1). Parents of BAME military participants (particularly Asian parents) were the least supportive of their son/daughter joining the AF due to concerns of racism, religious tensions and not viewing the AF as a professional career (noted in previous research; [REDACTED]) (see Section 5.4.2). Reasons for joining the CS were divided into those who had made informed decisions to join (based on opportunities for career progression or their personal circumstances) and those who had 'fallen into it' (see Section 5.4.1).

Minority groups face challenges joining the organisation.¹⁷ Attraction to Defence differed by group with CS BAME participants more likely than their white peers to be attracted to the MOD because of its reputation and prestige (see Section 5.4.1); this expands on previous work addressing attraction (e.g. [REDACTED]). However, CS BAME participants in particular encountered challenges upon joining. For example, CS BAME and female participants (both CS and military) cited some job advertisements and selection interviews as being exclusionary or discriminatory (see Section 5.4.3). Once in the MOD, a lack of formal induction posed a further challenge to 'getting on' for CS BAME participants (see Section 5.4.4). Concerns around security and personal safety stemming from historic geopolitical reasons stopped CS BAME participants from revealing to extended families or their communities where they worked, preventing them from being champions or advocates for the MOD (see Section 5.4.2).

Dissatisfaction with recruitment processes. The recruitment and selection process raised concerns for some. Army Reservists were the most dissatisfied with recruitment processes, citing a lack of human contact and time delays (as supported by prior research by [REDACTED]) (see Section 5.4.3). BAME participants (particularly those born overseas or with family overseas) viewed the vetting/security clearance as overly long and intrusive and felt that it singled them out as different to their white counterparts who were not perceived to undergo the same level of scrutiny (see Section 5.4.3).

Minority groups frustrated with formal and informal career progression processes. Frustrations with the subjective nature of the appraisal and reporting process were felt across the sample (see Section 5.5.5) (adding further support to the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) (2018) which reports that only 40% of personnel were satisfied with the appraisal process). The fairness of formal/informal career progression mechanisms was questioned by all but more so by females and BAME participants who cited 'nepotism' and 'old boys' networks' as barriers (see Section 5.5.3). Minority groups felt that their career progression was sometimes hampered by them not being perceived by others as having 'the right' personality characteristics or their 'face not fitting' (see Section 5.5.2). A lack of role models and representation of minority groups at senior levels limited the extent to which females and BAME personnel felt that they could progress (adding further support to prior research by Ethnic Dimension, 2014) (see Section 5.7.3). Furthermore, Regular serving females (notably Officers) felt that their careers would be hampered by taking time off for maternity leave.

¹⁶ Whilst specific supporting research evidence was not found by the research team, this finding was considered by Dstl to be generally known and understood by Defence.

¹⁷ Whilst specific supporting research evidence was not found by the research team, this finding was considered by Dstl to be generally known and understood by Defence.

Minority groups face slow career progression.¹⁸ There was wide-scale dissatisfaction with career management and progression across the sample; however, most impact was felt by females and BAME personnel. These groups perceived themselves as being in branches/trades/talent management schemes that were considered less likely to facilitate their career progression (see Section 5.5.1). This was often due to a combination of restricted opportunities, decisions around job choices, and the influence of social expectations about masculine and feminine roles, as reported in the literature (see Gottfredson's (2002) theory of career development; Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, 2016). F&C BAME cited the organisation reproducing itself in the same image, as a barrier to advancing their career and, therefore, reported experiencing slower career progression than their peers (see Section 5.5.4). Further challenges, relating to language used to describe BAME participants and cultural issues around challenging poor appraisal reports, were spoken of by BAME participants (see Section 5.5.5). Irrespective of gender and ethnicity, many participants were frustrated that promotion was overly linked to "time-served" compared with ability (see Section 5.5.3, 5.5.5). The 'settled middle'¹⁹ in particular felt overlooked and under-supported with younger colleagues perceived to be afforded greater support to advance their careers (see Section 5.5.4).

Achieving a work-life balance poses a challenge to all participants, with the greatest impact upon Regular serving females with children. This was due to the demands of Service life (long hours, deployments, frequent changes in post and location moves) often being appraised by participants as incompatible with family life (see Section 5.6.2). As the primary caregiver, females often made the greatest career sacrifices to achieve a work-life balance. It was notable that many female Reservists had reluctantly given up a Regular career that they "loved" (and so lost rank) in order to be able to manage childcare and family-life. This is consistent with research by the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly (2016) which highlighted that serving females are more likely than males to leave the Services when their children are young. Whilst key policies were viewed as changing the landscape of career flexibility and progression, particularly for females the implementation of these policies (and policies more widely) across Defence was seen as variable (see Section 5.3.2, 5.6.2). Moreover, evidence of military males feeling distanced from their family due to work commitments was also apparent with a suggestion that pursuit of a career was sometimes to the detriment of marriages and key relationships (see Section 5.6.2). Whilst most males' career progression was not immediately impacted by having a child, they also struggled to maintain a work-life balance (see [REDACTED]). Typically Regular serving males sought posts that afforded greater domestic stability as their children grew older, thus making career sacrifices at a relatively later stage. As previously reported by [REDACTED], single participants without children often felt that their own work-life balance was negatively impacted as a direct consequence of accommodating the needs of those with dependents (see Section 5.6.2).

Importance of leadership in establishing an inclusive culture.²⁰ Senior leaders were seen as representing one of two extremes: passionately engaged and role modelling good behaviours or paying lip service to D&I (see Section 5.7.1). The latter is a critical blocker to D&I change given the overwhelming evidence showing that senior leaders play a critical role in setting the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, modelling comfort with difference (Shore, Cleveland, and Sanchez, 2018), and generally setting the culture and climate of the organisation. The lack of diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, social class and schooling in senior leaders (most notably in the CS) was perceived to further undermine organisational D&I messaging (see Section 5.7.1).

Fairness and support from line management questioned. As supported by previous research ([REDACTED] and [REDACTED]) line management/Chain of Command was found to play a pivotal role in determining how readily participants could manage their work-life balance (with greater impact felt by females). Requests for reduced hours, different work patterns or job shares, in order to manage childcare responsibilities,²¹ were

¹⁸ Whilst specific supporting research evidence was not found by the research team, this finding was considered by Dstl to be generally known and understood by Defence.

¹⁹ Personnel in middle grades/ranks who have the experience to apply for promotion but choose not to.

²⁰ Whilst specific supporting research evidence was not found by the research team, this finding was considered by Dstl to be generally known and understood by Defence.

²¹ The statutory right to request flexible working was introduced in 2002 and was originally applied to limited categories of employees with parental or caring responsibilities.

<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN01086/SN01086.pdf>. Note: this is different to the Armed Forces Flexible Working Bill introduced in 2017.

not always accepted by CS line managers which disproportionately impacted females (see Section 5.6.2). In general there appeared to be an undercurrent of resentment by those working full time to anyone working part-time hours. More generally, line management/Chain of Command was pivotal in determining how inclusive working environments were by accepting (or not) inappropriate behaviour (noting that sometimes the poor behaviour came from managers) (see Sections 5.7.2, 5.2.3).

BAME personnel not feeling part of the team. As also noted in previous research (Greene, 2016) F&C BAME participants reported difficulties with adjusting to the UK culture, with many feeling that aspects of their ethnic, cultural or religious background were not always well understood, negatively impacting on their sense of belonging (see Section 5.8.2). For some BAME participants, working for the MOD caused identity challenges, such as being in the AF and a Muslim, and as a result, they often had to adapt their behaviours to a greater extent to fit in (see Section 5.8.5) (also noted by Greene, 2016). Involvement in social activities was important for developing a sense of belonging and for career advancement in the military. However, social activities, particularly those involving alcohol, often excluded females and BAME personnel (noted by Greene, 2016, to particularly impact F&C BAME military personnel) (see Section 5.8.3). Banter (see Section 5.9.4) remains a complex issue as a signaller of both inclusion and exclusion (for anyone who is different), as previously reported by [REDACTED].

Juxtaposition of visibility and isolation of minority groups within Defence.²² Females and BAME participants reported feeling like ‘tokens’ (when an employee is from a sub-group that represents less than 15% of the population (Kanter, 1977)) in the military and at more senior levels of the CS as a result of low levels of representation (see Section 5.8.4). The literature reports that a token may experience both periods of high visibility and invisibility. For example, they may feel highly visible due to their differences to the majority, but at the same time might find it difficult to have their achievements noticed. Visibility and isolation were issues for females and BAME personnel. Visibility was often a double-edged sword (being judged more harshly but also more likely to be remembered by senior leaders) (see Section 5.8.4). The study also found evidence of colourism²³ (prejudice against people with darker skin tones) where BAME personnel with lighter skin were viewed (by BAME participants) as fitting in more easily (see Section 5.5.2). Positively, military participants (particularly F&C BAME) who were enthusiastic or talented sportspeople had a route into making friends with the white male population through the achievement of a common goal (see Section 5.8.1). This is supported by existing theory examining the role of sport as a potential integrator (Hagerty, Williams, Coyne and Early, 1996).

Racism and sexism within Defence. Whilst some white military males felt that overt racism and sexism were no longer issues, recent examples (within the last year) were talked about by participants (see Section 5.2.1). Many participants saw the persistence of racist and sexist ideas as resting with the ‘old and bold’, though racist/sexist attitudes in younger participants were evident (see Section 5.3.2). Generally, blatant forms of discrimination had largely been replaced by subtler forms of prejudicial attitudes towards females and BAME personnel such as being ignored, excluded, overlooked, questioned, micromanaged, not cooperated with, perceived as incompetent and having rules applied more stringently to them than their white, male colleagues (see Section 5.2.1). This is also reflected in wider society where overt expressions of racism have reduced as they have become less socially acceptable (Deitch, Barsky, Butz, Chan, Brief and Bradley, 2003). These subtler forms of discrimination (a drip effect) (reported previously in the CS by [REDACTED]) were often difficult to ‘call out’ as discrimination and to seek redress. Bias in relation to, and stereotypes of, females and BAME personnel were common experiences (see Section 5.2.1). Despite this, females and BAME participants retained positive commitments to the MOD even when they experienced discriminatory/unacceptable behaviour, often recognising the positive aspects of employment at the MOD relative to other options (see Section 5.1.4). This mirrors findings of Black and Latino personnel, and white females reported in the US military (Lundquist, 2008).

²² Whilst specific supporting research evidence was not found by the research team, this finding was considered by Dstl to be generally known and understood by Defence.

²³ “a form of racial discrimination based on the shade of an individual's skin tone, typically favoring lighter skin. It can occur both within a specific ethnic group and across ethnic groups”. <https://www.dictionary.com/e/historical-current-events/colorism/>.

Concerns around potential abuse of power in basic military training.²⁴ Possible abuses of power were noted in the basic military training environment; BAME Regulars (particularly F&C) were more likely to comment on receiving negative treatment from instructors (see Section 5.4.4), and military participants cited inappropriate relationships between female recruits and instructors (see Section 5.4.4). However, participants who spoke of these concerns had not undertaken basic training in the last seven years; so it is not possible to know whether this problem is historic or still persists.

Widespread dissatisfaction for all with complaints processes. Formal complaints processes (military and CS) were viewed negatively by both ‘complainants’ and those complained about. More often than not participants chose not to complain due to: fear of reprisal; ‘closing ranks’; the view it would not be taken seriously; negative impact on career; or not worth the effort (individuals would be moving on) (similar to those cited in other sources, such as CS Human Resources (HR), 2018 and AFCAS, 2018). The psychological/physical and behavioural impact of unresolved negative treatment (stress, ill health, absence from work and reduced commitment) was evident (see Section 5.2.6).

Need for better D&I training.²⁵ Whilst not considered to be onerous by personnel, the utility of D&I training in its current forms was questioned. In particular, the online nature of the CS D&I training was felt not to allow for the depth of discussion and understanding that face-to-face training could provide (see Section 5.3.2). It is therefore suggested that D&I training would benefit from review. The diversity training evaluation framework should be used for this review²⁶.

3.5 Summary of Key Messages and Suggested Actions by Theme

As described in Section 3.2 (Technical Approach) thematic analysis of the data revealed nine key themes. More detailed information on these can be found in Part Two of the report in the sections identified below:

1. Organisational Trust, Justice and Loyalty (Section 5.1).
2. Negative Treatment and Experiences (Section 5.2).
3. Organisational Change (Section 5.3).
4. Joining and Early Experiences (Section 5.4).
5. Career (Section 5.5).
6. Work, Family and Wellbeing (Section 5.6).
7. Influential Working Relationships (Section 5.7).
8. Belonging and Social Identity (Section 5.8).
9. Organisational Culture (Section 5.9).


Part Two of this report contains findings of the more detailed analysis of the data presented by theme. The key messages identified are reported in Table 3-1 along with selected suggested actions.

²⁴ Whilst specific supporting research evidence was not found by the research team, this finding was considered by Dstl to be generally known and understood by Defence.

²⁵ Whilst specific supporting research evidence was not found by the research team, this finding was considered by Dstl to be generally known and understood by Defence.

²⁶ [REDACTED].

Table 3-1: Summary of key messages and suggested actions by theme

Theme	Summary of Key Messages and Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A widespread pride in the organisation remains, with ceremonial occasions noted by BAME military participants to be important in imbuing pride. However, organisational pride was also viewed as potentially reducing the capacity to see the extent of problems within the MOD. This suggests that steps may need to be taken to identify where pride becomes a barrier to change, and how to overcome this. • Many participants perceived that D&I initiatives violated the principle of merit, which is a strong mantra for the organisation. Thus personnel, including females, and BAME participants were not opposed to the progression of females/BAME per se, but of perceived unfair preferential treatment of them. Many white male participants did not understand the rationale for D&I changes, which could explain the level of resistance to them amongst this group. Furthermore, there was a lack of comprehension of the subtle mechanisms of injustice for female and BAME personnel, which added to the sense of injustice amongst white males who perceived positive treatments of others as being at their own disadvantage. Key challenges for the organisation lie in creating or maintaining objectively 'fair' processes and outcomes that are also perceived to be fair by the workforce as a whole. This may, in part, involve making visible to the white male majority, the many subtleties of bias or injustice. All the indications are that the D&I training must be reconfigured to become more interactive and personal (face-to-face) to help develop this awareness, particularly for managers and senior leaders. Re-framing D&I as restoring fairness and upholding the meritocracy that many view as important, may also help to reduce resistance. • Trust in the organisation to support personnel in times of crisis is strong, but has been substantially reduced as the design and implementation of Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR)²⁷ was seen to be erratic and unfair. This view applied across the organisation regardless of gender and ethnicity. However, females and BAME participants had additional reasons for a loss of trust related to inadequate redress for injustices they endured. Where there is lack of trust in organisational processes, affective commitment²⁸ may be undermined. Oversight of the impact of policies upon personnel (and their commitment and trust) may need to be considered. • Communication about both strategic and operational changes (e.g. closures of bases, sub-contracting of services, training events) was perceived to be absent, irregular or inconsistent. Participants experienced a great deal of stress with hypothesised plans, changes to previous plans and notional or absent timescales. This impacted on those with families in particular. This may suggest that there needs to be a focus upon the source and method of communication (e.g. face to face versus remote) and the frequency of engagement with personnel in order to increase understanding and manage expectations.

²⁷ Please note that most participants did not specify during interview whether they were referring to SDSR 2010 or 2015.

²⁸ Allen and Meyer (1990) defined three kinds of organisational commitment: affective; normative and continuance. Affective commitment sees loyalty as based on an emotional identification with the organisation and it is usually linked to positive experiences therein. Allen and Meyer (1990) suggest that personnel with affective and normative commitments to an organisation are greater assets, whereas those primarily with a continuance commitment are less likely to positively contribute to organisational progression.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to the MOD remained strong but was being compromised. The extent to which loyalty to MOD was based on fears of leaving, rather than excitement at staying, suggests the MOD may not be getting the most from swathes of the most experienced personnel. For example, the 'settled middle' feel a sense of injustice as organisational attention and resources are focused on new entrants, and fast-track personnel. Many females and BAME personnel occupy the settled spaces and are keen to have their skills and potential noticed. Steps to invest in the careers of the 'settled middle' may help to facilitate their progression and increase affective commitment. This could take the form of a skills audit focused on identifying overlooked or latent talent, with meaningful job enrichment and personal development actions to follow. Progression also needs to be reconceptualised, to include reward and recognition for a variety of work-related efforts within the same grade, rather than just moving up within the organisation. • Those more disaffected across the sample, usually those in the middle ranks/grades with longer Service, perceived that the MOD has shown little concern for them in the way cuts and restructuring have been devised and implemented. The distance between policy makers and those on the ground was seen as a factor in this perceived insensitivity. Moreover, the pressure of more work being done by fewer personnel has increased a sense of injustice amongst the sample, leading to stress and thoughts of leaving. Whilst the impact of cuts may not be able to be immediately mitigated, some easing of pay/benefits cuts at the lower end of the organisation may be required. Opportunities for personal dialogue between those at the top and bottom of the organisation, unmediated by those in the middle may also help personnel to highlight the nature and impact of the cuts on them. Face-to-face meetings with those designing policies, and a communication of the influences these may have had on policy decisions, should become part of the planning process. This would help to address not just organisational trust and commitment amongst those disaffected in lower or middle ranks/grades, it may lead to policies that have less negative impact on health and wellbeing through policy makers understanding more of the experiences of such personnel. A commitment to these types of meetings also provides an opportunity for the organisation to communicate and explain the rationale for the changes, potentially overcoming misinterpretations and/or the resistance of some personnel. A review of workloads and stress assessments may be more easily achievable in the short term. However, a key challenge is to manage the factors underpinning personnel's negative perceptions in order to improve their experience of the workplace.
 <p>Negative treatment and experiences</p>	<p>Drawing on extreme examples of discriminatory behaviour suggests that many white males have an under-developed understanding of what contemporary discrimination looks like. Unless this is tackled then myths about the MOD as a place with very limited discrimination or negative treatment related to gender or ethnicity, and with an exemplary system for dealing with the rare breaches, will continue, and will be a barrier to the development of an inclusive organisation that many white males endorse. One means of addressing negative treatment and supporting the achievement of the D&I mission might be through the use of Regimental Inclusion Councils (RIC). A RIC is a forum where personnel can raise D&I issues either in person or anonymously. These issues are reviewed by the council who are a collective group of personnel from a diverse range of backgrounds empowered to make decisions. This is a bottom up initiative originating in 10 The Queens Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment (10 QOGLR). Evaluating the effectiveness of this approach to see whether it could have wider applicability is suggested. This approach may also help to raise awareness of the issues that minority groups face.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination also operates at an institutional level and females and BAME personnel endure systematically greater financial disadvantage because of their locations amongst particular strata of the MOD. Females are subjected to further structural discrimination because a lack of investment impacts more severely on them specifically, compared to males e.g. with respect to


equipment provision. In relation to this there is clearly an urgent need to supply females with the equipment appropriate for their size. More widely, any future decisions about resourcing need to examine, at the outset, the implications for those organisational spaces where females and BAME personnel are over-represented. Inbuilt flexibilities to allow adjustments in order to prevent an uneven distribution of the negative aspects of policy should be an intrinsic aspect of this process. Thus D&I concerns should not be an afterthought in the decision making process.


- Overt forms of racism and sexism exist and the system to address these seems inadequate. Initial approaches to line managers may be inappropriate because they are implicated, and as a result complaints are not made because complainants do not know where else to go. Fears of reprisals, a lack of faith in the system and lack of knowledge about how to complain mean much negative treatment goes unreported. Avoidance strategies, such as moving personnel on/out are deemed ineffective and will reproduce negative behaviours in Defence as it does not address underlying behaviours witnessed by females and BAME personnel. The findings suggest that a zero tolerance approach coupled with an objective, independent and easily accessible complaints system is needed. Where issues are resolved locally, there may need to be greater governance of when this is used to avoid issues being 'swept under the carpet'. This may involve central monitoring (via spot checks) to maintain oversight and evaluation of the efficacy of this approach. Greater communication with the complainant may also be needed to ensure that they do not feel excluded from the process and are aware of the steps taken as well as any outcome. Recent changes to the military complaints system may address some of the issues identified above, but work should be done in earnest to mitigate the effects of the extant system. The lack of faith in the system is deeply held by those who ought to have used it. There needs to be a widespread communications strategy to announce new procedures and reassure potential users that there has been meaningful change.
- Positive discrimination is perceived to exist and this perception is understandable in times of scarce resources and personal hardship, coupled with a lack of understanding of the disadvantages faced by females and BAME personnel. Ironically, fear of being seen to positively discriminate can result in harsher treatment of females and BAME personnel by females and BAME personnel senior to them. Attempts to provide greater clarity about the difference between positive action and positive discrimination may be required. This needs to be communicated to personnel across all levels of the organisation.
- Bullying towards females and BAME personnel is enacted more by military managers, and particularly towards those in the CS and who have child care responsibilities. This may reflect an inappropriate abrasive management style rather than a bullying intent. It may also reflect a disregard for these populations or a lack of understanding. Where the problem is perceived to derive from a lack of understanding, individual informal attempts at redress through dialogue are proving to be effective ways in helping white males develop this kind of insight.
- Assumptions about gender are leaving females more vulnerable across Defence. This can be where behaviours of female managers are perceived as bullying where the same behaviour by males would not be. It can also mean that inter-female conflict is seen as unimportant, not adequately dealt with and can lead to painful consequences that need not have happened if it had been addressed. D&I training which increases awareness of the penalties applied to females for behaviour seen as more suitable for males (for example) will help personnel to identify and address double-standards. Management training that challenges similar gendered perspectives is also required so that inter-female conflict is recognised and addressed accordingly.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racial and sexual harassment persists across Defence. Whether this is online, or out of earshot, or restricted to particular geographical locations (deployments, units, Messes) its impact can be significant. This form of prejudice is coupled with more 'covert' forms of racism that are subtle and therefore difficult to call out. This is likely complicated by the fact that perpetrators of this form of racism may not be aware that they are discriminating against ethnic minority groups given these actions are driven by subconscious beliefs. The extent of ambiguities in what can be proven as sexist/racial discrimination means that the 'drip, drip' of unresolved 'senses' of negative treatment accumulates across the organisation and across the Lived Experiences of individuals. The effect of this may be underestimated by females and BAME personnel. Whilst both overt and covert forms of prejudice and discrimination need to be managed, a key challenge for Defence is to ensure that both forms are attended to and that 'obvious' forms of discrimination do not become the sole target for intervention. Finding ways to identify, manage and prevent the emergence of covert and 'invisible' behaviours is vital. Different forms of prejudice and discrimination may require different forms of intervention. D&I training that elicits empathy for females and BAME personnel effectively may help others to appreciate how their unreflective actions may be received by these groups. Whilst unconscious bias and other forms of D&I training are important, knowing what is and is not permissible cannot cover the plethora of 'low level' pervasive incidents. White males who have an understanding of how such incidents or marginalisation feel seem to be more sensitive to the experiences of others and so D&I training recommendations about developing empathy through dialogue and real life examples are pertinent here. • The commitment made by more powerful participants (senior grades/ranks and white males) to show moral courage and call out forms of racism and sexism in future is worthy but may be compromised if their ability to understand and thus identify these instances is impaired. White males in lower grades/ranks face additional pressures to act insofar as their careers may be affected by senior males, and also they may feel negative consequences if they are seen to challenge dominant male groups, within their peer rather than career structure.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a widespread belief that the MOD has changed positively with regards to D&I. This change was attributed to multiple factors, such as changing societal expectations about equality, generational change, MOD policies and buy-in from senior leaders. However, there was a sizable population of military personnel (mostly white males, but not exclusively) who were resistant to the prospect of more D&I-related change in the MOD. Understanding why people may feel excluded or unable to utilise the systems of redress was noticeably limited amongst this population and is an aspect that D&I training needs to address. Improving the messages around D&I would go some way to help personnel understand why change is needed. For example, by further emphasising the benefits of increased D&I for all personnel in that it creates an organisation that can better support the participation of a wider range of individuals from different backgrounds and that this can aid the achievement of organisational goals. • Whilst there was a sense that societal change was a driver for change within the organisation, there was also acknowledgement that racist and sexist attitudes existed in society, which were also echoed within the organisation. This challenges the idea that the younger generation will automatically bring change to the organisation organically, and suggests that Defence needs to continue to take sustained action and invest resource to effect change. • Communications from senior leadership with genuine 'buy in' was appreciated and seen as central in a hierarchical organisation such as the MOD. Whilst good practice in terms of managing and supporting personnel was identified, so were lapses and poor practice.

	<p>Redress in this aspect may be accessible relatively quickly by drawing out the lessons from good practices and rolling these out consistently across the organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better communication about the benefits of diversity for all personnel across the MOD was seen as an important driver for diversity, as well as one that could tackle resistance to the diversity agenda. The historic and continued contribution of BAME personnel to the MOD was suggested as a means to communicate this. The MOD already commemorates 'Black History Month' in an effort to raise the profile of black figures in its social history, but more could be done beyond an annual public-facing series of events to raise such profiles. In addition, the MOD should look to increase opportunities for personnel less familiar with some minority communities and religions to gain greater cultural competency and feel more at ease interacting with those who are different to them. • A feeling of a lack of authenticity in D&I policies that sought to change the MOD into a more diverse and inclusive workplace was evident across the sample. This emerged from the perceived lack of BAME representation at senior levels, and also amongst leadership creating D&I initiatives. Thus there is a clear sense of what good senior leadership looks like with respect to D&I, and whilst more females are involved in policy making at that level, the same needs to be achieved for BAME personnel. However, the inclusion of female and BAME voices from the lower echelons of the organisation clearly is important also, otherwise policies may not connect to the strata where they are most likely to be felt. • Opening up combat roles to females was met with mixed reactions by participants in the military. Females were positive about these changes, seeing it as an important signal of inclusion. However, many white male Regulars expressed concern that these changes may also encourage the imposition of quotas and targets, which they were expressly against. Again, communication about quotas and targets and stronger messaging about the benefits of having females in these roles is needed to dispel these anxieties. • Policy changes, such as those related to maternity and flexible working, were understood to have opened up the career landscape to females. However, evidence suggests that these policies were not being consistently implemented. This suggests the need to ensure policies are implemented fairly across Defence. • Whilst some policies have enhanced progression for females, the same cannot be said for BAME participants across the sample. This suggests that minority personnel should be consulted about policy decisions that impact them and consideration given to how they can be implemented more effectively. • D&I training was perceived to be influential in changing attitudes and behaviours, but it was often met with little enthusiasm and the medium of delivery compounded this. Some suggestions from participants for improving training included making it more interactive and providing more opportunities for personnel to ask questions and explore scenarios. Further to this, it is suggested that D&I should be mainstreamed within all leadership training. Greater emphasis should be placed on values early on induction/training making sure that instructors in Phase 1, in particular, are bought into D&I and act as role models so that a very clear and positive message is relayed from the start. • There was a sense from some (mainly white males) that the MOD's focus on D&I could lead to career advantages for females and BAME personnel and detract from the opportunities for personnel who do not qualify for special initiatives, either due to their
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	<p>demographic profile or their career stage. Consideration should be given to how there could be more of a focus on the career development of these individuals so they are properly utilised and do not feel 'left behind' by a focus on D&I.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some BAME participants said there was a view within BAME communities that the MOD was not associated with high status professional careers or, due to its existing demographic profile, not considered a desirable employer for BAME personnel. Further outreach activities should be conducted at locations where there are high numbers of BAME people (including some higher educational establishments). The range of career opportunities within the military and the CS, including the chance to gain professional qualifications, should be highlighted to broaden the likely appeal of the MOD.
 <p>Joining and early experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The influence of family members over decisions around joining the AF was evident. Females and Muslim participants often faced the most resistance due to concerns over racism and religious tensions, and fear of isolation and negative treatment in particular Services/branches/trades. Whilst participants in this study clearly overcame these challenges to join it is likely that many individuals will have faced these hurdles and not overcome them. Outreach activities to inform and educate gatekeepers have an important part to play in making sure that society understands the role of the AF and the job opportunities available. This is particularly important as prior military experience and family connections are indicators of motivation to join and adaption to the organisation and these connections are weaker in the BAME group. Job adverts and selection interviews were sometimes viewed as exclusionary or discriminatory by BAME participants and females due to the selection techniques being used at the time (i.e. competency based interviews) and the way they were carried out (i.e. asking inappropriate questions, lack of diversity on interview panels). It was felt that this would prohibit a diverse range of people from which to select. Informal processes also meant that some groups (namely BAME personnel) were not always getting the opportunity for temporary promotion. It is understood that work has already taken place by the MOD to prevent some issues from occurring again. In particular, diverse interview panels, mandatory unconscious bias training for interviewers, and the implementation of a new interview approach in the CS (akin to strength based interviewing) should resolve some of these issues. It is critical that these processes are both monitored (for adherence to) and evaluated for effectiveness. Across the sample, BAME participants (particularly F&C) faced the greatest challenges entering the organisation. Many BAME participants were hampered by vetting processes which were felt to be slow and intrusive. On joining they experienced a lack of organisational support (particularly CS BAME) and faced the additional challenge of adapting to the UK culture (F&C BAME) as well as the Defence environment. Removing some of these obstacles would no doubt make for a more pleasant introduction and enable a smoother transition into the organisation. Things that would particularly help would be a speedier and less intrusive vetting process (as already acknowledged by the MOD), removing unnecessary security clearance requirements (or clearly articulating what restrictions entail and why they are required), a formal induction for all new CS joiners (understood to be now in place) and cultural awareness/training for F&C BAME recruits before they join (as well educating those in positions of leadership/instructional roles on cultural differences too).


	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was evidence to suggest that the military training environment was particularly difficult for minority groups with abuses of power and unfair treatment from instructors. This should be further explored to assess whether this is a historic issue or a problem which still persists today.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The job choices and opportunities available to females and BAME personnel (particularly F&C) shaped career trajectories, often limiting career progression (particularly in the AF) from the outset. This was both a function of availability of opportunity and the different decisions made by these cohorts, typically based on cultural norms and stereotypes about roles being 'masculine' or 'feminine'. Opening up all roles to everyone in the AF is undoubtedly positive. However, dismantling the stereotypes of 'feminine' and 'masculine' roles and encouraging females into Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects is needed more widely in society for real change to occur. As a major STEM employer MOD can do much to reflect or even facilitate these changes. Consideration of more flexible career paths or exploring how the desired skills and knowledge can be demonstrated outside of the 'traditional' career paths may also help to increase diversity across roles. F&C military BAME participants reported trying to change branches/trades to improve their career prospects, which often proved very difficult or impossible. The process for changing trades in the military (how, when, if possible) needs to be reviewed to ensure it is transparent and communicated clearly to all. Minority groups and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds felt that their career progression was hampered by their lack of 'fit' within the organisation. Both groups felt they were less likely to be perceived by others as having 'the right' personality characteristics. Stereotypes about what a typical Senior Civil Servant (SCS), Warfare Officer or Infanteer, for example, 'looks like' need to be broken down. Support from others in terms of career progression was noted by all as important. However, access to support varied. A lack of, or poor, formal career management was particularly felt by F&C BAME, CS BAME and older participants who wanted (and sometimes expected) to receive more support on joining the organisation. Across the sample, it was evident that management/Chain of Command could be either a source of support or a blocker to advancement. Some participants were therefore seeking out their own forms of support. For white personnel, building informal networks was a key facilitator of career progression. BAME personnel were less likely to have access to these networks. Minority groups were more likely to have access to formal D&I networks. This was sometimes viewed negatively by others as giving them a career advantage, which did not appear to be the case. The remit and terms of reference of formal D&I networks should be clear and transparent so that their purpose is understood by all. The speed and restrictions around career progression were an irritation across the sample. Promotion overly linked to "time-served" and age was said to restrict the progression of 'late joiners' in the AF and cited as a key frustration by some. F&C BAME military participants reported that they were most impacted by a lack of speed of progression, citing bias and nepotism as reasons for their slow advancement. However, white personnel sometimes felt that it was the language barrier that held F&C BAME back. It is suggested that a more detailed study is conducted to identify whether there is an issue with F&C progression. This work is important, especially in light of further F&C recruitment.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frustrations with the subjective nature of the appraisal and reporting process were felt by all. Problems relating to language used to describe BAME personnel and cultural issues around challenging poor reports were noted by BAME participants. Removing names and gender identifiers on reports on military promotion boards could help remove the potential for unconscious bias. • The career progression of females with children was heavily impacted by childcare and family responsibilities. This is a persistent finding amongst military females and has changed little over time. A more radical change to career pathways may be required so that a level playing field which is fair for all is achieved. • Obtaining formal qualifications was seen as a benefit by all but especially those who joined with few qualifications. However, evidence of elitism regarding education (reported by participants and observed by the research team) was also apparent amongst some cohorts. The opportunity to obtain qualifications should continue to be clearly articulated to personnel before joining.
 <p>Work, family and wellbeing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childbirth challenged some Regular females' ability to attain expected fitness standards on return to work whilst also introducing the possibility of longer term health problems. A lack of awareness of these outcomes was seen to manifest in lack of guidance and support to regain fitness. Greater understanding of females' needs post-partum (including the provision of <i>suitable</i> facilities for them to breastfeed in the workplace) is needed. Individual differences in recovery will also need to be accommodated. Tri-service collaboration to identify (successful) initiatives already in place to support females may help to signpost areas where original research is needed and where the Services can learn from each other as to what guidance or strategies have best effect. • The role of primary care giver typically fell to females and they experienced the greatest difficulties managing work and family life. This was most notable in the Services and is a continued threat to females remaining with and progressing within the organisation. Single mothers and those who were part of a dual serving couple faced the greatest challenges. Whilst 'family friendly' policies were noted to be in place, across the sample, under resourcing, high demand (workload) and varying degrees of acceptance of flexible or alternative working by line management (most notably in the CS) compromised the implementation of these policies. Moreover, seeking greater domestic stability could lead to selection of roles that disadvantaged career progression. A key challenge is to explore how to engender a culture that truly supports flexible working for all. Reviewing how to recognise and reward individual merit and potential outside of career paths or roles traditionally viewed as 'necessary' for progression may also help to diversify the workplace. • The expectation that participants would demonstrate total commitment to a role was very much in evidence. In the military, this manifested in the 'Service first' ethos. Whilst it was observed to a lesser extent in the CS, it was apparent that primary importance was placed upon full time work. This highlights how females who take time off for maternity, take on the role of primary care giver, and are the key users of alternative forms of working (e.g. reduced hours, flexible working) are more likely than males to be 'devalued' in the workplace. Where the working environment remains male dominated there may be no apparent 'incentive' to change: the majority do not directly benefit and the 'male' model of 'commitment' remains the reference point. Altering organisational culture is not an easy task: Further research is needed to better understand how to manage these perceptions, which are likely exacerbated by lack of personnel and high Service demand. Some areas for consideration are re-evaluation of the perception of what a 'good' Service person or CS 'looks like'; reward based upon merit rather than overly linked to "time-served"; and a movement away from flexible working or part time working being perceived as only applicable to females.


- Work-life balance was important to all participants; however, perceptions of conflict and the periods at which they emerged varied by gender and personal circumstances. Work demands were greater for Service personnel given the greater level of commitment. Females were most likely to struggle to manage due to the aforementioned dual demands of family and work. Males (mainly those in the military) were more likely to perceive conflict between work and family further along their career and as the impact of separation from family took its 'toll'. Some single personnel (primarily military) felt their work-life balance was compromised as they were seen as 'ever available' for deployments or short notice taskings. Across the sample, a lack of work-life balance was seen to negatively impact organisational commitment and, most notably in the military, a reconsideration of the continued viability of Service life. This highlights the importance of considering the needs of the entire workforce, rather than making provision of support contingent upon marital status²⁹, as well as identifying, and exploring how to accommodate changing priorities.
- Having a mental health problem or (to a lesser extent) a physical health problem was seen as a weakness in the military. These attitudes were not evident in the CS. There was a strong stigma attached to admitting to problems, which inhibited help-seeking behaviour. This was in spite of increased efforts by the organisation, noted by participants, to raise awareness of mental illness and to encourage personnel to come forward. Key challenges relate to managing the tension between organisational messaging around the need for a Service person to be strong and capable and the perception of mental or physical illness as a threat to this. Whilst previous research has identified and recommended strategies to mitigate stigma and increase help-seeking it remains a pervasive problem. An evaluation of current Defence strategies in the field of mental health to determine their relative impact as well as assessment of programmes which are specifically aimed at reducing stigma would be beneficial. [REDACTED] recommended the use of longitudinal studies (and control groups) to evaluate interventions aimed at reducing stigma. Review of the literature may also help to determine if all evidence based recommendations have been implemented or whether further action is needed to encourage help-seeking behaviours.
- Aspects of the working environment related to high workload, under-resourcing, lack of support, uncertainty, and effort-reward imbalance were seen to negatively impact psychological wellbeing. In some instances, there was evidence of depression, anxiety and suicidal intent. High Service demands with reduced resourcing and an organisational culture of 'Service first' that was observed across the MOD present a key challenge. There is no easy redress for this; whilst some of the stressors may not be able to be immediately addressed (e.g. lack of resources) there needs to be consideration of how to best mitigate the impact of these factors in both the short and long term.
- It was evident that there was variable implementation of policies. This was most notable in the CS. Where policies were applied rigidly, ignored or incorrectly interpreted it was often the source of much conflict as well as a source of distress to participants. The MOD may benefit from developing a greater understanding of why this is happening, e.g. whether it is deliberate or via lack of knowledge.

²⁹ It is understood that a 'Future Accommodation Model' is under development and will apply to Service personnel with/without families, whether they are single, in a relationship or married.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-accommodation-model-what-you-need-to-know/what-you-need-to-know-about-fam>

 <p>Influential working relationships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants readily identified those senior leaders who lacked ‘true’ engagement and commitment to D&I. In some instances there were cited examples of discriminatory attitudes in the very people who were supposed to be figureheads for D&I. This served to not only undermine the credibility of organisational messaging but led to further damage when senior leaders failed to act against those that had publicly demonstrated derogatory attitudes towards minority groups. Placement of leaders who demonstrate belief in D&I is needed to ensure that organisational messaging on D&I has the intended impact. Consideration may need to be given as to how to ‘select’ leaders who are the ‘face’ of D&I as well as further exploration of how D&I messaging is received within the organisation. [REDACTED] highlighted that diversity “champions” should be those that are committed to the cause; have sufficient time to devote to the issue as well as being people with the requisite authority to make a difference within the organisation. • A lack of representation of minority groups at the highest levels of the CS and the military undermines some female and ethnic minority participants’ belief that these roles are open to them. Those role models that were visible were not always seen to be ‘authentic’, but rather as adopting the dominant values and behaviours of the existing culture. Minority group participants stressed that authentic role models are needed so that they feel that there is a place for them in the organisation. Steps to understand how diversity of thought and behaviour can be retained as personnel move through the grades/ranks may be needed as well as exploration of strategies to challenge minority groups’ perceptions that the senior levels are not ‘for them’. • The MOD, most notably the CS, was felt to be elitist, valuing what school or university an individual had attended. This was felt to be most evident in the top levels of the organisation. In the military, individual ability was recognised but there were pockets of elitism whereby holders of a ‘higher’ social class were said to acquire the highest profile roles regardless of merit. This further undermined messaging about inclusivity as those who did not fit this mould were less likely to feel they could progress into senior roles. Steps to accept and facilitate diversity are needed across all levels of the organisation and recognition of social class as a factor should be a key part of this. • Line management/Chain of Command had the greatest impact upon participants’ everyday experience of the organisation. There was evidence of behaviours and attitudes that were valued across the sample and which research suggests have benefit for embracing diversity. Understanding the drivers and barriers to the emergence of these behaviours and how they can be more widely disseminated through the organisation may be beneficial. • Negative behaviours from Chain of Command/line management were reported across the sample including bullying, favouritism and abuses of power. BAME females seemed to suffer the most in terms of frequency and severity of event, often experiencing both sexism and racism. It was frequently difficult for them to manage these situations as many of the negative experiences were not overt. Management has a strong influence over the culture of the local working environment and are, therefore, key in informing the participants’ day-to-day experience of the workplace. This suggests that any attempts to improve D&I need to have genuine buy-in and acceptance from management. This may require exploration of where and why negative management behaviours emerge and how best to mitigate the likelihood of their occurrence. • Line management as well as senior others often acted as role models or mentors, in informal or formalised interactions. Aside from support being seen as a requirement of rank, there was often a key trait similarity (be it gender, ethnicity, social class, background, trade) between the ‘mentor’ and the ‘mentee’ that led to the development of the relationship. A desire to make things better for
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	<p>others, often due to a personal understanding of what it was like to lack support or guidance, often acted as motivation. The organisation may wish to explore how it could exploit these behaviours to confer benefits upon a wider audience.</p>
 <p>Belonging and social identity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White males were largely unreflective about their own privilege and assumed the organisation operated universally as a meritocracy. The idea that their success depended on their own merits was important to their identity and belonging within MOD. This meant that they often attributed female and BAME personnel's lack of progression to their characteristics rather than considering the structural causes of inequality. As a result, some white males tended to view any positive action targeted at minority groups in a negative way. This does not mean that no action should be taken. There is a need to challenge existing ways of working and focus on diversity in its broadest sense (Bohnet, 2016) as not all white males felt that they fitted the masculine stereotypical themselves. • Facilitators of belonging included working in close collaboration, deployment, engagement in sporting activities, uniforms and the actions of the immediate work team. Task cohesion in these activities enables a sense of shared purpose and respect for the talents that individuals bring. Mentoring and informal help from immediate superiors aided the sense of belonging. This highlights the importance of role modelling and rewarding inclusive behaviours at all levels of the hierarchy, not just senior management. Senior leaders need to recognise how everyday experiences of inequality and 'micro-aggressions'³⁰ can impact negatively on the retention of this diverse talent (see Shore, Cleveland and Sanchez, 2018). Evidence suggests that senior leaders play an important role in setting the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and modelling comfort with difference (see Shore, Cleveland and Sanchez, 2018). • Females and BAME personnel often found it harder to develop a sense of belonging as a result of being stereotyped, a lack of understanding and a lack of value being placed upon their skills and attributes. Females in particular felt that they were continually required to prove their competence. It could be argued that this will change if more females and BAME personnel progress through the organisation; however, this change will be slow unless all individuals are exposed to alternative ways of operating. Although participants spoke positively about formal D&I policies and networks, their sense of belonging relied upon the ways in which these were implemented and experienced on a daily basis. This points to one striking way that inclusion and exclusion coexist i.e. when participants experience disconnect between the presence of formal programmes or policies and the day-to-day reality of informal norms that allow exclusion to arise. It suggests that attention should be given to the extent to which policies are adhered to across the MOD. • The lack of BAME and female personnel in the organisation in general, and particularly at more senior levels, means that they suffer from excessive visibility. This can be a double-edged sword; some felt that they are judged more harshly than white male peers but are also more likely to be remembered by senior personnel. Consideration should be given to the support needs of those individuals who are excessively visible – particularly those who are used by the MOD in promotional materials as potential role models. • Female participants within the MOD discussed feelings of isolation. They developed behavioural strategies to cope with this including developing more stereotypically masculine ways of operating. Although this can be an effective individual strategy as it enables them

³⁰ "Brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership". (Sue, 2010, p xvi). Micro-aggressions may be automatic and unconscious or intentional.

	<p>to fit in, it also serves to reinforce the existing culture. Role modelling and rewarding alternative ways of operating by both males and females is an important way of challenging the dominant masculine mode of behaviour.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Of all groups, BAME females experienced the most challenges in developing a sense of belonging. This is likely to be a result of the potential double disadvantage they suffer (St Jean and Feagin, 2015) and their underrepresentation within the organisation. Attention should be given to both formal practices (such as policies) and informal processes that create inequality and make individuals feel excluded.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In spite of noted progress, the organisation was not perceived as diverse by participants, although it was considered inclusive because it accommodated cultural, religious and sex-based differences. However, it was notable that those who were not white, male and middle class found it difficult to feel fully included in the organisation. It was apparent that increased cultural understanding allowed for the development of friendships and acceptance. The organisation may wish to consider how it can further facilitate cultural awareness. Increasing understanding may also help integrate the Whole Force. For example, some Reservists did not feel valued by Regulars with a sense that their skills and civilian experience are not utilised. The idea of “<i>cross fertilisation</i>” between different groups is worth considering as a means to both value and utilise what Reservists bring to the organisation. There were concerns from some white military males about whether accommodating differences would lead to a ‘watering down’ of the culture of the organisation. Neglecting the concerns of majority personnel can cause resistance to change but expecting minority personnel to fit in can undermine the added value of a diverse workforce. The key issue to be unravelled is the extent to which values and behaviours can remain common in the organisation whilst allowing the benefits of diversity to be fully realised. This could include involving those with a diverse background in the decision making process whilst also increasing clarity around the message on accommodations that are made for gender-based, cultural and religious differences. Many participants saw themselves as part of a “<i>family</i>”, seeing this as inherently a positive thing. However, included in this “<i>family</i>” narrative were patriarchal management styles that were sometimes detrimental to females’ sense of inclusion and team cohesion, although often well-intentioned. This suggests that there is a need to shift the focus from ‘protecting’ to ‘supporting’ females and BAME in the workplace. This could include training for managers on the management of diverse teams. There was evidence that females often felt inferior to male colleagues due to the hierarchal structure where rank and grade were highly prized. BAME participants felt the organisation’s focus upon ‘status’ and position prevented them from crossing organisational hierarchies, thus restricting their opportunities to form a support network with like-minded people and increasing feelings of isolation. Junior personnel felt overlooked. Deference to rank and grade in the organisation also spurred an urge to conform, acting as a barrier to inclusion and diversity of thought. Consideration may need to be given as to how to move towards a culture where the knowledge and experience inherent in rank and grade are acknowledged, whilst giving voice to diversity of opinion across the hierarchy. Further exploration of those instances where the formal hierarchy isolates and excludes may also need to be undertaken. This is particularly important for BAME personnel who sometimes experienced racism in the wider community, particularly in those locations with little ethnic diversity. The importance of support networks for BAME personnel may assist in making them feel looked after and understood.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banter was a complex issue as a signaller of both inclusion and exclusion (for anyone who was different), forging bonds and friendships but offending and problematic for many females, BAME personnel and anyone who did not fit the white male stereotype. A minority of military white males expressed resistance to the drawing of boundaries around what is considered appropriate banter. Many white males also did not appear comfortable speaking about race, suggesting that the boundaries of banter and appropriate language (what is okay to say – especially in relation to ethnicity and cultural differences) should be regularly negotiated/discussed within teams and units. • Organisational communication was often gendered, which reinforced an organisational culture where males are perceived to be the norm and females are ‘other’³¹. Removing gendered language used in organisational communication could lead to females feeling more included in the organisation. Language is never neutral but is instead embedded with social meanings, including overt and covert biases, stereotypes and inequalities. The UK Fire Service has sought to address similar issues by campaigning to use the term ‘firefighters’ rather than ‘firemen’ as part of a wider campaign to encourage more females to consider a role in the fire brigade. The MOD may be able to learn lessons from this approach. • In an era when opportunities to deploy are reducing, sport is an important leveller and informal inclusionary practice for F&C BAME. However, it can also exclude females especially, suggesting that female participation in sport needs to be taken seriously. Barriers to females’ participation also need tackling. One mechanism for this would be through promoting alternative sports that have less emphasis on competition than in traditional and competitive sports, where dominant relations between females and males can still be seen. It also points to the broader issue of task cohesion being strengthened through shared activity. • Whilst socialising can cement working relationships, it also brings several problems. From a D&I perspective, CS and military females sometimes felt vulnerable in these spaces when alcohol was involved due to anxieties of being judged harshly and concerns about sexual harassment. Some BAME participants did not drink alcohol and this also excluded them from such informal socialisation as well as making them uncomfortable at formal events. Thus, there is always potential for in-group/out-group³² dynamics to be played out around this form of socialising, excluding and isolating members who are not part of the in-group. Having informal meetings at different times of the day, such as lunch meetings, rather than drinks after work is one way of ensuring that people are not unintentionally left out. • The CS participant and Reservist experience was often shaped by their engagement with military colleagues. Many CS participants were disappointed by their treatment by military colleagues, especially those working in mixed environments. There were serious concerns from CS personnel about the norms of behaviour, (in)civility and bullying that they often experience from military colleagues and managers. This suggests that the MOD may need to explore what steps could be taken to ensure that military managers or ex-military personnel who are involved in line managing CS personnel understand the most effective management style for use within this working environment. This could include a specific focus on how to manage a diverse team. Healthcare professionals advocating for the importance of civility in organisations have launched the ‘Civility Saves Lives’ campaign. The National Health Service (NHS) now
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³¹ Where an individual or group becomes mentally classified in a person’s mind as “not one of us”.

³² An in-group is a social group to which a person psychologically identifies as being a member. By contrast, an out-group is a social group with which an individual does not identify. This is based on Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1981).

	has unofficial 'civility' champions to advocate for the importance of respect, professional courtesy and valuing each other in the workplace (Hurst, Farmer and Turner, 2018). Similar initiatives for promoting a more positive working environment may help solve such problems.
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3.6 Suggested Actions

The literature suggests that there is no simple solution to addressing D&I; whilst some approaches might be suitable in some contexts they are less suitable in others. Consequently, the best approaches are those that are tailored to the specific organisation. That said, there are some underlying principles that apply across organisations (evidenced by [REDACTED]), which should be considered before embarking on any approach to diversity management to effect positive change. With this in mind, a table (Table 6-1) of six focus areas with associated options for action is presented in Part Three. The table documents the evidence thread outlining where the suggested action was derived from, the desired outcome of making the change and the potential scale and size of the impact.

Areas of focus have been derived from the aforementioned principles cited by [REDACTED] in conjunction with the specific findings from the research, evidence from the literature, insight into what other organisations have done to address similar challenges, and the expertise of the research team. These focus areas are:

- Challenging/changing the culture of the organisation.
- Focusing on organisational communication.
- Reviewing recruitment, selection and induction processes.
- Reviewing leadership and management behaviours.
- Implementing new policies and practices (or reviewing existing ones).
- Increasing opportunities for education and training.

Whilst the literature suggests that attention should be paid to all six areas, the one likely to have most significant impact on improving D&I is 'culture change'.

Part Two

Supporting Evidence

4 Situating the Findings in Context

Organisational research does not take place in a vacuum. Awareness of how the global, national and Defence environment has changed over time provides an important backdrop to understanding participants' experiences. Equally as important is an understanding of the key events that occurred in wider society during the data collection period as this provides an interesting insight into the socio-economic and political climate in the United Kingdom (UK) at the time of the research.

With this in mind, two timelines have been produced (see Appendix A, Section A.6.1 for further information on how the timelines were produced). The first maps out key global, national and Defence events and policy changes during the period covered in the timeline interview (2000 onwards) (Figure 1). The period between 2001 and 2014 saw British Forces active in Afghanistan as part of an international response to the terrorist threat and in Iraq as part of the attempt to disarm weapons of mass destruction. During this period significant policy change pertaining to Defence strategy and resourcing also took place against a backdrop of a global financial crisis in 2008. Public sector cuts, redundancies and pay freezes therefore coincided with a period where many Service personnel were engaged in military action. Most recently, and with great relevance to this study, there has been significant change to the opportunities available to military females with 2016 seeing the ban on women in close ground combat roles being lifted (see Appendix I for further detail of the events outlined in both timelines).

There have also been seismic changes in wider society. The most recent of these are outlined in the second timeline which presents key media events and stories that span the data collection period from June 2017 (Figure 2) to July 2018 (Figure 3). These stories mostly relate to the UK unless they had global significance and were reported widely in the UK. A stand against unacceptable behaviours (e.g. the #metoo campaign against sexual harassment; American footballers taking a stand against police violence and racism) was accompanied by a suggestion of sustained or sometimes increasing levels of discrimination and mistreatment of minority groups (e.g. five-fold increase in anti-Muslim hate crimes in London; Sexual harassment complaints in Westminster). (See Appendix I for further detail of the events). The reader may wish to consider these events when reading the report in order to situate the findings in context and to understand some of the potential drivers of participants' response. Individual attitudes, behaviours and affective (emotional) responses are, in part, informed by wider social values and norms as well as through direct, personal experience.

Through researchers' analysis of the interview transcripts and reference to the timelines, it was apparent that events were influential upon participants' responses in several ways. Whilst not all events were directly mentioned by participants, it was evident that many had had significant impact upon their experience of working in Defence. For example, flexible working was referenced in relation to its impact upon females' careers as well as participants perception of the organisation as a good place for females to work. In other instances, participants spoke of the consequences of key events, rather than directly referencing the event itself. For example, under-resourcing and 'triple hatting' were often salient to participants and may, in part, be linked to the implementation and residual effects of the Armed Forces (AF) redundancy programme in 2011 and the public sector cuts in 2010. The timelines, therefore, signpost the reader to events that may have governed some of the participants' experiences and which consciously or subconsciously shaped their perceptions and attitudes. As an example, some military white males believed that scarce resources were being diverted into Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) initiatives which they felt were not warranted; some questioned the MOD for seemingly 'prioritising' these initiatives and felt that operational effectiveness was potentially compromised as a result (see the theme of Organisational Trust, Justice and Loyalty, Section 5.1).

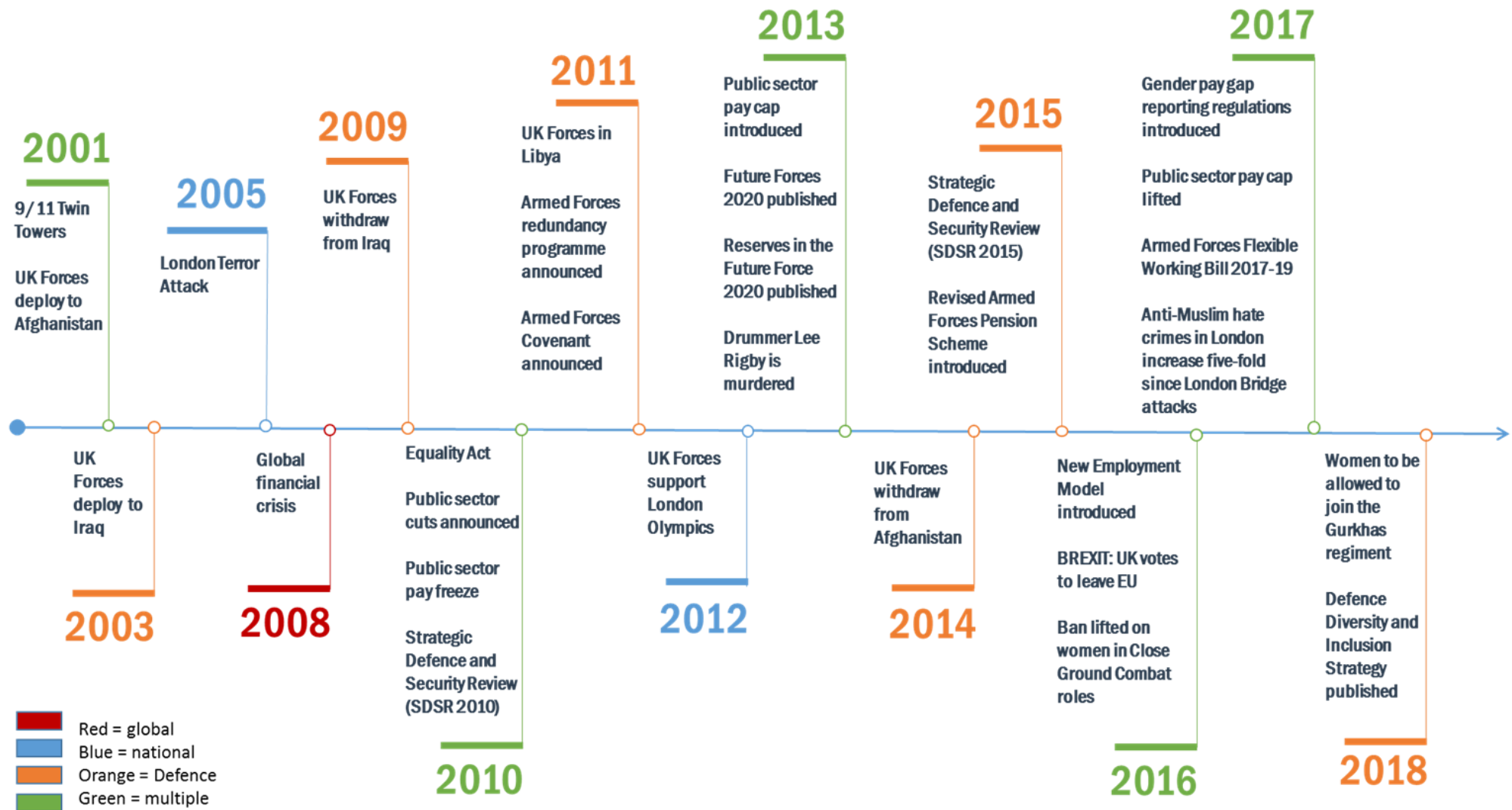


Figure 1: Global, national and Defence timeline

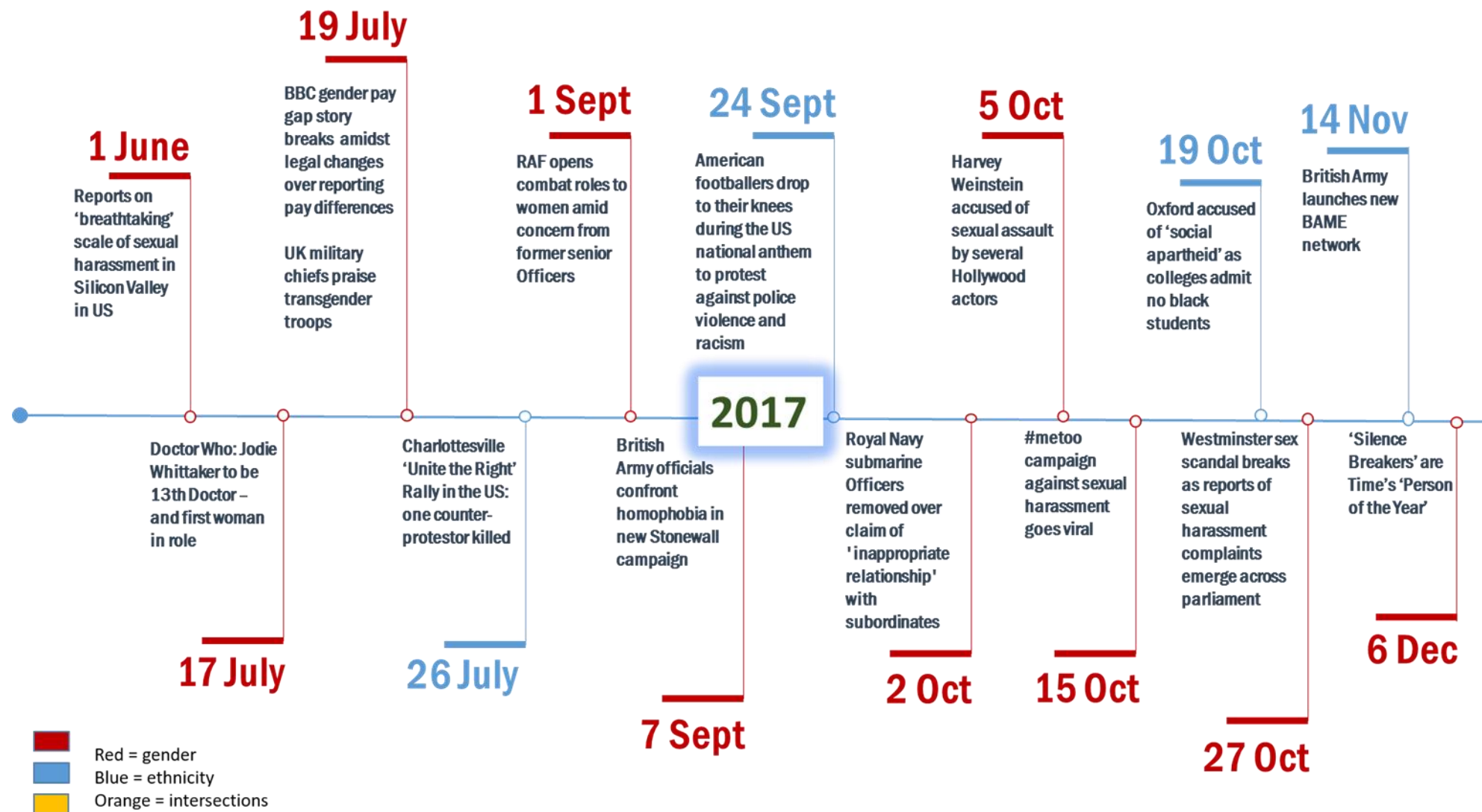


Figure 2: Societal timeline (2017)

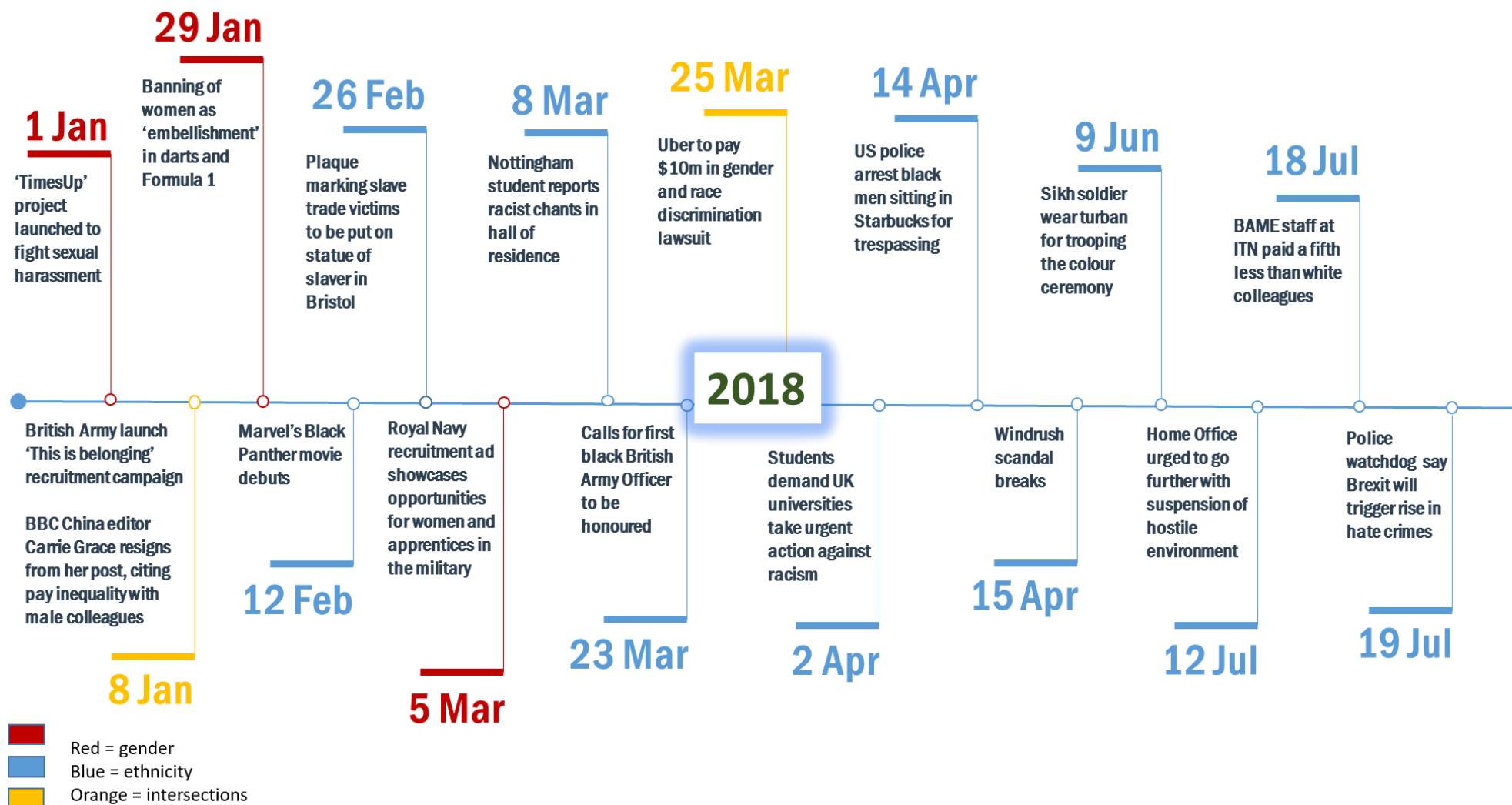


Figure 3: Societal timeline (2018)

5 Findings by Theme

During the course of the analysis, nine themes emerged from the data (see Figure 4). To aid the narrative the findings have been reported by theme. Please note, some points are reported in more than one theme as the issue is viewed through more than one lens. For example, some social activities in the military were felt to be exclusionary to minority groups and impacted their sense of belonging (as reported in the theme 'Belonging and Social Identity'). However, this exclusion was also found to have a negative impact on their career (as reported in the 'Career' theme). Whilst kept to a minimum, signposting and cross-referencing between themes is provided as necessary to aid further understanding.

Options for action based on the findings by theme are reported in Part Three (Table 6-1).



Figure 4: Themes

5.1 Organisational Trust, Justice and Loyalty

This theme focusses on how people perceive Defence, in terms of how it has treated them and how it treats others. This includes sentiments of trust, fairness, commitment, justice and loyalty that exist across the organisation, which have both positive and negative outcomes.

This theme comprises the following sub-themes:

- Pride in the MOD.
- A Meritocratic Organisation.
- Trust and Fairness.
- Considerations for Remaining or Leaving.

Points to note: Views about whether the organisation is fair or trustworthy emerged organically during the timeline part of the interview. Sentiments about the MOD also emerged in response to specific questions about intentions to stay/leave, whether they would recommend the MOD to others, and whether it was a good place to work for females and BAME personnel.

Synopsis

There were strong feelings that historic levels of job satisfaction, security and reward have been eroded by recent organisational changes and restructuring (the New Employment Model; Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR)³³). The perceived resultant instability and inequity of this has dissolved trust in the organisation particularly amongst the longer serving middle and lower graded/ranked personnel.

³³ Please note that most participants did not specify during interview whether they were referring to SDSR 2010 or 2015.

Nonetheless, a pride in the role of Defence, and a relatively advantageous landscape of opportunities (in terms of variety of roles, personal and professional development and education), underpinned widespread ongoing commitment, even in the context of broader dissatisfaction.

Whilst the MOD was perceived to have developed a number of progressive policies, (i.e. flexible working) the extent to which it was viewed to operate as a meritocracy varied across the sample. Many females and BAME participants retained positive commitment to the MOD even when they experienced discriminatory and other forms of unacceptable behaviour that impacted negatively on them and their careers.

Feelings about the MOD were often contradictory. Despite negative sentiments with regard to organisational injustices, in many cases females and BAME personnel recognised positive aspects of employment in the MOD relative to other options. Nonetheless, there was evidence that females sometimes left because of organisational injustices linked to their sex (career barriers and harassment). This 'opportunity' calculation worked in a different way for incumbent white males, who instead compared current circumstances with historic terms and conditions (T&C). Those longer-serving in the middle or lower echelons of the organisation felt the most aggrieved but remained committed due to feeling 'locked in' by their pension.

5.1.1 Pride in the MOD

Many participants were proud to work for the MOD and of their contribution to its role in the world. However, Civil Service (CS) BAME participants were the exception, instead being proud to work for a Government organisation more generally rather than the MOD specifically. Across the sample there was pride in being part of Defence, what it stood for on a world stage, and pride in its role of supporting others. This aligns with findings from the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) (2018) whereby 74% of personnel said that they were proud to be in their Service.

"It's a feeling of doing something good to be honest...I believe very strongly in the mission of the Army and the work that they do, both in the UK and overseas, so being part of that...you're part of that system, and I think it a massive sense of belonging" (Military, BAME, female)

"So financially [being a Reservist] doesn't really stack up, so you have to have a higher reason for doing it. So you know you do it because you enjoy it and you feel you're valued, you do it because it's a good thing to do" (Military, white, male)

Amongst Regular serving participants, milestone ceremonies, such as passing out parades, and public events (i.e. remembrance parades, the Lord Mayor's Show) were noted as invoking a sense of pride. A strong narrative amongst CS participants (and similarly amongst Reservists) was of their pride in supporting AF personnel to fulfil their roles. This was largely conveyed by those in more senior roles (B grades and above, who were perhaps more able to witness the contribution of their efforts to the overall organisation) and those working in roles close to the military. Pride amongst CS BAME participants was more likely to stem from being proud of working for Government and/or a prestigious organisation. The role of the MOD on the world stage was less often cited as a positive. Indeed, CS BAME participants were sometimes more committed to their occupation, their profession or the CS more broadly rather than to Defence.

"I am not passionate about Defence I'm passionate about the job I do because the future I see is one where...I have a skill and that skill might be required in any of these Government departments" (CS, BAME, female)

Ceremonial occasions were seen as important in imbuing pride, although this varied according to gender, ethnicity and role. Public facing ceremonial events held a particular significance for military females and BAME military participants. The relative rarity of females and BAME personnel in ceremonial events, compared to the presence of white males, not only made the significance of their personal achievement stand out, it showcased their presence to others. Thus, in addition to being proud of themselves, they were proud to visibly represent the organisation and to signal that the MOD is an organisation where minority groups can achieve. These perspectives of female and BAME participants stood in contrast to those expressed by quite a few military white males (particularly Army and Royal Navy (RN)), who saw ceremonial work as *"a waste of time"*, and as something the MOD were making them do to occupy their time in the absence of *"more meaningful"* combat-related activities. These participants were often resentful that they

were not “doing what [they] were trained to do”. Older male Reservists expressed this opinion on occasion but, in general, ceremonial duties held conflicting sentiments amongst Reservists. Longer-serving Reservists valued public ceremonies as important occasions for group cohesion (and warned against cutting them for budgetary reasons), whereas newer Reservists were more likely to be undertaking Reservist duties with competing demands (to serve their country, their employer and their families) and so ceremonial work was seen as the least effective use of their allocated military commitment. Nonetheless, being proud of their contribution to operational effectiveness of the MOD was a key part of many Reservist narratives.

“We all came in at junior ranks into the unit. But to sit in a large room, in a conference meeting and you are discussing with very senior Officers as well. Contributing to a national discussion. To me that was very – it stood out in that you really are contributing, at that stage” (Military, BAME, male)

A lack of pride in the MOD was often linked to the poor treatment of its personnel. Although this was not a strong narrative across the sample, and not unique to females or BAME personnel, it was sometimes connected to D&I issues. This centred on occasions when racist and sexist views were expressed on public platforms. Some white males said they were ashamed to be associated with the organisation. Bearing witness to the poor treatment of personnel negatively affected participants. At times, this “disgraceful” treatment of others became a motivation to try to change things. Being at the receiving end of poor treatment, by Government (not just the MOD), was noted, more frequently by CS participants in lower grades.

“I try not to tell people where I work because I'm embarrassed about everything, you know, about the way I've been treated throughout my career, the way I'm treated on a daily basis, the way the Government treats us, our benefits, everything changing and not having a say” (CS, white, female)

5.1.2 A Meritocratic Organisation

Female and BAME participants believed the MOD was a meritocratic employer, usually comparing the MOD with other organisations, where they imagined they would have fewer opportunities. This belief prevailed despite their belief that they needed to work harder than their white male peers to get equivalent recognition. Across the sample, personnel expressed gratitude that MOD employment had given them opportunities that they would not otherwise have obtained. This sentiment was particularly strong amongst females and Foreign & Commonwealth (F&C) BAME participants. These feelings were linked to social class for some BAME recent joiners as well as by longer-serving white males, who explicitly expressed gratitude towards the MOD for the “social mobility” afforded them. Collectively, this amounts to a volume of gratitude to the organisation from those not in the dominant white, middle-class, male group. In the model of organisational commitment produced by Allen and Meyer (1990) this kind of gratitude expressed by females, BAME participants and working-class individuals can prove to be a strong influence in longer term commitment to the employer. ‘Normative commitment’ of this type is a positive sense of obligation to the organisation, whereby employees may want to remain in order to repay the perceived investment the organisation has made in them.

White females across the sample were less likely to draw on narratives of social origins. However, many expressed positive views that the MOD gave opportunities to females that might not be available from other employers. Specifically, the MOD was seen, at least in policy terms, to have developed an array of progressive policies for females; with equal pay, maternity benefits, and other family-friendly policies being cited. Amongst military females in particular, the opportunities given to them engendered explicit loyalty because the organisation had invested in them. However, females who experienced the application of such policies found that managers were influential in delivery of these, with sometimes negative outcomes.

Many military white males reported that the diversion of resources to bolster the representation of female and BAME personnel was unjust. They commented that these funds could be used to mitigate the cuts to the MOD budgets in other areas (such as equipment). Military white males believed that scarce resources were being diverted into D&I initiatives that were not warranted, either because the organisation is diverse, or because it does not need to become more diverse. Investments to bolster recruitment of females and BAME personnel (out-reach, advertising campaigns), the resourcing of meetings or forums for the benefit of such groups, or the cost of adapting training so that females could be supported into roles dominated by (and most suited to) males, were commonly cited as examples of unnecessary spending. For some, there was a condemnation of the MOD for prioritising what were seen as political investments over other investments,

which could potentially compromise operational effectiveness. In the context of budget cuts and scarce resources, it may be easier to understand perceptions of this kind as ‘distributive injustice’ (Greenberg, 1987), as groups compete for scarce resources. Distributive justice relates to perceptions around the fairness of outcomes from decisions made within the organisation, assessing for example whether one group benefits at the expense of others. With perceptions that the organisation was making investments in females and BAME personnel rather than other kinds of investments, females and BAME personnel may inadvertently become scapegoats for wider dissatisfactions. Events aimed at BAME or female personnel often led to a sense of injustice from white males, who felt excluded.

“Sometimes people don’t just get it and there’s a lot of ‘there’s this event and there’s this...I’m a white male you know...I feel discriminated against, why don’t we have a white history month?’ That was said to me...and I’m thinking, we don’t have a white history month because every day is white history” (CS, BAME, male)

It was clear that white male participants across the sample did not understand their relative privileges, and this compounded their sense of injustice towards the MOD, who they saw as prioritising others. The rationale for such measures, such as advertising campaigns, support networks and mandatory D&I training, and its contribution towards the meritocratic ideal that many white males believed the MOD stood for, was more often understood by higher ranks/grades and those with specific D&I-related roles. The frustration caused by this lack of understanding was sometimes levelled at females and BAME personnel. This suggests there is much to be gained by increasing understanding of the dimensions of privilege and disadvantage amongst the white males in MOD, to address the sense of injustice they feel. Dismantling such objections would then enhance the creation of inclusive organisational environments.

“There is a danger of giving previously disadvantaged groups excessive attention or what’s the word, positive discrimination, which then runs a risk of making other groups then feel that they’re being disadvantaged. And certainly, I see in this building a great concentration on BAME, you know what I mean? In recruiting efforts, and so on. Which often means that the traditional white working class is often overlooked. And there is a danger that they may begin to feel the Army is not for them, because special interest groups are being elevated above them...in wanting to be equal and fair to some people, others then feel disadvantaged” (Military, white, male)

Activities to strengthen the MOD as a meritocratic organisation can, conversely, be seen as threatening meritocracy. To illustrate, research by Son Hing, Bobocel and Zanna (2002) showed that initiatives to address inequalities in the workplace for minority groups can often be seen as a violation of the merit principle. This breach of the meritocratic ideal was a significant factor in opposition to various forms of affirmative initiatives. Whilst perhaps it is understandable that such opposition was particularly strong amongst those who did not see discrimination occurring in the workplace, it was also surprisingly present amongst those who saw discrimination, but whose commitment to the meritocratic ideal was stronger. The authors suggested that workplaces may need to work to show those who do not see the nature of discrimination, in terms of understanding how assessment of merit for those from minority groups is likely biased or unjust. There should be an emphasis on how the beneficiaries of any initiative are worthy of the redress, rather than their promotion as a quick fix.

5.1.3 Trust and Fairness in the MOD

Across the sample, participants outwith the senior ranks suggested that senior leaders could not be trusted to defend the organisation, and those who worked in it, against the vagaries of Government policy and Defence cuts. Additionally, there was a sense of inequity amongst CS personnel. Some perceived that the cuts reflected senior leaders’ favouritism towards the Regular Service, with spending on military infrastructure seen to be at the expense of supporting other parts of the organisation. However, it was clear that those in the Regulars had little sense of any form of protection being afforded them.

“I think we are definitely now...an absolute budget-driven organisation, and that’s come at the cost of looking after our soldiers...I think soldiers are definitely feeling that they’re declining in worth - not from the British public but certainly from the Government and the MOD as an organisation because of the financial circumstances of our country” (Military, white, male)

Whilst trust in senior leaders to stand up to Government was weak across the sample, there was a much greater trust in the organisation to deliver support to individuals at times of crises. Acute health issues and

familial bereavement were often cited examples, where the MOD was seen to excel in responding to personnel needs, with speedy access to specialist healthcare, excellent mobilisation of resources to get participants home to families (particularly if overseas), and time off work were commonly relayed by those who had needed such measures, and those who had also witnessed this provision to others. This trust was abundant across the sample and created feelings of loyalty to the organisation. Repaying that support was an important factor in the formation of strong allegiances to the organisation. Interestingly, in a minority of cases, experience of receiving inadequate institutional support (usually in relation to health) was also a factor in proclaimed commitments to remain in the organisation. Amongst males, lapses in support were more usually cited as being related to their physical and emotional health (e.g. Service-related injury or stress) where the provision of basic care did not cover their needs and access to more complex care was not supported. Females spoke of a lack of organisational support or infrastructure in tackling sexism that they experienced or witnessed and for some senior females this was a reason to consider leaving. However, in both of these circumstances, participants proclaimed a personal commitment to remain in the organisation in order to contribute to an improved provision in the future. Thus lapses in support occasionally lead to increased continuance commitment.

Across the sample, restructuring has significantly undermined trust in MOD and reduced loyalties. Length of Service was a more important factor in this rather than gender or ethnicity. Previous studies have highlighted that satisfaction with T&C is low. Only 31% of Regulars agreed that the pay and benefits they received are fair for the work they do (AFCAS, 2018); just 34% of CS personnel are satisfied with the total benefits package they receive; 30% believe their pay adequately reflects their performance (Civil Service People Survey; 2017). Increasing outsourcing and reductions to T&C, staffing, and opportunities for job enriching activities, were perceived as producing increasingly inequitable outcomes amongst participants across the sample. For example, the end of final-salary pensions and pay freezes (frequently seen as cuts) were highlighted as issues across the sample. Location moves were cited as being disruptive with an impact on families and home-life, and the lack of stability, in terms of being able to plan for the future, was a significant source of stress. Those with longer career histories (both Regulars and CS) were more likely to feel a stronger sense of unfairness, and a distinct lack of trust, because of accumulated changes. However, they also experienced unfairness on behalf of newer recruits who were, in their opinion, receiving much less favourable career rewards than they should be (and this resulted in more muted recommendations of MOD careers for future entrants). An additional source of discontent for CS participants was parts of the organisation being contracted out. Being a part of the MOD was regarded as substantively different to being paid as a contractor to deliver services. This was seen as impersonal and contract driven, whereas being part of the MOD, and the loyalties that ensued, meant that participants believed they delivered the kind of support military personnel deserved. Any enforced change to their contractual employment was seen as unjust, demoralising, and potentially damaging to the level of support that military personnel required and deserved.

A greater sense of injustice was felt by participants in the lowest grades/ranks who believe they are absorbing the budget cuts. Irrespective of gender or ethnicity, many participants in the lower grades and ranks spoke of the upper echelons of decision makers (those on “*telephone number salaries*”) designing cuts and changes with little concept of the experiences of those with the most limited financial resources. There were examples of the kinds of sacrifices that families and households had made over recent years with a widely held belief that senior leaders and those in Headquarters (HQ) would be unlikely to be having to make such significant adjustments to their standards of living.

Whilst generally those in the CS believed they were unjustly bearing the brunt of MOD budget cuts, spending restrictions at a local level could be felt more by female CS with familial responsibilities. For example, standardised travel arrangements in place for attendance at educational or CS-wide events (e.g. coaches provided, restriction on train fares, specified location only etc.) made it impossible for females with caring responsibilities to take these opportunities. Their alternative suggestions (which they believed to be relatively minor, and justified in any case as accommodating those with familial commitments) were often denied or had to be forcefully fought for. The sense of injustice was clear.

“And you just think you’re banging your head against a brick wall and feel really undervalued. And particularly when you work with military people who are going to Chile and New Zealand and Singapore and you think, ‘I can’t get a £35 train ticket to London’” (CS, white, female)

Failures by the organisation to consult and to communicate effectively on decisions were further reasons that trust and a sense of fairness were being compromised. The uncertainty over whether the MOD would act on announcements, or a sense of mistrust that announcements were actually truthful, was a source of stress and negative sentiment towards the organisation across the sample with the exception of the higher grades/ranks. Participants were angry that potential relocations and/or job losses would be announced, or speculated on, but with no real 'follow up', consistency of message or secure sense of what was likely to happen. The timing and nature of these 'plans' added to stress and insecurities, with intentions around restructuring or outsourcing being 'dripped in' over many months with no greater clarity emerging over time, or a sporadic announcement with no further mention of it.

"The only negatives that stick out is that, is like, nobody knows when major changes happen, no one really knows what's going on until it's all been finalised at top level and then its communicated downwards, but then we do find out eventually" (Military, BAME, male)

An absence of dialogue between senior leaders and those in lower grades and ranks about the rationale for, and the nature of proposed changes also added to a sense of injustice. This is an aspect of 'informational justice' (Saunders and Thornhill, 2003), which relates to how messages about changes are communicated, in terms of the medium, timing and sense being tailored to the audience. Saunders and Thornhill (2003) suggest that employees are more likely to accept unfavourable decisions if they are given adequate and genuine reasons, delivered in appropriate ways. This appears not to have occurred in relation to D&I and other changes, and a sense of injustice has developed. Few participants felt they were being adequately regarded in this way. The interpersonal dimension of organisational communication is also deemed significant in enhancing or challenging employee loyalties. 'Interactional justice' (Saunders and Thornhill, 2003), refers to how personnel feel they were treated in the decision making process, in terms of being listened to and being treated well once decisions were made. There was significant dissatisfaction with this across the sample, but also, an explicit suggestion that the MOD could address this lapse by fully utilising the infrastructure in place to explain decisions across the organisation.

"We have the tools, we just don't use them properly...if people were given a sense that their opinion mattered, that their, they had as much right to a justification for decisions being made as the board, for example. Then I think, I think for people to be treated as equals in that sense would be, would be a big, a big improvement. And none of that would cost money" (CS, white female)

Having a sense that people did not matter, as noted above, was a common cause of the injustice felt by many across the sample. It emerged particularly strongly amongst Reservists, who perceived a seemingly casual attitude towards their employment, which had a significant impact on their experiences. The MOD was criticised on a number of occasions for its history of cancelling deployments and training events, including at the last minute. For Reservists this had other knock-on effects, such as disrupting families, annoying employers and undermining the credibility of the Reservist role. The importance of delivering on promises was seemingly more important for Reservists, who had to make arrangements for planned events in ways that Regulars did not.

"...although people say that Reserves are really important...actually if they don't need you they don't care and they'll just drop you. You're not properly their responsibility until you put on the uniform and show up. So you know, if they cancel something, they genuinely didn't seem to care how that impacted your life and sometimes you know it really does" (Military, white, male)

5.1.4 Considerations for Remaining or Leaving the MOD

Organisational benefits such as job security, pension, the range of work and educational opportunities, were important factors for remaining in the MOD across the sample, and particularly so for female personnel. This appreciation was compromised, but held nonetheless, even where it was recognised amongst longer serving participants that organisational benefits had reduced over their career timelines.

"I have considered leaving at least once, I put my option in to consider leaving, and when I started digging into the detail really of what I'd have to commit for to get the same sort of wage, same sort of additional extras that we get, pension funds and the like, I'd have to work a lot harder, have a lot, lot more responsibility and a lot less perks and a lot more commuting and so on than I currently do" (Military, white, male)

Additional benefits, such as Continuity of Education allowance and flexible working were pertinent to Regulars and CS personnel respectively. Females also appreciated the equal pay and lack of differential that they believed they would have to endure elsewhere.

There was a general sentiment across the sample, that the benefits of working for the MOD outweighed the costs. This was felt most strongly by female and BAME participants, but was being most compromised amongst military males with dependent families. Despite many reported experiences of various forms of discrimination and harassment amongst females and BAME participants across the sample (see Negative Treatment and Experiences, Section 5.2) these participants nevertheless endorsed the MOD as a good employer for a variety of other reasons. Flexible working was seen as a significant benefit for many CS females and a smaller number of CS male participants. Maternity provision was seen as industry leading (rather than legally compliant) and engendered feelings of gratitude by many females across the sample. Amongst the CS a good work-life balance was a commonly cited theme, and female CS participants compared the MOD favourably to the private sector in this regard. This adds further support to Lundquist's (2008) research in the US military who reported similar findings. Lundquist found that Black and Latino males and females, and white females, reported higher job satisfaction relative to white males and interpreted this in light of *"relative deprivation"*. The study highlighted that different minority groups have different expectations of what they could obtain in the civilian domain and used this reference point to determine if they were at a position of advantage/disadvantage. This may also explain the current study's findings that military males with dependent children were notable exceptions, in that their strong sense of inequity related to an increasingly compromised work-life balance compared with what went before. They were more likely than their female counterparts to voice resentment at reduced T&C for an increased loss of family time. This is a timely reminder that there are implications for a sense of just practices amongst parents across all areas of the MOD, and whilst positive changes are being developed for females, the unintended consequences of changed T&C may be perceived as impacting more negatively on military males.

Inconsistent implementation of policies 'on the ground', whether around flexible working or promotion, and a complaints system rarely regarded as adequate, meant there was limited trust in the organisation, particularly in the middle and lower ranks/grades, to address the concerns of personnel when things went wrong. Lack of career progression, discrimination, and harassment were reasons for females and BAME personnel to consider leaving the MOD.

"I felt so angry at the way I felt I was treated by the MOD. You know I was the victim [of alleged sexual assault] but they were kind of protecting him. That's how it felt. And I felt so angry. If it hadn't have been for the fact that I needed the flexible working that MOD offered, I'd have left" (CS, white, female)

Females and BAME participants often endured less than satisfactory aspects of their MOD career in exchange for a wider landscape of opportunity. Dissatisfactions could often be temporary, due to routine job rotations of military personnel and/or the opportunity to change roles in the CS (where possible). Dissatisfactions could be ameliorated over time, as females and BAME participants reflected on how they had learned to adapt to the environments in which they worked, so they spoke of not being offended by behaviours that they were initially offended by, or of learning to ignore some unpalatable aspects. This seemed to be a stronger narrative amongst females, perhaps reflecting a wider societal norm that casual sexism is more acceptable than casual racism. Also it was clear that the negative aspects of careers could be outweighed by other positive aspects of employment (fun, uniqueness, variety, maternity provision etc.).

Military females described difficulties in balancing family life with working for the MOD, which contributed to their decisions to stay or leave. (See also Work, Family and Wellbeing, Section 5.6.1 and 5.6.2). The military in particular was seen as incompatible with family life and as such familial responsibilities with regard to dependent children were described as a contributory factor in considerations to leave the AF.

"I've always said that if I had children or if I got married I'd leave the Army anyway, I wouldn't want to bring a child up in the military, especially if my partner's in the Army as well, it's too...it's too much" (Military, white, female)

Some military white females thought that career progression required too great a sacrifice to family life than they were prepared to give, and this was an important consideration for whether they would remain or leave the Services.

“Some of the successful female Officers that I know that have reached Commander and above, if they’re not already on divorce number one, they are single, not particularly happy with their home life. Yes they’ve got houses, sort of the bling car and all that kind of stuff but the reason they’re single is because they’ve had to do back to back jobs, going away all the time, they don’t want to date work colleagues. So ultimately I think that will have an effect on whether or not I want to stay in, you know, is it worth the trade off?” (Military, white female)

Indeed, many military females described considering their age as part of their decision of when to leave the MOD, wanting to be young enough to have a family and/or a second career. Some ex-Regular Reservist white females described leaving the Regulars due to some of the concerns of balancing family with military life, as well as noting their changing priorities following having children. However, there were also a number of Regular females who said that the military was compatible with family life, but these females tended to emphasise that the moment it became incompatible, they would leave.

“Every posting I’ve ever taken I’ve always thought ‘can this work for my family?’ And if it really, really wasn’t going to work for my family I would leave...But actually, as ever, I had a lovely team...they helped me, and I had lovely soldiers to look after. And so we made it work” (Regular, white, female)

Difficulties in balancing family with work was not a female-specific issue, although many participants across the sample noted that this tended to be a more pressing subject for females with caring responsibilities. Some CS white males, for example, who had previously been very mobile, described being less motivated to relocate after having children, which impacted on their career progression and caused some to consider leaving the MOD.

Eroding terms and conditions (pay freezes, changes to pensions and allowances etc.) contributed to considerations of leaving, with grade/rank a more decisive factor than gender or ethnicity. Participants in the lower strata of the organisation spoke of changes not merely in terms of their financial impact, but also with regard to more personal, affective outcomes. Some found these changes “demoralising” and “belittling” and some Regulars felt betrayed in terms of their risk of life having little impact on how they feel they are currently treated.

Limited opportunities for promotion due to job cuts compounded the already more problematic career landscape for females and BAME participants. However, participants across the sample, and across the grades and ranks, were ‘horizon-scanning’ for other careers outside the MOD. Gender impacted here in a number of ways. Females who were dissatisfied often still regarded the MOD as a better employer for their gender than civilian organisations. This was mostly perceived positively as a reason to stay, rather than negatively. Males however lacked that compensatory view, and longer serving males in the middle or lower grades/ranks were further aggrieved if, while job hunting, they found out that their skills were outdated. This was another factor they attributed to a reduced strategic investment by the MOD. This serves to highlight the multi-faceted nature of dissatisfaction with the D&I agenda amongst a white male strata in MOD that has been revealed in this research. There were a number of reasons for some white males’ attitudes towards the increased representation of female and BAME personnel, and there was a sense of disadvantage compared to minority groups, who they see as in the ascendancy and as securing organisational attention, relative to themselves.

The notion of the ‘psychological contract’ between personnel and an organisation is useful here, in the sense that it consists of the beliefs of the parties involved in an organisation regarding their reciprocal obligations (Rousseau, 1995). Perceptions about these unwritten terms of exchange between an individual and their employer can shape a range of job-related attitudes, including job satisfaction and intention to quit. From the employee’s perspective, the terms of the psychological contract are often implied rather than stated and it is shaped by their interaction with the organisation. Over time the employee builds up expectations of what they should give to their employer and what they should receive in return (Conway and Briner, 2005). This was very evident amongst many of the longer serving personnel; males were particularly vocal about their sense of betrayal by the MOD compared with longer serving females who were disappointed, but more tempered in their views. Breaches of these perceived terms are likely to produce a negative emotional response and negative job-related attitudes. Employees experiencing psychological contract breach often reduce the effort that they put into their work and their job performance (Conway and Briner, 2005; Turnley, Bolino, Lester and Bloodgood, 2003). In this sense, the perceived dismantling of the psychological contract

amongst these personnel through the erosion of T&C, and the sense of injustice they feel, may have longer term unintended consequences.

Across the sample, satisfaction and enjoyment of work were important factors for remaining in the MOD whilst dissatisfaction, boredom and feeling devalued in their roles led many to consider leaving. The sense of not feeling valued was cited repeatedly across the sample, but there was a discernible difference with respect to ethnicity. Many white males felt under-valued in the sense that their careers or circumstances did not seem to matter as much to the MOD since SDSR, whereas CS BAME participants were more likely to report feeling under-valued as a result of being under-used.

"...from my perspective it's more my skills and experience that I don't feel are exploited...I'm not encouraged to use them..." (CS, BAME, male)

Many participants, irrespective of gender and ethnicity, described really enjoying the work, and found it stimulating and with a lot of opportunities for variety. Many were happy to stay in the organisation that offered this, having invested in the time needed to acclimatise to this idiosyncratic environment.

"I'm still getting a lot of diversity out of what I do, like you can see no two jobs have been really the same. And I think while that continues I don't see any reason to leave" (CS, white, female)

Whilst many participants described being satisfied in their daily working lives, many were unsatisfied, frustrated and bored in their roles, and these were cited as common reasons for considering leaving. In the CS, red tape and a slow-moving bureaucracy led to boredom and a desire to utilise skills in other sectors, whilst some military participants spoke about the futility of their daily tasks and doing pointless things.

"I find it quite slow and dull at times and quite limiting and restricting and the red tape is something I really don't work well with" (CS, BAME female)

However, this frustration with the slowness of the MOD was countered by others across the sample who felt they were being asked to work at an unsustainable pace. This sometimes led to a sense of not feeling valued.

"I'm finding it very challenging and it's very fast pace and I don't feel I can sustain it, but I've been told there's a business need...I don't think this team values its individuals, it values the output to the programme. The individual is neglected and that's kind of the frustration I have" (CS, BAME Female)

Indeed, the sense of increasing demands and expectations from the MOD were driving some participants across the sample to consider early retirement, with workload being a factor for many, especially longer-serving personnel not in the upper echelons of the MOD.

"Would I be happy to stay until 60, that would be a hard slog because you require a lot more out of me now than you did to my equivalent 10 years ago" (CS, white, female)

Conversely, a lack of demanding work from a military perspective was cited as a reason for leaving amongst Regulars and a few Reservists. Reduced opportunities for deployment and engaging in operations abroad were felt particularly acutely by the younger male military participants who joined up specifically to go on operational deployments and felt like they were 'missing out'. There was a suggestion that some of these men who were thinking of leaving were planning on going into roles where they thought they could utilise their MOD training e.g. anti-terrorism roles in the Police Force.

"So the reasons people are leaving, so they're leaving a lot more now than they did before because we're not in Afghanistan anymore. So that means that they're not getting that thing they signed up for generally of going on tours, you know doing exciting things they couldn't have done anywhere else, so that leads to frustration like these little day to day frustrations" (Military, white, male)

The commitment that participants felt they had invested in the MOD (arising from age, gender, length of time in MOD and/or investment in the organisation) was a significant factor influencing participants' decisions to remain, in both positive and negative ways. There was a feeling amongst white females across the sample that the investment they had made in understanding the MOD as an organisation was a reason to remain. Many viewed this significant investment positively.

"I kind of know where I am, with the MOD. I know the policies, and I know what the people are like" (CS, white, female)

However, some participants felt that the investment they had made meant they had little choice but to remain. For those closer to retirement age, the pension was a big driver in the face of these changes, and many noted that they felt “locked in” by the MOD’s T&C since they had built up good pensions over time. This and the specificity of the MOD’s working environment was a more negative reason for staying in the organisation. Some female CS participants thought they might be “pigeonholed” into the MOD’s specific working culture, and had little “commercial awareness”. This view was common amongst C grades, where they could not imagine returning to “civvy street”, “where you have to battle for everything”. Some CS also talked about looking for opportunities outside of the MOD but being nervous about leaving due to their pension and T&C, or not finding fulfilling jobs outside, suggesting that there was a fear about the costs of leaving the MOD. CS E grades who had worked for the MOD for long periods of time were particularly nervous of leaving the MOD, being so close to pensionable retirement and also being particularly fearful of facing an employment market hostile to their age and credentials.

“We’ve been in the Civil Service for so long now, I would be frightened to leave, because of the pension that I’ve accrued. I would hate to lose that, as well” (CS, white, female)

Allen and Meyer’s (1990) work on ‘organisational commitment’ is a useful lens for understanding the implications of these feelings of loyalty to the organisation. They defined three kinds of organisational commitment: affective; normative and continuance. Affective commitment sees loyalty as based on an emotional identification with the organisation and its aims and is usually linked to positive experiences therein. For those BAME participants subject to forms of negative treatment (see Negative Treatment and Experiences, Section 5.2) a strong sense of commitment to the “cause” was a motivator for some to remain in the military, particularly for serving females.

“I try not to let anything negative put me off, and at the end of the day, the reason I joined is because of the work the Army does, not because of how great I feel being in the Army, it’s because of the work that the military does and how much I believe in that work. So even if I was really unhappy, I’d still try and stay in, purely because I believe in their mission, so” (Military, BAME, female)

The basis of normative commitment is an employee’s sense of obligation to the organisation, for example by wanting to repay the investment the organisation has made in them (referred to earlier in this theme). Continuance commitment can be founded on less positive sentiments insofar as employees are committed to remain because they have investments in the organisation (i.e. pensions, or effort) that they need to get the benefit from, or dare not risk by leaving. The kinds of commitment held by personnel are not mutually exclusive, and the combinations they hold can change over time. Many females and BAME participants, who expressed a form of continuance commitment, also displayed a strong sense of normative commitment where females, BAME participants and those from lower socio-economic origins were grateful for the organisational investment the MOD had made in them. The literature (Allen and Meyer, 1990) suggests that personnel with affective and normative commitments to an organisation are greater assets, whereas those primarily with a continuance commitment are less likely to positively contribute to organisational progression.

In the context of significant restructuring, it was clear that longer serving participants (irrespective of gender and ethnicity, but instead influenced by rank and grade) were remaining due to a continuance commitment that was more negative. Longer serving personnel in the middle grades/ranks (‘the settled middle’, or “stretched middle” as they referred to themselves) were more likely to remain until pensionable retirement, but be relatively disenfranchised. This seemed particularly acute amongst white CS males in the ‘settled middle’, who felt the added injustice of being expected to help ‘fast-tracked others’ progress whilst they remained in situ. Meyer and Allen (1997) emphasise that organisations should attend to what they label the “casualties of restructuring”, to try to establish a more productive commitment to the organisation. On the surface this may seem to be a matter simply of organisational justice and efficiency, rather than related to D&I explicitly. There is potential latent talent in this strata and a meritocratic organisation should not allow this to go unrewarded. Additionally, given the representation of females and BAME participants in the ‘settled middle’, they too will have opportunities to have their talent assessed/recognised, thereby improving the representation of females and BAME personnel also, up the organisational hierarchy. There is also the opportunity to remove the potential hindrance to D&I progression that resentful incumbents in this strata could present, by engendering a more productive commitment to organisational change that sees

them included rather than being left behind. Thus there are multiple benefits to attending to the ‘causalities of restructuring’ as suggested by Meyer and Allen (1997).

Experiences relating to D&I are reasons that female and BAME participants gave for considering leaving.

Experiences of pregnancy and maternity in the Services were significant factors for females. Some females also spoke about the effect of sexual harassment and continual harassment disguised as banter (see Organisational Culture, 5.9.4) as a contributory factor in their desire to leave. Ethnicity and/or gender seemed to compound experiences amongst military females (particularly those in the Army) who spoke also of being stereotyped or treated more harshly, which also influenced their thoughts around leaving.

*“...some of the time it is meant just light heartedly to take the p*** and other times you can tell it is not because of the tone or the manner in which it is delivered, but yes...it is disheartening, it is disappointing, it is...it gets under your skin after a while...‘oh yes more jokes, cheers’ and you know it does make you wonder ‘why am I still here, why am I putting up with this, I could be doing a better paid job where I get to go home every night’” (Military, white, female)*

Racist behaviours were identified as influencing thoughts of leaving. The particular behaviour of certain individuals had prompted some BAME military participants to consider resigning at certain times during their career.

“It just shows you that all it has to take is one person to upset the apple cart, which is why it's quite, it's quite threatening actually to think that just one person can have that much influence” (Military, BAME, female)

However, many CS BAME participants noted that D&I issues had no bearing on their desire to leave the MOD; more influential was that they were so tired of the impact of reduced resourcing, to the extent they felt they were now being exploited by the organisation.

“I have asked twice in the past to reduce my hours. I have a few minor health issues. And been told that's not feasible...until they can find someone else to cover the other half of my job...I'm fed up with being, fed up with being exploited really. That's got nothing to do with gender or ethnicity, it's just taken me a long time to see the light” (CS, BAME, female)

Organisational Trust, Justice and Loyalty - Key Messages and Actions

- A widespread pride in the organisation remains, with ceremonial occasions noted by BAME military participants to be important in imbuing pride. However, organisational pride was also viewed as potentially reducing the capacity to see the extent of problems within the MOD. This suggests that steps may need to be taken to identify where pride becomes a barrier to change, and how to overcome this.
- Many participants perceived that D&I initiatives violated the principle of merit, which is a strong mantra for the organisation. Thus personnel, including females, and BAME participants were not opposed to the progression of females/BAME per se, but of perceived unfair preferential treatment of them. Many white male participants did not understand the rationale for D&I changes, which could explain the level of resistance to them amongst this group. Furthermore, there was a lack of comprehension of the subtle mechanisms of injustice for female and BAME personnel, which added to the sense of injustice amongst white males who perceived positive treatments of others as being at their own disadvantage. Key challenges for the organisation lie in creating or maintaining objectively ‘fair’ processes and outcomes that are also perceived to be fair by the workforce as a whole. This may, in part, involve making visible to the white male majority³⁴, the many subtleties of bias or injustice. All the indications are that the D&I training must be reconfigured to become more interactive and personal (face-to-face) to help develop this awareness, particularly for managers and senior leaders. Re-framing D&I as restoring fairness and upholding the meritocracy that many view as important, may also help to reduce resistance.
- Trust in the organisation to support personnel in times of crisis is strong, but has been substantially reduced as the design and implementation of SDSR was seen to be erratic and unfair. This view

³⁴ The employee group who identify as ‘white’ as a racial classification specifier, and ‘male’ as a sex classification specifier where being white and male is the most common, or majority, employee group.

applied across the organisation regardless of gender and ethnicity. However, females and BAME participants had additional reasons for a loss of trust related to inadequate redress for injustices they endured. Where there is lack of trust in organisational processes, affective commitment may be undermined. Oversight of the impact of policies upon personnel (and their commitment and trust) may need to be considered.

- Communication about both strategic and operational changes (e.g. closures of bases, sub-contracting of services, training events) was perceived to be absent, irregular or inconsistent. Participants experienced a great deal of stress with hypothesised plans, changes to previous plans and notional or absent timescales. This impacted on those with families in particular. This may suggest that there needs to be a focus upon the source and method of communication (e.g. face to face versus remote) and the frequency of engagement with personnel in order to increase understanding and manage expectations.
- Commitment to the MOD remained strong but was being compromised. The extent to which loyalty to MOD was based on fears of leaving, rather than excitement at staying, suggests the MOD may not be getting the most from swathes of the most experienced personnel. For example, the 'settled middle' feel a sense of injustice as organisational attention and resources are focused on new entrants, and fast-track personnel. Many females and BAME personnel occupy the settled spaces and are keen to have their skills and potential noticed. Steps to invest in the careers of the 'settled middle' may help to facilitate their progression and increase affective commitment. This could take the form of a skills audit focused on identifying overlooked or latent talent, with meaningful job enrichment and personal development actions to follow. Progression also needs to be reconceptualised, to include reward and recognition for a variety of work-related efforts within the same grade, rather than just moving up within the organisation.
- Those more disaffected across the sample, usually those in the middle ranks/grades with longer Service, perceived that the MOD has shown little concern for them in the way cuts and restructuring have been devised and implemented. The distance between policy makers and those on the ground was seen as a factor in this insensitivity. Moreover, the pressure of more work being done by fewer personnel has increased a sense of injustice amongst the sample, leading to stress and thoughts of leaving. Whilst the impact of cuts may not be able to be immediately mitigated, some easing of pay/benefits cuts at the lower end of the organisation may be required. Opportunities for personal dialogue between those at the top and bottom of the organisation, unmediated by those in the middle may also help personnel to highlight the nature and impact of the cuts on them. Face-to-face meetings with those designing policies, and a communication of the influences these may have had on policy decisions, should become part of the planning process. This would help to address not just organisational trust and commitment amongst those disaffected in lower or middle ranks/grades, it may lead to policies that have less negative impact on health and wellbeing through policy makers understanding more of the experiences of such personnel. A commitment to these types of meetings also provides an opportunity for the organisation to communicate and explain the rationale for the changes, potentially overcoming misinterpretations and/or the resistance of some personnel. A review of workloads and stress assessments may be more easily achievable in the short term. However, a key challenge is to manage the factors underpinning personnel's negative perceptions in order to improve their experience of the workplace.

5.2 Negative Treatment and Experiences

This theme examines various forms of negative treatment relayed by participants (such as bullying, harassment, discrimination) to understand the impact and consequences of their occurrence.

This theme comprises the following sub themes:

- The Invisibility of Discrimination.
- Structural and Positive Discrimination.
- Bullying.

- Sexual Harassment.
- Racial Harassment.
- Challenging Negative Treatment.

Points to note: Participants did not always recognise certain aspects of their experience as constituting an act of harassment and as such it was the task of the research team to interpret these instances (alongside self-reports by participants). Bullying behaviours, however, are confined to those occurrences that participants themselves defined as bullying. Participants were far more comfortable using this term presumably because societal and institutional recognition of what constitutes bullying exists on a firmer foundation.

Synopsis

Like many other organisations, the MOD has seen a shift from overt to more subtle forms of discrimination. Females and BAME participants encountered cumulative experiences of unconscious biases, missed opportunities, and low level indignities that could be difficult to 'call out' as discrimination to seek redress. Where this was attempted, outcomes were variable. Some institutional practices were also seen to disadvantage females and BAME personnel relative to white males: over-represented amongst the lower strata of the organisation (except military females) where cuts to T&C and salary freezes were seen to impact most harshly; insensitive vetting processes; and a routine disregard for essential facilities and equipment for military females. Widespread perceptions of positive discrimination betrayed the reality of the actual experiences of many females and BAME personnel. Encounters of bullying, sexual and racial harassment were frequently mentioned, although the degree of intent behind such behaviours was contested, in some cases. Harsher treatment by senior females and senior BAME personnel towards personnel from these minority groups in lower grades and ranks was reported, and explained as strategies to toughen up such populations and to protect seniors against complaints of favouritism.

There was much to deter individuals from making complaints about these behaviours, including concerns about: how to prove the offending behaviour took place; the behaviour appearing 'petty' out of context; and the impact of making a complaint on careers and peer relationships. Working on small bases, or as a Reserve, made complaining more problematic for female and BAME participants, who were more identifiable as probable complainants. The complaints process was viewed negatively by most participants. The process was seen as protective of the accused where they were military or senior, and seen as protective of females and BAME personnel by those who were accused. With a lack of both transparency and support, and with unreasonably long timeframes exacerbating stress and difficult working relationships, the system was condemned as unfit for purpose. Instead, redress was being achieved in military contexts at an interpersonal level, by BAME participants and female Officers in particular. These individuals felt able to discuss negative behaviours with those who initiated them, helping them to understand its significance. This was often deemed successful.

5.2.1 The Invisibility of Discrimination

There was a widely held perception amongst many in the sample that sexist and racial discrimination were historic issues that had been largely rectified by the MOD. This belief was particularly prevalent amongst military white males, thus speaking to the invisibility of these issues for many in this group. Many white males across the sample suggested they had never witnessed any form of discrimination or in cases where they had witnessed it, that blatant acts of discrimination were rare.

"We don't care what gender you are, what your ethnic background is, you're a member of the [unit] in our case and that's where the line is drawn" (Military, white, male)

For many military white males this meant that there must not be any discrimination, though other white males (CS and military) acknowledged that just because they had not witnessed any discrimination, it did not mean that it did not occur. So in addition to the invisibility of discrimination, it also suggests that some military white males often only think about discrimination as occurring blatantly and not in less visible forms. Extreme examples of overtly sexist scenarios and the imagined organisational response to them were

regularly invoked amongst this group, to demonstrate how Defence had changed in this regard. The pattern of imagining such extreme examples of what discrimination looks like, suggests a lack of understanding of the banal or structural ways in which sexism and racism operate.

"I think if I ever turned around and said you know, 'oh let the girls clean all of that up because that's what they're there for', I'm pretty sure I'd be facing somebody, it doesn't matter whether they are male or female, any of the senior Officers or ranks would come straight away down on me and probably make me do it all by myself to teach me a lesson" (Military, white, male)

There was a common perception amongst males in the sample that the 'problem' of gender disadvantage was some way to being 'solved' in the MOD and was therefore no longer an issue. Such gender-blindness, while appearing to be progressive, conceals females continued disadvantage, nullifying those gendered experiences that privilege the masculine (Lewis, 2006). The invisibility and denial of females' gendered and BAME personnel's racialised experiences were also evident in many military participants' insistence on the role of "merit" in the MOD ("if you are good enough, you will make it") and on 'change' ("it was a problem in the past"). Although this sentiment was more common in military male narratives, it was also present amongst some military BAME and female narratives too. The concept of 'colourblindness' is relevant here. The seminal work was initially constructed in the US (e.g. Bonilla-Silva, 2014), to refer to the fact that many Americans believe they live in a post-racial society and that individual efforts and merit are more important than race in determining social outcomes. These beliefs thus obscure or reframe the impact of racism by reframing structural inequalities as issues of individual choice and ability. Bonilla-Silva (2014) also uses the concept of 'colour-blind racism' to describe a shift whereby "white privilege was achieved through overt and usually explicitly racial practices" (p12) in the past. However, today "it is accomplished through institutional, subtle and non-racial means" (p12). This practice relies on the idea of innate cultural differences, as opposed to biological differences. What both these theoretical lenses suggest is that when gender and/or race is declared as 'irrelevant', it should be met with caution since it often masks underlying and subtle forms of exclusion.

Whilst there was a sense amongst some participants (particularly white military males) that racism and sexism were no longer issues in Defence, there were many examples of overt racism and sexism across the sample. Whilst many of these tended to be historic, some took place more recently (2015 onwards), such as the discovery of documents rating female colleagues in various sexual categories and offensive racist name calling.

"So, early 2015 erm...a massive thing happened to do with racism where erm...there was one sub-group and...and these guys were posting stuff about other black soldiers saying they should go back where they come from...they should go back and walk how many miles carrying water on their head and stuff like that, calling them names and stuff" (Military, BAME, female)

"As soon as you turn up...as a female you're seen as fresh meat, and 'who is the Big Daddy, who is going to smash it first?'...Yeah, 'who's going to smash it first?' Honest. But that's the only thing I don't like about it" (Military, BAME, female)

Whilst there was a broad consensus across the sample (including amongst many females and BAME participants) that things are changing, albeit slowly, the assessment that sexism is largely a thing of the past is premature. There were a number of reported examples of senior ranking military males publicly declaring their dislike of female presence in the AF, an open questioning of females' capabilities in the field and sexualised and sexist comments and jokes. A minority of Regular white males exemplified these experiences in the interview itself, referring to females as unsuitable for certain roles or seeing menstruation as interfering with their capability in the field, for example. Even if many of these issues no longer persist, the fact remains that serving personnel have heard and endured them, they know who said them, and in some cases, those who were known to hold such views still remain in the organisation.

"We still have got some pockets [of sexist attitudes] but I think that's mainly because we've got the older generation still around with their old views cause like I mentioned earlier we have got one [Senior Leader here] who does not believe women should be in the organisation...He's set in his ways and he'll be retiring in [a few] years' time. And that pocket will disappear" (Military, white, female)

Overt racism or clear differential treatment of BAME personnel was a common narrative amongst this group, with quite a few BAME participants across the sample experiencing or witnessing racist attitudes and

discrimination. In the military, this included derogatory racist remarks, bullying, and open declarations of dislike of the presence of BAME personnel in the AF. In the CS, this included bullying behaviour from line managers and being treated more harshly than white colleagues. It was clear that at times, some white males had intervened to challenge the discrimination that they witnessed. However, since some participants across the sample saw blatant forms of discrimination as most likely perpetrated by those in senior ranks/grades, this meant it often went unchallenged (at least at the time and in public). Some white males also spoke of their regret at witnessing, but not challenging such behaviours.

Changes in behaviour towards females and BAME personnel were not always felt to reflect real changes in attitude. There were multiple examples whereby BAME personnel had witnessed or overheard comments and jokes when the perpetrator did not notice their presence. This fed into a sense that whilst some personnel “*behave*” in their presence, an attitude that was detrimental to ethnic minorities still existed.

“...it’s not the very overt stuff I would worry about, it’s the stuff I don’t see or hear about” (Military, BAME, male)

This was sometimes described as “*subtle*” or as “*passively racist*” and contributed to a popular belief amongst military participants across the sample (both BAME and white) that white males were forced to be “*tolerant*” and that this did not always reflect a meaningful change in their attitudes.

Across the sample, participants felt that more blatant forms of discrimination had largely been replaced by subtler forms of prejudicial attitudes towards females and BAME personnel. This is reflected in wider society where overt expressions of racism have reduced as they have become less socially acceptable (Deitch, Barsky, Butz, Chan, Brief and Bradley, 2003). A perception that overt racism had “*gone underground*” and transformed into subtler forms existed amongst some females and BAME participants. Again, this is in line with the conceptualisation of ‘modern’ racism as subtle, ‘invisible’ or “*cool, distant and indirect*” (Liao, Hong and Rounds, 2016, p. 239). In the CS, casual, everyday sexism was said to be ongoing and difficult to challenge, particularly in male-dominated, mixed military/CS environments. This was always latent, but anonymous outlets for sexist attitudes such as responses to blogs relating to D&I issues (for example on International Women’s Day) revealed underlying attitudes. These more latent forms of discrimination mean it is difficult to assess the degree to which participants’ everyday experience may be shaped by ongoing forms of discrimination.

The subtle discrimination described by females and BAME participants included being ignored, excluded, overlooked, questioned, micromanaged, not cooperated with, perceived of as incompetent and having rules applied more stringently to them than their male/white colleagues. These forms of negative treatment were often about how females and BAME participants felt, rather than them being able to say they had definitely experienced racism or sexism.

“And that is the kind of racism you see, or prejudice you see around, unspoken discrimination perhaps. And so many, many, many examples. You know people chatting about stuff, ‘oh how was your weekend’ and it’s just the little clique. And you say something and no-one wants to know, they just walk away, like not interested, they just walk away. And it’s subtle discrimination but it’s still discrimination” (CS, BAME, male)

“I don’t think an organisation like MOD wants to own up that there is racism. They like to think they’ve dealt with it, and nobody’s racist anymore...because racism doesn’t have to be full-on in your face. It’s how you make the other person feel. And that other person knows something is amiss. You’re not treated the same as the white person sitting next to you. It’s a tone, it’s the kinds of things you’re given, you’re made to feel lesser than someone else” (CS, BAME, Female)

As supported by the literature, this suggests that discrimination is likely not perpetrated by people with blatantly racist or sexist attitudes, but is rather ambiguous and pervasive, enacted through everyday relationships and workplace structures. These more everyday forms of discrimination or ‘incivility’ are pervasive, are less visible, often ambiguous for those experiencing it, not easily recognised as discrimination and often not punishable under anti-discrimination legislation. This ambiguity can also be understood as a reason for not seeking redress (Deitch, Barsky, Butz, Chan, Brief and Bradley, 2003; Cortina, 2008). It is important to note that this form of bias or ‘aversive’ racism occurs even where individuals hold egalitarian values and support equality; whilst these beliefs offset the likelihood of the individual committing overt

forms of discrimination, non-conscious feelings about ethnic minorities (derived from in-group/out-group³⁵ beliefs and stereotypes) act to allow the emergence of 'subtle' forms of discrimination. This is most likely to occur when in the presence of ambiguous norms for behaviour or judgement. Thus, the perpetrators may not perceive themselves to be biased or prejudiced, rationalising their actions as being driven by causes other than racism (Pearson, Dovidio and Gaertner, 2009).

Biases and stereotypes of females and BAME personnel were perceived to shape experiences in the MOD, with bias usually seen as unconscious by those who believed they experienced or witnessed it. Assumptions were frequently made, (including amongst participants), about the characters, attitudes and motivations of females and BAME personnel in their working environments. There appeared to be a broad stereotype across the organisation that after females have children, they seek work that can be organised around their family life and therefore limit their career progression. Other comments/incidences related to stereotypical views of females being inclined towards cooking, administration and organising. Stereotypes of females as hysterical and emotional were sometimes drawn upon by Regular white male participants, in particular. A minority of these participants related females' emotional states to their menstrual cycles, yet attributed male expression of stress and emotions to external factors such as home life. This suggests that men's health and wellbeing are viewed as connected to external influence, whereas with females, it is about their essential 'woman-ness'. This may be understood as a form of 'ultimate attribution error'. Ultimate attribution error is a cognitive bias whereby the negative behaviours of members of an outgroup are attributed to their disposition, whilst positive behaviours are ascribed to situational factors. The converse is true for in-group members; any poor behaviour is perceived to be the result of circumstances whilst the positive behaviours of in-group members are attributed to their character. This phenomenon has been used to explain how the stereotype of females as 'emotional' is perpetuated as well as the stereotype of Black people as 'aggressive' (Stewart, Latu, Kawakami and Myers, 2010).

Similarly, stereotypes and assumptions about BAME participants were rife across the sample. Many were teased about their names, aspects of their culture were consistently misunderstood, and some had assumptions and stereotypes levelled at them and their motivations for being in the MOD. F&C BAME participants were often stereotyped as being "*laid-back*", with assumptions made about their motivations for joining the military e.g. it was often assumed that they were only in the military for the financial benefits. Stereotypes of the value that BAME personnel might bring to the organisation regarding their insight into the Middle East, languages and cultural understanding were also noted across the sample. Females were also subjected to similar stereotyping, whereby their mediating and communication skills were emphasised as important. However, this can reinforce and reproduce stereotypes regarding female and BAME personnel. Some CS BAME participants expressed concern that BAME personnel were stereotyped into particular roles, such as Human Resources (HR), which narrowed their opportunities in other areas across the organisation. Female and BAME personnel's grade or rank were also often called into question due to these stereotypes. Females and BAME participants were sometimes assumed to be of a junior rank to a male and/or white colleague or in a more stereotypical role.

"The reception was 'are you sure you're [XXXX] trade', like 'are you sure you're not a chef, are you sure you're not RLC, are you sure you're not a clerk'? 'No, I've got the same cap badge as you, I've done the same training, I've passed the same assessments, I am [trade]'. 'Well you're the first black lass I've ever seen in [trade]'" (Military, BAME, female)

Some females and BAME participants described tactics for battling against such unconscious bias, but these were also described as "*daily battles*" by females in senior roles.

"I could be the secretary or I could be the boss...And with most people, if you have a room with older males, they will look to the older males, because they assume they're the boss. I'm the boss. So, it's often a very small thing...but you turn up last. And you make sure somebody makes you a cup of tea. You always sit at the table. So, a lot of them sit around the table. 'I don't mind giving up my space.' I never give up my space. I always sit at the table and I never make the cup of tea" (CS, BAME, female)

³⁵ An in-group is a social group to which a person psychologically identifies as being a member. By contrast, an out-group is a social group with which an individual does not identify. This is based on Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1981).

5.2.2 Structural and Positive Discrimination

The impact of budget cuts was reported to disproportionately impact females and BAME personnel respectively, particularly in CS. Limited investments in infrastructure compounded the disadvantages faced by military females even further. Patterns of such uneven outcomes point towards potential structural discrimination in the MOD. Discrimination of this nature refers to the control, behaviour and policies of the dominant ethnicity/gender institution, where they are neutral in intent, but end up discriminatory in their application (see Pincus, 1996). The central distinction between this type of discrimination and institutional discrimination is one of intent. Thus whilst the MOD is not designing policies to deliberately impact negatively on one group over another, being blind to the impact of gender and/or ethnicity on policies or implementation, constitutes a form of structural discrimination.

Many of the cost cutting measures that had been implemented by the MOD were perceived by those on lower salaries to disproportionately affect them because of their structural location within the organisation. For example, Government pay restrictions applied during a period of austerity when applied to those already on high salaries is unlikely to have the same impact as the same pay restriction (i.e. 1% pay freeze) applied to those on much lower salaries. This seemed particularly harsh in the context of rising consumer prices and also reductions in other T&C devised by the MOD. With females and BAME personnel overrepresented in the lower ranks/grades of the MOD this could indeed constitute a form of structural discrimination. It was clear that participants across the sample, particularly from lower and middle grades/ranks, were facing difficult decisions and having to make various financial sacrifices in their household expenditure. Some spoke of their own and others' struggles, including no longer being able to run their cars, sacrificing holidays or treats, and fewer trips home for Regulars. The negative impact was not restricted to their standard of living but also impacted on their wellbeing in terms of stress, and a sense of injustice at the loss of some domestic pleasures that they felt they should continue to be able to afford.

Reduced investment in infrastructure disproportionately affected females, in failing to provide facilities and resources that were the norm for males. With the exception of those military and CS females in newer buildings or Head Offices, inadequate infrastructure and a lack of attention to their specific needs was almost an expected part of many females' employment. In addition to the psychological consequences of a general lack of investment leaving the basic needs of females frequently unmet, it was seen to compromise operational effectiveness (communications not relayed to female blocks on exercises) and also personnel safety (ill-fitting male protective uniforms on operations). These routine absences seemed to be fairly pragmatically accepted by females in military environments. Even in instances where inadequately sized uniforms may have led to loss of protection in combat facing roles. Nonetheless, whilst a general lack of investment meant continued poor infrastructure and equipment impacted across the sample, it clearly had a specific impact on females that constitutes a form of structural discrimination.

Infrastructure decisions could be discriminatory when D&I implications were not considered, or considered at the end of the process. In a few CS experiences, local decisions about adaptations to sites were fought by on-site representatives in D&I or related roles, who recognised the unfair impact they would have for those with certain limitations. This points to the need for D&I to be part of the foreground in all aspects of MOD policy rather than, as some perceived it, an extra factor to then be considered as this can result in a form of structural discrimination. It is important to bring to the foreground these structural dimensions of discrimination, which despite the lack of intent, discriminate nonetheless. Acker (2009) provides a valuable framework for understanding the different dimensions that contribute to gender inequalities in organisations. Key aspects that inhibit the development of more equitable organisations are the invisibility of systematic inequalities and the perceived legitimacy of these inequalities. To illustrate how pervasive this might be in MOD, there were examples of CS females whose requests for flexibility in provision of travel and also training opportunities to accommodate their familial commitments were denied due to cost implications. Whilst appearing unjust and discriminatory from a D&I perspective, this might reflect local interpretations of regulations rather than an inherent structurally discriminatory policy.

Across the sample, there was belief or fear that positive discrimination was prevalent in the MOD, raising concerns (particularly amongst Regulars) about fairness. A strong minority thought that radical positive action would be beneficial to the organisation. Positive discrimination means "*recruiting or promoting a person solely because they have a relevant protected characteristic*" (Government Equalities Office, 2011, p. 9). Many participants across the sample, but particularly those in the Regulars, perceived attempts to rectify

the unequal presence of female and BAME personnel in the MOD as positive discrimination and mostly, but by no means unanimously, rejected it as unfair. It was relatively rare for participants to refer to positive action³⁶ (though those that did were evidently informed and supportive) so there was a sense that there was some confusion between positive action and positive discrimination. The sentiment of unfairness was expressed widely and just as forcefully amongst some females and BAME participants (particularly those in the Regulars) as well as white males. Due to the fact that many males across the sample perceived gender equality as already achieved they saw organisational moves towards what they regarded as positive discrimination as deeply unfair. Most females in the sample were strongly against the idea of positive discrimination too. They felt that opportunities should be offered to personnel based on merit rather than their demographic features. Some white females raised concerns about positive discrimination also, in terms of ethnicity or disability, reflecting in part their own concerns about being disadvantaged.

"I do think they need to be inclusive but at the end of the day they need to make sure they have the best person for the job. So I don't think people should be picked because of ethnicity or disability if other people are better..." (CS, white, female)

The use of targets for under-represented groups contributed to this sense that positive discrimination, rather than positive action, was taking place, whereby people with protected characteristics were being given opportunities over others as a way to achieve these targets. Hence, when female and BAME personnel were promoted it opened a debate about whether it was on merit or if they were helped by the need for the organisation to achieve diversity targets. This question mark raised suspicion about their capability to do the job.

"I think there is a bit of positive discrimination in the way we promote females to senior Officer roles...I'd rather just promote on whether I am good enough compared to my peers male or female rather than 'we need to see a female Commanding Officer...' and then these people being in a role and actually they don't have the respect because they're not as good as the people around them..." (Military, white, female)

Whilst there was a broad consensus against positive discrimination, a small minority of participants across the sample (but especially in the CS) thought radical action was necessary in order to enact meaningful change in the organisation and while positive discrimination was known to be illegal, other forms of positive action were fully supported. This more radical expression tended to come from those participants who were able to compare the MOD with other kinds of organisations they had worked for prior to joining Defence. Noon (2010) concurs and takes an assertive stand that radical change is entirely necessary to speed up the required transformation in many white, middle class, male dominated organisations. Noon (2010) suggests that even the initial hostility would be worth the subsequent benefits. With a clear rationale around equity, rather than privilege, perhaps the almost instinctive reaction to reject forms of positive action or discrimination might be amended.

"It's a difficult one because I wouldn't turn down an opportunity if it was afforded to me...I think it is important to look holistically and say if your board is purely white, middle aged males...I've probably not thought about it enough to come to a conclusion..." (Military, white, female)

Some females (white military, CS BAME) perceived that they have been advantaged by being female, whilst other females and BAME participants strongly rejected the existence of positive discrimination, but were nonetheless perceived by others to have advantaged from the practice. For those females who felt their gender was an advantage to their career progression, they did not believe that they were being gifted an unfair advantage, but rather that they were more likely to get noticed because they were doing their jobs well and were therefore more visible.

³⁶ Positive action relates to the treatment of one "more favourably where this is a proportionate way to help members of that group overcome a disadvantage or participate more fully, or in order to meet needs they have that are different from the population as a whole".

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85046/positive-action-recruitment.pdf.

"Well probably being a female definitely is...but like in positive ways as well, because generally...and this is bad or clearly my perspective, like you can get chosen for things first because you are a female" (Military, white female)

There were some females who felt they had been recruited into roles by managers who specifically wanted females on their team because they did not wish to work with all-male teams. A small number of CS BAME participants questioned whether they themselves or others had benefitted from a climate where the organisation was keen to be seen to increase BAME numbers in key positions.

"I've always had the niggling suspicion the reason why I got on....is because I ticked two of the boxes..." (CS, BAME, female)

Whilst these participants reflected on their possible advantage in the organisation, this was tempered by the clear evidence across the sample that their gender and/or ethnicity often disadvantaged females and BAME personnel. Moreover, females, and most BAME males, were adamant that despite the perception, positive discrimination absolutely did not exist.

"What really annoys me is that other people say to me...including my direct line manager, women are positively discriminated for in terms of promotion in the RAF [Royal Air Force]. So they think women are promoted above their proportion...That's a feeling, it's not a fact...the opposite of that is a fact" (Military, white, female)

"I think some people believe that individuals get promoted because of their ethnicity to fill boxes. Well actually everyone I know personally, whether they are in the Forces or Civil Servants actually are there because they are good people...they have achieved what they have through their own merits" (CS, BAME male)

Despite this rejection, many females and BAME participants across the sample quite often faced or sensed others' beliefs that their career progression was a result of positive discrimination. This was echoed by many white males, who raised concerns that females and BAME personnel were being promoted ahead of them due to the practice of positive discrimination. There was also a sense that others might not trust females and BAME to be able to fulfil their roles, on the premise that they had not fully earned them. Indeed some female and BAME participants spoke of being wary of applying for or accepting roles for fear of their gender and/or ethnicity being seen as a factor in its attainment.

"Some people make the remark...'you only got promotion because you're an ethnic'...I didn't like that...you go 'Well I got it because of my ability and merit and on passing these exam boards'" (Military, BAME, male)

Assumptions about the prevalence of positive discrimination were bolstered by the extent to which BAME military participants were given opportunities to appear in adverts and promotional materials for recruitment campaigns or outreach activities to show that the military was diverse. This was often seen as a practical move that benefitted the organisation but was unconnected to any career advantages for the individual.

"...it's realistic, you're not going to send an Asian bloke into a completely white area, same way you wouldn't send the white person into a completely black area...you'd want to send someone from the same community because people who look the same and talk the same as them they generally relate to a lot better and they get through to them a lot more because they kind of see a bit of themselves in that person, so they can relate to it a bit more. Some people say to me 'you're just being used' this, that and the other 'for the colour of your skin', but me personally I just sort of say 'if they weren't sending me they'd only be sending another brown bloke..." (Military, BAME, male)

Some white male military participants perceived these public relations activities as another example of white males being pushed to the side for the sake of diversity, leading to resentment. Amongst some BAME participants, the added demands of taking part in these campaigns took its toll. Whilst others expressed a wish to take up such opportunities, those who had experienced it grew tired of being called on, and elsewhere, it was reported to have a knock-on effect for peer relationships.

"...say if a Colonel's coming to visit, they would take me from whatever course I'm doing...and being sat in a conference room just to represent that one black female that they've got. So then obviously that

isolated me as well from my peers because they're like 'oh she thinks she's special, there goes the black girl again, she's off'. But it wasn't my choice" (Military, BAME, female)

Senior female and BAME personnel in the Regulars were sometimes seen (by their subordinates) as treating their junior BAME and female subordinates more harshly to protect themselves from claims of positive discrimination. It was also understood as paternalistic, but also as hostile by some females. This was mostly relayed by participants who believed they were the recipients of such discriminatory behaviour, rather than initiators of such. A number of reasons were offered. It was suggested that this occurred as the senior wanted to protect themselves against charges of positive discrimination or favouritism towards their subordinates. Thus, senior females and BAME personnel had treated participants more harshly because they had to make it clear to others that there was no favouritism on their part. Such actions thus reflect different layers of vulnerabilities as females and BAME personnel progress up the organisational hierarchy. Recent research (Lloyd and Amoroso; 2018) supports the strength of the 'favouritism threat' faced by senior minority employees and identifies it as a barrier to enhancing organisational diversity via the use of such seniors as role models, mentors or advocates for more junior minority employees. Another rationale for receiving harsher treatment from females and BAME military personnel working under those seniors was a degree of 'paternalism' in that it was interpreted as a strategy to protect those in more junior positions in the longer term. Females and BAME participants subjected to harsher treatment felt they were being "*toughened up*" by someone who understood the additional challenges they faced. Some military female participants believed they had been subjected to harsher treatment as females because the senior females saw them as rivals and sought to maintain this status differential for their own benefit. Participants themselves drew on the term 'Queen Bee' to describe such females. This kind of 'Queen Bee' behaviour has been found amongst senior females in many different male dominated organisations, including the police, with fewer studies also revealing similarities between minority ethnic employees (see Derks, Van Laar and Ellemers; 2016). As stated above, this discriminatory behaviour by senior personnel needs to be understood as intricately linked to their vulnerabilities in the organisation. For example, a strategy of creating distance between themselves and less successful (female or BAME) others, by undermining and marginalising those others, may be necessary for senior females to ensure they remain aligned to the dominant group. The literature shows the need to understand the underlying foundation that can lead to harsher treatment of junior females and BAME personnel by their senior peers that the MOD have faith in to progress their development.

5.2.3 Bullying

Females and BAME participants endured more bullying behaviour than white males. This was particularly noted as occurring in the CS and often involved military line managers. The kind of bullying³⁷ that was reported by females and BAME participants was a mix of isolated and also more persistent incidents, but generally encompassed behaviours that were intimidating or degrading to various degrees. Those managed by military personnel encountered problematic working relationships quite frequently. They reported being spoken to inappropriately, shouted at, treated dismissively, ignored, micro-managed and belittled quite routinely. They spoke of resultant bullying if they challenged military managers' instructions or decisions. Participants were not always clear whether bullying behaviour was connected to underlying racist or sexist attitudes, was a deliberate strategy unconnected to any such attitudes, or had become an unreflective way of behaving as the 'norm' in military life.

"[He was] very much old school... 'I am senior, I will shout and I will get things done'...many, many people complained" (CS, white female)

"This isn't just about racism, this is about, what I would say it's about bullying and harassment for no particular reason, you know, as in, not a protected characteristic" (CS, BAME female)

"Bullying is endemic in the culture of the military...I don't think people realise they're bullying or intimidating them, it's because they have this perception of this 'Chain of Command'" (CS, BAME, Male)

³⁷ Bullying and harassment refers to any unwanted behaviour that makes someone feel intimidated, degraded, humiliated or offended. It may be obvious or insidious; it may be persistent or isolated (see Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), 2014)

However, other participants were more convinced that there were racist or sexist sentiments beneath the bullying behaviour, although this sense of being treated differently was a weak foundation for claims of any bullying behaviour that were (for example) racially motivated.

“He didn’t have a problem with other people. And I could only put it down to, and in the military there is an underlying, not with all obviously, but there is racism, so I felt it was racism” (CS, BAME female)

Whilst historic norms of physical violence are much removed from the landscape of MOD (something occasionally noted by military personnel as previously offering a swift resolution to conflict or poor performance) there were spaces where threatening behaviour occasionally surfaced. Physical intimidation was usually instigated by older/longer serving military personnel, towards other males, and there was evidence of it being challenged:

“We had a confrontation, and he came out with this line ‘if you was a [soldier], I’d have you’ and I looked at him and I went ‘yes, Sir. But I’m not, and you won’t.’ And I promptly walked past him” (CS, white male)

Being female or BAME in the CS compounded a general lack of respect held by the military towards those in the CS. Motherhood often made this even worse. CS females and BAME participants reported a degree of disregard for their work schedules and entitlements from military managers, and a variety of persistently less favourable treatment to their white and/or male peers that they sensed may have been due to their gender or ethnicity.

“...in the same way that I mentioned about the military having this undisclosed...unstated attitude towards civilians, I think they have the same sort of attitude towards people who aren’t white...” (CS, BAME male)

Maternity and motherhood (see Work, Family and Wellbeing, Section 5.6.1 and 5.6.2) complicated things further bringing more need to challenge discriminatory line management decisions or unreasonable expectations, thereby increasing the potential for more problematic behaviours to develop towards CS females. This also applied amongst female Reservists and their Regular peers to a lesser extent. Male managers (particularly military) were sometimes seen to not really appreciate the implications of females having both familial and work commitments and the experiences of mothers across the sample were littered with examples of military managers’ frustrations descending into bullying episodes. Much of the bullying behaviour was from older, senior military males, and was rationalised also as being partly due to a lack of understanding of the implications of having more females working alongside them.

“Maybe if you get your military guy who’s never had to deal with a woman in his life, and then you’ve got...a civilian pregnancy who’s got a lot of morning sickness and issues, he might just flip his...head and can’t cope with it...how on earth can people be behaving like this in the MOD?” (CS, BAME, female)

Military females were also the subject of bullying service complaints, which may have been affected by their gender, and additionally by ethnicity. A number of military females believed these complaints about their behaviours were unfair and reflected gendered assumptions about acceptable behaviours, rather than the behaviour itself. They relayed that their behaviour that was deemed as bullying by the complainant (who were noted as being both male and female), was seen as extreme because it was enacted by a female. They believed that similar behaviours enacted by their male peers would be accepted, and indeed seen as decisive and forthright. Thus, they were being penalised not for their behaviour, but for their transgression of gendered norms. Ethnicity could compound the issue; some military BAME females reported their ways of addressing others being read as aggressive, when in fact their mannerisms and ways of speaking were their natural traits, and characteristic of their cultural origins. Nonetheless, many participants across the sample reported instances where they firmly believed they had been bullied by female military line managers.

“I was bullied and persecuted by her...and I was surprised at how submissive I was in terms of being bullied. I wasn’t strong enough. It was really horrible...All the friends that I had created [in the unit] she had, not turned them against me but created the circumstances where I was marginalised...” (Reserve, white female)

Research in education contexts suggests that females have a greater tendency towards more subtle kinds of ‘social bullying’ whereby they ostracise those they bully rather than more overt physical forms of aggressive treatment. The picture seems more complex in the MOD insofar as marginalising others is more widespread,

albeit more openly, with the tendency to “close ranks” when threatened. It was rarely regarded as a form of bullying by those outsiders who had experienced it (including lateral entry senior CS) but in fact, should be seen this way as a means to highlight it as unacceptable.

Bullying behaviour was not always seen as intentional. It was clear that perceptions of bullying and the motivations behind it were being subjectively constructed in the context of unequal power relations, and that gender and ethnicity were central to this. A recent report into bullying, harassment and misconduct in the CS (CS HR, 2018) concluded that a substantial proportion of the cases recorded as bullying by some of the 330,000 respondents should more accurately be regarded as ‘abrasive’ rather than bullying behaviour. Abrasive behaviours referred to personal styles, “*which feel like bullying, harassment and discrimination or misconduct to the individual, but are not intended to be and where the perpetrator may often be unaware of the impact*” (p. 9, CS HR, 2018). There may be some resonance with the current study as forms of conduct by military managers that may have been seen as effective in military contexts were evidently being regarded as bullying in a CS environment. Whilst these behaviours might be perceived as unprofessional whether they warrant the accusation of bullying raises debate. That is not to minimise the impact that these militarised behaviours were having on CS personnel, but to invite a more considered reflection for the MOD on how definitions of bullying and various forms of unacceptable behaviours are understood.

Across the sample, experiencing bullying behaviour impacted negatively on commitment to the organisation. This was far more likely to have been experienced by females and BAME participants, who reported a variety of responses that ranged from a dip in morale and motivation to a sense of being undermined or let down. There were consequent negative views of the organisation and, in addition to general upset, these factors had led to considerations of leaving (although other positive aspects of employment were usually a reason to decide to endure such behaviour). Stress, and absence from work, depression, medication and talking therapies were all relayed as consequences of bullying behaviour encountered via military line management, (both male and female) amongst personnel across the sample. Across the sample, there were also feelings of hopelessness in the face of a lack of support. Within the CS it was notable the number of participants who sought to move out from that post/team or department or hardened their resolve to prove themselves.

Conflict between females (within the CS, but more usually military) was not dealt with effectively by male line managers/Chain of Command. It was often said to be ignored or disregarded as meaningless, or dealing with the conflict was avoided as it was perceived as uncomfortable for the male manager to deal with. Due to this, conflict often escalated to something more serious. Complaints made by females about other females revealed another way in which gender impacted on complaint-worthy behaviour in a male dominated environment. There were a number of occasions where females (usually but not exclusively military; usually but not exclusively Regulars) had made representation to their Chain of Command regarding perceived unacceptable behaviour by another female, or females. These complaints were rarely felt to have been handled appropriately, often ignored, despite their persistence over many months, until things escalated. Female participants believed that their male military manager was sometimes uncomfortable dealing with inter-female conflict compared with inter-male conflict. There were also feelings that males did not take their complaints seriously, either because they were seen as marginal to operations, or because of female’s perceived propensity for “*emotional*” behaviour, compared to males. There was supporting evidence from a number of military males to illustrate that this was not an uncommon view. There were instances in military male accounts of such dismissive attitudes towards female conflict occurring around them: “*the girls in the office are at it again*”. Ignoring underlying female conflict was shown to negatively impact on the emotional/mental wellbeing of females with ill health leading to formal charges of bullying and an escalation to more serious incidents on occasions. Many of these females felt that the escalation of these negative outcomes would not have occurred if their earlier concerns had been dealt with by their managers, suggesting there might be the need to develop the self-efficacy of some managers.

5.2.4 Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is part of the landscape of work for females in Defence, mostly enacted by military males and much goes unreported. Unwanted sexual attention at work is a common experience for females in a variety of organisations, in other Nations’ militaries (Deschamps, 2015), as well as in the UK MOD (e.g. [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]). Females across the sample experienced a variety and a considerable volume of different kinds of sexual harassment. Whilst serious sexual assaults were rare, routine forms of

sexual harassment were more prevalent. These included unpleasant or unfettered sexualised conversations and materials, (sometimes seen as deliberately contrived to embarrass or intimidate females), comments about appearance and behaviour (the more frequent form reported by CS females) or testing of the sexual availability of females (more overt but not confined to military male contexts).

"If we just talk about language for example, there is still an awful lot of sexualised language. There is still an awful lot of unnecessary sexualised swearing. And a lot of sexual harassment still, or more than there should be" (Military, white, female)

"I know that people have felt...sexually threatened while kind of out having a few beers after, with colleagues, so it's still a work environment right. And I have lost count of the number of times that I have overheard people talking about other people's appearance and you know, no I don't think it's a good place to work as a woman" (CS, white, male)

"I think as well as a woman, I mean I'm quite an outgoing, friendly person, no matter who I talk to, there's always some sort of comment about, 'Oh do you like so and so', 'do you like so and so?' And it gets very old and very tiring very quickly" (Military, BAME, female)

Marriages or intimate personal relationships could be compromised through the circulation of rumours of sexual conquests/affairs of males with their female subordinates. This was particularly worrisome where the partner of the female targeted in the rumour also served in the MOD and was thus more likely to hear of the unsolicited rumours. For females, rumours of sexual conquests were seen to undermine their rank or authority. This was evident in the narratives of females who had been, or feared being, targeted in such rumours, but was also evident throughout the sample with many instances of personnel assessing the legitimacy of other females (particularly military) in direct regard to their (assumed) sexual relationships with influential others.

Levels of sexual harassment were noted as being *"more than there should be"*, which speaks to the level of expectation around normalised levels of harassment for females more widely. However, given the increase in prosecution of historic male sexual assault of females and recent impact of social media campaigns such as #metoo, there is evidence of recognition and intolerance to actions not previously named as sexual harassment (see Figure 2 and in Appendix I). Indeed [REDACTED] shows the increased naming of more subtle forms of behaviour towards females now being recognised as harassment, amongst both male and female personnel, compared to the survey in 2015.

In the military, experiences of, and perceptions of the extent of sexual harassment varied by seniority with females in the lower ranks experiencing more incidents of harassment. In line with previous MOD studies (e.g. [REDACTED]), senior military females recognised they had become relatively insulated from both targeted and generalised sexual behaviours, compared to earlier phases of their careers. Of note was the extent of unacceptable, overt, sexualised behaviours directed towards female junior Officers that occurred in the Officers' Mess. These were occurring more recently and usually when groups of younger male Officers were together and consuming alcohol.

"So, there were a couple of incidents where I was told if I didn't leave the, leave the bar immediately I was gonna see them all naked, and a couple of incidents where people were inappropriate and had to write apology letters" (Military, white, female)

The behaviours described by female junior Officers (and also by other participants in different contexts) were of a fraternity associated with a rowdy *"rugby lad culture"* usually intertwined with elite/privileged university males. Many universities are dominated socially if not statistically by males and key elements of the dominant masculine campus culture include misogynist banter, objectification of females and sexual pressure and harassment (Phipps and Young, 2015). These types of behaviours were experienced by female junior Officers in this sample, and they described a Mess culture that aligns quite readily to the 'campus culture' described in university studies; in some bases these were seen as alcohol fuelled, predatory and threatening male spaces. If they reported these behaviours to senior (male) staff it was clear, in some cases, that such behaviours were condoned. Females were told that it was harmless, these things happen, and they needed to toughen up.

Irrespective of gender, seniority could produce a particular world-view that over-estimated the degree to which this kind of poor behaviour had changed over time. Some senior military participants (male and

female) actually confronted their assumptions about the extent to which sexual harassment was now substantially reduced in the MOD since their days in the junior ranks. On reflection, some then came to the conclusion that things were probably not as drastically different as they, and others in similar positions, assumed. These few participants reflected that longer serving, senior personnel, who are most likely to assume such change, are actually far removed from “the coal face” where it is most likely to occur. Indeed there was evidence, once they looked for it, that actually, the sexual pursuit and intimidation of females in the lower ranks of the AF is still a significant issue to be addressed.

“[in my early career] it was almost as though every female on board had to be linked with some male as a partner...it was almost, they were expected to have teamed up with somebody in there to stop them, being hassled all the time, or whatever... And I don’t think that attitude’s changed much” (Military, white, male)

It is important to note the outcome of assumptions being challenged by those seniors in this study. Many seniors and policy influencers may not be invited to reflect in the ways witnessed here, which may have implications for policy in future. As the above testimony illustrates, those designing policy may not fully appreciate the extent to which sexualised harassment remains an issue at ‘the coal face’ and so are not well placed to design policies to address the experiences of lower ranking females, in particular, who they have little contact with. The contemporary experiences of these individuals must be heard (rather than assumed) as part of policy development.

Females were taking a number of steps to avoid sexual harassment, which often meant not socialising or doing so in limited ways. Presence at social functions, and the ability to socialise was mentioned as an aspect of career appraisal but for military females in particular (and CS females working closely with the military) the pervasive threat of dealing with sexually inappropriate behaviours by their male peers, and more usually their male seniors, meant they avoided or tempered joining in. Military females spoke of taking remedial steps at times to avoid potential unwanted sexual attention from their male colleagues. This included: not socialising or leaving functions early before the males became ‘too rowdy’; ensuring they were accompanied to avoid potential propositions or situations; booking into hotels; securing the door to their quarters; and taking steps to make it clear to males that they were not sexually available. Despite the belief that historic and widespread sexual harassment of females was no longer present or acceptable, it is pertinent to highlight the extent to which females in the MOD still take remedial steps to avoid unwanted sexual attention.

5.2.5 Racial Harassment

There were recent reports of racial harassment³⁸ experienced by BAME participants across the sample. Whilst rare, these were significant in their effects. Dimensions of harassment conveyed by BAME participants included actions and utterances that intentionally expressed some degree of hostility towards ethnic minority groups and/or contributed to the creation of an offensive environment for BAME personnel within the MOD.

Some Army combat units in particular were viewed as comprising personnel who were openly racist. This manifested itself in the open use of racist symbols and racist language. These personnel were said to create spaces that were unwelcoming for BAME personnel and made it clear to them that they did not want them within their units. In some instances, racist views and actions were not challenged by more senior personnel.

“So much good people in the Army but these odd few who join, because they can’t outlive their extreme racism crap on civvie street because it would not be tolerated, they join certain departments in the Army where they feel covered, they feel protected” (Military, BAME, female)

Across the military sample it was acknowledged that those with racist views did exist in pockets in the Army, although these were seen to be very few and clustered in particular units. Nonetheless their impact was significant. BAME military participants relayed how those with such views contributed to a very difficult

³⁸ Racial harassment includes ‘unwanted conduct’ that relates to race or ethnicity that has ‘...the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual’ Racial harassment is intentional but does not need to involve the perpetrator in direct confrontation with the victim for it to be effected. (ACAS, 2017).

working environment for them and one that BAME participants felt compelled to escape from, especially if they did not feel their concerns were being taken seriously.

“So I thought ‘I’ll transfer and give it a go and see if that is the Army’. And I’m really glad I did because those individuals would have ruined my career...” (Military, BAME, female)

Deployment created additional spaces for the expression of racial hostilities, including towards local populations. It was reported that racially hostile personnel took these views abroad with them on deployment. The location could make it even harder for BAME personnel and the attitude towards locals by those military with hostile views was seen as distasteful. It also made it more difficult for the military to win the battle for ‘hearts and minds’ in overseas settings and was generally seen to make the job of the British military more difficult.

“You do have some extreme racists who have joined these groups because they think they’ll get posted abroad on operations to abuse and live out their racial extremist fantasies against people from different minority backgrounds, because they’ll get away with it under such circumstances” (Military, BAME, female)

There were some worrying historical activities that were relayed, including into the new millennium, although not in more recent years.

In the CS, as in other military units, there were examples of those who used discriminatory language and thus created an unpleasant working environment for personnel. For example, peers who seemed to relish discussing racially sensitive issues (such the British National Party) in the presence of BAME participants were felt to be doing so knowing that it would make them uncomfortable.

“And I tend to let these things go over my head but it got to the point where I felt so belittled and all the rest of it...” (CS, BAME, female)

Within the military and CS, participants reported that such behaviour was not always effectively challenged by managers/Chain of Command (especially if they were towards the end of their career). Sometimes CS BAME personnel were moved to a different desk as a way of dealing with the situation, and military BAME personnel sought transfers out of some units. Neither were felt to be satisfactory ways to resolve the issue, and leaves the perpetrators of offensive or derogatory behaviours unchallenged.

Racist epithets, racially hostile views being expressed online, and challenges to the legitimacy of F&C BAME personnel in MOD were also part of the experience of some BAME participants. BAME participants across the military and in the CS discussed experiences where they had overheard racist epithets being used about them when the perpetrator was unaware of their presence or where they read racist comments that were written on work-related social media.

“I was shocked and disappointed because I thought well, if you are calling yourself this ‘[racist moniker]’ every time you log on you know you are, you’ve seen me ...I train with you. You either haven’t thought to change it or you genuinely believe that that’s acceptable” (Military, BAME, female)

Some of this hostility was perceived to be in part a backlash against the organisation’s efforts to improve D&I. BAME participants who experienced these types of incidences spoke of how it unsettled them and made them feel less supported and accepted in the organisation. There was a sense that the organisation should do more to challenge such attitudes but that it was difficult to police.

“...Let’s just say that people have been blatantly racist on line...what are...seniors doing about it?” (CS, BAME, female)

Viewed collectively, there is a cumulative picture of racial harassment existing outside of the operational environment in the MOD (e.g. in social or online contexts). This reinforces the claim stated in [REDACTED], that there is a need to conduct a review of the use of social media in the workplace, with respect to issues of harassment. This should be extended beyond the issue of sexual harassment to encompass other forms of harassment, such as racial harassment, as evidenced here.

5.2.6 Challenging Negative Treatment

Of those across the sample who experienced forms of negative treatment, a majority chose not to complain. This was regardless of gender or ethnicity, and instead was related to position in the

organisation. Low levels of reporting of discrimination in the CS are reported elsewhere. For example, of those individuals who stated that they had personally experienced discrimination in the last 12 months, only 36% reported the bullying or harassment that they had experienced (Civil Service People Survey, 2017). There were common fears about complaining across the sample, often related to marginalisation and a fear of consequences. Many participants did not know who to complain to, other than their line manager/Chain of Command who in many cases was the object of the complaint. Common concerns about complaining about negative treatment included a lack of faith in the process to deliver, fear of the impact on careers and peer relationships, the power of those being accused (usually a line manager or other senior rank/grade), the MOD closing ranks and a perceived lack of support for those who do complain, and having to remain working alongside those accused. These findings mirror those reported by the CS (CS HR, 2018), whereby the most frequently cited barriers to reporting bullying and harassment/misconduct were concerns relating to personal impact or repercussions and a lack of confidence that the issue would be addressed. Personnel rotations in the military also contributed to negative behaviours going unreported and endured, again irrespective of gender or ethnicity. Complainants also spoke of a number of unjust aspects to the process. The military closing of ranks to 'protect our own' and a similar protective response in the CS was evidenced by those military and CS participants who complained. There was similar testimony of this behaviour by participants who witnessed complaints procedures taking place around them. Imbalances in support that favoured the hierarchy were also commonly experienced. Complainants spoke of military 'accused' being briefed and helped to write reports whilst they as the accuser (even if they were a military male) struggled to find support from other sources (e.g. unions). The capacity of the MOD to justify whatever outcome it required was also a common belief.

"The organisation is opaque, doesn't always give clear reasons for its actions but can always find a justification so it is difficult to challenge and complain" (CS, BAME, female)

"The complaints system is broken, it doesn't work, it's all geared and stacked against the individual. The service complaints system is stacked against the individual because the old boys' [network]" (CS, BAME, male)

Those with recent experiences of the complaints system (e.g. who had raised or been subjected to a Service complaint within the past four years) maintained such sentiments as those highlighted above. This continued circulation of the widely held belief of the inadequacy of the system prevented many personnel with more recent experiences of negative behaviour (within the last year) from considering taking action to address it.

The difficulty in proving discriminatory behaviour, the perceived triviality of issues, and being more readily identifiable as a complainant were additional factors deterring females and BAME participants from complaining. The subtle nature of discrimination meant that many females and BAME participants did not complain because they believed it would be difficult to prove. Bullying and harassment behaviours were also seen as open to interpretation and there were examples where negative treatment perceived by females and BAME personnel were viewed as over-sensitivity on their part. Some females and BAME participants also dismissed their treatment as not being complaint-worthy because it was unintentional (and therefore neutral), conducted whilst drunk (therefore excusable), or was banter that had been misinterpreted. In some cases of hyper-sexualised misconduct, females were told that it was harmless.

Due to the generally much smaller representation of females and BAME personnel in particular circumstances, (e.g. on deployment, in white and/or male dominated locations, in rural or small locations) it was even harder for them to submit a Service complaint. This was because those complained about, as well as others working in such locations, would be more likely to deduce who the complainant was. Being a minority also meant that fewer personnel were nearby who may have been able to understand the nature of the negative treatment and thus provide the kind of support required. The lack of senior representation also added to insecurities about garnering support. Additionally, the fact that both parties would remain working in such unavoidable proximity during the investigation was a further consideration for females and BAME personnel when considering their options.

Across the sample, widespread faith in the MOD to address complaints was expressed by those who had not complained. Those who had complained concluded that the MOD had 'no appetite' to deal with poor behaviours. This aligns with findings from the CS whereby confidence that the organisation will deal with bullying, harassment and misconduct is higher amongst those who have never complained or witnessed these behaviours (CS HR, 2018). Whilst there was gratitude in those instances where the MOD had taken

firm and effective action in severe cases of unacceptable behaviour (including dismissal), the wider view across Defence was that the complaints system would work to address any instances of discriminatory behaviour for females and BAME personnel though this was contested by the experiences of females and BAME participants. Whilst fewer white male participants were involved in the complaints processes, they join with female and BAME participants in testifying to the inadequacy of the system, whether as those complained about, or those making a complaint. Sentiments about MOD avoiding dealing with complaints (particularly in the military) and tending to “*sweep things under the carpet*” were common. There was a tendency to move people on or out of posts in cases of complaint-worthy behaviour, which was seen as a way of avoiding taking actions.

“You are begging for someone to claim sexual harassment but no-one does and it gets swept under very lovely carpets in the Army sometimes” (Military, white, female)

“He moved on, but as with most things he was sort of promoted rather than disciplined or anything like that....[it is] very common, either promoted or lateral transfer into somebody else’s team to be dealt with” (CS, white female)

There was a fairly uniform condemnation of the formal complaints system by those who were involved in it. This applied regardless of gender and ethnicity, and regardless of whether personnel were instigators or the subject of the complaint. Across the sample, participants felt aggrieved by the formal complaints system, all generally convinced that the system favoured the other party. Those accused reported feeling guilty until proven innocent and complainants spoke of being made to feel like a liar. Those males accused of negative behaviour towards females and BAME personnel felt that they were being “*sacrificed*” in the system because the MOD was “*scared of looking racist*” and the resentment was clear. Participants recalled some complaints taking well over a year to be resolved. Either as the instigator or recipient of the complaint, the consequences in terms of stress and relationship difficulties was considerable, thus even when cases were concluded, there was a limited sense of satisfaction on either side.

The longer term impact of negative treatment remaining unresolved was psychological/physical, organisational and cumulative. There were a number of historic complaints that had been unresolved (the accused was moved on), which had an enduring negative impact on the recipients of that behaviour. In a few instances females spoke of ‘horizon scanning’ or doing preparatory work in case they should ever meet the males who they allege bullied or assaulted them earlier in their careers. This indicates that the residual impact of previous unacceptable behaviours remained. The psychological and physical impact of negative treatment reported by participants included stress, ill health, absence from work and reduced commitment (see Work, Family and Wellbeing, Section 5.6.3). Also noted was the extent to which many unresolved instances (i.e. those not complained about to managers) were deemed not to really matter by the female and BAME participants who experienced them. These were conveyed to be because such instances constituted the actions of a minority of individuals and/or were of a low order of concern. Nonetheless, the “*drip drip*” effect of persistent negative treatment should be recognised, and the denial of its impact could be considered a learned response.

“One of the hardest things when you are dealing with people who’ve been harassed and bullied and have got mental health problems is getting them to address it...if they don’t address it by putting a complaint in...it just eats away at them and they’ll never get better” (CS, BAME male)

From an organisational perspective many females and BAME participants were critical of the tendency for complaints, if they were acted on, to be formally or informally resolved by the relocation of those they had complained about. Whilst this removed the individual (or in some cases themselves) to a different context, this did not address the issue. Further, the opportunity for the sexist or racist behaviour to surface elsewhere in the organisation was an expressed concern.

“Whenever there is a person who has this kind of tendency instead of challenging that person the Ministry of Defence reaction is ‘let’s get them out of the door. So let’s hope one of his applications for promotion goes through, we won’t have to say anything bad about him, we would have got rid of him’, and that is sad because it allows within the system people with not the right characters to progress’ (CS, BAME, male)

An inadequate institutional response to a very similar sexualised military culture was reported in the Canadian military (Deschamps, 2015), with an emphatic warning that substantial cultural change was

required. Part of this change was for senior leadership to fully recognise the degree to which assault and harassment prevailed in the organisation, and to see the serious hostilities and risks to females, that emanate from a largely unaddressed underlying sexualised culture.

Females and BAME participants found success in resolving their grievances with informal dialogue. They sought to help the instigator understand the personal impact of their behaviours. This was less evident amongst white male complainants. There was some sentiment that redress for offending behaviours did not necessarily need to be formalised. A few BAME participants (particularly F&C BAME) reflected that often it was ignorance or lack of cultural understanding beneath some forms of inappropriate behaviour and that it would be more effective to inform and educate the other party (i.e. correct misunderstandings or stereotypical views of cultures etc.) rather than inform *on them*. Similar actions were taken by females. For example, males provided examples of females correcting their use of sexist language (i.e. ball-breaking, ball-ache, manning, girls) and there seemed to be some progress being made in terms of males' understanding the implications. Generally there was some success reported in using personal dialogue to informally address unacceptable behaviour. Cockburn (1989) emphasises how small changes in organisations should not be underestimated in their capacity to enact wider effects in future. It seems that the creation of dialogue and spaces to inform initiators of negative treatment have enabled the development of more empathetic understanding for those who have been subjected to insensitive treatment. Nonetheless, informal spaces for dialogue and redress were still spaces of power; many females who sought to educate others were senior to the recipient of the advice (recent graduate entrants, or longer serving Non Commissioned Officers) and BAME participants were mostly (but not exclusively) addressing peers in order to educate them.

Informal attempts to address unacceptable behaviour in the military by the Chain of Command may go unseen. Many females and BAME participants, who approached (usually military) line managers with complaints about others' behaviour, were very dissatisfied by the lack of action following this. This was seen as a lack of will to address problems that were seen as trivial. However, amongst white male Regulars there were a number of instances where they had actioned, or been privy to, informal warnings given towards other white males for forms of unacceptable behaviour towards females in particular. Thus, a harsh 'dressing down' or warning of future dismissal had been instigated by senior males or were known about by other white males to have taken place. But there was limited knowledge amongst females or BAME personnel of this landscape of informal activity, where unacceptable behaviour was being addressed in these ways. Amongst females and BAME personnel there was a common belief that nothing was being done in cases where they complained.

The experience of participating in this study led to pledges amongst more senior personnel and white males to intervene to challenge negative treatment towards others in future, although ability to see and act on occurrences might still be limited. This was a widespread commitment across the sample to act in future to address gendered or sexist behaviours. This was powerful when stated by personnel who had failed to act in the past, who believed that their current privileges of rank, age, career stage and (amongst females) confidence, provided the power to be prepared to 'upset the apple cart' if need be. Senior personnel who had joined the CS more recently also stated their commitment to act. Nonetheless, in a hierarchical organisation, the capacity to see the events at the "*coal face*" may be less available, although mentoring was seen to offer a route to such insight. Males in the middle ranks/grades also pledged to draw on the 'moral courage' they needed in order to intervene and the need for more widespread moral courage as a motor for change was expressed by many males across the sample. Whilst some reflected on having done this in the past, hierarchical authority prevailed.

"I felt I had to do something [about bullying towards a colleague], but I obviously had to respect the Chain of Command. So I did try to speak to her to say 'you do realise that you're not treating us both equally', but I wasn't successful in getting her to change her approach" (Military, white, male)

Decisions about whether or not to intervene when witnessing problematic behaviour towards female or BAME personnel can also be about the position of the witness in the 'gender order' of that situation (cf. Connell, 1995) rather than the rank or seniority of those around them. In organisations and across societies, once the 'hegemonic norm' (placing men as superior to women) is established (in the MOD this may be seen as being decisive, authoritative etc.) other males who do not fulfil the standards of this norm tend to become subservient or complicit to it, to avoid suffering the consequences of challenge. Many males who may not agree with the actions or values of a dominant type of male peer group, nonetheless gain privilege by not

challenging it (e.g. by being part of the dominant team, they won't get picked on or ostracised, maintain the power over subordinate others etc.). This is another dimension independent of rank/grade/seniority that will make it harder for males to call out other males.

A review of sexual harassment in the Canadian military (Deschamps, 2015) pinpointed the need for senior leadership to take responsibility to enact more meaningful change, in order to eradicate the threatening environment for females. Specific policy changes such as: using external agencies to manage complaints; in depth training for Commanding Officers to ensure they are fully capable of assessing and dealing with harassment matters; and instigating policies on adverse working relationships to avoid abuse of power seem just as pertinent to the MOD.

Negative Treatment and Experiences - Key Messages and Actions

- Drawing on extreme examples of discriminatory behaviour suggests that many white males have an under-developed understanding of what contemporary discrimination looks like. Unless this is tackled then myths about the MOD as a place with very limited discrimination or negative treatment related to gender or ethnicity, and with an exemplary system for dealing with the rare breaches, will continue, and will be a barrier to the development of an inclusive organisation that many white males endorse. One means of addressing negative treatment and supporting the achievement of the D&I mission might be through the use of Regimental Inclusion Councils (RIC). A RIC is a forum where personnel can raise D&I issues either in person or anonymously. These issues are reviewed by the council who are a collective group of personnel from a diverse range of backgrounds empowered to make decisions. This is a bottom up initiative originating in 10 The Queens Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment (10 QOGLR). Evaluating the effectiveness of this approach to see whether it could have wider applicability is suggested. This approach may also help to raise awareness of the issues that minority groups face.
- Discrimination also operates at an institutional level and females and BAME personnel endure systematically greater financial disadvantage because of their locations amongst particular strata of the MOD. Females are subjected to further structural discrimination because a lack of investment impacts more severely on them specifically, compared to males e.g. with respect to equipment provision. In relation to this there is clearly an urgent need to supply females with the equipment appropriate for their size. More widely, any future decisions about resourcing need to examine, at the outset, the implications for those organisational spaces where females and BAME personnel are over-represented. Inbuilt flexibilities to allow adjustments in order to prevent an uneven distribution of the negative aspects of policy should be an intrinsic aspect of this process. Thus D&I concerns should not be an afterthought in the decision making process.
- Overt forms of racism and sexism exist and the system to address these seems inadequate. Initial approaches to line managers may be inappropriate because they are implicated, and as a result complaints are not made because complainants do not know where else to go. Fears of reprisals, a lack of faith in the system and lack of knowledge about how to complain mean much negative treatment goes unreported. Avoidance strategies, such as moving personnel on/out are deemed ineffective and will reproduce negative behaviours in Defence as it does not address underlying behaviours witnessed by females and BAME personnel. The findings suggest that a zero tolerance approach coupled with an objective, independent and easily accessible complaints system is needed, as found in other militaries (Deschamps, 2015). Where issues are resolved locally, there may need to be greater governance of when this is used to avoid issues being 'swept under the carpet'. This may involve central monitoring (via spot checks) to maintain oversight and evaluation of the efficacy of this approach. Greater communication with the complainant may also be needed to ensure that they do not feel excluded from the process and are aware of the steps taken as well as any outcome. Recent changes to the military complaints system (and planned changes to the CS system) may address some of the issues identified above, but work should be done in earnest to mitigate the effects of the extant system. The lack of faith in the system is deeply held by those who ought to have used it. There needs to be a widespread communications strategy to announce new procedures and reassure potential users that there has been meaningful change.
- Positive discrimination is perceived to exist and this perception is understandable in times of scarce resources and personal hardship, coupled with a lack of understanding of the disadvantages faced

by females and BAME personnel. Ironically, fear of being seen to positively discriminate can result in harsher treatment of females and BAME personnel by females and BAME personnel senior to them. Attempts to provide greater clarity about the difference between positive action and positive discrimination may be required. This needs to be communicated to personnel across all levels of the organisation.

- Bullying towards females and BAME personnel is enacted more by military managers, and particularly towards those in the CS and those who have child care responsibilities. This may reflect an inappropriate abrasive management style rather than a bullying intent. It may also reflect a disregard for these populations or a lack of understanding. Where the problem is perceived to derive from a lack of understanding, individual informal attempts at redress through dialogue are proving to be effective ways in helping white males develop this kind of insight.
- Assumptions about gender are leaving females more vulnerable across Defence. This can be where behaviours of female managers are perceived as bullying where the same behaviour by males would not be. It can also mean that inter-female conflict is seen as unimportant, not adequately dealt with and can lead to painful consequences that need not have happened if it had been addressed. D&I training which increases awareness of the penalties applied to females for behaviour seen as more suitable for males (for example) will help personnel to identify and address double-standards. Management training that challenges similar gendered perspectives is also required so that inter-female conflict is recognised and addressed accordingly.
- Racial and sexual harassment persists across Defence. Whether this is online, or out of earshot, or restricted to particular geographical locations (deployments, units, Messes) its impact can be significant. This form of prejudice is coupled with more 'covert' forms of racism that are subtle and therefore difficult to call out. This is likely complicated by the fact that perpetrators of this form of racism may not be aware that they are discriminating against ethnic minority groups given these actions are driven by subconscious beliefs. The extent of ambiguities in what can be proven as sexist/racial discrimination means that the 'drip, drip' of unresolved 'senses' of negative treatment accumulates across the organisation and across the Lived Experiences of individuals. The effect of this may be underestimated by females and BAME personnel. Whilst both overt and covert forms of prejudice and discrimination need to be managed, a key challenge for Defence is to ensure that both forms are attended to and that 'obvious' forms of discrimination do not become the sole target for intervention. Finding ways to identify, manage and prevent the emergence of covert and 'invisible' behaviours is vital. Different forms of prejudice and discrimination may require different forms of intervention. D&I training that elicits empathy for females and BAME personnel effectively may help others to appreciate how their unreflective actions may be received by these groups. Whilst unconscious bias and other forms of D&I training are important, knowing what is and is not permissible cannot cover the plethora of 'low level' pervasive incidents. White males who have an understanding of how such incidents or marginalisation feel seem to be more sensitive to the experiences of others and so D&I training recommendations about developing empathy through dialogue and real life examples are pertinent here.
- The commitment made by more powerful participants (senior grades/ranks and white males) to show moral courage and call out forms of racism and sexism in future is worthy but may be compromised if their ability to understand and thus identify these instances is impaired. White males in lower grades/ranks face additional pressures to act insofar as their careers may be affected by senior males, and also they may feel negative consequences if they are seen to challenge dominant male groups, within their peer rather than career structure.

5.3 Organisational Change

This theme focuses on the perceived nature and extent of change within the MOD that has occurred, or needs to occur, with respect to gender and ethnicity. It covers the views of participants from across the sample.

This theme comprises the following sub-themes:

- Rationale for Change.
- Achieving Change.
- Barriers to Change.
- Evaluation of the Change Agenda.
- Recommendations for Change.

Points to note: Participants were asked directly whether they had seen any cultural changes with respect to gender and ethnicity. However, most comments about change or how to achieve it occurred more organically during the more open timeline part of the interview.

Synopsis

There is widespread belief that there has been significant positive change across the MOD in recent decades, and particularly within the past five years, which reflects broader societal changes around gender and ethnicity. Messaging around D&I is clear, with the visible commitment from senior leadership, routine D&I awareness training, various D&I focused policy amendments and support initiatives being widely discussed by the sample. There was some resentment of this change, primarily from white males, and it stemmed from a perception that the focus on D&I was effectively creating a problem that did not exist. These white males viewed the MOD as an organisation that welcomed all who can do the job. They saw the focus on D&I as having a negative impact in that it implied the MOD was inherently racist/sexist; it created a fear of saying or doing the wrong thing which could reduce organisational effectiveness; and it was stifling careers as older/longer serving white males (and similarly, white females) were being overlooked in favour of newer female/BAME personnel. Similar concerns from these males about a backlash were mirrored by a minority of BAME personnel and females across the sample. However, support for D&I focused change was greater than resistance, although not without critique. Perceived insincere senior leadership and a lack of BAME personnel creating policy meant there was a sizable perception that 'lip service' was being paid, without an authentic commitment to meaningful change.

The positive view of change was more muted for BAME personnel, and even more so for BAME females. Unconscious bias and micro-aggressions³⁹ were more evident than direct discrimination. Opportunities to resolve less overt forms of non-inclusive or discriminatory behaviour through education rather than punishment was perceived by a number of BAME and female personnel as a more effective way of enacting future change. Creating different forms of diversity training to expand empathy with minority groups, and embedding a deeper understanding of different cultures were also perceived as necessary to harness more meaningful change in the future. Recognising and attempting to reconcile the tensions within the white male majority, which can exist as part of a homogenous masculinist⁴⁰ culture that can harm males too (Connell, 1995), should be another avenue of repair in terms of producing a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

5.3.1 Rationale for Change

There was a widespread belief across the sample that changing societal expectations about equality for historically marginalised social groups was a key driver for D&I change in the MOD in recent decades. Many participants saw the MOD as a reflection of society. In some instances wider social changes (globalisation, more diversity in society, improved education, greater representation of all backgrounds in the media, more liberal attitudes) were felt to have had a positive impact upon Defence culture (in terms of acceptance of differences and diversity). As such, it was felt that there was no longer any "appetite" for overtly sexist and racist behaviours and attitudes that were previously accepted or unchallenged.

"I guess what it is individuals are more interested but I don't think that's because MOD is promoting it, but I think generally the general kind of cultural environment that we are in, people are more...more

³⁹ "Brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership". (Sue, 2010, p xvi:). Micro-aggressions may be automatic and unconscious or intentional.

⁴⁰ "Characterised by or denoting attitudes or values held to be typical of men".

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/masculinist>.

engaging, more tolerant of other cultures and diversity because...also you know it is part of the curriculum at school... you know people travel more now as well, so they are more tolerant, more aware of different cultures, so I don't think it's just MOD, I think people generally are more kind of interested" (CS, BAME, female)

Participants across the sample reflected that previously accepted behaviours (e.g. where "it was sport to see if you could break someone") were now regarded as sexist and/or racist bullying. The general consensus was that such behaviours have indeed changed, although there were allusions to "bad apples" (individuals or units) remaining. In some instances, changes in society were explicitly linked to what was appraised as the changing values of younger people, who were seen as less deferential, more willing to challenge convention, and more accepting of diversity (though this was most often referenced in relation to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) or spoken of quite generally). This was felt to bring a more open and accepting mind-set into the military. However the extent to which these sentiments reflect the experiences of LGBT personnel is unclear as they were not actively sampled in this study.

The continued presence of racism in society was referenced by a number of BAME (and some white) participants as a reason for the MOD to continue its change efforts. This included personal experiences of racism in society as well as that experienced by their families.

"We talk about equality and diversity, diverse community in a modern age...but there are still people out there you know...who would not even talk to [me or my family]" (Military, BAME, male)

There was also a suggestion that prejudice (racism, sexism) was so commonplace in society that it often went unnoticed or unchallenged and that this was echoed in the military too.

"It doesn't matter how many jokes they make. Half the time, nobody will say anything, to say 'no, I'm not comfortable with this joke" (Military, white, female)

There was some concern that people may pay "lip service" to D&I, i.e. outwardly conforming, but still retaining racist attitudes, which are simply 'pushed underground'. A number of participants spoke of Brexit and underlying prejudice driving this or the emergence of "Trump" and an associated "emboldening of bad behaviour in society" with a fear this could emerge in the workplace. Indeed, events outlined in the timeline evidenced the continued negative treatment of minority groups (see Figure 2 and in Appendix I). Again, this counters the suggestion that society is becoming more accepting and, if MOD culture is a reflection of society, it would suggest that it is not necessarily moving towards a universal culture of inclusivity.

Across the sample there was a sense that diversity in the MOD was beneficial to the organisation, since females and BAME personnel brought new skills, experiences, perspectives and behaviours that were deemed to be of genuine benefit. Occasionally there was a danger of invoking gendered or racialised stereotypes insofar as some longer serving white males assumed the greater push for BAME personnel would be useful only because of assumptions around their deeper understanding of specific issues rather than their individual skills and talents. A few BAME participants spoke as recipients of such assumptions, and of not feeling valued because of it, especially because these assumptions of their cultural knowledge often drew on negative stereotypes.

"First of all they think I'm a Muslim, secondly 'cos he's you know... you know everything with ISIS or anything like that, so, you get that kind of thing yeah" (CS, BAME, male)

Similarly, there were assumptions made by males and some of the females across the sample that individual females would automatically bring softer skills and more diverse ways of working and communicating. However, there was evidence in this study of females displaying the same masculine behaviours as many of their male peers (especially in the military but also the CS). These include: very assertive leadership styles; swearing and bantering with male colleagues; getting into physical fights, etc. But, whilst the issue of stereotyping could be regarded as one negative aspect of the change agenda, the stronger message from participants was more positive and centred on the MOD needing more varied insights and perspectives that a diverse workforce brings.

A number of white males across the sample conveyed the psychological impact for males having to work in an organisation where a particular form of macho⁴¹, assertive, decisive masculinity dominated. There

⁴¹ "Masculine in an overly assertive or aggressive way...A man who is aggressively proud of his masculinity"
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/macho>

were some useful reflections from ‘non-macho’ males who felt bullied or silenced and under pressure to conform to a male norm that simply did not fit them. Further efforts to include personnel from outside of the white male majority may benefit such ‘non-macho’ males as, by introducing more cultural difference, it may encourage the development of a broader and less macho set of norms within teams.

“I actively tried to avoid taking on many of the characteristics that you’d find with people that have done full careers in XXXXX ...that kind of very male dominated world, very...very crude banter, very...quite, quite alpha male⁴², quite aggressive” (Military, white, male)

The pressure that males feel by being located always in relationship to a masculine norm has been recognised as damaging (Connell, 1995). In cases where a male fails to satisfy one of these normative characteristics, he may be ostracised from his masculine group by other males. For a number of males in this study, the homogeneity of masculine behaviour in the MOD negatively impacted them and affected their sense of belonging (see also Belonging and Social Identity, Section 5.8.23). The pressure to display a certain type of masculinity also impacted negatively on help-seeking behaviours at times of mental distress. An opening up of more diverse characteristics across Defence could arguably contribute to a healthier population of white males, and provide an opportunity to loosen some of the more negative aspects of the dominant masculine norms. There were other ways in which the presence of females, specifically, was seen to benefit incumbent males. Females across the sample relayed a sense of their presence having helped their male peers on numerous occasions. This included providing them with insights into relationship issues (i.e. providing a female perspective on a family or relationship problem), and providing emotional support that was viewed as less likely to come from a male peer group. A less positive ‘benefit’ was also offered about how the change to greater inclusion of females may prove motivational for males to enhance their performance because *“they won’t want to be beaten by a girl”*.

Whilst there was a broad perception that the MOD had changed, this often coexisted alongside a narrative that the MOD did not need to change further. There was a very strong belief amongst some white personnel that the MOD was already diverse and hence further effort was not needed to increase diversity. This belief was also present amongst some BAME participants though they were less likely to say that the MOD did not need to change compared to white participants (see Organisational Culture, Section 5.9.1). Where participants noted the lack of diversity (many participants acknowledged limited diversity in the location where they worked) greater diversity, particularly with respect to ethnicity, was assumed to exist in other MOD locations. A culture of inclusivity was also widely believed to exist (particularly amongst white males) with processes in place for redress should breaches occur.

“...the main thing that [MOD] can do is stop making it an issue. I feel like most of that kind of stuff comes from higher up saying, “Oh you’ve got to be inclusive here and you’ve got to do this and do that”. But, actually it wasn’t a problem ‘til you started mentioning it so I think it’s kind of drop the fact that it’s a problem unless it’s being...if it’s coming from the bottom up that it’s a problem then I think that’s quite...quite specific” (Military, white, male)

Those who espoused this kind of position believed the lack of diversity would be resolved over time, and potentially exponentially once a tipping point was reached.

“You know it takes success to build success. It’s only once you reach critical mass that then it’s thought of as an obvious career option. Until you get to that stage, you know and the fact that there aren’t that many ethnic minorities, might be something that puts people off. I don’t know” (Military, white, male)

The change that was needed, according to those who believed in this position, was around recruitment activities and messaging in order to bring more minority groups into MOD; there was no need to change other aspects of the organisation substantively. Literature on organisational change reports that discrimination is likely to be reduced as those in a majority become more used to working with minorities. Finseraas, Johnsen, Kotsadam and Torsvik (2016) found that intense collaborative exposure to female colleagues reduced discriminatory attitudes. In their study, male soldiers who were randomly assigned to share rooms and work in a squad with female soldiers were less likely to discriminate. This suggests that increased exposure to female colleagues might improve attitudes to diversity and the suggestions of a

⁴² “A man tending to assume a dominant or domineering role in social or professional situations”
https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/alpha_male

'tipping point' might hold some weight. Duncanson and Woodward (2016) outline the dilemma faced by writers on the issue of female inclusion in the military as to whether strategies should focus on 'inclusion' (e.g. emphasising the sameness between men and women) or 'reversal' (e.g. arguing that women bring unique and valuable skills). To show how this binary choice might be overcome they present work by Cockburn and Hubric (2002) on international peacekeeping soldiers in Bosnia that explores how the military could be re-gendered to improve female participation. A re-gendered military is one where both males and females value and demonstrate masculine and feminine traits in the course of their work and none is valued above the other. To move towards a more re-gendered military, Cockburn and Hubric (2002) argue that a three-pronged approach is required:

1. Inclusion: Recruit more females to reduce discrimination, particularly in areas where they are clearly underrepresented.
2. Reversal: The inclusion of females is necessary, but not sufficient, however. Reversal, the revaluation of practices previously feminised, such as empathy, care and cooperation, is also required. Together they contribute to displacement.
3. Displacement: Shifting of gendered dichotomies.

They argue that the increased inclusion of females and the lack of differentiation between male and female roles in the military (where you do not have only females doing the "*womanly stuff*" and only males "*acting tough*" (Cockburn and Hubric, 2002 p. 12)) would help to re-gender the military towards one where the sex of a person is not associated with a particular form of work and males are not valued above females. Duncanson and Woodward (2016) suggest that research should focus on the extent to which militaries can move towards 're-gendering'.

Duncanson and Woodward (2016) also argue that that emphasising that the military's first purpose is 'security' rather than combat is important to this process of re-gendering. They also suggest that this would assist in the need to disassociate military work from white personnel and concerns about "*white Knights in dark lands*" (p. 13) which, as the data in this report suggests, could help with the recruitment of BAME personnel.

5.3.2 Achieving Change

Opening all military roles to females was received positively by females but less so by some military males.

During the course of the study/interview period, the opening of combat roles to women (see Figure 1 and Figure 2 and in Appendix I) was met with mixed reactions in the media. Unsurprisingly, these changes were commented on frequently by participants in the military. Some participants, especially females, were very positive about what this meant for inclusion and opportunity.

"I think the organisation, as I said, it is changing, it is on this massive curve, and I think with women ground close combat this year it's changing everything. Women only came into the Royal Engineers in 1992, you know I'm sure they were having those conversations back then 'oh you know....' whereas now we don't even think about it. So I think for females coming into this organisation now I think it's even more positive because they have so much to choose from" (Military, white, female)

However, the opening of these roles to females was often linked into concerns about quotas and targets (this was particularly the case amongst military white males). Many participants, typically white males, but also a number of females and BAME participants, spoke of being against quotas, believing change should happen more naturally. Their reflections indicated a possible confusion between quotas and targets and a belief that the MOD had quotas for employing a certain proportion of females and BAME personnel. Nevertheless even those who understood targets as a direction of travel rather than a mandatory action recognised that once a target had been set, there is pressure in the organisation to try to meet it and this, some feared, could lead to positive discrimination towards females and BAME personnel. Prior research has highlighted resistance to the use of targets in other organisations due to fears that appointments will be perceived as being allocated on the basis of minority status, rather than merit ([REDACTED]).

Key policies, such as those related to maternity and caregiving, changed the landscape of career stability and career progression for females across the sample, but were perceived to be implemented inconsistently. Some females expressed mistrust in the flexible working policy and a wariness of being penalised for adopting different work patterns. With the presence of more females, in uniform and at senior

levels, there was a belief that biased assumptions about authority and gender were being dismantled, although females trying to access flexible working were still met with hostility sometimes. Moreover, implementation of the policies that were seen as positive moves for females, were often dependent upon the Chain of Command/line management and there was considerable disparity in experience here, with some females describing the chasm between policy and practice and the difficulties in redressing this (see also Work, Family and Wellbeing, Section 5.6).

“When you come back from maternity, even I felt very vulnerable. I hadn’t done it for a year. I was tired, there was a lot on my plate...it’s very difficult given the information that’s within the defensive Defence world, to know your rights. Because it’s very obscurely written. It’s very obscurely controlled. And even when you ring up HR, they know what your rights are, they say that’s not right, but I can’t do anything about it...So, if you ring up DBS [Defence Business Services], they say this is the policy, it should be followed. Oh, it’s not being followed. Er, OK, can’t do anything about that” (CS, white, female)

Moves to anonymised applications, greater diversity on selection boards and fast track schemes to enhance progression for minorities were found to be having some impact on changing the unequal distribution of females in the organisation, although less so for BAME groups. CS females in particular noted the positive moves the organisation was making towards improving D&I through recruitment processes, such as anonymised applications and ensuring interview panels included a diverse range of people. The CS Fast Track scheme had also placed a number of CS females in the MOD. These mechanisms were seen to be improving female representation across the organisation. The presence of more females in senior roles seemed to add to a general sense that the gender issue has mostly been resolved in MOD whereas there was thought to be still some way to go regarding BAME issues. However, and largely in contrast to white males, female and BAME participants were more likely to highlight the unequal distribution of females/BAME in the lower levels of the MOD hierarchy, and the concentration of white males at the top of the hierarchy. It was not uncommon for males to state that females had achieved near equal status in the MOD but, when this belief was questioned, to realise that more widely, they had not.

D&I training, at its best, was perceived to be influential in changing attitudes and behaviours, although there was often little enthusiasm for it and the medium for delivery compounded the sense that the training represented a “missed opportunity” in terms of driving change. D&I training was deemed necessary by some due to a perceived lack of competency around issues of D&I such as the language that was sometimes used to describe those from BAME groups. This lack of competency was thought by some to have a generational component with the view that some older personnel may be less aware of acceptable terms. It was also suggested by a few CS female participants that there might be an issue with a small minority of personnel who leave the Regulars and join the CS, taking this lack of competency around diversity with them, which can cause problems. Training was seen as an important and influential tool for diversity, but some felt that what was provided was not sufficient or fit for purpose. Whilst there was limited objection to undertaking D&I training, there was often little interest in it as a serious topic.

“Well we’ve, they’ve got the courses, the diversity and inclusion...I mean they change the name of it every year, but that course that you attend, and I don’t know if people take it seriously to be honest, you get told be nice to people essentially...” (Military, white, female)

Some participants felt that D&I training did not really contribute to a more inclusive organisation. There was concern amongst some military participants that D&I briefings were not being delivered with much enthusiasm or knowledge; it was just about imparting information from PowerPoint slides, which was detrimental to the overall message about the importance of D&I.

“...the entire Regiment has had to sit in a hall and be spoken about say E&D [Equality and Diversity] training and the person that’s delivering it couldn’t be arsed and just flicking through it and saying ‘yeah yeah this is it...’...So then that shows individuals who are suffering from issues that come under E&D if they do speak out it’s not going to be taken seriously” (Military, BAME, female)

Related to this issue of delivery, some personnel felt that the online nature of the CS D&I training was not effective and that something more interactive was required.

“My personal view is that the best way to bring those things across is to make an interactive, diverse group of people go through the awareness and learning about those issues...” (CS, white, male)

There were some comments that the online nature of the CS D&I training did not allow for the depth of discussion and understanding that face-to-face training could provide. Furthermore, bringing people together for group training could be a networking opportunity. There was the suggestion that external agencies delivering this training would improve the way in which the message was being put across and increase its utility. Indeed, those in the Senior Civil Service (SCS) mentioned how they had received extensive D&I training (from external organisations), which focused on unconscious bias and was deemed useful. There were also some BAME military participants who had been involved in briefing their colleagues about their religion or culture and spoke positively about the experience. They felt that these briefings had been useful to their colleagues and improved understanding between ethnic and religious groups. Some of the white participants echoed the need for this more in-depth support.

“...it needs to do more to impart to the majority community, by which we obviously mean white males...particularly the decision makers, the leaders in that group, of what is like to be a woman or a minority, and to feel the rough end of the deal...” (Military, white, male)

Other participants saw a need for training that improved their ability to manage diverse teams, such as training to improve leader effectiveness at dealing with diversity-related disputes. There was also a sense that the demographic profile of the MOD sometimes made the lessons from diversity training more difficult to embed as training sessions were typically attended by a white male majority that meant that the messages or experiences of minorities in the room were not fully taken on board.

However, care needs to be taken with any re-design of diversity training that seeks to make it more in-depth. Although personnel seemed to gain from training that allowed them to better understand cultural difference, it is important that ‘guilt-based’ approaches to diversity training are avoided as these can create a backlash (Pendry, Driscoll and Field, 2007). Pendry, Driscoll and Field’s (2007) work would also suggest that efforts to increase cultural awareness and understanding of different ethnic groups and religions should always be done against a backdrop of stressing common identities as MOD personnel and that an awareness of unconscious bias was important to try to reduce discrimination (Pendry, Driscoll, and Field 2007).

Despite D&I training and mandated actions (the inclusion of a D&I objectives for all), some participants did not feel that the organisation had effectively confronted its diversity issues and needed to do more. In this sense, D&I training was seen to be moving in the right direction, but there was considerable work still to be done.

“Everyone talks about....diversity and inclusion as being...a good place...the great direction...everyone’s on the bus but the bus is going nowhere...It’s pointing in the right direction but it’s barely in first gear...I just think [it] is all smoke and no flame...” (Military, BAME, female)

The imposition of D&I initiatives, such as the annual inclusion objective, was divisive in terms of its capacity to assist in change. For some participants its imposition sent a clear message down the hierarchy that everyone must work to be inclusive as they would work to achieve any other objective. However, this was not the most widely held perspective. Many from across the sample including females and BAME participants saw it as an imposed, unmeasurable, standardised statement as further evidence of an institutional ‘tick box’ approach to D&I that would be slow to deliver meaningful change. There was a sense across the sample that initiatives such as this were “forcing” D&I related change. The organisation’s commitment to increase D&I was read by some as resulting in a pressure for rapid change and this called into question some of the actions taken to effect change.

“It would be counterproductive yes. You have people there and you’ll have people there who feel personally that they’re not there by merit. And you’ll have people who think ‘well he is not there by merit. He’s only there because he’s a part of this minority programme.’ Which is, you don’t ever want that yeah. It defeats whatever progress is being made, yeah” (Military, BAME, male)

This was echoed by many of the white male participants who were vocally resistant to the D&I agenda being “forced” and “in your face”. This may be perceived as a form of ‘diversity fatigue’, which may lead to a lack of engagement with the issue. In this context diversity fatigue relates to weariness with the continued need for engaging in activities to promote diversity that may seem difficult or pointless (e.g. Schumpeter, 2016). However, the term is also used to refer to frustration with the lack of progress in diversity (Tsusaka, 2019).

Across the sample, there was an established belief from many that new entrants were central to achieving change. However, evidence from the participants suggests that some of the younger generation still hold racist and/or sexist views. The logic stated repeatedly across the sample was that as the “old and bold” retire, replenishment by those who have been raised around diversity and to be inclusive will progress change from within.

“As you look to the younger leaders, they are paying more attention to ensuring that these things are, are done well, so making sure that people do actually do the training and understand the meaning behind it...As opposed to perhaps ticking the box” (Military, white, male)

This is a lot of pressure to place on newer entrants, and perhaps quite an idealisation of their potential to enact change in this organisation. Whilst some looked to their own children or known teenagers as examples of generational change, it seemed that few looked to their own experiences within the organisation and the critique that many offered about the way it operates. Few in the sample reflected critically on the widely propagated belief in next generation change. Indeed, there was evidence that some younger participants hold discriminatory attitudes, suggesting that it would be erroneous to assume that younger generations will automatically bring with them a more inclusive outlook and culture. In particular, Royal Marine (RM) and Army males in combat roles and some university educated males (often young Officers) across the sample were found to be discriminatory towards minority groups. The existence of these attitudes amongst some university-educated male participants could be linked with ‘lad culture’ in British universities, which is understood to manifest itself as ‘overt sexism’, but can also include elements of racism and homophobia (Jackson and Sundaram, 2015). Those that were more sceptical about the idea of generational change tended to be newer to the organisation and to have experience of working outside of Government in industry. Interestingly, whilst research has highlighted that levels of ‘acceptance’ of minority groups, including BAME, have increased in society, there are lowering levels of acceptance of immigrants amongst the younger generation (Janmaat and Keating, 2017). The authors concluded “*the development of seemingly more inclusive identities only leads to new forms of exclusion and othering*” (p. 62). This suggests the dominance of ‘in-group-outgroup’ processes and the need to guard against the development of ‘new’ targets of exclusionary practices.

5.3.3 Barriers to Change

Key barriers to change have been divided into: those which prevent the recruitment of a more diverse workforce; those that prevent females and BAME personnel from remaining in Defence; and those that act as barriers to inclusion for minority groups.

5.3.3.1 Barriers to Recruitment of a More Diverse Workforce

The MOD is not seen as offering the types of careers traditionally favoured by some of those from UK BAME groups. This attitude within some BAME communities is an issue known to Defence. Within this study, there was a perception that the reluctance of British-born ethnic minority groups (especially Asian communities) to join stemmed partly from them not seeing the MOD as a professional career (see also Joining and Early Experiences, Section 5.4.2 and 5.4.3).

“I think the problem about getting ethnic minorities to come into the Civil Service, or the MOD in particular, is that, and what people don’t understand, I think, is that..., we don’t see this as a career for our children. For example, my [child’s] not coming into the Civil Service. We have the aspiration that our children are gonna be doctors, dentists, lawyers, what have you, and that’s where we push the children, engineers” (CS, BAME female)

Many participants who identified this problem stated that the MOD should focus on relaying the professional/career message and appropriately engaging certain communities. The demographic profile of recruiters (white, male) and the messaging that MOD sends out in terms of recruitment adverts was seen as problematic in this regard. During the course of the interview period, the Army released a new advertising campaign (see Figure 3 and Table 7-8 in Appendix I) which was met with mixed reactions. Unsurprisingly, the recruitment adverts were mentioned by a number of participants, particularly in the Army. Recruitment adverts were perceived by some BAME participants as not doing enough in terms of reflecting the broad scope of the Services, whilst many white males saw adverts as doing too much to attract minority groups at the risk of excluding the white male majority. It is suggested that the organisation needs to consider sustained and serious change internally to promote the professional trades for real change to occur.

The lack of diversity was thought to perpetuate an on-going lack of diversity. Some BAME participants argued that the lack of diversity in the organisation was likely to be a barrier to other BAME personnel joining it.

“It’s...just not reflective of society, that’s the issue...and then also does that encourage people to join...because I’m not from that type of background or I’m not you know from that sort of creed” (CS, BAME, male)

Many participants (white and BAME) made reference to the idea that the organisation had an image problem and looked worse to outsiders than it might be on the inside.

“[The MOD] struggles with changing perception of maybe some people on the outside to come in, as opposed to the people on the inside accepting those people” (Military, white, male)

However, other white participants did not think that this was an issue and saw the organisation as one that people would join if they wished. This sentiment was also echoed by some BAME participants.

“...people will join the Army if that is what they want to do and the extent to which there are people like them is less important” (Military, BAME, Male)

5.3.3.2 Barriers to Retaining a Diverse Workforce

Many females and BAME participants felt there was a failure to recognise specific issues affecting them and that their voices were often not heard in relation to these issues. Many females felt that issues affecting them at different stages of their lives were not fully recognised by the MOD, from the needs of females during pregnancy and maternity leave, to the impact of menopause and reproductive health issues such as hysterectomy, the latter of which are increasingly important in the context of an ageing workforce. Some of these matters were considered taboo, particularly amongst military males who often appeared uncomfortable discussing these issues with personnel and in the research interview context itself. Some BAME participants also felt they were not consulted adequately on issues pertaining to their own experience. In the CS in particular, some described a lack of willingness from those responsible for diversity to collaborate and try different approaches. Relatedly, whilst many participants across the sample welcomed the forums/networks for those with protected characteristics, and Equality and Diversity Advisor (EDA)⁴³ roles, a perception persisted amongst some BAME participants that EDA roles were often filled by white personnel, including at the policy level. This could well be the case due to the small number of BAME personnel within the organisation.

“The other thing I’ll say is the people who work in the Diversity and Inclusion space they’re all white and they have no appreciation for the issues...So we know that if there’s a D&I job they put white people in it, they won’t put anyone of colour” (CS, BAME female)

A lack of visible role models was seen as a recruitment and retention barrier for females and BAME participants, and made it difficult for these participants to aspire to senior roles. This lack of a visible presence of female/BAME personnel at senior management levels had an impact on feelings about progression/future prospects within the organisation (see also Influential Working Relationships, Section 5.7.3).

⁴³ Please note the role is now referred to as an Equality Diversity and Inclusion Advisor.

“And I think it’s also really important for the junior ranks to see senior BAME role models, or senior BAME people who can mentor them to a certain extent. I think we have one other black person in the station. And he came in and I said ‘oh, my goodness, there’s another black person on station’. And he beamed. I could say that because I was more senior” (Regular, BAME, Female)

However, there was also recognition that the demographic makeup of the organisation was changing and there were more females and BAME personnel being employed, even though in many areas of the organisation their numbers remained small. This lack of a critical mass of BAME groups was also seen as a reason as to why those with entrenched views will not change their minds regarding diversity.

Physical fitness levels on joining were seen as a barrier for some military females. Many military females reported training and physical fitness standards as putting some females at a disadvantage compared to their male counterparts.

“I think one of the areas where, the classic area for male/female divide is physical fitness. I think that there needs to be more tailored programming for fitness in phase 1 and phase 2 training because especially with the younger soldiers their bodies have not finished developing and as a result making people do exactly the same training, although it is good in the sense that we have done exactly the same but you are breaking people at different points. I think that can be a disadvantage” (Military, white, female)

Attempts to change standards were often met with resistance from some males (white and BAME), with many expressing concerns about the dilution of standards. However, some white males and females thought that fitness tests were likely to change in the future, because they were causing issues (injuries) for all groups. Nonetheless, it seemed that the perception persisted that any changes to fitness levels were to facilitate the entry of females into close combat roles. There was a sense, observed by the researchers, that this problem was linked to education and communication about why standards were changing, whereby the lack of clear communication about this issue allowed harmful myths to develop and circulate. Similar concerns relating to the changing of standards were observed in the Australian Defence Force in response to female recruitment initiatives (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012). These recruitment initiatives also led to perceptions of ‘special treatment’ and ‘undermining of merit’ (see [REDACTED] highlighting the potential for backlash and the importance of finding ways to engage with personnel to emphasise the added value equity brings to the organisation.

It should be noted that there has been a significant level of investment by Defence in redesigning physical fitness tests. New ‘gender and age free’ physical fitness standards are due to be introduced in the British Army in 2019, which is an important step forward in addressing perceived unfairness.

5.3.3.3 Barriers to Developing a More Inclusive Organisation

Many white military males were resistant to females joining previously male-only units. A number of white male Regulars (longer serving and also newer, younger entrants) rejected the need to allow females into all roles across the military. Many RM and Army white males in particular expressed beliefs that females would not be physically able or in any case motivated to be, *“at the teeth end”* and that their presence would disrupt operational effectiveness (e.g. males would save females over their peers in a combat situation; adjustments to physical standards may cost lives). Some also believed that money spent on the diversity agenda and on recruiting a small number of females into these roles would be better spent elsewhere. Some white male Regulars also resisted what they saw as arbitrarily imposed diversity targets and argued that the expectations normally held for equal representation of all sections of society should not apply to such a unique occupation.

“I completely get the argument that of course an Army should reflect the society but at the same time this isn’t a job that is normal in society you know...this isn’t...you’re not asking people to wake up and do a 9 to 5 office job punching a few numbers at the end of the day as Infantry we are asking people to walk for miles, sleep in a ditch, wake up in the morning and go and kill the enemy and that’s not a normal job. So, I don’t think you can...but that job doesn’t reflect society so why should the people working reflect society...I mean killing nowadays is quite...quite far away from anything else in my opinion” (Military, white, male)

There was a perception amongst many females and BAME participants that budget cuts were having an impact on D&I initiatives across the MOD. The impact of budget cuts meant that initiatives that participants deemed significant drivers for D&I in the military were no longer operational. For example, budgetary constraints made it more difficult to engage in outreach activities with BAME communities, negatively

impacting on military recruitment. In the CS, budgetary constraints were felt to have negatively impacted the running of the D&I networks. CS BAME personnel said that it made it more difficult for the networks to effectively communicate and run events for members and also made it more difficult for members to attend events due to costs. There was also a general sense that working with limited resources had an impact on the amount of effort that could be channelled into such initiatives.

"I think the Army are doing what they can do given the limitations on resource. I think there's a lot more that can be done but ultimately it'll cost money and, and sadly whether we like it or not, that will have a direct impact on, on how much effort you can put behind changing, changing you know, making the Army more inclusive" (Military, BAME, male)

It was also argued that the lack of budget meant that a lot of D&I work remained at Main Building as there is not the resource given to roll it out effectively to other sites e.g.

"...if they do anything in Main Building there's never the ability for it to be videoed or broadcasted across the rest of the sites around the country, bearing in mind...outside of London so it's very, very London centric, so for example the D&I strategy was being launched a couple of months back in London, there was nothing at all across the sites around the country to say you know this is what we're launching, we're here to do, to launch it across every site... (CS, BAME, male)

Stereotyping about what are relevant roles was reported by BAME and female participants as still holding back change. There were fears amongst some BAME personnel that when BAME personnel were employed/recruited they were being channelled into particular stereotypical and less valuable jobs (see Career, Section 5.5.1 for more information).

"When I went to the Race Forum meeting it was quite a large group of about 20 people who were members and I found that there's a danger of...there seemed to be a danger of ethnic minority staff ghettoising themselves in a very narrow niche of the Ministry of Defence's work. Nearly everyone round the table was either working in HR, Diversity or both and I feel as though if you really want to break stereotypes and show them we don't just come here to work for our 'own people' we can actually do mainstream demanding jobs in the Ministry of Defence" (CS, BAME, male)

Separate facilities in the military were perceived by some as posing a barrier to the full integration of females, especially in those units where bonding was seen as particularly important. Some military females described being segregated with other females (regardless of rank) in separate accommodation during training and deployment as isolating and a *"really lonely process"* (see also Belonging and Social Identity, Sections 5.8.2 and 5.8.4). However, many male and female participants perceived separate sleeping and toilet facilities as necessary and desirable. These types of concerns speak to broader questions about whether females should be treated differently and afforded separate facilities, or treated the same and integrated into the same facilities as the males. There is no easy answer here. Whilst segregation often existed to 'protect' females from sexual harassment and provide them with privacy, it was also seen by some to isolate them.

5.3.4 Evaluation of the Change Agenda

Viewpoints on what MOD D&I initiatives have achieved so far ranged from enthusiastic endorsement to disappointment. Endorsements (e.g. 'committed top level leadership', 'sustained policy', the MOD being *"a trailblazer"* regarding gender) were often given by white males who did not seem to have direct experiences underpinning such assured evaluations. Those who expressed disappointment tended to be more senior CS personnel who had joined the MOD more recently and had experiences of working in other organisations. The middle ground was occupied by a more mixed evaluation. A common positive perception was that the MOD is doing 'what it can' but operates with budgetary constraints, and is a slow-moving, bureaucratic institution. The belief was the MOD will achieve its D&I objectives, and many believed that it was fairly close with regards to gender. A less common, and more negative, attitude recognised the cultural barriers in the MOD that are barriers to progress.

"It's no good recruiting the Asian, Muslim, background individual from Bradford, if when he turns up, you just say 'do you know what, we're not interested really in what you've got to say. This is what the RAF does, this is what the RAF says, and you are going to say. We're just going to turn into a clone of everyone else', or the female, or whatever else you want to do" (Military, white, male)

There was a common perception across the sample that female ‘issues’ have gained more traction than BAME ‘issues’. There was broad agreement that females were increasingly represented in senior roles across the MOD and previously male-only roles in the military. Participants also noted how the maternity and flexible working policies had supported many females in their bid to combine their work with their family responsibilities (see Section 5.6.2 for further evidence on perceptions of work-life balance across the sample). However, there was acknowledgement that there was still a lot more to be done with regards to BAME representation and progression in the organisation. Many females identified the changes over the last twenty years that allowed their careers to flourish.

“It feels more normal now to be in the headquarters and to see women of my equivalent rank or senior to me” (Military, white, female)

This is not to say that barriers for females have been broken down completely; evidence of negative treatment and challenges in gaining promotion suggest otherwise (see Sections 5.5.6, 5.6.1 and 5.6.2).

5.3.5 Recommendations for Change

Recommendations made by participants as to what the organisation could do to become more diverse and inclusive centred on actions to increase diversity, and actions to improve the experience and prospects for female and BAME personnel.

5.3.5.1 Actions to Increase Diversity

Outreach to BAME communities and higher education institutions with high proportions of BAME students was suggested, to challenge and change perceptions of Defence careers. Some suggestions for challenging perceptions included targeting BAME communities by emphasising the opportunity for professional careers, pay, skills, travel, education and qualifications (including degrees) as well as emphasising how military values resonate with many BAME community and family values (an approach previously suggested by [REDACTED] with regards to accessing Reservists).

“I think it’s really important to go to these communities and actually show them and tell them that (a) you can have a really successful career in the military, that it does pay well, that you get lots of great skills, that you get to travel the world...can get qualifications as well...Discipline is a massive thing in Asian communities and African communities, they always teach their kids to work incredibly hard and you know...to work as hard as possible and just regardless of how...difficult that is, things like that...taking care of one another, all of these things are all values that are pretty great and are in the military” (Military, BAME, female)

Increasing the presence of BAME personnel at recruitment events was also suggested. There was some recognition that further links with minority communities need to be made to influence attitudes to the military in the longer term. Some participants spoke about initiatives they were involved in that aimed to increase recruitment of BAME individuals through schools/the Cadet Forces. There was some concern that these initiatives are driven by individuals, and often ceased when the person moved on, suggesting that the continuity of such initiatives was based on individual interest rather than institutional priorities. A lack of training in cultural awareness was understood as hampering attempts to build such relationships with these communities. Whilst D&I training focused on harassment and unconscious bias, participants felt that they were not sufficiently taught about different cultures, which left some white males in particular feeling ignorant and uncertain when reaching out to minority communities. Looking to other organisations, the Fire Service used social media and media strategies specifically designed for BAME communities as well as direct engagement with communities to aid recruitment, resulting in an increase in applications from ethnic minority groups⁴⁴.

Some participants in the CS suggested that the way the organisation reproduces itself needs to be challenged, thus requiring radical change. Some white and BAME CS participants saw the organisation as tending to recruit and promote in its own image, closing ranks when challenged and reproducing discriminatory behaviours due to deference for the hierarchical system. Those making such comments noted

⁴⁴ <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/fire-service-ditching-outdated-image-major-diversity-drive>

the difficulties in achieving D&I change. Some suggested that action would need to be taken by those outside of the hierarchical structure and external to the MOD, perhaps even Ministers, to really effect change.

5.3.5.2 Actions to Improve the Organisation for Females and BAME Personnel

Suggestions for improving D&I training were made across the sample. Some participants recommended improvements to D&I training, especially for those in more senior positions. With regard to annual D&I training, the meaningful inclusion of the voices of females and minorities in training and a focus on understanding the effect of certain behaviours were specific suggestions put forward for improvement. Reference was made to the drawbacks of online delivery of CS D&I training. There were some comments that this did not allow for the depth of discussion and understanding that face-to-face training could provide, suggesting that face-to-face training would allow for meaningful engagement as well as providing a networking opportunity. There was also evidence and suggestions that cultural awareness training might improve understanding of different cultures, and support for the idea from the study data that it was necessary. Some white male participants said they were uncomfortable mixing with different cultural groups. For some, a fear of upsetting others, saying the wrong things or feeling ignorant about their background, contributed to this unease. Participants in the Regulars (white and BAME) spoke positively about informal cultural awareness activities where F&C BAME personnel and those from minority religious groups were able to share aspects of their culture and/or religion and generally increase the cultural awareness of their peers.

Communication of D&I issues was recommended as needing review, with an increased focus on selling the message that diversity is not just about giving opportunities to those from minority groups. Some suggested that personnel would be more receptive to messages of inclusivity if they were framed in terms of operational effectiveness and not in terms of 'diversity for diversity's sake'. This could be a way of dealing with resistance. Making clearer the historical contribution of BAME staff to the MOD was also mentioned as important.

Improving mechanisms for recognising and utilising the talent and skills of those already in the MOD was recommended by females across the sample and Reservists. There was a sense amongst many Reservists and females across the sample that the full range of their skills was not recognised nor made use of by the MOD. This was seen to be a loss to the organisation, since many in these groups felt they could offer more, which may lead to greater job fulfilment. This could also help to reiterate to white males that the MOD's focus on D&I does not reduce their opportunity to compete for promotions and progression. In addition, it could also allow the organisation to benefit from increased engagement from existing female and BAME personnel, with the potential to increase the number in more senior roles.

Improvements to the complaints process was suggested by some participants, especially those who had gone through the complaints process or those who had experienced discrimination. Some suggested the complaints procedure needed to be more efficient and less onerous for complainants. Having the opportunity to raise concerns around treatment confidentially was also mentioned.

"I think we need to do a lot more of nip things in the bud...I know that they have these sort of 'helpers', you know, they have people, they're confidential people that you can go to if you think you're being bullied or harassed. And I think my, my understanding is those people have no, they have no power, so you know then, you know, it's a toothless tiger" (CS, BAME, female)

The MOD could benefit from drawing on best practice within other organisations to address some of these issues. As outlined by [REDACTED], the Trades Union Congress recommends that complex harassment cases are managed by an independent investigator with a 28-day target within which the complaint should be dealt with. Participants in the present study also recommended greater consequences for discriminatory behaviour, especially for those at senior levels, but more generally, some suggested that these behaviours should be held to account.

Ensure military females (especially Other Ranks (OR)) are adequately included in communication and bonding activities. Separate accommodation, although often necessary (and something that many females wanted to retain), was discussed by some military personnel as problematic for team bonding and communication. There should be further assessment of what can be done to mitigate against the sense of isolation that this type of segregation can result in.

Career development and progression pathways were noted by some military females with children as needing to change. Some females suggested changes to the commission structure, since maternity leave disadvantaged females, whilst others focused more broadly on the restructuring of the career path so females/mothers are not disadvantaged. Providing tailored support in a unit, in addition to the central programmes currently being offered, would be more effective in helping females' career progression. Other improvements related to childcare, such as subsidised or standardised nursery facilities, were also recommended.

Organisational Change - Key Messages and Actions

- There was a widespread belief that the MOD has changed positively with regards to D&I. This change was attributed to multiple factors, such as changing societal expectations about equality, generational change, MOD policies and buy-in from senior leaders. However, there was a sizable population of military personnel (mostly white males, but not exclusively) who were resistant to the prospect of more D&I-related change in the MOD. Understanding why people may feel excluded or unable to utilise the systems of redress was noticeably limited amongst this population and is an aspect that D&I training needs to address. Improving the messages around D&I would go some way to help personnel understand why change is needed. For example, by further emphasising the benefits of increased D&I for all personnel in that it creates an organisation that can better support the participation of a wider range of individuals from different backgrounds and that this can aid the achievement of organisational goals.
- Whilst there was a sense that societal change was a driver for change within the organisation, there was also acknowledgement that racist and sexist attitudes existed in society, which were also echoed within the organisation. This challenges the idea that the younger generation will automatically bring change to the organisation organically, and suggests that Defence needs to continue to take sustained action and invest resource to effect change.
- Communications from senior leadership with genuine 'buy in' was appreciated and seen as central in a hierarchical organisation such as the MOD. Whilst good practice in terms of managing and supporting personnel was identified, so were lapses and poor practice. Redress in this aspect may be accessible relatively quickly by drawing out the lessons from good practices and rolling these out consistently across the organisation.
- Better communication about the benefits of diversity for all personnel across the MOD was seen as an important driver for diversity, as well as one that could tackle resistance to the diversity agenda. The historic and continued contribution of BAME personnel to the MOD was suggested as a means to communicate this. The MOD already commemorates 'Black History Month' in an effort to raise the profile of black figures in its social history, but more could be done beyond an annual public-facing series of events to raise such profiles. In addition, the MOD should look to increase opportunities for personnel less familiar with some minority communities and religions to gain greater cultural competency and feel more at ease interacting with those who are different to them.
- A feeling of a lack of authenticity in D&I policies that sought to change the MOD into a more diverse and inclusive workplace was evident across the sample. This emerged from the perceived lack of BAME representation at senior levels, and also amongst leadership creating D&I initiatives. Thus there is a clear sense of what good senior leadership looks like with respect to D&I, and whilst more females are involved in policy making at that level, the same needs to be achieved for BAME personnel. However, the inclusion of female and BAME voices from the lower echelons of the organisation clearly is important also, otherwise policies may not connect to the strata where they are most likely to be felt.
- Opening up combat roles to females was met with mixed reactions by participants in the military. Females were positive about these changes, seeing it as an important signal of inclusion. However, many white male Regulars expressed concern that these changes may also encourage the imposition of quotas and targets, which they were expressly against. Again, communication about quotas and targets and stronger messaging about the benefits of having females in these roles is needed to dispel these anxieties.

- Policy changes, such as those related to maternity and flexible working, were understood to have opened up the career landscape to females. However, evidence suggests that these policies were not being consistently implemented. This suggests the need to ensure policies are implemented fairly across Defence. This is particularly pertinent given the Armed Forces (Flexible Working) Act 2018 which is due to come into effect in April 2019.⁴⁵ This act will enable Regular serving personnel to apply to reduce their hours or limit the amount of time they are away from their home base for a set number of days per year.
- Whilst some policies have enhanced progression for females, the same cannot be said for BAME participants across the sample. This suggests that minority personnel should be consulted about policy decisions that impact them and consideration given to how they can be implemented more effectively.
- D&I training was perceived to be influential in changing attitudes and behaviours, but it was often met with little enthusiasm and the medium of delivery compounded this. Some suggestions from participants for improving training included making it more interactive and providing more opportunities for personnel to ask questions and explore scenarios. Further to this, it is suggested that D&I should be mainstreamed within all leadership training. Greater emphasis should be placed on values early on induction/training making sure that instructors in Phase 1, in particular, are bought into D&I and act as role models so that a very clear and positive message is relayed from the start.
- There was a sense from some (mainly white males) that the MOD's focus on D&I could lead to career advantages for females and BAME personnel and detract from the opportunities for personnel who do not qualify for special initiatives, either due to their demographic profile or their career stage. Consideration should be given to how there could be more of a focus on the career development of these individuals so they are properly utilised and do not feel 'left behind' by a focus on D&I.
- Some BAME participants said there was a view within BAME communities that the MOD was not associated with high status professional careers or, due to its existing demographic profile, not considered a desirable employer for BAME personnel. Further outreach activities should be conducted at locations where there are high numbers of BAME people (including some higher educational establishments). The range of career opportunities within the military and the CS, including the chance to gain professional qualifications, should be highlighted to broaden the likely appeal of the MOD.

5.4 Joining and Early Experiences

This theme covers the participant employment journey from attraction to the organisation, through recruitment, to on-boarding and initial training.

This theme comprises the following sub-themes:

- Reasons for Joining.
- Views of Others about Joining.
- Recruitment and Selection Processes.
- On-boarding and Initial Training.
- Expectations versus Reality.

Points to note: Data came primarily from semi-structured interview questions, which specifically asked why participants joined, whether their gender/ethnicity played any part in this decision, how supportive their family and friends were, what they expected the organisation to be like, and how their expectations compared with reality. Participants were not asked directly about recruitment processes or initial training but many referred to these experiences during the interview.

⁴⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/2/contents/enacted/data.htm>

Synopsis

Family connections to, or prior experience of, the AF strongly influenced joining. However, parents and family members were not always supportive. Asian parents of military participants in particular were far less supportive of (often against) their children joining the AF citing concerns over racism or religious tensions. Female Regular serving personnel had experienced paternal concern from fathers with prior military experience about isolation and negative treatment of females in particular Services/branches/trades. Mothers of Regular serving personnel were said to be concerned about their son/daughter's physical safety. CS BAME participants (especially those from Muslim faiths) also raised concerns around personal security and/or stigma of working for the MOD and said they often chose not to disclose to extended family (particularly those living overseas) who they worked for.

Frustrations with the recruitment and selection process were evident with some females and BAME participants (particularly those in the CS) viewing job adverts and selection interviews as exclusionary or discriminatory towards them. BAME participants (particularly those not born in the UK or with family overseas) had negative views on the vetting/security clearance process, viewing it as lengthy and intrusive. They often felt that the same level of scrutiny was not applied to their white counterparts.

Once within the organisation, adjusting to the environment was a particular challenge for BAME participants. In the CS, a perceived lack of corporate induction, amongst other factors, meant they sometimes struggled to adapt. The challenges were greater for F&C BAME who had to adjust to the UK culture as well as the Defence environment. The military training environment was reported to be particularly difficult for minority groups up to at least seven years ago with abuses of power and unfair treatment from instructors alluded to. (No participants had been through training within the last seven years.)

5.4.1 Reasons for Joining

Gender differences were apparent in attraction to the organisation. CS and Reservist females were more likely than their male counterparts to make decisions about joining based on their ability to achieve family stability. Many CS females said that they joined the MOD because it was their largest local employer, it was close to home and for many it allowed them to balance their work and family life. Similarly, female Reservists spoke of leaving Regular Service to join the Reserve Force on starting a family because of the challenges of managing their work and family life. For many, the Reserve Service provided them with the stability that Regular Service could not.

"I made a conscious decision to return to Service as a Reservist, on Full-Time Reserve Service, because it allowed me to work in a single location without any requirement to deploy. It allowed me to offer some stability to the children, because my husband is a serving member of the [Service] as well" (Military, white, female)

Ethnicity differences in attraction to the organisation were also found. CS BAME participants were more likely than their white peers to be attracted to the organisation because of its reputation and prestige. This adds support to the work of [REDACTED] who also found that prestige and status were important in attracting black personnel to the Reserve Forces.

"I was very attracted to the sort of reputation of the MOD, I knew it was a heavyweight department" (CS, BAME, female)

"It's an honour...to be part of...such a...reputable...organisation...it's the Ministry of Defence, it's the Queen's Ministry of Defence so it's an honour so I feel so proud" (CS, BAME, male)

F&C BAME participants were more likely than others to have been attracted to the AF by a specific recruitment campaign in their home country. A military career was presented (and many perceived it) as an opportunity to better themselves and/or as a preferable alternative employment option to what was available in their home country.

"Joining the British Army at the time looked much more attractive than working from 8 'til midnight and normally earning about 30 quid a day, you know, back home" (Military, BAME, male)

Most F&C BAME participants recognised that joining the AF presented itself as a chance for social and economic mobility. However, this rationale was sometimes viewed negatively by their white counterparts who saw them as being less committed to the organisation. The reasons given by UK BAME participants for joining the AF were more akin to those of white participants (as outlined below).

Most other differences related to organisational attraction were a function of Whole Force component (i.e. Regular, Reservist or CS) rather than gender or ethnicity. Reasons cited for joining the AF are heavily supported by other research studies suggesting that these factors have changed very little over time. Regular serving personnel typically joined for the challenge, adventure, and opportunity to travel or ‘do something different’ (as supported by the Recruit Trainee Survey (RTS) Annual Report, 2017/18; the Officer Cadet Survey (OCS), 2017/18; and Swain, 2015). Many reported that they had wanted to join from a young age and/or had joined to undertake a specific job. In comparison with Regulars, Reservists typically joined because: they wanted to serve but did not want to commit themselves to Regular Service (or felt they were ‘not good enough’ to be a Regular); treated the Reserve Forces as a realistic job preview for the Regulars; joined for continuation of Regular Service after leaving; or, left the Regulars and joined the Reserve Forces to achieve better family stability. These findings also echo prior research studies. [REDACTED] reported ex-Regulars joining the Reserve Forces to enable continuous Service and [REDACTED] found that some Reservists joined as a preview before joining the Regulars and/or as a more suitable alternative for those with family responsibilities. Interestingly, the reasons provided here do not completely align with the Tri-Service Reserves Continuous Attitude Survey (2018) results, which state that the top five reasons for joining the Reserves are: ‘to serve my country’, ‘for the challenge’, ‘personal development’, ‘for the excitement and adventure’, and ‘to make a difference/do something worthwhile’. This may be a product of the different types of commitment in the Reserve Forces (i.e. volunteer Reservists, Regular Reservist, Full Time Reserve Service) and variability by group in reasons for joining. This highlights the importance of not treating Reservists as a homogenous group when designing recruitment campaigns.

Compared with the military, less is known from research about why CS personnel join. Findings from this study show that CS career decisions were divided into those who had made informed decisions to join and those who had ‘fallen into it’. The former either did so based on the opportunities for career progression or their personal circumstances. Those who made career-focused decisions were far more likely to have been attracted by a particular role as opposed to working for the MOD per se. Participants had often transitioned from other Government departments to progress their career (due to limited opportunities in the exiting organisation). Some participants were on CS Fast Stream or the MOD Means of Identifying Internal Talent (MIDIT) scheme. A number of participants on the CS Fast Stream actively chose their placement in the MOD because of an interest in the department. However, a large proportion of the CS sample had not given a great deal of thought to joining the MOD prior to doing so.

“The attraction was that it was local, most of my friends and family were there. I didn’t really think any broader at the time, in terms of career, it’s turned into that since...” (CS, BAME, female)

Family connections to, and prior experience of, the organisation were influential factors in attracting people regardless of gender/ethnicity. The influence of family on young people’s lives is well established. Compared with previous generations, parents are more influential in their children’s lives and involved in decision making as acknowledged by the phrase ‘helicopter parent’ (Merriman, 2015), which is often used to describe this phenomenon. Data from the RTS (2017/18) and OCS (2017/18) both report friends/family who have served as the most common source of information about the AF for those joining. This is a finding that has remained constant over time. In this study, having family/friends that had served or were serving or prior military-type experience (such as University Officers’ Training Corps and/or the Cadets) were influential sources of information. This impact of family was also reflected in the CS sample, particularly for those who joined the organisation at a junior grade (i.e. following in the footsteps of relatives/friends) and/or lived in an area where the MOD was a large, local employer.

The influence of gender and ethnicity on joining was invisible for white male participants. The vast majority of white males answered “no” when asked whether their gender or ethnicity played any part in their decision to join the organisation. Some were surprised by the question and immediately spoke about females/ethnic minority personnel, indicating that they did not see the question as applicable to them. Some white males acknowledged that they did not face concerns about fitting in on joining because they fitted the “mould”. In comparison, some white military females were concerned about how their male counterparts might perceive

them, and whether they would be accepted into the organisation, whilst BAME participants mentioned similar concerns about fitting in and worries over racism.

5.4.2 Views of Others about Joining

Reactions and support from family and friends were mixed and varied by AF and CS; parents of CS being the least concerned. Initial reactions from family members to their son/daughter joining the AF were mixed; some parents were very supportive, others were initially “shocked” or concerned. Those joining as OR rather than Officers were sometimes considered to be ‘aiming too low’ by family and friends with middle class backgrounds. Whilst for some, across the sample, more general negative perceptions of the military persisted.

“[As stated by the parent of one participant] Only thick people join the Armed Forces” (Military, white, female)

Within the military, the narrative around family, in particular parents, was strong. Despite initial (sometimes very negative) reactions, the overwhelming narrative in this sub-theme was one of familial pride of loved ones serving. Regular personnel often discussed their decision to join with family members in a way that was not apparent in the CS sample. This is perhaps not surprising as the CS is not vocational in the same way. Within the CS sample, family were often described as being “fine” about the job or “quite happy” or “supportive”. There were fewer examples of family members being negative about a decision to join the MOD CS compared with the AF. Family and friends’ perceptions of the CS were that it was a “stable” or “secure” job. A small but persistent minority thought that their family member was going to be working as a “spy”, indicating a degree of mystery (or a lack of understanding) about the organisation. There was a significant minority of individuals across the sample who did not tell their family they were joining until after they had been selected due to concerns over not being selected. The influence of friends was weaker than that of family across the sample. However, when friends were mentioned it was typically by the CS sample and specifically in relation to friends who had moral objections to them working in a Defence organisation. With regards to the military, friends were least influential for those who had joined the AF at a young age and many of these individuals talked about no longer being in contact with those friends, with them having been replaced by new friendships within the military.

Parents of some Asian military participants were perceived to be far less supportive of their children joining the AF, compared with the rest of the sample. Research into the career choices made by young people suggests that influential others (especially parents, peers and community) are particularly important in influencing career decisions amongst BAME populations (Hodkinson, 2008). This is supported here with Asian participants reporting that their parents in particular had not viewed the military as a “professional career”. These parents had career aspirations for their children to become dentists, doctors, lawyers or accountants and perceived them to be “throwing away” their education to join the military. Initial reactions from some Muslim parents were strong, emotional and anti-military: “So you want to go around the world killing Muslims”. This sentiment was echoed in a series of interviews with British Muslims serving in the UK Army on BBC Radio 4 (2017)⁴⁶, who reported facing similar reactions from their family on joining. These interviewees described how this was also made more difficult by the fact that the last two military campaigns have taken place in predominantly Muslim countries and cited this as the main reason for Muslims not joining the Army. In the present study, a parental concern around racism, and active dissuasion of their son/daughter joining, was evident. That said, in most cases (though not all) participants reported that once parents became used to the idea, and/or more informed about the military, they became less averse and many were proud of their son/daughter’s career choice. However, this does reassert that the military may well be missing out on recruiting those from minority backgrounds who are dissuaded by family early on, and who are unable and/or unwilling to push against this parental barrier.

Safety and security were more prominent in the narrative of CS BAME personnel and Regular serving participant’s mothers who were fearful of them joining. Concerns around personal security were evident in the CS BAME sample, which were not apparent in other CS groups. Some CS BAME participants mentioned close relatives being concerned for their safety or concerned that they would choose to work for the UK military due to current or historic geopolitical reasons. A number of participants said that they did not

⁴⁶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08k1xv4>. Accessed on the 25 September 2018.

disclose where they worked to extended family (especially those who lived abroad) or people they did not know because of security concerns and fears around how people might receive the news. This was particularly the case for participants with strong (often Muslim) religious connections.

“I’m just quite security conscious, because I’m a Muslim as well so I’m um you know, in a way you’re actually creating more problems for yourself if you’re a Muslim and you work for the MOD and you go around publicising it” (CS, BAME, female)

The disadvantage for the organisation is that by keeping where they work a secret they are not able to be champions or advocates for the MOD, which is particularly important in encouraging others, like themselves, to join the organisation.

Regular serving participants reported their mothers as being fearful for their safety. Mothers worried the most about their son/daughter joining the AF, irrespective of ethnicity. Safety concerns related to fears over deployments, which often stemmed from reports parents had seen in the media. The families of participants who had joined during times of conflict (namely Iraq and Afghanistan) were particularly concerned.

“I think my mum had her concerns particularly at that point was when Iraq and Afghanistan were very much in the news...” (Military, white, female)

Parents of Reservists were reported to be less concerned by this, by the nature of their voluntary commitment.

“...to be fair to my mum if I asked her she would be quite happy I was a Reservist rather than a Regular” (Military, white, male)

Fathers with prior military experience were said to be more concerned about their daughters (than sons) serving. Families with military connections were often reported as being less concerned and more supportive of their son/daughter joining because of their knowledge of the environment. The exception to this was fathers (of white daughters) who had served, or were currently serving; these participants said that their fathers were more apprehensive about them joining.

“My dad said ‘you’ll join the Army over my dead body’” (Military, white, female)

A number of white females talked about how their father had either tried to prevent them from joining altogether or guided them away from joining a certain Service/branch/trade.

“...my dad told me not to be an engineer cause I wouldn’t enjoy it... he said you’ll be very isolated as a woman” (Military, white, female)

This was often based on perceptions of negative treatment or isolation of women in some areas. In particular, the Army was viewed as a less suitable environment for females.

This presents a barrier to change in that females may be discouraged from joining altogether or be guided into specific parts of the organisation by people whose experience of the AF might not be recent and, therefore, accurate. It also reinforces the funnelling of females into certain branches/roles that are perhaps already traditionally populated by females and may be less likely to enable career progression (see Career, Section 5.5.1). This paternal experience also persists once within the organisation for females working under patriarchal management styles with the ‘boss’ as a father figure further impacting their career pathways (see Section on Organisational Culture, Section 5.9).

Irrespective of gender and ethnicity, age on signing up to the AF was reported to influence how parents felt about their son/daughter joining. The parents of those who joined as teenagers (especially where they had to consent to them joining) were said to be particularly reluctant about them joining. Interestingly though, whilst a challenge to joining, being younger (those who were teenagers or in their very early twenties) in training was found to be an advantage for integration into the AF. Participants who were older when they joined said that they found it harder to ‘fit in’ because they were often at a different stage in life and had less in common with younger recruits.

5.4.3 Recruitment and Selection Processes

CS BAME participants felt that informal recruitment practices sometimes precluded diversity. A few CS BAME participants suggested that the recruitment process itself could be limiting opportunities for minority groups, especially on smaller sites in more rural locations. Although opportunities were formally advertised (more so

in recent years), news of vacancies were also perceived to be spread through word of mouth and via existing staff using their personal networks to generate applications for entry level positions, often leading the organisation to essentially ‘reproduce itself’ in the same image.

“Well I think the main problem really is a question of people recruiting from a known pool. People that they already know because it makes it easier for them...and that’s why I talked about unconscious bias. It is not really that someone is going around saying ‘I don’t want the Asian that lived in [XXX] down here to work’, no but it’s about ‘okay we need a secretary’, just for example and then they say ‘who do you know?’. This one says ‘oh I know someone who works at Tesco’s and this and this....so then from that known pool’ (CS, BAME, male)

There was widespread dissatisfaction with the recruitment processes which were cited as being “slow” and “badly managed”. BAME and Army Reservist participants were most dissatisfied with this. Across the sample, participants spoke of paperwork going missing (often in relation to vetting processes), processes having to be repeated or a general lack of information during the recruitment phase. Army Reservists who had joined in the last five years (or had friends in the process of joining) commented more negatively on their experiences than those who had joined more than five years ago. Army participants directly blamed the service provider and the lack of “human contact” in the new process for their negative experience. Army Reservists who had joined prior to changes in the recruitment process appeared to have had a smoother transition. The challenges presented by the current Army recruitment process are not new and are well known/understood by the Army (e.g. see [REDACTED]).

Job adverts and selection interviews were sometimes viewed as exclusionary or discriminatory by BAME participants and white females. Passing medical examinations for the military appeared to be a greater blocker for females than males. Examples were given where females had failed for seemingly insignificant reasons that were later over-ruled when challenged, such as issues with eyesight. Inappropriate questions about family plans (asked within the last five years) and a lack of diversity on CS interview panels were also noted by females and BAME personnel respectively. BAME participants commented on how ‘off-putting’ it was to be faced with an all-white interview panel, which made them question whether they would fit in to the organisation from the outset. The language and acronyms used in some CS job adverts were felt by minority groups to be exclusionary as they were viewed as being more likely to attract candidates who already ‘fit’ the environment (such as ex-military, males) rather than attracting a more diverse pool. Although no longer being used by the CS, problems with the previous competency-based interviewing approach were also noted as either not being followed correctly or unlikely to get the best range of people to select from. Importantly, CS BAME participants felt that they did not always get the opportunity to undertake temporary promotions (or were less likely to be on the CS Fast Stream or MIDIT scheme) and, therefore, found it more challenging to show competence at the next level up to gain promotion. The literature further indicates that this disadvantage of BAME personnel occurs long before joining the organisation and starts from a young age. For example, a study by Weller and Breugel (2009) found that white, middle-class families were much more likely than others to structure their children’s social time with the aim of increasing their social networks and providing further educational opportunities. This suggests that from an early age BAME personnel (and also working class personnel) are disadvantaged when competing against white middle-class counterparts who have potentially had opportunities to allow them to develop important skills (learning leadership skills through the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, for example) which put them ahead.

The vetting/security clearance process was viewed negatively by BAME participants (particularly those not born in the UK or with family overseas) who saw it as lengthy and intrusive. BAME participants spoke extensively about their dissatisfaction with the vetting process. This issue is well understood by the MOD and it is acknowledged that the vetting process takes longer for those who have lived overseas. However, even those BAME personnel born in the UK (or those who had lived in the UK for some time) reported facing lengthy delays in acquiring clearances due to the need to find information out from parents who were born overseas. Many participants said that the process made them feel like “an outsider”. BAME participants felt that the process discriminated against them, compared with their white peers, who they perceived as being treated differently.

“They apply the policies towards BAME people to the letter, and then when it comes to non-BAME people, Caucasian, they just like let certain things slide” (CS, BAME, male)

Whilst experienced more readily by BAME participants this issue affected others too. Some white CS participants who transferred in from other government departments (and were already security cleared)

spoke of lengthy security clearance transfer times. This suggests that the vetting process poses a general problem for all but is further compounded by issues of not being born in the UK or having family overseas, thus impacting BAME personnel to a greater extent.

5.4.4 On-Boarding and Initial Training

Lack of organisational support on joining, including a corporate induction, was a challenge for CS BAME participants. Compared with any other group, CS BAME participants commented far more readily about the lack of help and support when joining the organisation as a new starter. Many CS BAME participants talked about being “*left to their own devices*” on joining the organisation because the lengthy recruitment process rarely allowed for a handover from the previous incumbent. Colleagues were sometimes, but not always, helpful.

“One of my colleagues who was at the same level as me and working at the same team and who I thought would help me but she was very adamant in her view that I’m not here to coach you or support you” (CS, BAME, male)

There was acknowledgment that less support was acceptable for some grades (those more senior) but should not be expected of all. Lack of support on joining was made more challenging due to the absence of a corporate induction, which some expected, but did not receive. This could be problematic on a number of levels because induction processes have been identified as important to the development of workplace belonging (CIPD, 2018).

The number of acronyms also proved to be an extra barrier to those with no prior Defence knowledge/experience.

The exception to the above was those who joined MIDIT or Fast Stream schemes. These individuals spoke of joining and undertaking familiarisation courses to experience different aspects of the organisation over a number of weeks. However, many thought these opportunities were no longer offered because of “*funding constraints*”.

“We used to go out on ships, we went in submarines, we went on tanks, we went on planes, and that was really important to give me that feeling of belonging and knowing what Civil Servants are there to do” (CS, BAME, female)

F&C BAME participants reported difficulties with adjusting to the UK culture including a much colder climate, different customs around greeting people and eating different types of food. Personnel who had not been to the UK or lived in the country before joining the organisation were most negatively impacted by this.

“We came over in February so it was freezing cold...and even the food was different from back home...it was a massive culture shock” (Military, BAME, male)

Language barriers, British ‘slang’ terminology, new foods and different customs around eye contact and challenging elders/seniors made navigating the organisation a challenge for F&C BAME. Some F&C BAME participants also found it difficult adapting to working alongside females because in their own culture females are not treated as equals.

“...‘You shouldn’t be talking to me like that, you’re getting my back up.’[Participant reflecting on his attitude towards a female colleague] But she wasn’t doing anything wrong more than the guy was doing” (Military, BAME, male)

Compared with others, BAME Regulars (particularly F&C BAME) were more likely to comment on receiving negative treatment from others during training (pre 2011). Sometimes this poor treatment was acknowledged (even by a minority of white participants) to come from peers and was often based on them being visibly different to their white counterparts.

*“One guy in my platoon, so he was sort of Maldivian, so he looks Indian basically, so he got so much taken the p*** out of for this...” (Military, white, male)*

However, most negative treatment that BAME participants reported came from instructional staff. This included examples of feeling singled out, direct racism or not feeling able to do “*anything right*”. Many felt that they were treated more harshly than their white counterparts.

“...And if they have to punish us, they punish us badly than the Caucasian guy” (Military, BAME, male)

From what participants said, the implication is that much of this negative treatment was based on miscommunication or misunderstandings resulting from cultural differences (such as BAME personnel not making eye contact with instructors when being addressed), as well as stereotyping on the part of instructors (such as, assuming that Black personnel would not want to undertake swimming lessons). However, it should be noted that most participants had not been through basic military training in the last seven years so it is not possible to know whether this problem is historic or still persists. It should be noted that data from the RTS (2017/18) reports that the vast majority of recruits were treated fairly by staff during basic training, which they viewed to be conducted without racial harassment. However, it should also be noted that the breakdown by gender and ethnicity is not reported and often those who leave the training environment early do not always complete the survey.

Sexual relationships between female recruits and male instructors during military training were mentioned negatively by male and female participants who witnessed/suspected such behaviour. A strong minority of military females cited numerous examples of their male instructors and female peers being involved in relationships during training⁴⁷. Most referred to this negatively and felt it was an abuse of power (on the part of instructors) over individuals in a vulnerable situation. Moreover, some participants viewed their female peers negatively for entering into these relationships. A few military male participants commented on this issue of relationships between female recruits and instructors but spoke in terms of fairness rather than duty of care. Males raised concerns about females receiving more favourable treatment in training compared with them because of these relationships. However, this was often spoken of in an abstract way and males did not always have specific examples of when female recruits had been given an advantage.

Sexual relationships between recruits and instructors are forbidden in military training, as outlined in policy. This is also true in the wider military environment with relationships between the Chain of Command and subordinates forbidden. However, as indicated by the timeline (see Figure 2 and in Appendix I) this does not mean they do not occur. In October 2017, a RN nuclear submarine Commander was removed from his vessel amid claims of an *“inappropriate relationship”* with a subordinate. Prior to this in 2014 a female Commander was also removed for her ship over an alleged affair with a subordinate. However, as noted previously, most participants had not been through basic military training in the last seven years so it is not possible to know whether this problem is historic or still persists.

BAME participants and females often alluded to a lack of diversity in the training environment. Often they recounted the number of females or BAME personnel in their Troop etc. BAME participants in particular were far more likely than their white counterparts to comment on whether they felt they *“blend[ed] in”* or *“integrated”* into the team. Some F&C BAME acknowledged that it was easier to integrate into training if there were a number of them starting at the same time so they had support. In a few cases, (though not in the last 10 years) BAME participants commented that some of their white peers had never previously met someone who was BAME.

“Basic training there was people there that hadn’t met black people before” (Military, BAME, female)

Irrespective of gender and ethnicity, military training was often described as a steep learning curve, but prior military experience and time of year made a difference. Most military personnel found initial training incredibly hard or *“intense”* but a huge achievement upon completion. Time of year was mentioned by some, with those completing training in winter months citing the cold weather as an additional challenge. Participants who had Cadet or Reservist experience or were commissioning from the ranks acknowledged the advantage this afforded in terms of expectation management. A few BAME participants who had commissioned from the ranks said that this experience had been invaluable to them and they questioned whether they would have commissioned without this prior exposure. This perhaps suggests a need for extra support for some groups prior to entering training.

Delays in training caused by injury or waiting for courses to become available were key features of people’s narrative across the sample. Non-freezing cold injuries (a well-known issue in Defence) were a particular concern for Black participants going through military training as African-Caribbean/Pacific-Islanders are

⁴⁷ There was no suggestion that the female recruits were under the age of consent.

known to be at higher risk of cold injury compared with others (Burgess and Macfarlane, 2009). Participants said that personnel in general though were reluctant to report injuries because they did not want to delay their military training and then join a new group, often because they had made good friends. This is supported by findings in the RTS (2017/18), which highlight this as the most frequently cited reason for recruits not reporting an illness/injury. In this study the forming of strong friendships was an important feature across all military personnel, with many reporting that they still keep in close contact with friends made during training.

Older recruits found initial training more of a challenge than younger recruits. Recruits who joined in their mid-twenties, or older, found it hard to bond with younger recruits who they felt they had less in common with. The biggest difficulty for this cohort was being “*treated like a child*”, not being able to ask questions to staff and just accepting orders. Participants who said they did ask questions said they were often viewed as insubordinate or difficult.

5.4.5 Expectations versus Reality

Across the sample and irrespective of gender and ethnicity, expectations about Defence were either non-existent or based on limited, or incorrect, information. Many CS participants said that they had “*no preconceptions*” about the organisation before they joined. This was mirrored in the Regular sample who often said that they were “*young and naïve*” when they joined the Services and did not really know what to expect. Within the military, expectations were mostly formed from what participants had seen in the media, AF advertising, films, and family and friends. Military personnel who had prior experiences of the AF (such as a family member who served, Cadet experience or prior Regular Service for those in the Reserve Forces) were more likely to say that they knew what to expect before they joined and, in many cases, reality lived up to expectations. However it should be noted that the challenge of accurately recalling expectations was acknowledged by some who had served/worked for the MOD for a number of years.

F&C BAME participant’s expectations were often based on their experiences of their own countries’ militaries, which were typically very different to their experiences of the British AF. In some cases it was not until they entered into training that they realised their preconceived ideas were incorrect.

“In [African country] [military personnel] are feared rather than they are meant to be protectors of a land....So I thought they were kind of little monsters until I joined I realised things are different everywhere you go” (Military, BAME, male)

Together with information cited previously this suggests that F&C BAME personnel may be less well prepared for training or have expectations that do not match reality.

Concerns around organisational fit were raised primarily by females, BAME participants and those from a lower socio-economic background. Subtle differences were noted for Regular BAME participants compared with CS BAME. Regular BAME participants reported expectations of racist behaviour before they joined. This concern has been reported in other research ([REDACTED]; Ishaq and Hussain, 2002). However, as previously noted many participants had not recently joined the AF so it is not possible to say with confidence that this issue persists. Unlike military BAME, CS BAME reported concerns about whether they would be accepted into a predominantly white organisation but did not specifically mention fear of direct racism. Military females, and a homosexual white military male, had concerns about joining a macho culture. Specifically, they reported being worried about meeting the physical fitness standards of the military (particularly the Army) before they joined. The issues of ethnicity and gender were multiplied for BAME females, with a couple stating that they actually doubted whether the MOD would even consider them for the job because of being at odds with the stereotype. However, gender and ethnicity were not the only important factors with regards to fitting in. Concerns were raised across the sample about not fitting in due to their socio-economic background. Some participants felt that they did not go to the ‘right’ school or have the ‘right’ accent to fit in. A level of elitism within the organisation was noted which made it difficult for those who did not have the ‘right’ background to feel like they fit or could progress.

In reality, the concerns raised by female and BAME participants around fitness standards and racism were largely (but not always) unfounded. For many BAME military females the fitness standards proved not to be as high as anticipated. Generally, fears of overt racism for BAME Regular personnel were unproven. A minority of incidents were noted where racist behaviour was experienced. Most (but not all) of these incidents did not happen in recent years.

“Proper racism I would say once or twice and in them days again it was a case of take it on the chin and carry on” (Military, BAME, male)

There were mixed views as to whether expectations of the organisation had lived up to reality. Some participants said that the organisation had exceeded their expectations whilst others said it met their expectations in some ways, but not in others. The importance of having a realistic job preview to managing expectations is well established. Regular serving personnel who had joined some time ago were the least likely to say that the organisation was currently meeting their expectations and considered that it had changed for the worse. This was often cited as being due to budget cuts and stretched resourcing meaning that opportunities for travel (particularly noted by RN participants) and adventure training were fewer. This was the reverse of Reservists who suggested that the Reserve Force had improved over time and was now a more professional organisation. However, a lack of awareness of the opportunities available in the Reserve Forces was also evident, even from those who had prior Service (as also found by [REDACTED]).

“I thought that there was opportunities out there in the Reserves, I didn’t really know what the opportunities were and I still think there’s probably a huge lack of awareness about what opportunities are out there in the Reserves, even amongst Regulars...” (Military, white, female)

Expectations around being empowered and having the freedom to make decisions were found not to hold true by participants in both the CS and Regular sample. The CS was commented on by a number of participants under the age of 40 as being an old-fashioned organisation with an aging workforce, which was unknown to some before joining.

Joining and Early Experiences - Key Messages and Actions

- The influence of family members over decisions around joining the AF was evident. Females and Muslim participants often faced the most resistance due to concerns over racism and religious tensions, and fear of isolation and negative treatment in particular Services/branches/trades. Whilst participants in this study clearly overcame these challenges to join it is likely that many individuals will have faced these hurdles and not overcome them. Outreach activities to inform and educate gatekeepers have an important part to play in making sure that society understands the role of the AF and the job opportunities available. This is particularly important as prior military experience and family connections are indicators of motivation to join and adaption to the organisation and these connections are weaker in the BAME group.
- Job adverts and selection interviews were sometimes viewed as exclusionary or discriminatory by BAME participants and females due to the selection techniques being used at the time (i.e. competency based interviews) and the way they were carried out (i.e. asking inappropriate questions, lack of diversity on interview panels). It was felt that this would prohibit a diverse range of people from which to select. Informal processes also meant that some groups (namely BAME personnel) were not always getting the opportunity for temporary promotion. It is understood that work has already taken place by the MOD to prevent some issues from occurring again. In particular, diverse interview panels, mandatory unconscious bias training for interviewers, and the implementation of a new interview approach in the CS (akin to strength based interviewing) should resolve some of these issues. It is critical that these processes are both monitored (for adherence to) and evaluated for effectiveness
- Across the sample, BAME participants (particularly F&C) faced the greatest challenges entering the organisation. Many BAME participants were hampered by vetting processes which felt to be slow and intrusive. On joining they experienced a lack of organisational support (particularly CS BAME) and faced the additional challenge of adapting to the UK culture (F&C BAME) as well as the Defence environment. Removing some of these obstacles would no doubt make for a more pleasant introduction and enable a smoother transition into the organisation. Things that would particularly help would be a speedier and less intrusive vetting process (as already acknowledged by the MOD), removing unnecessary security clearance requirements (or clearly articulating what restrictions entail and why they are required), a formal induction for all new CS joiners (understood to be now in place) and cultural awareness/training for F&C BAME recruits before they join (as well educating those in positions of leadership/instructional roles on cultural differences too).

- There was evidence to suggest that the military training environment was particularly difficult for minority groups with abuses of power and unfair treatment from instructors. This should be further explored to assess whether this is a historic issue or a problem which still persists today.

5.5 Career

This theme discusses the barriers and enablers to career progression in the MOD.

This theme comprises the following sub-themes:

- Career Decisions and Job Choices.
- Person-Organisation Fit.
- Career Management and Support.
- Career Progression.
- Performance Appraisal.
- Career and Family.
- Personal and Professional Development.

Points to note: Participants were not asked specifically about their career progression. Most of the data within this theme were attributable to Regular serving personnel and CS. Reservists made minimal comments about their career progression.

Synopsis

Career progression was viewed as a key measure of success for many across the sample (though less so for Reservists). The hierarchical structure of Defence made it easy for participants to compare their career progress against their peers. Across the sample, the perceived subjectivity of the appraisal and reporting process and that promotion is overly linked to “time-served” compared with ability were common frustrations. The concept of “time-served” prevented some participants from progressing as quickly as they would have liked, or receiving negative feedback from colleagues when they did progress (particularly in the Regulars). Age was suggested by older joiners to be a barrier to promotion, in both the Regulars and CS, with perceived opportunities limited by time left to serve or being given to younger personnel. A lack of (in the CS), or poor, formal career management was a frustration across the sample. However, the issue was more readily felt by F&C BAME, CS BAME and older participants who appeared to need greater support than others to progress their career. Female and BAME participants felt they were more disadvantaged than their white counterparts, citing management promoting people who were ‘like them’, which they perceived as hampering their career progression. F&C BAME perceived they were further disadvantaged by the availability of job choices and vetting procedures. Certain ingredients (or a mix of) were judged to be required for career success. These ingredients included being on a talent management scheme for CS or in the ‘right’ military branch/trade for Regulars, being proactive in seeking out opportunities, having support from others to advance, and access to informal networks. Based on the evidence, white males were more likely than others to have these ingredients for success.

5.5.1 Career Decisions and Job Choices

Regular serving females perceived that they were less likely to be in branches/trades that were considered to facilitate career progression. This was due to a combination of opportunity, choice, and the influence of social expectations about the type of work females ‘should’ undertake. All roles across the AF were finally ‘opened up’ to females in December 2018. Before 1998 only 40% of posts were accessible to females in the Army (DASA, 2006). Some military females commented that their gender had posed a barrier to progression because of this. It was evident from what female Army participants said, that those in combat roles (where females have not been allowed to serve) were better placed to progress, citing evidence that many of the ‘best jobs’ were filled by personnel from these branches. The same was also true of the other two Services, with Warfare and Aircrew personnel perceived to be in a stronger position to progress.

“...the same as the RAF – they will only promote aviators” (Military, white, female)

“...we need to get better in the Service of not assuming that because you’re really good at ship driving, then you’re the best person to run Defence” (Military, white, female)

Whilst this disadvantage will also likely be felt by males, because of the way females have been particularly directed to these roles, the impact overall appears to be greater for this group.

This finding is supported by research by the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly (2016) who highlight that females are often directed into administrative or support positions; however, these are the very posts that curtail their opportunities to progress in the military, with very specific career paths defining who is able to reach the highest ranks. This bears similarities with Dick’s (2009) research on the deployment of female Officers in the UK Police Force and how they were often perceived as ‘specialists’, best suited to roles dealing with domestic violence, sexual offences and children. In the Police Force, such deployment acts to not only strengthen and reproduce stereotypes, but also to reproduce the dominant understandings of ‘real’ Police work. Such understandings act to marginalise female Officers because they are perceived as unsuitable for tasks that fall outside of these ‘specialist’ roles (Westmarland, 2001). Moreover, such understandings, it is claimed, undermine female’s efforts to gain the range of experiences that are deemed important for promotion (Walklate, 2001). Indeed, those females and BAME participants in this study who felt they had been affected by stereotypes and unconscious bias described being at a disadvantage due to preconceived assumptions about their capabilities.

However, availability of opportunity is not the only factor that is likely to have impacted on females’ career progression. Different theories of career development and how career interests are formed (for example, Holland’s (1997) theory of vocational personalities; Super’s (1990) self-concept theory; and Gottfredson’s (2002) theory of circumscription and compromise, which is of most relevance here) provide insight into the variety of factors that impact career decisions. For example, Gottfredson (2002) states that people differentiate occupations along dimensions of sex type, level of work and field of work assessing suitability of occupations according to their self-concept. Occupations that are compatible with their self-concept will be highly desirable; those that are not will be highly undesirable. As individuals develop they successively reject occupations as: unsuitable for their gender; then as inappropriate for their social class and ability level; and finally on the basis of personal interests and values. The result is a set of acceptable options. However, the jobs people view as suitable for themselves are not always available and as such they must compromise. The typical pattern of compromise is: people first sacrifice interests; then prestige; and finally sex type. In other words, given two choices, one that fits a person’s interests but not their sex type, and one that does not fit their interests but is viewed as sex-appropriate, the latter will be chosen. Gottfredson’s (2002) explanation of why women are in lower-status, lower-level positions is that these occupations are compatible with their self-concepts and views about accessibility.

Adding further support to the above theory, research shows that males and females are attracted to different types of work. [REDACTED] note that females are more attracted by social and altruistic work values than men. Subsequently, females tend to be concentrated in what are often viewed as traditionally female jobs including administrative and secretarial occupations, caring, leisure and other service occupations [REDACTED]. Young women are also less likely to be studying science, technology, engineering or maths (STEM) subjects at university compared with young men (Stoet and Geary, 2018; Burke, and Mattis, 2007).

The theories presented above suggest that opening up all roles to females in the AF will not alone address the problem of females residing in branches/trades that are less likely to facilitate career progression. This is because females are less likely to be attracted to these career facilitating roles in the first place because they are not congruent with their sex which, in part, is driven by social expectations regarding the roles they ‘should’ take on and perceptions of self-efficacy.

Although predominantly impacting females, military males also commented on their branch/trade/specialism as stifling their opportunities. Across the sample the impact of branch/trade/specialism on career progression was not well understood when making career decisions, either through a lack of, or mis, information. However the barriers often became evident as participants were exposed to personnel from different branches on career courses.

“You’re not a Combat Officer, so therefore you’re inferior...No matter what you do you will only ever be borderline middle top-third” (Military, white, female)

F&C BAME participants faced restricted job choices, which were not always clear to them on joining.

Security clearances required for some roles restricted job choices for F&C BAME participants. Within the AF there are limits to the trades that F&C BAME personnel can join due to security restrictions imposed by partner countries. In the RN there are five trades that F&C personnel are able to join (catering, administration, limited engineering roles, RM and aircraft handler) none of which are noted for their fast progression. The RAF also imposes a number of nationality restrictions on certain trades/branches including some limitations on British/dual nationality personnel and tighter restrictions on Commonwealth citizens. For example, a Commonwealth citizen is unable to become a pilot (a trade acknowledged by participants as the key to progression in the RAF). In the Army there is a 15% cap on F&C personnel by Arm/Service that exists to ensure the promotion of unit cohesion and communication (Greene, 2016).

According to participants in this study, this funnelling of BAME personnel (particularly felt by F&C BAME females) into particular areas negatively impacted the shape of their careers and their ability to progress within the organisation. They tended to cluster in support service roles rather than being spread out across the organisation leading to a form of horizontal segregation.

“Those branches, especially chefs and stewards, are overborne with ethnic minorities...and those are the branches that are ridiculously hard to get promoted in” (Military, BAME, female)

“...because of my background I am limited to what jobs I can do...” (CS, BAME, male)

Many F&C military BAME participants spoke about trying to change branches/trades to improve their career prospects, though this often proved very difficult or impossible in reality due to a lack of roles being available or misinformation about when they could transfer. Some F&C BAME military participants felt “*misled*” or poorly advised by recruiters as to their career options and so were vulnerable to taking such advice without questioning it. Others felt that the restriction placed upon them was unnecessary.

“If you employ me to serve in the military then you should be able to employ me to serve in any capacity, regardless of where I come from” (Military, BAME, male)

UK BAME (particularly Officers and/or those from a higher socio-economic group) were less restricted in their job choices than F&C BAME and therefore had greater opportunities. UK BAME personnel from a higher socio-economic group often joined to undertake a particular profession and appeared to experience greater career progression than their F&C counterparts. Conner, Tyers, Modood and Hillage (2004), found that social class (and educational attainment) were “*significant contributors to decisions to join the uniformed services*” (as cited in Greene, 2016, p. 38). Their study (which focused on the factors influencing ethnic minorities to join the Police Service) reported that ethnic minorities from higher socio-economic backgrounds had more options and as such tended to focus on careers within established professions such as accountancy, law and medicine rather than the Police Force. This supports previous evidence suggesting that BAME personnel (from higher socio-economic backgrounds) are not interested in a career in the AF that does not align to their professional identity and further adds to this by indicating that those who do join are able to progress within a professional role.

CS talent management schemes were viewed as enabling access to the best jobs. However, CS BAME personnel perceived that they were less likely to be participants than their non-BAME counterparts. CS participants viewed talent management schemes (such as Fast Stream or MIDIT) as the route to progression. Personnel on these schemes benefited from having their career formally managed and had access to jobs that others did not (“*it’s where the best jobs are*”). More so than any other group, CS BAME felt that they faced challenges with access to these schemes. Some had applied but had been unsuccessful while others were unaware that they existed.

“...what’s also become clear is that you’re not on a talent programme, you’re nobody” (CS, BAME, female)

However, evidence from the MOD does not support this assertion. In fact, in 2017, 8% of personnel on the scheme identified as being BAME compared with the 4% of the MOD CS population who identify as BAME.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Information provided by the People Sec, Diversity and Inclusion team.

5.5.2 Person-Organisation Fit

Selection of branch/trade/specialism was also a function of ‘fit’ based on background and social class. Person-organisation fit is the “*compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when at least one entity provides what the other needs or they share similar fundamental characteristics or both*” (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman and Johnson, 2005, p. 4-5). It is widely established that personnel who do not fit within an organisation are more likely to leave (see Rubenstein, Kammeyer-Mueller, Wang and Thundiyl, 2019; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski and Erez, 2001). Participants indicated that their assessment of ‘fit’ within the organisation was based on their background and social class as well as gender and ethnicity. In the CS, this issue presented itself with participants from a lower socio-economic background feeling like they did not always fit. This was particularly the case with regards to achieving more senior grades. In the military it was evident that some military branches were viewed as being exclusionary to personnel from particular social backgrounds.

“I didn’t have enough money to become a Guardsman or join the Household Cav...the Infantry I was fit but I wasn’t fit enough... which left me with Combat Support or Combat Service Support” (Military, BAME, male)

This in itself poses a barrier to creating a diverse organisation; personnel may well struggle to integrate into a branch/trade/specialism where they do not conform to the norm or they may be diverted away from these branches in the first place by recruiters because they do not fit the prototype of what an Infantry Officer (for example) is like.

Minority groups felt that their career progression was sometimes hampered by not having/displaying ‘the right’ personality characteristics, behaviours or appearance for the job. There was a view by those who did not fit the white male prototype⁴⁹ that certain personality characteristics (often those associated with being an alpha male, such as dominance, assertiveness, a strong physicality) were regarded more positively by Defence and people displaying these characteristics were more likely to progress; their “*face fits*”; and those responsible for recruitment and promotion selected people who reflected their own image.

“Individuals who still fit the societal, typical norm of a military Officer are more likely to be promoted” (Military, white, female)

Participants who viewed themselves as not fitting the personality stereotype (those who were “*quiet*” or “*shy*” or “*introverted*”, for example) were often seen as doing less well, were not viewed as a “*team player*” or were overshadowed by people who “*shout*”. Often (but not always) these ‘less desirable’ traits were felt to be more evident in F&C BAME participants and females.

“Afro Caribbean’s, ‘Oh they are very quiet and unassuming’...” (Military, BAME, male)

In fact, some BAME participants spoke of being told they did not fit in or “*possess the right qualities*”, as reasons for not being promoted (noted as being slightly more evident in the military).

Certain personality characteristics (often associated with masculinity) were reported by some female participants as being viewed negatively when displayed by females, being described as “*aggressive*”, “*demanding*” or “*driven*”.

This disadvantage extended to physical appearance with BAME participants who looked more like their white counterparts reporting fitting in or being accepted more readily by the organisation. This finding lends support to the concept of colourism⁵⁰ (prejudice against people with darker skin tones). Research on ‘colourism’ has shown how ethnic minorities with lighter skin are advantaged in terms of the job market, education etc. due to their “*approximation to whiteness*” (Harrison and Thomas, 2009).⁵¹

⁴⁹ A prototype is the exemplar of a category; the implicit ideas about the typical characteristics, or a predominant image when an individual is asked to think, of a person representing that social group.

⁵⁰ “*a form of racial discrimination based on the shade of an individual's skin tone, typically favoring lighter skin. It can occur both within a specific ethnic group and across ethnic groups*”. <https://www.dictionary.com/e/historical-current-events/colorism/>.

⁵¹ <https://theconversation.com/colourism-how-shade-bias-perpetuates-prejudice-against-people-with-dark-skin-97149>.

Accessed on the 7 January 2019.

"I never really felt any different in terms of my ethnicity, I didn't wear a turban or have a beard...I was short-haired, clean shaven...I just happened to have a better tan than most people" (Military, BAME, male)

"Well, she's very different to me. I don't have a British accent, and she does. Her hair is straighter, she's - I don't know, close-up she is less BAME than I am" (Military, BAME, female)

5.5.3 Career Management and Support

A lack of, or poor, formal career management was a frustration across the sample but particularly for F&C BAME, CS BAME and older participants who wanted more support. These participants (typically those in junior grades) struggled most to progress their career without support. CS participants commented negatively on the removal of career managers and spoke most about the challenge of securing support for progression.

"It's an endemic problem within that organisation, they just churn people in and then people are just left to their own devices so it's very difficult...to find your way without any support" (CS, BAME, male)

This finding in part reinforces previous research by Greene (2016) who uncovered paternalistic expectations by F&C soldiers of the organisation that did not match the reality. Greene (2016) found that *"ethnic minority F&C personnel generally held the view that the organisation had a duty to help and direct them into their career; however, this was not their actual experience"* (p. 165). This suggests that some groups expect greater support to progress their career. Either this support needs to be provided by Defence or expectations about support with career management need to be better managed.

For other Regular participants, the issues with career management more generally were related to last minute postings, being promoted or moved into unwanted jobs and/or locations. It was evident that Officers had slightly more control over their career management than OR. Often OR felt that they were at the *"mercy"* of their career managers who relied upon a limited range of information to determine allocations.

"You feel very much in the hands of the drafter in that they have all the power" (Military, white, male)

Across the sample, a lack of career management meant that skills were not always fully recognised or utilised. Reservists were most frustrated by this. Reservists commented on the breadth of skills they brought to their Reservist role either through previous Regular Service or their civilian career. However, some felt that the organisation did not always understand these skills and, as a consequence, they were not optimised. This finding aligns with the work of [REDACTED], who reported that sometimes the skills of Reservists were felt to go unnoticed by the Regular Force.

Line managers/the Chain of Command were both sources of support or blockers to advancement. Participants indicated that support from superiors was key to successful career advancement, irrespective of gender/ethnicity. This was either through superiors providing developmental opportunities, supporting applications or actively encouraging advancement. For late entry BAME Officers, it was often a senior person who had recommended they apply for a commission even when the participant themselves was unsure. In equal measure, examples were given of managers/the Chain of Command being perceived to be unhelpful or unsupportive, and in some cases, deliberately hindering career progression.

"... 'you do know that by writing that report [about me] you have killed any possibility of promotion?' And she said 'yes, I know, that is why I wrote it'" (Military, white, female)

Building informal networks was (and continues to be) a key facilitator of career progression for white participants, particularly CS. BAME participants (military and CS) were less likely to have access to these networks. Whilst some alluded to this happening less in recent years, numerous examples of white CS personnel getting jobs as a result of an informal *"chat over coffee"* or people being directly approached about roles from personnel they knew or they had worked with previously were evident.

"...a few weeks later one of them rung me up and said 'oh, there may be a vacancy coming up'..." (CS, white, female)

"Actually it was the wife of the person running the programme who actually mentioned it to me and said 'I think you should have a go at this'..." (CS, white, female)

Often white participants did not acknowledge that this networking had helped to advance their career. However, it was recognised as a disadvantage by BAME participants who did not have access to these networks. This aligns with research by Wyatt and Silvester (2015) who reported that BAME managers found it comparatively harder than white managers to access informal processes, such as networks, to advance their careers. Wyatt and Silvester (2015) found that whilst BAME managers had to rely on explicit knowledge about formal paths to reach their goals, white managers were more likely to be assisted through informal channels, thus allowing them to progress to leadership positions more quickly. In the current study, some BAME participants (military and CS) spoke about how they were disadvantaged by the perceived need for informal networking to progress their career because either they did not understand the need to do this or, if they did, found it more difficult than some of their white peers (because they did not have a “*shared bond*” or things in common with senior personnel). Much of this perceived difficulty stemmed from having different interests outside of work (see Belonging and Social Identity, Section 5.8.3 for further information).

BAME participants were more likely to have access to formal networks than the white, male majority. However, access to these networks was not a career advantage. Whilst white participants alluded to access to informal networks, BAME participants spoke more frequently about formal D&I networks. A number of the participants were members of a network and spoke positively about them. However, there were also examples of line managers not being supportive of participants taking time off to attend events and comments from white males who felt disadvantaged that they did not have a ‘white, male network’ for support. Ironically, despite some white males feeling that minority groups had some kind of career advantage by being part of these groups, there was no evidence to suggest this was the case. Equally, there was no evidence from the information available about the networks to suggest they were intended to be career enhancing (or that BAME participants expected them to be).

The fairness of formal and informal career progression mechanisms was questioned by all but more so by females and BAME participants. Participants spoke of a lack of transparency with career progression. Positions being filled “*behind the scenes*” (particularly in relation to temporary promotions) was still felt to be a persistent issue in the CS. This aligns with findings by Ethnic Dimension (2014) that highlighted how BAME personnel felt that progression within the CS was based upon ‘who you know’. In the current study, some military participants raised questions as to why some people were given certain jobs over others, with some saying that people were “*looking out for people*” on military promotion boards. Reputations preceding people (in both a positive and negative way) were noted. An element of “*favouritism*” or “*nepotism*” was referenced across the sample (including white males) but particularly by females and BAME participants. There was a view that sometimes personnel were promoted into positions because they were favoured by their line management/Chain of Command.

“You’re either in his club or not” (Military, white, female)

Specific issues were raised by female and BAME participants. Females felt that the “*old boy’s network*” or “*jobs for the boys*” held them back because they did not have access to these groups. Within the Gurkha Regiment; everyone was viewed as “*equally good*” and there were limited vacancies, therefore promotion decisions were often felt to be based on who was favoured. Direct discrimination was referenced by some BAME participants who felt they were not getting development opportunities or temporary promotions, which acted as a career development vehicle.

“The amount of BAME people who get the opportunity to do temporary promotion is very few and far...” (CS, BAME, male)

Participants who reported success in advancing their careers said they were often forging their own career paths, using various sources of support. Across the sample, participants who felt they were progressing within the organisation were proactive in seeking opportunities and had a clear career strategy.

“I hustled to get it” (CS, white, female).

Though not exclusive to the CS, a lack of formal career support in the CS meant that participants were seeking their own forms of informal career advice and guidance to help them to progress. In particular, white CS participants sought support from coaches, mentors, previous managers or trusted colleagues. This was particularly important for CS participants who in the absence of career managers were required to forge their own career path, particularly if they were not on a talent management scheme. This included making sideways moves to gain new skills, not just moving up.

5.5.4 Career Progression

There was compelling evidence from the study to suggest that F&C BAME participants in particular experienced slower career progression than their peers. F&C BAME participants provided numerous examples of where their (or other F&C BAME) promotion had been far slower than that of their white and UK BAME counterparts, which aligns with previous research (Greene, 2016). Many F&C BAME felt that they were working just as hard (if not harder) than their white counterparts but were not rewarded with promotion. This finding aligns with Kanter's (1977) assertion that members of a minority group have to work harder to have their professional achievements recognised. F&C BAME participants spoke of 'weaker' colleagues and those with poor sickness or behaviour records being promoted ahead of them.

"People not like me, who do less and are still shining" (Military, BAME, female)

This finding is despite evidence that suggests that many ethnic minority groups are in fact more ambitious for promotion than white personnel (Defence Statistics⁵², 2007). [REDACTED] reports that although the literature suggests that there may be hidden imbalances in promotion rates for those from minority groups, and that the experience of promotion is a key contributor to ethnic minority retention, no UK research in a military context has been done.

Whilst not frequently mentioned by F&C BAME participants, others felt that poor English language skills were holding some F&C back from progressing (particularly commissioning), as early as basic military training, with personnel not understanding instructions and being 'back-squadded' for making mistakes. F&C BAME felt that they were under more "scrutiny" or had to prove themselves.

"I've always felt that I have to work twice as hard as my white peers to get the same recognition" (Military, BAME, Female)

There was the view by some that "unconscious bias" was the reason they were not being promoted ("there are no brown faces being promoted"). This led some to question whether the organisation really valued them. This suggestion of bias is consistent with research highlighting that ethnic minority groups in general are more than twice as likely as white people to say that they have been unfairly overlooked for promotion (ICM/Guardian, 2018). Specific to the MOD, research conducted by Defence Statistics (2007) highlighted that ethnic minorities in the CS were more likely than white personnel to feel that they had been unfairly turned down for a promotion. In this study, both female and BAME participants cited examples of when they had been told by colleagues that they only promoted because they were female, black or to fill "quotas", with others actively saying they did not deserve the promotion. Whilst most (but not all) of these examples were not recent, they provide an indicator of the challenges female and BAME personnel have to overcome to remain in the organisation and why others may have left.

Whilst F&C BAME participants more readily cited examples of slow career progression, frustrations around speed of progression were felt across the sample, including by white males. Across the sample, participants spoke of being "stuck" at the same level without a challenge or "resigned" to not being promoted. Regulars drew comparisons with the civilian environment and their frustrations at not being able to do anything about their speed of promotion; they could not apply for a job, they had to wait. Across the sample, participants said that a lack of promotion had made them seriously think about leaving at various points in their career. Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory highlights three elements that lead to motivated performance: a valued reward (valence); the likelihood that performance will be rewarded (instrumentality); and the likelihood that their effort will actually lead to a good performance (expectancy). If managers want employees to demonstrate motivated behaviour then they need to ensure that personnel feel their efforts will lead to good performance and that this performance will be rewarded. If personnel perceive themselves as working hard but not being rewarded for their hard work through promotion, they may well consider leaving the organisation. However, obviously in an organisation which is based on a pyramid structure it has to be acknowledged that not all personnel will be able to progress to the top. Therefore there is a need to manage these expectations and reward personnel for their efforts in ways other than promotion.

Across the sample, it was a frustration to some that promotion appeared to be overly linked to "time-served" compared with ability. Although acknowledged that within a pyramid structure not all personnel

⁵² Formerly known as the Defence Analytical Services Agency.

will be able (or capable) to promote, military participants explained that there was the requirement to undertake a number of years in post before being eligible for promotion (also true of CS jobs which require six months in role before promotion can be sought). Examples were provided of Service personnel (despite judging themselves to be being capable) having to wait for promotion because others who had served longer needed to be promoted ahead of them. This same culture existed in the CS; older personnel, in particular, who had worked for the MOD for some time, felt that others should progress in the same way they had.

“My line manager who had got her promotion based on time-served, you know, so she felt that I had to follow her career path” (CS, white, female)

CS participants who had sought out opportunities to accelerate progression or had not worked their way up from the bottom of the organisation recounted disapproval from others.

This focus upon time in role as a requirement to promote may not only cause frustration but may also undermine efforts to promote on merit. There is the possibility that this may disproportionately disadvantage females who take time out for maternity or childcare responsibilities.

Irrespective of gender and ethnicity, age was a perceived barrier to career progression across the sample with older participants perceiving themselves to be disadvantaged. In the military, challenges with integrating and having things in common with those younger than them in basic training were evident. Beyond this, participants who joined at an older age spoke of this stunting their career prospects. Older personnel reported that they were less likely to be promoted into certain roles because they had less time to serve than their younger colleagues. Older participants felt that younger personnel were more likely to be given opportunities/job roles over older personnel that would then enable them to progress. This was particularly felt in Main Building.

“...the opportunities to stretch, the high-profile stuff, will not be given to somebody older, it will always go to a younger person” (CS, BAME, female)

Progression for Regulars was perceived to be facilitated by deployment. Military participants spoke of Regular personnel being more likely to receive promotion following a deployment. Deployment provided them with strong performance evidence for an appraisal report, which was viewed favourably by promotions boards. Again, this was more likely to impact females negatively due to branch/trade restrictions (until recently) limiting opportunities to deploy.

White males had mixed views on whether females and BAME personnel faced barriers to career progression. Some felt that barriers were being broken down as a result of all roles now being open to females; many felt that there were no barriers as opportunities were available for all. Broadbridge and Simpson (2011) note that as more women progress, the belief that progress in organisations is based on merit becomes more prevalent, as does the belief that women make choices about whether or not they take certain roads in their career. It becomes about the women themselves and their individual choices, rather than the organisational structures and cultures. This certainly seems to be borne out in the views of some white males. However, there were those who acknowledged that the career progression of their female colleagues was sometimes more challenging.

“I’ve certainly seen female peers seem to have a slightly more difficult time of it than I do” (Military, white, male)

Across the sample, older participants (particularly in the CS) were not always interested in being promoted. It should be noted that promotion was not on everyone’s agenda. There were some older personnel who were frustrated by hierarchy’s emphasis on promotion; they were content with their current grade and role and did not want to be promoted.

“Some of us don’t want promotion. Some of us are happy doing what we’re doing” (CS, white, female)

5.5.5 Performance Appraisal

Frustrations with the appraisal and reporting process were felt across the sample with additional obstacles perceived to be faced by BAME participants and CS personnel with military managers in terms of cultural issues and engagement with the process. The main complaint was the “subjective” nature of the process.

"I haven't changed my style over the last year and I've gone from being a middle third Officer in my previous Battalion to being the best out here" (Military, BAME, male)

As highlighted by the AFCAS (2018) satisfaction with fairness of the appraisal process has been decreasing since its peak in satisfaction in 2010.

Participants said that the quality of their report was dependent on their relationship with their line manager/Reporting Officer.

"Career progression in the [Service] purely depends on who writes your report" (Military, BAME, female)

The process was felt to favour individuals who were able to write well or who understood the "game" in terms of knowing what to say, and what not to say (or personnel with line managers/Reporting Officers who did so). Certain words used to describe BAME personnel, such as being "laid back" or "aloof" were felt, by some BAME participants, to hinder promotion because of the negative connotations of these words in a military context (i.e. laid back = lazy).

Military participants spoke about the difficulties of challenging what they deemed to be an unfair report; consequently, many chose not to. The "suicide box" was mentioned repeatedly; military participants acknowledged that it was 'career suicide' to disagree with your Reporting Officer. That said, some participants challenged their reports, and this was met with mixed reactions from Reporting Officers. Some participants reported responses from Reporting Officers that further reinforced their perception that to disagree was career limiting. Aside from the obvious difficulties associated with confronting the Chain of Command (felt by many), cultural differences made it very difficult for some groups to do this. For example, some F&C African BAME participants felt unable to question their grade because challenging elders is viewed as disrespectful in their culture.

Some CS commented that having a military line manager was a particular disadvantage when it came to performance appraisals; there was a view that they did not always understand the civilian process or (some) were not interested in understanding it. The resultant poorly written reports were noted by these participants as impacting on the likelihood of getting a bonus (though the appraisal process has now changed).

5.5.6 Career and Family

Compared with males, the career progression of females was reported to be more heavily impacted by childcare and family responsibilities (more information on this can be found in Work, Family and Wellbeing, Sections 5.6.1 and 5.6.2). These considerations started even before becoming pregnant, with military females often making decisions about when to start a family based on minimising negative career impact.

"...whereas if I waited 'til I was promoted and then had a family it wouldn't impact me so much" (Military, white, female)

Even with the best planning, for many females, maternity leave had a "detrimental impact [on their] career" (through shorter appraisal reports).

"[As stated by a male colleague] Well the reason you have not been promoted is because you have had children" (Military, white, female)

Across the sample, parents in general were making career sacrifices. There were examples of males and females putting the needs of their family first and examples of promotions being turned down in favour of geographical stability. However, as primary care-givers it was often females who made greater sacrifices. Having dependents prevented them from taking on certain roles, excluded them from taking on additional tasks or prevented them from committing to the demands of a more senior role, which ultimately disadvantaged them. Though these are the same challenges faced by females outside of Defence, these issues are often exacerbated by the military culture (i.e., due to deployments, relocations etc.). Being married to a serving person intensified the complexities of family life for military females. It was made clear to some individuals that certain roles required family sacrifice and therefore might not be the right role for them. Examples of females moving from the Regulars into Reservist roles to obtain a better work-life balance also provided evidence of career sacrifice as often personnel lost their rank when transitioning. In some cases,

females described sacrificing their own career for their partners' career; this was not evident in the male cohort.

"I mean if I was looking back I didn't have to raise a family and worry about my work-life balance I would probably be at least another grade higher" (CS, BAME, female)

These findings are not new and the challenges that females with caring responsibilities (particularly military females) face have been well documented (e.g. [REDACTED]). However, there was clear frustration with the perceived lack of understanding from specific line managers/Reporting Officers as well as their male counterparts, even those who had families themselves.

"There's no consideration of this person is a mum and runs a house and has a full-time job and does all these things as well, that's not how you're graded in the military, they don't care" (Military, white, female)

Many CS females spoke positively about the ability to work part-time or compressed hours to suit the needs of their family. Often this was said to limit career progression. However, this was not a concern to all, with some females very content to strike the 'balance' between work and home life in favour of home.

The requirement to move location for a role posed a challenge for some. CS females with caring responsibilities were the least likely (and most reluctant) to relocate. CS participants spoke of the requirement to move jobs and locations to progress their careers. Participants who had worked in the organisation for some time noted that, in the past, a *"relocation allowance"* enabled personnel to move easily; removal of this allowance was said to prevent people moving locations and taking up opportunities because of the adverse financial implications. Participants commented that most opportunities were based in the south of the country (many being *"London-centric"*), limiting opportunities for those living elsewhere in the country who were unable to relocate for financial and family reasons. Participants who worked part-time due to caring responsibilities were least likely to be able to move. Some CS females spoke of a reluctance to change roles for fear that a different line manager might not agree to the same working terms and conditions.

5.5.7 Personal and Professional Development

Opportunities for personal and professional development were viewed positively by participants, particularly females. Data from the AFCAS (2018) reveals that over half of Regular personnel are satisfied with the opportunities for professional (57%) and personal development (55%). In this study, personnel across the sample spoke positively about the opportunities to develop that were available to them during their career. These included interesting jobs, learning new skills, meeting VIPs, attending prestigious events and travelling and working abroad. Whilst those who had worked longer for Defence felt that there were fewer opportunities than in previous years, most acknowledged that some of the opportunities afforded to them would not have been available in a *"commercial organisation"*; as such, the opportunities were highly valued. Females were slightly more likely than their male counterparts to comment on the benefits of working for Defence compared with the private sector.

Obtaining formal qualifications was seen as a benefit of working for the organisation for all, particularly those who joined without them. Participants, particularly those who had not performed particularly well at school, or entered the organisation with few qualifications (often OR or Late Entry Officers), spoke positively about being able to attain externally recognised qualifications. Often these individuals had either recognised the benefit of continued education later in life themselves or there were influential others who had encouraged them to study. Irrespective of gender or ethnicity, qualifications and learning were seen as beneficial for personal development and, to a lesser extent, enabling career progression. This supports findings from the 2007 study by Defence Statistics exploring diversity and career progression in the CS. They found a similar proportion of white (50%) and BAME (49%) respondents were satisfied with the opportunities for gaining relevant educational/professional qualifications in the MOD.

Having a degree (or the 'right' degree) was viewed by many participants across the sample as being important for credibility and acceptance. A few participants felt that not having a degree or formal qualifications disadvantaged them or caused others to view them as less credible in their role. Some Officers felt that not having a degree from a *"red brick Russell Group University"* was looked on less favourably by some parts of the organisation, indicating perceived elitism in the organisation. It was acknowledged that F&C BAME were on the *"back foot"* from the start because many joined with no formal qualifications or, if

they were held, their qualifications were not always recognised. Interestingly, there were a number of military personnel who were undertaking qualifications in preparation for leaving the organisation, particularly those who felt that their military qualifications might not translate to a civilian environment.

Career - Key Messages and Actions

- The job choices and opportunities available to females and BAME personnel (particularly F&C) shaped career trajectories, often limiting career progression (particularly in the AF) from the outset. This was both a function of availability of opportunity and the different decisions made by these cohorts, typically based on cultural norms and stereotypes about roles being 'masculine' or 'feminine'. Opening up all roles to everyone in the AF is undoubtedly positive. However, dismantling the stereotypes of 'feminine' and 'masculine' roles and encouraging females into STEM subjects is needed more widely in society for real change to occur. As a major STEM employer MOD can do much to reflect or even facilitate these changes. Consideration of more flexible career paths or exploring how the desired skills and knowledge can be demonstrated outside of the 'traditional' career paths may also help to increase diversity across roles.
- F&C military BAME participants reported trying to change branches/trades to improve their career prospects, which often proved very difficult or impossible. The process for changing trades in the military (how, when, if possible) needs to be reviewed to ensure it is transparent and communicated clearly to all.
- Minority groups and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds felt that their career progression was hampered by their lack of 'fit' within the organisation. Both groups felt they were less likely to be perceived by others as having 'the right' personality characteristics. Stereotypes about what a typical SCS, Warfare Officer or Infanteer, for example, looks like need to be broken down.
- Support from others in terms of career progression was noted by all as important. However, access to support varied. A lack of, or poor, formal career management was particularly felt by F&C BAME, CS BAME and older participants who wanted (and sometimes expected) to receive more support on joining the organisation. Across the sample, it was evident that management/Chain of Command could be either a source of support or a blocker to advancement. Some participants were therefore seeking out their own forms of support. For white personnel, building informal networks was a key facilitator of career progression. BAME personnel were less likely to have access to these networks. Minority groups were more likely to have access to formal D&I networks. This was sometimes viewed negatively by others as giving them a career advantage, which did not appear to be the case. The remit and terms of reference of formal D&I networks should be clear and transparent so that their purpose is understood by all.
- The speed and restrictions around career progression were an irritation across the sample. Promotion overly linked to "*time-served*" and age was said to restrict the progression of 'late joiners' in the AF and cited as a key frustration by some. F&C BAME military participants reported that they were most impacted by a lack of speed of progression, citing unconscious bias and nepotism as reasons for their slow advancement. However, white personnel sometimes felt that it was the language barrier that held F&C BAME back. It is suggested that a more detailed study is conducted to identify whether there is an issue with F&C progression. This work is important, especially in light of further F&C recruitment.
- Frustrations with the subjective nature of the appraisal and reporting process were felt by all. Problems relating to language used to describe BAME personnel and cultural issues around challenging poor reports were noted by BAME participants. Removing names and gender identifiers on reports on military promotion boards could help remove the potential for unconscious bias.
- The career progression of females with children was heavily impacted by childcare and family responsibilities. This is a persistent finding amongst military females and has changed little over time. A more radical change to career pathways may be required so that a level playing field which is fair for all is achieved.

- Obtaining formal qualifications was seen as a benefit by all but especially those who joined with few qualifications. However, evidence of elitism regarding education (reported by participants and observed by the research team) was also apparent amongst some cohorts. The opportunity to obtain qualifications should continue to be clearly articulated to personnel before joining.

5.6 Work, Family and Wellbeing

This theme outlines the impact of work demands in relation to key life events upon participants' perceptions of their work-life balance and well-being.

This theme comprises the following sub-themes:

- Pregnancy and Maternity/Paternity.
- Work-Life Balance.
- Psychological and Physical Wellbeing.

Points to note: Findings mainly emerged during the timeline interview. The overwhelming majority of comments relating to pregnancy and childcare were provided by females (Regular and CS). Joining the Reservists was found to sometimes be chosen (by ex-Regular females) as a way of managing childcare responsibilities and work-life balance. Comments on physical and mental health were largely provided by participants from the Army and RAF.

Synopsis

Across the sample, the role of primary care giver typically fell to females. Gender, rather than ethnicity, therefore, was key to understanding the positive and negative aspects of a participant's experience in relation to this theme. The role of primary care giver had significant impact upon females' ability to retain a career and how they were perceived and treated in the workplace. Parenthood for males was reported as significantly less intrusive and continued career progression was evident. Whilst work demands impacted males and females differently in this respect, common occupational stressors were seen to challenge wellbeing across the sample. These stressors included high work demands, low control, and lack of support in the workplace. Conflict in key working relationships, namely with the Chain of Command or line management, was also of fundamental importance in determining wellbeing and satisfaction with the workplace. Whilst many of the welfare services were appraised positively, the extent to which military participants sought help when needed was compromised by an enduring stigma associated with mental illness and physical injury. For CS, a lack of face-to-face welfare support was noted, with line management felt to be inadequately trained to deal with identification and management of work-related stress.

5.6.1 Pregnancy and Maternity/Paternity

Participants both with and without children, perceived that policies and attitudes relating to pregnancy and maternity were "greatly improved". Both males and females acknowledged the accommodation of changing needs during their or their partner's, pregnancy. Many appraised the current maternity package (duration, extent of pay) very positively and reported "*fantastic*" or "*phenomenal*" support. The provision of newer forms of support for females, such as keeping in touch days or support groups, was perceived by females as the organisation signalling that they continued to value females and were invested in supporting their careers. Subsequently, many participants felt that it was more feasible now for females to have a career and a family compared with previous years and under former Defence policies.

"... they couldn't have treated me any better if they'd tried really ... my line manager was great, the guys that I worked with were great, you know, I was afforded time off work to go to all of my maternity appointments ... I was really, really supported in that from the day I went to the med centre and found out I was pregnant and they gave me all of the information ..." (Military, white, female)

Despite noted improvements, the impact of having a child upon their career was a key concern for (mostly) Regular serving females. This was most notable amongst Officers. Females reported seeing their female colleagues with children "*struggling*" or leaving the organisation when managing work and family life became

“too much”. Despite formal policies, female participants were concerned that their career and chances of promotion would be hindered by taking time off for maternity leave. Both military and CS females often referenced not seeing as many females in higher ranks/grades with those going furthest not having children. This finding is also reflected in the Australian Defence Force where very few senior females have children (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012). In the current study, findings suggested that there were feelings of uncertainty amongst serving females that they would be able to attain the career that they desired and a sense that policies did not succeed in giving the assurances required. This influenced females’ expectations about when they ‘should’ have a child and was often a turning point for military females where the viability of continued Service came under threat. Some female participants considered that they might have to leave if the challenge of managing both childcare and demands of Service life became insurmountable. These findings are consistent with prior UK AF research by [REDACTED] who found that females in the RAF feared their career prospects would be adversely impacted by a pregnancy. They also found that many females in the RN anticipated having to leave the Services on becoming pregnant, with this perception driven by extant difficulties managing work and life and a belief that the RN was failing to live up to its claims of being ‘family orientated’. More recent research (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012) presented similar findings, with many female members of the Australian Defence Force feeling that they must choose between having a career or having a family.

Female participants recounted instances of negative reactions to pregnancy/maternity, which left them feeling demoralised. Whilst not commonplace, these responses were most evident in the CS, largely in lower grades (D and below), where females reported feeling that they had less ‘worth’ as soon as they announced their pregnancy. Lack of support during significant pregnancy-related complications was also observed in the CS and, across the sample, there were assumptions that females were no longer committed to their role after having a baby or would leave the organisation. A minority of Regular serving females (mainly OR) reported that they were perceived by others as trying to shirk duties (“*anything to avoid going to sea*”) with a suggestion of “*annoyance*” that females would have time off. Whilst some of the variation in response may be attributed to individual differences and unit/department culture, recent research by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2016) suggests that negative or potentially discriminatory experiences at work during pregnancy, maternity or on return to work are commonplace. This includes, but is not limited to females feeling less respected; having their opinions devalued; and being on the receiving end of negative comments/harassment. There is limited research pertaining to attitudes towards pregnancy in the military, particularly from the perception of leaders. Most research is focused upon the impact of pregnancy upon unit readiness and cohesion and pregnancy planning (McCreight, 2016). This suggests that further exploration of attitudes towards pregnancy may be needed to fully understand females’ experience in the workplace.

Resourcing challenges and an organisational culture expecting ‘total commitment’ exacerbated negative responses to a pregnancy. Participants reported that shortages of personnel (most keenly felt in the military) served to increase “*anxiety*” over how to manage the additional workload during a colleague’s maternity leave. This was most notable when the female’s post remained ‘gapped’ during her absence. An inability to ‘backfill’ a post gapped due to maternity leave was also reported to lead to negative appraisals of maternity leave in the Australian Defence Force (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012). In our study there was evidence that some Regular serving females worried about “*letting the side down*” by taking maternity leave (adding further support to findings by [REDACTED]) and this negatively impacted their own views of pregnancy. In addition, a period of absence or reduced duties threatened the ‘Service comes first’ culture (i.e. the individual was no longer available 24/7; they were unable to fulfil full-time commitments). Expectations of ‘Service first’ also manifested in a minority of instances in the CS: For example, a military male expressed the view towards (a pregnant) CS that working for the military meant “*you should be here all the time*”. The prioritisation of work was also observed in the experiences of a minority of males (Regular serving) who reported having paternity leave cut short or ‘postponed’ due to an expectation that they would/should attend a career-related course. It was apparent that participants (both males and females) that sought alternative patterns of work (such as reduced hours) that deviated from the ‘expected’ norm of full time work were also seen to be a threat to the ‘Service first’ ethos⁵³. A similar conceptualisation of the

⁵³ The Armed Forces are currently conducting a Flexible Duties trial which is assessing the ability of the AF to respond to differing engagements and the impact on individuals, teams and the organisation.

ideal worker as one that is full time and ever available is evident in the Australian Police Force: Commitment to the Police is signalled through availability to work long hours or unsociable shifts; the greater the number of hours worked, the greater the perceived level of commitment. By default, those who are part-time are judged to be less committed and less ambitious. This disproportionately impacts females, who are more likely to be in part time roles and who are subsequently overlooked for development and training (Charlesworth and Whittenbury, 2007).

The impact of childbirth upon females' fitness endured past the point of maternity leave but was felt to not be understood by the organisation. This was a particular concern for Regular serving females who felt that support and guidance from the Services on how to regain their fitness after childbirth was absent. A lack of understanding was also evident by the absence of a medical code in some Services that recognised post-partum complications. The impact of this is illustrated in comments by Regular serving females who reported sustaining injuries at work after returning from maternity leave, which they attributed to having to do too much physically too soon. This added to the sense that the Services simply were not aware of the impact that pregnancy could have upon a woman's body and further manifested in assumptions that women are back at work so 'must be fine'.

"[A soldier of mine] enjoyed telling me in graphic detail about the traumatic birth that she'd had and I can fully understand how she hadn't done any fitness in a year because it sounded horrendous. But I think the PTIs [physical training instructors] just thought that she'd been lazy for a year" (Military, white, female)

"I was suffering and am still suffering from the aftermath of having a baby and having complications with that and I don't think that was particularly well dealt with...if you've hurt yourself you can go and see the ER [emergency room], or you can go and see the physio, you can be given a remedial package...but there is nothing for post-maternity" (Military, white, female)

The literature has highlighted that there is a lack of understanding of the time required to enable females to recover their level of pre-pregnancy fitness. As noted, females can often feel that those around them do not understand what they are going through (Armitage, Severtsen, Vandermause and Smart, 2014). Research conducted with the United States (US) military reported that some complications during a pregnancy can increase the likelihood of poor postpartum fitness (Miller, Kutcher and Adams, 2017) and that females may be more vulnerable to mental and physical health problems in the first six months after birth (Armitage, Severtsen, Vandermause and Smart, 2014). This highlights the importance of understanding the impact of childbirth upon females' physical and psychological wellbeing, and how this may vary over time, in order to support regain of fitness whilst mitigating the possibility of injury⁵⁴.

Females struggled to have their needs accommodated during the period that they were breastfeeding at work. This was reported by a strong minority of Regular serving females who said it compromised their ability to continue breastfeeding. This was due to a lack of awareness amongst colleagues that they needed to take time away to express milk; a lack of (private) facilities to do so; or being told to undertake a course/Military Annual Training Tests/deployment shortly after returning from maternity leave, with pressure exerted upon them to do so.

"To breastfeed is difficult, to express was a massive challenge, I hated it and then to do it in an environment where you're meant to be tactical...they basically said to me, if I wasn't prepared to go on exercise they would move me to a different squadron" (Military, BAME, female)

Females perceived this as an additional stressor during an already challenging period. It was felt that this lack of support was often due to ignorance, given the (primarily) male dominated working environment.

A strong minority of Regular serving females spoke of complications arising after child birth resulting in long(er) term or more serious physical health problems. Participants suggested that they did not necessarily disclose this to those around them, perhaps due to the perception that to admit a physical health problem would be viewed as a weakness (see Section 5.6.3). However, a lack of disclosure potentially contributed to

⁵⁴ It should be noted that research, initiated by the Women in Ground Close Combat team, is currently underway in the UK to explore 'The Efficacy of a Post-Partum Physical Development Programme on Occupational Physical Performance and Musculoskeletal Health'.

the lack of awareness (by the Services) of the extent that these issues impacted females, thus adding to the perception that everything was 'okay'.

Males may not have a full understanding of the type and extent of issues faced by some females post maternity. Although not directly asked about, post-maternity issues faced by females were not mentioned by male participants during the interviews. Whilst it is acknowledged that explicit exploration of these topics with males might engender very different findings, a lack of awareness by males relating to regaining fitness, breastfeeding in the workplace, and worries about retaining a career may serve to reduce workplace support for these issues if the primarily male workforce does not understand the extent of the challenges that females may face.

5.6.2 Work-Life Balance

There was a strong sense that participants felt that work intruded into their personal life to an 'unacceptable' level. This often led to a conscious decision to reprioritise and change behaviours to obtain a better work-life balance. This was most evident in the Regulars, where the demands of Service life (long hours, deployments, frequent changes in post and location moves) were often appraised as incompatible with family life⁵⁵. For F&C BAME participants, a long duration of separation from the wider family; difficulties finding time to return home; and the prohibitive cost of travel led to sentiments that they may reach a point where the "stress" of work will not be "worth it [anymore]". In general, the impact of family life was not as great in the CS, likely due to the relatively lesser intrusion that a civilian role exerts. However, across the sample, those personnel who were unhappy with their work-life balance often sought, or considered: alternative working hours; selected posts that offered greater domestic stability; or, for the military, a move away from "adventurous things" or deployments. In some instances the challenges of managing a work-life balance were viewed as increasingly impossible to overcome (e.g. simply unable to obtain childcare), or viewed as having too great a consequence (e.g. rarely seeing their spouse/partner). Reduced organisational commitment (Allen and Meyer 1990) was evident; some participants reviewed their intention to remain with the organisation, either by reducing the length of their commitment or expressing intent to leave. Recent findings (AFCAS, 2018) highlighted that many personnel feel they do not have a work-life balance, aligning with the characterisation of military organisations as 'greedy institutions' whose demands are "all consuming" (Wong, Bliese and McGurk, 2003). Moreover, a lack of work-life balance in the UK AF has been associated with intent to leave ([REDACTED]; AFCAS, 2018). Attending to lack of satisfaction is important as expressed intention to leave the organisation has been shown to predict actual leaving behaviours ([REDACTED]).

Across the sample, line management/Chain of Command played a key role in influencing how readily personnel could balance their work and personal life. There was a sense that Defence better understood (than in previous years) the need for personnel to achieve a good work-life balance. This was reflected in management/Chain of Command behaviours. These findings are largely in line with those from the AFCAS (2018), which reported that 69% of respondents agreed that their immediate superior is supportive over work-life balance issues. In this study, many participants reported supportive management who accommodated their need to alter work patterns. For example, allowing the participant to leave early to collect a child from nursery. However, there were instances across the sample of "power plays", and seemingly unnecessary last minute taskings that prevented participants from working flexibly. Prior research with the UK military ([REDACTED]) reported similar findings whereby line managers instigated short notice requests or requirements to stay overnight which were perceived as 'tests' that females felt they were expected to fail. Interestingly, in the current study, these "power plays" were experienced by both male and females. Management was also found to be unsympathetic to difficulties in participants' personal lives. There was a strong suggestion that policies alone were not sufficient to ensure a positive workplace culture and that line management had a key role in facilitating or obstructing this.

⁵⁵ This included: ability to fulfil childcare commitments; time with family; impact upon relationship with spouse; stability of their spouse/partner's career; children's schooling (quality, continuity and proximity); availability and cost of childcare; and proximity to wider family (social support; childcare support). For Reservists, the ability to manage their civilian career alongside their Reservist commitment was also of importance.

"[The MOD] has all the structures to be in place, has all the policies. It has the crèche, the flexible working. But that is window dressing on the reality of the situation. All the policies are in place, everything is there. But the behaviours of people are not" (CS, white, female)

The primary importance of Chain of Command's attitudes, support and responsiveness to changing needs upon military participants' experience of becoming a parent has been evidenced elsewhere ([REDACTED]). Findings in this study reinforce the crucial role line management/Chain of Command play in governing personnel's' experience of the workplace.

For females, having a child became a 'crunch point' when many fought to manage both work and home commitments. CS females typically sought reduced working hours, or switched roles to accommodate work and home commitments. Research conducted with UK working families suggests that it is not uncommon for mothers to work reduced hours: 41% of mothers surveyed worked part time compared to just 5% of fathers (Modern Families Index, 2019). Given that part time work was not an option for military personnel, the practical and emotional impact of parenthood was often greater for serving females and driven by the significant challenges of being a primary care giver whilst also meeting Service demands. Many relied upon family/partners; others found it difficult to find childcare to cover the hours/location worked. The "massive pressure" of managing both home and work life was particularly challenging for single mothers and females who were part of a dual-serving couple. It was felt that this was not always recognised within the workplace. Similarly, F&C BAME females who did not have family in this country were less likely to have support with childcare. There were some instances of Regular serving F&C BAME females bringing family over to the UK, at considerable personal expense, to enable them to continue to meet work demands.

As primary care givers, females often struggled to meet their care-giving responsibilities due to a lack of accommodation of their needs in the workplace. CS females spoke of unsympathetic line managers when they were managing the care of elderly relatives or seriously ill children; being made to take annual leave rather than considering alternatives. In the Services, a lack of interest in individual circumstances was reported, resulting in a lack of flexibility or a failure to recognise that participants may have changing needs. Subsequently, mothers (as primary care givers) were expected to arrange childcare to enable them to meet Service demands and to continue to "take orders". Failure to achieve this was met with little sympathy.

"There was one time I was drafted to a ship and childcare was an issue so after a few years...what I was told is that OK then if you can't provide childcare then you need to put your notice in to leave" (Military, BAME, female)

Some single mothers were adversely impacted by management behaviour, most notably in the Services. Many of these females spoke of managers who made their life "absolute hell". There was some suggestion of deliberately obstructive behaviours, such as disallowing previously agreed schedules (that fitted around childcare) with no justification; continually being put forward for deployments by someone known to 'dislike' women; and being singled out for "over-scrutiny".

"[My boss] made it clear that even though I was now a single mother with young children...that he would not accept me taking any time off if the children were ill, or any time off to go to any school activities...unless I had cleared leave with him in advance. And he also advised me that if I was ever in work after him he would discipline me for being late, and if I left work before him I had to have his approval. He would happily take time off whenever he needed or whenever it suited him and didn't apply the same rules" (Military, white, female)

The suggestion that single mothers may face the greatest challenges is underpinned by prior research with the UK AF, highlighting that preferential treatment and benefits are conferred upon personnel who are married. Females with long term partners and children reported being treated as though they were 'single' ([REDACTED]). This finding suggests that this culture may exacerbate negative behaviours towards those personnel who do not 'conform' to the military's social 'norms'.

In the CS, it was notable that females' requests for reduced hours or job shares in order to manage childcare (options unavailable in the military) were reported to be turned down. These occurred post 2002

when the right to request flexible working was introduced⁵⁶. Participants typically struggled to obtain a rationale for the refusal from their line manager. This was most apparent amongst D grade CS females⁵⁷ with a suggestion that females were exposed to behaviours that signalled resentment of their maternity leave.

"I received a letter back from my manager saying in words you've already had enough from us with taking maternity leave. You've no right to reduce your hours, we won't accept it. So your option is to leave" (CS, white, female)

This aligns with research by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2016) that outlined how, whilst in the minority, some mothers in the general workforce have negative experiences related to flexible working. Support for working hours being a source of contention is also supported by findings from the CS People Survey (2017): 20% of respondents indicated that they had personally experienced discrimination at work due to their working pattern within the last 12 months.

Subsequently, females in the CS felt that there was an undercurrent of resentment of personnel working anything other than full time hours and a variable interpretation of policies. Some CS females suggested that the MOD did not want to employ females with children and some had overheard other personnel saying that they only wanted to employ personnel that could work full time; or would not appoint a women to a job if they believed there was a chance she would become pregnant. There was evidence that these attitudes further manifested in poor behaviours: In a minority of cases CS females had, or knew of other females, whose job had been given to someone else whilst they were on maternity leave (as recent as 2015); had career opportunities deliberately curtailed or had been told they would be given a lesser role on return to work (circa 2017) or had their annual leave allowance removed after their return from maternity leave (circa 2014). Typically these incidents were part of a series of seemingly negative behaviours directed towards female participants that were appraised by the participants themselves as exclusionary and/or a form of "harassment". Incidents such as these have led to participants experiencing disappointment over lost careers, loss of confidence, anger, and increased likelihood of leaving (reduced organisational commitment; see Allen and Meyer, 1990). These findings are consistent with those of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2016) which reported that some females experience negative attitudes on becoming a mother and may feel forced out of their jobs, including being dismissed or being made compulsorily redundant when others in their workplace are not.

Whilst there was evidence of males taking an increased share of childcare duties, females still took (or anticipated taking on) the role of primary care giver. Whilst shared parental leave was appraised positively as an initiative, the findings suggest that there was not much appetite for shared parental leave. However, when this option was taken, it tended to be amongst higher ranks (no CS participants reported taking this form of leave or observing other CS doing so). 'Family friendly' policies enabling flexible/home/term-time working or reduced hours also continued to be primarily taken up by females. (Note: the AF Flexible Working Bill was announced in 2017: see Figure 1 and Table 7-7 in Appendix I). The lack of uptake of alternative forms of working by males was sometimes attributed to wider societal expectations of gender roles (females as the primary care giver) combined with organisational (cultural) constraints.

"The concept is all there...absolutely we should be supporting flexible working and, shared parental leave – excellent idea...All the stuff's there but we pay lip service to it up until the crunch time, and then we go 'actually we can't make that work, needs of the Service'" (Military, white, female)

An 'indifference' towards opportunities for flexible working by Regular serving personnel has been noted (AFCAS, 2018). The extent to which this differs by gender is not clear and this indifference may reflect the male viewpoint, given they form a much higher proportion of the Services. These perceptions may manifest in the wider organisational attitudes towards flexible working and act as a barrier to change. However, unless

⁵⁶ As originally framed in 2002, the right to request flexible working was applied to limited categories of employees with parental or caring responsibilities. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN01086/SN01086.pdf>. Note, this is different to the Armed Forces Flexible Working Bill introduced in 2017.

⁵⁷ Further research would be needed to determine if this is because proportionally more females at this grade requested alternative forms of working, or whether CS personnel at lower grades are more likely to be subjected to negative treatment than their counterparts in higher grades.

changes are made, barriers to uptake of these opportunities will likely continue to have a negative impact upon perceptions of work-life balance whilst reinforcing labour division along established gender lines.

Females were more likely to make sacrifices to their career, or anticipate having to make sacrifices, relative to males. Participants who selected roles that allowed greater domestic stability reported that they were often seen to be sacrificing their careers or becoming ‘second stream’. As females were more likely to have to prioritise family over work they were relatively more likely to be disadvantaged in their career. Some males recognised this impact, acknowledging that maternity leave and the role of primary care giver can restrict females’ career progression whilst stating that, for them, having children had *“not had any impact whatsoever”* on their career. The impact of family life upon career was reinforced by the experiences of female Reservists who were ex-Regular. It was notable how many had joined the Reserve Forces with the specific intention of being able to have a better work-life balance. Whilst this was referenced by male Reservists it was to a much lesser degree and less of a driving force for leaving the Regulars. Many females had been disappointed to leave the Regulars as it was a career that they *“loved”* and were *“passionate”* about. However, it did not offer the predictability, control and a known level of commitment needed to ensure that family lives were not compromised. Difficulties managing family and career have further been reported by females in the US and Australian Defence Forces (Evertson and Nesbitt, 2004; Burmester, Evans, Halupka and May, 2013). Prior research conducted with the UK AF (with the RN and RAF) identified work-life balance as having the greatest impact upon the long term retention of females in the AF ([REDACTED]) highlighting the importance of attending to this issue.

The impact of paternity on males was less severe and more commonly involved a re-evaluation of their priorities. For serving males this was often later in their career where they considered that they had sacrificed enough (e.g. not being there for their children’s early years or missing key events such as birthdays) or appraised the continued *“upheaval”* and *“strain”* associated with military life as increasingly unfair upon their family.

“When [your children] are very small, they can move around with you. But [the tour] suddenly made me think about the long term, and stability, and what do I do about making sure the family’s life is not subject to too much upheaval. And if necessary, how their education is to be preserved or at least not compromised. So, it was a realisation that I could no longer just think about a career” (Military, white, male)

This is consistent with findings from the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly (2016), which identified that females are more likely to leave the Services when their children are young, whilst the impact of family upon intention to quit for males typically occurs when their children are older and difficulties associated with the continued relocation of their families arise. In the current study, there was little evidence to suggest CS males faced the conflict experienced by their male counterparts in the Services. However, some sought to make adjustments to work location, working hours and role to give greater weight to their family’s needs.

Many military participants, primarily males, felt their personal relationships had been put under significant strain due to the length and frequency of separation. Difficulties arose from both ‘routine’ separation caused by postings in the UK as well as deployments. Many felt that time apart had contributed to, or been the key driver, for the end of their marriage/relationship.

“My marriage was on the rocks, because for various reasons I’d done back, to back, to back patrols, so I had seen my wife for a week in the preceding year” (Military, white, male)

Loss of these key relationships contributed to their sense of having sacrificed ‘enough’ and created intent to not allow relationships to be compromised again. Both males and females commented on the *“ridiculous”* divorce rates in the military or noted the failure of (mainly male) colleagues’ relationships due to a primary focus upon career. It should be noted, however, that despite this perception research suggests that divorce rates in the military are relatively lower than that of the general UK population, with the exception of military females in the 18-29 year age group, who are more likely to be divorced (Keeling, Wessely and Fear, 2016). However, research has also highlighted a negative impact of separation upon marital satisfaction, with marital difficulties arising where the serving person is deployed for more than 13 months in 3 years (see Keeling, Wessely and Fear, 2016). Further exploration would be required to determine whether marital dissatisfaction/difficulties always result in the break-up of the marriage, or whether the military benefits associated with marital status coupled with the military value placed upon marriage and the ‘nuclear family’ acts as a barrier to divorce/separation.

Accommodation of the needs of personnel with families was reported by participants who were single to sometimes be to the detriment of their work-life balance. Some single personnel (without children) felt that they were “*penalised*” for not being married with children and bore the brunt of responsibility for covering for personnel with families (see also [REDACTED]). In the military this included deployments, weekend duties or short-notice taskings for which they were seen as having “*no excuse*” not to do. This led to perceptions of a lack of parity in allocation of duties in the workplace and highlights how accommodation of the needs of one group, may adversely impact the needs of another. Single participants’ perceptions that they were disproportionately ‘leaned upon’ was exacerbated by the view that the military tailored support around a ‘nuclear family’ model, which meant that personnel who remained single felt that they were overlooked and denied appropriate support. This highlights a key challenge of instilling a workplace environment where no one group is felt to be ‘disadvantaged’.

“Family is very much prioritised in the military over single people. For a whole range of things. Not just deployments, but for allowances, for finances, for housing, for duties, for selection for things. We live in the 1950s, in the military. It has not progressed. If you are married, if you are a married man, you are top priority, if you are a married woman, you are second priority, anybody else comes below that. They definitely treat married people far differently to single people” (Military, white, female)

The ‘traditional’ Service culture that primarily valued the “nuclear family” was felt to have further manifested in “outdated” and “ludicrous” policies. These comments were primarily made by RAF participants who spoke of extant policies that continued to prohibit non-married couples from living together. This was in spite of having children together or having been in a relationship for longer than some married personnel. These policies were felt to disadvantage those that did not conform to expected behaviours, or forced others into marriage in order to help families stay together. Rates of marriage are known to be higher in the UK military population, relative to the general population in England and Wales, most notably in the 18 to 29 year age group (Keeling, Wessely and Fear, 2016). Lundquist and Xu (2014) argue that the military (in the US) directly and indirectly promotes marriage through the provision of benefits (e.g. housing) for married personnel whilst also challenging the cohesion of relationships of those unmarried, when faced with separation due to location moves. This finding suggests that the military is seen as ‘out of step’ with wider societal trends and places a value upon marital status that is not shared by all of its personnel.

Issues arose when assumptions were made that membership of a particular demographic group predicted individual needs and preferences. For example, there was evidence of variation in females’ response to becoming a parent. Some retained a strong sense of duty and commitment to their career; some felt that they needed to pursue a ‘job’ rather than a career; whilst others considered that they would need to change their focus entirely. Some males wanted to split childcare equally with their partner. It was evident that issues arose when assumptions were made about what an individual wanted (e.g. intent to deploy or not) or what was ‘best’ for the family, e.g. being told to get an ‘au pair’ or to put their child into boarding school. It was also notable that appraisals of Service life and of work-life balance were not fixed across the duration of a participant’s career (see also [REDACTED]). Deployments were often keenly desired when personnel were young(er) with no personal commitments. Work may have taken up a greater proportion of their time but this was not perceived negatively. As personal circumstances changed, a focus on their personal life became more important and deployments became the greatest challenge to this. This highlights the need to consider individual needs and expectations but also how they may vary across the life span.

5.6.3 Psychological and Physical Wellbeing

There was a stigma surrounding mental illness in the military, which prevented personnel from admitting to problems or engaging in help-seeking behaviours. Most comments were provided by (white) RAF and Army OR who reported that mental illness was seen as a sign of “*weakness*”. There was an indication that it may be harder for males to come forward as participants spoke of an “*alpha male*” culture in the Services where mental illness was seen as a “*lack of manliness*”. Reluctance to admit to a problem or to seek assistance was further linked to “*military bravado*” and a culture that could be “*cut throat*”. It was evident that having a mental health problem or admitting to psychological difficulties was seen to be going against “*core [Service] values ... core expectations*” and perceived to be an admission that the individual did not have the attributes and characteristics that they felt the Services demanded.

“[There is] that cultural thing where the RAF wants you to be robust and strong and to be able to withstand anything and if you don’t do that; then if you were to stick your hand up and say well, actually, I don’t, then oh! Or move onto the next, get rid of him, move onto the next, we need someone that’s strong” (Military, white, male)

In a strong minority of instances, there was evidence to support these perceptions, with personnel reporting being labelled “an embarrassment to [their] rank” when raising mental health problems, or wider issues with psychological wellbeing being “swept under the carpet”. The indication was that, in addition to the organisational culture, these responses arose from excessive Service demands and were ignored as pressure to deliver took priority. The evidence suggests that participants internalised the wider organisational attitudes towards mental health and needed to see themselves as resilient and capable and to identify as “the strongest here”. Both stigma and perceived weakness have been identified as significant barriers to seeking mental health support amongst military personnel in previous studies (Hom, Stanley, Schneider and Joiner, 2017; [REDACTED]) and remain key challenges to be overcome. CS did not speak of mental health in relation to stigma though it was noted by a minority, who worked with military personnel, that the military culture was one where personnel were discouraged from showing “weakness”.

Within the military the reluctance to seek help for mental health problems was influenced by age and rank. A similar reluctance to seek help was not observed in the CS. A minority of military participants, who had joined the Services when the stigma around mental health was even greater, indicated that they would be unlikely to seek help even when they recognised the benefits of doing so. There was the suggestion that prior Service culture was deeply ingrained and difficult to overcome, highlighting a cohort, potentially more likely to be male, that may remain untreated.

“Back when I joined men didn’t show emotion, we just didn’t, if you had a problem you just dealt with it yourself” (Military, white, male)

Hom, Stanley, Schneider and Joiner (2017) identified concerns about the impact upon career as one of the most commonly cited barriers to seeking formal mental health support in military personnel. This is reflected in the findings from this study whereby participants (primarily Officers) were concerned that admitting to a problem or seeking help from the organisation would be detrimental to their career, either through impacting upon their ability to fulfil requirements of the role or their ability to deploy. Many participants were keenly aware of the policy relating to being medically downgraded and the associated impact upon their ability to conduct full duties. Personnel were concerned that such a downgrade would negatively impact their reports and their chances of promotion. Further, participants worried about being viewed by colleagues as someone attempting to dodge responsibilities, or actively attempting to “stitch somebody else up” by asking others to take on their duties. This suggests that pressure to ‘keep quiet’ is exerted from the organisation, from peers and from the individual themselves.

Overseas deployment was felt primarily by RM and (male) Army participants to have negatively impacted their mental health due to greater and repeated exposure to stressors. These included direct and indirect exposure to death or serious injury of serving personnel (including friends) or civilians; proximity to the front line; and constant pressure, stress and uncertainty. In a few instances an operational tour was seen to exacerbate existing problems or become a ‘crunch point’ where participants knew they would have to seek help. This aligns with research by Coleman, Stevelink, Hatch, Denny and Greenberg (2017), who reported that treatment is often not sought by military personnel until a ‘crisis’ point. Across the sample, there was a suggestion that Operations were typically thought of as a trigger for mental health problems, most often Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Whilst participants spoke of other factors impacting mental health there may still be a conceptualisation of psychological problems as being triggered by ‘overtly’ traumatic incidents on tour and manifesting as ‘PTSD’ (perhaps reinforced by the phrasing of support as ‘Trauma Risk’; and increased public interest in PTSD). Subsequently, there may be relatively more willingness to talk of PTSD, but less awareness, understanding and acceptance of other mental health issues. The extent to which PTSD is becoming the ‘expected’ or ‘accepted’ face of mental illness in military personnel (potentially to the detriment of recognising other stressors and other mental illnesses) may need to be further explored.

Some CS felt that military culture adversely impacted the health of both CS and military personnel. A minority of CS indicated that the military viewed CS as ‘lesser’ and could “bully” and “belittle” them (see Section 5.9.5). Other CS spoke of a “toxic” environment created by the military that they felt had resulted in poor mental health amongst military personnel. It was commented that whilst there was talk of the ‘Whole

Force' approach, attempts to improve mental health support could be more focused upon the military, with a sense that CS participants felt that they were on the periphery.

It was evident that characteristics of the workplace negatively impacted upon the mental health and wellbeing of participants, leading to reports of anxiety, depression and/or general work-related stress.

This was apparent across the sample, with the exception of male CS participants in the higher grades who were less likely to report mental health issues. In some instances both military and CS participants reported having felt suicidal or reaching *"breaking point"* and taking time off sick. Compromised wellbeing in the Defence environment is in line with literature highlighting that stressors in the 'everyday' (non-deployed) military environment significantly impacts psychological wellbeing (Brooks and Greenberg, 2018). Participants often reported that it was an accumulation of stressors that resulted in poor mental health, sometimes interacting with personal life events, such as bereavement, divorce or relationship difficulties or poor physical health. The factors in the workplace associated with negative health outcomes aligned with those identified by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) as known occupational 'hazards' (i.e. features of the design, organisation and management of work) that can compromise physical and/or psychological health (MacKay, Cousins, Kelly, Lee, and McCaig, 2004). These hazards relate to job demands; control over the way personnel work; clarity of role and responsibilities; and the support available to them (HSE, 2017). Across the sample, there was evidence of a high volume and quick pace of work, often attributed to a lack of resources and the participant *"triple hatting"*, with lack of support or direction in the management of their workload. Refusal of alternative working practices (which were sometimes used by CS to manage existing health problems), micro-management, or a complete absence of management (most notable in the CS), were also reported. Redundancies, ongoing organisational change and job instability (again, notable in the CS), with little formal support, was also observed. In the CS, it was notable the number of participants who specifically reported experiencing work-related stress and/or who felt that the MOD had a significant problem with work-related stress. An ongoing requirement to manage increasing volumes of work with stretched resources was often considered by CS participants to be the key factor in undermining their and their colleague's resilience and mental wellbeing. Further, accounts of bullying and poor relationships with line managers (and, to a lesser extent, colleagues) were given (see Influential Working Relationships, Section 5.7.2). These relate to the known hazards pertaining to conflict or poor relationships at work and lack of support and communication during organisational change (HSE, 2017).

As with mental illness, participants felt that the military perceived physical injury or physical ill health as a sign of weakness, which compromised access to care and attendance to injury.

Military participants reported personnel as being rigidly categorised as either *"weak or strong"* according to their physical health. This was not evident in the CS sample but cut across ethnicity and gender in the military. Ability to uptake medical rehabilitation services or adhere to physiotherapy rehabilitation schedules or to even have an injury/illness acknowledged could be compromised by a number of factors. This included having problems *"palmed off"* or not taken seriously. There was self-induced pressure to return before full fitness was regained, likely driven by the need to be seen as *"strong"* and a reluctance to be seen as being *"on the biff"* or pulling *"a fast one"*. This was further exacerbated by a reported belief that some personnel lack intent to recover from injury. Participants were at pains to distance themselves from this cohort and the negative appraisals that they attracted. It was also apparent that pressure was exerted by the organisation to return to work/ continue with training, with threats or *"warning orders"* put in place. This was in spite of many of the injuries/problems occurring as a consequence of activity in the workplace, be it from physical training, sport or exercise.

"There was a culture of pass out of the course and deal with [the injury] when you get to first unit"
(Military, white, male)

A concern that injury will compromise career prospects was evident across the Services. Some participants felt that an injury had set back their career due to not being able to deploy, go on a tour or go on adventure training. In some instances, undergoing extensive medical investigations within the Services heightened their fear that they may not be able to remain in the Service.

There was some evidence of a RAF aircrew culture of keeping quiet about injuries. Participants spoke of a tendency to seek (private) medical support due to a fear that *"the minute they say something, they will be grounded"*.

Officers may face relatively greater pressure to demonstrate “physical leadership”. This is irrespective of the actual physical fitness levels required by their branch. This led to reluctance to seek help and could encourage behaviours that either increase the potential risk of injury or exacerbate existing problems.

“There are always jokes...the officers don’t go sick unless a bone’s actually sticking out of the skin and things like that. You think that’s how someone ended up not getting a cancer diagnosis for several months after he should have because he just ignored it. That’s how you end up with people making injuries worse because they think a small injury is just a small injury. They keep pushing through it” (Military, white, female)

Despite noted barriers to seeking help, military provision for physical and mental health problems was spoken of highly. This included the speed of access and quality of support services. Physical rehabilitation was frequently described as “first class” and mental health services as “outstanding”.

“The primary healthcare system in the Army is brilliant – it is absolutely outstanding ... the DCMH [defence community mental health], occupational health, all those individuals and actually to a degree the chain of command – all work really, really well together” (Military, white, male)

The greatest improvements were felt to have been made in the area of mental health, with operations in Afghanistan being cited as a key driver for progress, including the emergence of Trauma Risk Management (more commonly known as ‘TRiM’). It was noted that by formalising a response in a manner familiar to serving personnel it helped to bring issues out into the open. Most of these comments were made by Army personnel and may reflect the relatively greater impact that the conflict in Afghanistan had upon this Service. Overall, it was felt that the organisation better appreciated the need to acknowledge and attend to mental health issues and had actively sought to raise awareness, leading to the perception that people would be more likely to come forward. However, as noted, the persisting stigma surrounding mental health and the importance placed upon physical strength and health acts as a barrier to help-seeking.

Whilst recent improvements in the CS support for mental well-being were acknowledged, formal support was not seen as extensive or effective with excessive responsibility placed upon line management to deal with mental health issues in the workforce. Improvements noted included the introduction of mental health first aiders and a push to raise awareness of mental health. However, changes in the nature of support provided were viewed negatively. Remote support (employee welfare service) via a telephone call with “someone three hundred miles away” was not felt to offer the support that local ‘face-to-face’ services had previously provided. The current ‘remote’ forms of support were felt to create problems with establishing rapport and continuity of care (i.e. being able to speak with the same person each time). The implementation of these services was linked to the withdrawal of local Human Resources and Occupational Health departments. This was noted to have led to greater expectations being placed upon line managers to deal with wellbeing, though the adequacy of their training to identify and deal with indicators of workplace stress or mental illness was questioned. This was said to have a negative impact on personnel, with some participants reporting that line management did not support them with existing psychological problems or when new problems arose. For example, by failing to provide adequate support or direction to enable participants to perform in their role (so increasing stress levels) or by creating an excessive workload for the participant; failing to respond to/acknowledge participants when they highlighted that they were suffering from work-related stress; or calling participants about work-related issues when the participant was signed off sick. Some CS participants who had line management responsibilities echoed these concerns by highlighting that they felt ill equipped to deal with mental health issues amongst their staff and were unsupported when they did try to manage issues. Interestingly, when compared to the military, it was notable that CS were more likely to reference physical symptoms of psychological problems (difficulty sleeping, breathing or being sick) although it was suggested that they (and their colleagues) did not always immediately identify these symptoms as linked to mental health, further suggesting a lack of understanding of how some aspects of mental health problems may manifest.

There was some suggestion that health services may be less readily available for Reservists. Some Reservists spoke of not having the same access as Regulars to dental and medical care. Whilst this was not seen to be too problematic, it was felt that this could become an issue if they were to work elsewhere for an extended period. A lack of mental health/psychiatric nurses in Reserve units led to a belief that support was superficial and limited to “leaflets”. There was a suggestion that Reservists lacked the social support that was afforded to Regulars when they returned from deployment. Difficulties adjusting and lack of contact with other military personnel who understood the experience of deployment was noted to increase a sense of



isolation. Informal support, from personnel with shared experiences, has been noted to be important for Reservists ([REDACTED]).

“I’d shared a room [on deployment] with three other people, and you just miss that when you come back, and a lot of people who join the Reserves, after their first deployment come back and can’t cope, because a Regular will come back to what they left, but Reserves don’t” (Military, white, female)

These findings align with those of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], who identified that a perceived lack of support from the military and difficulties transitioning and reintegrating to civilian life increased Reservists’ vulnerability to mental health issues.

Line management/Chain of Command behaviours impacted wellbeing of Regular serving personnel and CS. Many line managers/Chain of Command were said to display positive behaviours through: encouraging personnel to get help for health problems; listening to their concerns; altering participants’ duties to reduce workplace stress; or accommodating the need to attend medical appointments during worktime. The ability to have a phased return to work after ill health was notably valued in the CS. Conversely, there were some instances of line managers making it difficult for personnel to attend to medical needs either through time off or through accommodation in the workplace. There was a suggestion, from a minority of females, that there was a lack of understanding and management of the menopause within the CS. Other behaviours cited include intrusive questions, or failing to attend to highlighted workplace stressors. It was apparent that line managers in the CS influence the extent to which policies are implemented and therefore their effect.

“My experience is that the safeguards that the system tries to build in actually don’t work. It still comes down to ‘is your boss a decent human being or not’” (Military, white, male)

In the CS, policies are not applied consistently and are sometimes used to ‘punish’ rather than support personnel during periods of ill-health. Participants said that managers interpret policies differently. For example, threatening personnel with formal warnings for legitimate periods of sick leave, or suspensions or reprimands for seemingly minor deviations (‘throwing the rule book’ at personnel), which escalated the problem. In some instances it was felt that there were attempts to oust an individual from their post during a period of sick leave, adding to an individual’s distress.

Across the sample there were instances of significant organisational support during times of personal crisis. Irrespective of gender or ethnicity, when faced with, for example, the death or serious illness/injury of relatives, participants cited examples of good levels of support. This helped to alleviate the participant’s sense of distress about work commitments, engendering positive appraisals of the organisation as a whole, as well as the individual actors who had responded sensitively and practically to their needs. It was notable that the military, in particular, were felt to excel in the provision of support during times of personal crisis. This included an *“extraordinary effort”* to rapidly mobilise resources to bring the Service person back home regardless of their (often overseas) location. Beyond the immediate crisis, extensive compassionate leave was in evidence, including time off to support family, leading to evaluations of the Service support as *“fantastic”* and *“remarkable”*.

“I could just go really at the drop of a hat. And my (family member died), I was given time off to go to her funeral. When my (other family member) died I was given time off to sort things out. I just feel though whenever I’ve got a major issue in my life that I’ll be looked after” (Military, white, male)

There was a suggestion that discretion could be used in the military to manage an individual’s absence according to their personal needs. However, across the CS, rigid adherence to policy was sometimes seen to occur to the detriment of providing the support that it was arguably designed to deliver. For example, duration of compassionate leave was not always felt to be sufficient and return to work sometimes occurred before personnel felt ready, due to pressure from management or concerns over loss of income.

Work, Family and Wellbeing - Key Messages and Actions

- Childbirth challenged some Regular females’ ability to attain expected fitness standards on return to work whilst also introducing the possibility of longer term health problems. A lack of awareness of these outcomes was seen to manifest in lack of guidance and support to regain fitness. Greater understanding of females’ needs post-partum (including the provision of *suitable* facilities for them to breastfeed in the workplace) is needed. Individual differences in recovery will also need to be accommodated. Tri-service collaboration to identify (successful) initiatives already in place to

support females may help to signpost areas where original research is needed and where the Services can learn from each other as to what guidance or strategies have best effect.

- The role of primary care giver typically fell to females and they experienced the greatest difficulties managing work and family life. This was most notable in the Services and is a continued threat to females remaining with and progressing within the organisation. Single mothers and those who were part of a dual serving couple faced the greatest challenges. Whilst ‘family friendly’ policies were noted to be in place, under resourcing, high demand (workload) and varying degrees of acceptance of flexible or alternative working by line management (most notably in the CS) compromised the implementation of these policies. Moreover, seeking greater domestic stability could lead to selection of roles that disadvantaged career progression. A key challenge is to explore how to engender a culture that truly supports flexible working for all. Reviewing how to recognise and reward individual merit and potential outside of career paths or roles traditionally viewed as ‘necessary’ for progression may also help to diversify the workplace.
- The expectation that participants would demonstrate total commitment to a role was very much in evidence. In the military, this manifested in the ‘Service first’ ethos. Whilst it was observed to a lesser extent in the CS, it was apparent that primary importance was placed upon full time work. This highlights how females who take time off for maternity, take on the role of primary care giver, and are the key users of alternative forms of working (e.g. reduced hours, flexible working) are more likely than males to be ‘devalued’ in the workplace. Where the working environment remains male dominated there may be no apparent ‘incentive’ to change: the majority do not directly benefit and the ‘male’ model of ‘commitment’ remains the reference point. Altering organisational culture is not an easy task: Further research is needed to better understand how to manage these perceptions, which are likely exacerbated by lack of personnel and high Service demand. Some areas for consideration are re-evaluation of the perception of what a ‘good’ Service person or CS ‘looks like’; reward based upon merit rather than overly linked to “*time-served*”; and a movement away from flexible working or part time working being perceived as only applicable to females.
- Work-life balance was important to all participants; however, perceptions of conflict and the periods at which they emerged varied by gender and personal circumstances. Work demands were greater for Service personnel given the greater level of commitment. Females were most likely to struggle to manage due to the aforementioned dual demands of family and work. Males (mainly those in the military) were more likely to perceive conflict between work and family further along their career and as the impact of separation from family took its ‘toll’. Some single personnel (primarily military) felt their work-life balance was compromised as they were seen as ‘ever available’ for deployments or short notice taskings. Across the sample, a lack of work-life balance was seen to negatively impact organisational commitment and, most notably in the military, a reconsideration of the continued viability of Service life. This highlights the importance of considering the needs of the entire workforce, rather than making provision of support contingent upon marital status⁵⁸, as well as identifying, and exploring how to accommodate changing priorities.
- Having a mental health problem or (to a lesser extent) a physical health problem was seen as a weakness in the military. These attitudes were not evident in the CS. There was a strong stigma attached to admitting to problems, which inhibited help-seeking behaviour. This was in spite of increased efforts by the organisation, noted by participants, to raise awareness of mental illness and to encourage personnel to come forward. Key challenges relate to managing the tension between organisational messaging around the need for a Service person to be strong and capable and the perception of mental or physical illness as a threat to this. Whilst previous research has identified and recommended strategies to mitigate stigma and increase help-seeking it remains a pervasive problem. An evaluation of current Defence strategies in the field of mental health to determine their relative impact as well as assessment of programmes which are specifically aimed at reducing stigma would be beneficial. [REDACTED] recommended the use of longitudinal studies (and control groups)

⁵⁸ It is understood that a ‘Future Accommodation Model’ is under development and will apply to Service personnel with/without families, whether they are single, in a relationship or married. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-accommodation-model-what-you-need-to-know/what-you-need-to-know-about-fam>

to evaluate interventions aimed at reducing stigma. Review of the literature may also help to determine if all evidence based recommendations have been implemented or whether further action is needed to encourage help-seeking behaviours.

- Aspects of the working environment related to high workload, under-resourcing, lack of support, uncertainty, and effort-reward imbalance were seen to negatively impact psychological wellbeing. In some instances, there was evidence of depression, anxiety and suicidal intent. High Service demands with reduced resourcing and an organisational culture of 'Service first' that was observed across the MOD present a key challenge. There is no easy redress for this; whilst some of the stressors may not be able to be immediately addressed (e.g. lack of resources) there needs to be consideration of how to best mitigate the impact of these factors in both the short and long term.
- It was evident that there was variable implementation of policies. This was most notable in the CS. Where policies was applied rigidly, ignored or incorrectly interpreted it was often the source of much conflict as well as a source of distress to participants. The MOD may benefit from developing a greater understanding of why this is happening, e.g. whether it is deliberate or via lack of knowledge.

5.7 Influential Working Relationships

This theme discusses how leaders, managers and key influential others were central to shaping participants' everyday experiences within MOD, including attitudes towards D&I.

This theme comprises the following sub-themes:

- Senior Leadership and Organisational Culture.
- Line Management as a Source of Discrimination and/or Inclusion.
- Role Models and Mentors.

Points to note: Most findings emerged during the general interview discourse. The majority of comments relating to senior leaders outside of an individual's immediate line management were provided by CS participants. Military comments were primarily drawn from the Regulars. Proportionately fewer comments were made by Reservists. This may be due to senior leaders and line management in their civilian employment exerting greater influence. Where comments were provided, they were largely in line with those of the Regulars.

Synopsis

The degree of discriminatory attitudes and behaviours that females and BAME participants were exposed to was strongly influenced by how inclusive their line manager/Chain of Command was. This was most evident in the military. The behaviours of management informed the culture of the unit/department at the local level and signalled what behaviours were acceptable or prohibited in the immediate environment. Management could also be the direct source of discrimination. Senior leaders set the tone and culture of the organisation and were vital in influencing the credibility of key diversity messages. Across the sample, it was evident that participants detected the differences between leaders that were sincere and engaged with D&I and those that lacked interest and paid 'lip service' to the issues. Role models were particularly important for females and ethnic minority groups; visibility of female and BAME personnel in senior posts made attainment of a similar role appear feasible. However, it was important that these role models demonstrated desirable traits, and were perceived as somebody that the participant could 'turn into'. Several factors served to undermine perceptions that the organisation was inclusive or that females or BAME personnel could reach the 'top' levels. This included a cohort of senior leaders (most notable in the CS) who were perceived to be overwhelmingly white, male and Oxbridge educated. Across the sample, there was commonality in the characteristics of line management/Chain of Command that were valued by participants. These attributes, which include fairness and 'moral courage' relate to those linked to 'authentic' leadership, which is associated with valuing and promoting individual differences and diversity of thought; and enhancing ethical behaviours.

5.7.1 Senior Leadership and Organisational Culture

The values and behaviours of leaders at the “*apex*” of the organisation were felt to have impacted credibility of organisational messaging on D&I. This was felt most keenly by females and BAME participants. Senior leaders appraised by participants as sincere in their commitment to diversity were felt to be “*engaged*” and “*passionate*” and readily demonstrated behaviours in line with their verbal or written D&I ‘pledges’. There was a sense that many of the initiatives were genuine attempts at improving diversity in the organisation, making minorities feel valued. Such buy-in was regarded as essential in a hierarchical organisation such as the MOD. High profile blogs (for example) were mentioned by many, as a very clear signifier that times have changed. Conversely, there were senior leaders who were noted to pay ‘lip service’ to D&I who were described as visibly disengaged and disinterested. Across the sample, it was apparent that participants readily identified leaders whose personal values did not seem to align with the wider organisational messaging or whose actions did not suggest real commitment to change or meaningful ‘buy in’.

“Our senior leadership do not personally invest in this, they’ll put their name to something and they want to be told what to do. But they aren’t themselves genuinely interested in finding out about other people, other ways of life and other perspectives” (CS, white, male)

Participants across the sample described behaviours of senior leaders that undermined the organisational message of commitment to D&I. For example, blogs published on the MOD intranet that related to minority groups and the push for diversity had attracted derogatory comments which were not redressed. Some participants found these comments objectionable but noted a lack of public rebuke or response from senior leaders. This acted to strengthen beliefs that commitment to diversity at the top level was superficial. It may also have served to suggest implicit support for the viewpoints expressed. Across the sample there were also examples of senior leaders making comments that revealed underlying sexist or racist attitudes (as recent as 2017) which were noted by females and BAME personnel. Often participants felt that these views were “*entrenched*” in these individuals or were the product of a military environment, whereby some personnel were not used to working with females. Some senior leaders were viewed as lacking interest in dealing with the complexity of D&I issues as it was “*too much hard work to do things properly*” or it was observed that they simply refused to acknowledge racism, even when confronted with evidence. This inactivity could have negative consequences. Kline (2014) concluded that a lack of commitment by senior management to address racial discrimination and inequality in the National Health Service (NHS) was identified as contributing to the organisation’s failure to improve racial equality. Moreover, evidence suggests that senior leaders play an important role in setting the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and modelling comfort with difference (See Shore, Cleveland and Sanchez, 2018). A lack of commitment to D&I may subsequently undermine the higher organisational messages and communicate that it is an issue that is not taken seriously. This highlights the importance of senior leaders demonstrating active and genuine commitment to D&I.

The perceived lack of diversity in terms of social class and schooling in senior leaders (most notably in the CS) was seen to further undermine organisational messaging around D&I. “*Elitism*”, (“*what university you went to, or what private school you went to*”) was felt to be clearly evident at the top of the CS hierarchy. In addition to being primarily white and male, senior CS were felt to all “*look the same, and talk the same*” and to be largely Oxbridge educated and drawn from a narrow socio-economic band. This was referenced by (mostly) CS C grades and upwards, however these perceptions of SCS have been reported by BAME personnel in other studies (Ethnic Dimension, 2014). Participants (most notably BAME and females) felt that senior posts were filled by a “*similar type*”. Within the military, elitism was associated with specific regiments (Guards, Cavalry) and also felt to be expressed in the allocation of high profile roles to those from certain social backgrounds, even when they had been outperformed by those from a ‘lower’ social class. Whilst there were exceptions and instances of social mobility, similar class divisions were reflected in the hierarchy with many Officer participants identifying themselves as middle-class and from private school backgrounds. Military participants said that those with different accents, or educational achievements were sometimes “*mocked*”. Participant’s perceptions align with previous data on the educational backgrounds of MOD personnel. A report by the Sutton Trust (Kirby, 2016) highlighted that only 23% of top SCS attended comprehensive schools and 51% of SCS who were university attendees were Oxbridge educated. Only 12% of senior military Officers (2 star or above) attended comprehensive schools.

5.7.2 Line Management as a Source of Discrimination and/or Inclusion

Whilst senior leaders drove the organisational culture, the Chain of Command/line management were considered across the sample to be paramount in shaping the culture at a local level. This included the extent to which the immediate working environment was inclusive. This strongly shaped the experiences of female and BAME participants by controlling the level of discrimination or inclusion they were exposed to. Management's influence was greatest in the military. This may be due to the socialisation of deference to rank and the authority or "power" held by those in command.

"It is always up to the Chain of Command, they determine the tone from the word 'go'. And that filters down from the very top to the very bottom and that probably has the biggest impact on how anyone, a woman, or someone from an ethnic minority actually enjoys their time in the Army" (Military, BAME, female)

There was some evidence that the influence of management upon the unit/department was recognised by the white male majority. This included general observations of Regiments instilling a sense of belonging and contentment where management was inclusive. This is in line with findings by Ellemers and Rink (2016) who note that where all employees feel included and valued, an organisational climate that fosters the benefits of diversity is observed. Prior research conducted by Magerøy, Lau, Riise and Moen (2009) found that fair leadership (as well as equal treatment and innovative climate) was associated with less observed bullying in the Royal Norwegian Navy, highlighting the influence management have upon the culture of the wider environment. Within our study, some participants recognised that there were "pockets" where bias or prejudice was evident and instilled in the wider working environment. For example a "racist boss" would engender a regiment with "racist undertones". Participants' ability to challenge or change the local climate was felt to be limited; there was a sense that personnel in positions of authority sometimes lacked accountability for their actions.

Across the sample, there was evidence of participants feeling bullied, singled out or undermined by line management/Chain of Command. These experiences were most notable in severity and in number for BAME females. CS BAME females in lower grades spoke of military personnel that bullied, ignored or overruled them as "just admin". With BAME and female personnel more likely to be represented at lower grades in the CS (Cabinet Office, 2018), and 'feminised' roles, such as administration often devalued, this group may face poorer treatment. Research by Reed and Bullis (2009) reported on the impact of destructive⁵⁹ leadership behaviours upon (US) senior military Officers and civilian employees: Whilst all participants were exposed to negative or 'destructive' leadership behaviours, the numbers of incidences were greater for those in the lower Officer ranks/civilian grades. This lends some support for the suggestion that rank or grade may influence the extent to which an individual is exposed to negative behaviours from management. Common to both military BAME males and females were experiences of being labelled as "insubordinate" and a feeling that "nothing [was] ever good enough". Participants spoke of being singled out by their management and not understanding why, making it difficult to manage or address the situation. As outlined in the theme of Belonging and Social Identity, research has highlighted that minority groups experience times of invisibility, for example, when seeking recognition of their professional achievements, whilst at other times they are subject to 'hypervisibility' resulting in over-scrutiny. One outcome of this is that they work harder to prove themselves (see Settles, Buchanan and Dotson, 2018).

"Then I had a second boss ... for the first time I just felt somebody just didn't see me as a capable person, for what I was, you know, it was constant. It's as if I constantly had to do more to prove myself and I found that really, really frustrating...I'd never given her a reason to distrust my work, or anything. If anything I'd actually done more to try and prove myself" (Military, BAME, female)

White females also highlighted incidents, in the recent past, of working alongside male managers who disliked being challenged by females or who made "jokey" sexist comments, which undermined the female's authority over subordinates. These were reported in addition to more overt instances of sexism, e.g. comments being made on their appearance or being made to take on gendered roles (typing, making the tea). White males reported fewer incidents to suggest they were being singled out by management, though where it occurred it was often attributed to "personality clashes". This reinforces the idea that fitting in and

⁵⁹ Measures of arbitrariness, self-aggrandizement, belittling subordinates, lack of consideration, a forcing style of conflict resolution, discouraging initiative, and non-contingent punishment.

any difference (appearance, values, attitude, gender) from the 'norm' may underpin issues, i.e. the greater the distance from the accepted norm, the worse the treatment that individual may face (see Belonging and Social Identity, Section 5.8).

Minority groups may be exposed to relatively more workplace stressors known to compromise mental health. Minority groups spoke of feeling “*miserable*” or “*helpless*” in response to bullying or difficulties with line management. Bullying is known to compromise mental wellbeing and there is substantial support for the relationship between leadership behaviours and employee wellbeing. For example, a meta-analysis by Harms, Crede, Tynan, Leon and Jeung (2017) found that lower levels of subordinate stress and burnout were associated with higher levels of transformational leadership and quality leader-member exchange (ability to count on the leader for support). Higher levels of stress and burnout were associated with ‘abusive’ leadership (hostile behaviours).

5.7.3 The Importance of Role Models and Mentors

Whilst role models were important for participants across the sample, the greatest impact was upon female and BAME participants. Where there was increased visibility of senior females, this boosted the aspirations of females. However, where there was lack of representation of minority groups at senior levels it undermined beliefs that these levels could be attained. This was most notable for ethnic minorities as a lack of representation of BAME role models at senior levels was noted and was described by BAME participants as demotivating. This aligns with previous research studies where a lack of BAME SCS was felt to be “*demoralising*” to BAME personnel (Ethnic Dimension, 2014). In this current study a lack of role models contributed to a perception that there was no opportunity for the participant to achieve a place in the organisation. It was implied that participants made a judgement about how they aligned with the expected “*mould*” and drew conclusions about how likely they could attain higher status based upon this.

“I did think whether my ethnicity would be an issue...I felt that I could come in here, and I could go up to a certain level, and I strongly felt that if you take it as a triangle, and you’re obviously working your way up, that career path...I always thought that you can’t have the top part of the triangle...it’s reserved. It’s that kind of elitism...I really did think that it’s going to be pointless trying to because after a certain level it’s reserved for the elites and who’s gone to a certain type of university or from a certain group, and of course, from a certain ethnic background” (CS, BAME, male)

There was a sense that these beliefs sometimes became unquestioned assumptions. This may prohibit active attempts by participants to seek progression or undermine confidence, or self-efficacy, in their ability to attain specific roles/rank.

Senior leaders from minority groups needed to be appraised as having desirable traits in order for them to be appraised as ‘role models’. This included attitudes and behaviours that the participant valued. For example, some (military) females referenced female line managers who they felt adopted overtly ‘masculine’ traits (and who levied harsher treatment to other females) in order to prove themselves in a predominately male environment. This may be understood in light of Social Identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) which may lead an individual to adopt an identity to align with the dominant attitudes and behaviours of the group they have become a member of. For minority group participants, the absence of desired traits could lead the participant to question to what extent they belonged, or whether they had a future in the organisation. This was because they could not see anyone that they felt they could “*turn into*”. Conversely, the presence of an individual ‘like you’, be it of the same gender, ethnicity or social class (most notable in the CS) and with desired attributes, helped to “*inspire*” the participant, making the possibility of attaining a similar status more viable and increasing general motivation to persevere during challenging periods.

There were commonalities in the characteristics and behaviours of line managers/the Chain of Command that participants held in esteem. Irrespective of the gender or ethnicity of participants, where line managers were admired, respected or viewed as role models or mentors, they were typically characterised as fair; supportive; often direct (straight talking) but approachable; open to other’s views; trusting of others; able to demonstrate moral courage (“*Being prepared to do the right thing as opposed to the easy thing*”); and willing to give participants opportunity to develop in their role and career.

“[My boss was the] voice of reason in any situation - level headed, fiercely fair, totally practical, good delegator, he didn’t try and trip you up but instead gave you the space to do it. He understood my strengths

and weaknesses and what I needed to do [to progress]. He let me run things. I knew when to go to him for advice” (Military, BAME, male)

These characteristics show some similarity to those purported to be held by ‘authentic leaders’, who are seen as shaping the attitudes and behaviours of subordinates. Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans and May (2004) wrote, “...authentic leaders exemplify directness, openness, commitment to the success of followers, a willingness to acknowledge their own limitations, transparency and a commitment to be held accountable for their actions and reward honesty and integrity. Such leadership behaviors enable followers to connect with their leaders and the values, beliefs, goals and activities that are identified with the leader over time”, (p. 807-808).

Therefore, the characteristics of management valued by personnel are also those noted to confer benefits for recognition and inclusion of diversity. Research has highlighted that this style of management is associated with valuing and promoting individual differences and diversity of thought, and enhancing ethical behaviours of those they influence (see Avolio et al (2004); Arda, Aslan and Alpan (2016)). Minority group (typically female) participants speculated that leaders’ personal experiences engendered these positive behaviours. For example, some military females attributed inclusive behaviour to their line management/Chain of Command having daughters; having prior experience of working with females; or using their (sometimes negative) life experiences as a catalyst to create positive experiences for their team. What was reported as important was their experience and individual disposition, rather than branch/trade.

“The college adjutant at the time ... was very pro women in the military and had worked with and had seen women doing hard jobs and doing them well – even though he was an Infanteer by background, [he] had a very refreshing attitude” (Military, white, female)

Across the sample, positive line management/Chain of Command was often the difference between a person leaving or deciding to stay. Where white females or BAME participants perceived they had experienced difficulties due to their gender/ethnicity, they reported that a line manager could ameliorate or exacerbate these existing issues. This was most notable in the Services where it was believed that a “good leader” created a “good Regiment”. Across the sample, management influenced the amount of personal gains that a participant felt they made. These gains include feeling respected, valued, supported and empowered. In turn, these influenced job satisfaction, overall appraisal of the organisation and affective commitment, including work ethic (working harder for someone who is respected). It was notable that participants sought to model or “emulate” the best attributes and behaviours of management in order to inform how they managed others. This highlights how behaviours of leaders may permeate through the organisation.

Personnel outside of a participant’s team/Chain of Command (often senior to them) were also influential in providing informal support. Whilst this was found across the sample, it was most notable in the military and was most often referenced by minority groups. It was apparent that whilst the influential person was often senior to the participant, there was a similarity between the participant and the ‘supportive other’ (be it gender, ethnicity, social class, background, trade) that underpinned the development of the relationship and the exchange of support. This led to supportive relationships between males and females, personnel from different ethnicities, different ranks/grades and, in some instances different Services. Personnel often maintained contact with these ‘supportive others’ across their career with a sense that these individuals helped the participant to navigate elements of their working life through application of their own experience.

In turn, participants across the sample sought to support others. For females and BAME participants, there was a desire to encourage diversity and to “empower” others from minority backgrounds. This included offering career coaching; encouraging females to “stand up for themselves”; answering informal queries (“Is there a glass ceiling?”); or providing support on personal challenges that they had also experienced (e.g. being a single working mother). A number of BAME participants spoke of BAME personnel approaching them for advice. Again, some of this was informal queries (“Is it fair when you are promoted?”); advice to F&C BAME personnel or support with job applications and interview techniques. For F&C BAME participants it was important that they had someone who understood their background and some of the challenges that arose from living and working in the UK. BAME personnel often have networks concentrated at lower levels of an organisation, thus restricting their opportunities to receive guidance from more senior personnel or from social networks (McDonald, 2011; Tomlinson, Muzio, Sommerlad, Webley and Duff, 2013). These

findings suggest that these informal ‘mentors’ and ‘supportive others’ play an important role in providing support and guidance that some minority groups may otherwise not have access to.

Participants’ stated motivation to support others was sometimes driven by their desire to provide support that they themselves had not received. This was evident across the sample, but was most notable in the military. Support, therefore, was often given to subordinates or lower grades and related to both general support and career advice. Within the CS, support was often formalised in official mentoring schemes with B and C grades most likely to say that they offered mentoring. Reverse mentoring was also spoken of positively as facilitating awareness between different grades, genders and ethnicities. Coaching and ‘buddying’ were referenced at grades D and below. In other instances, there was the suggestion that others were proactive in providing guidance because they witnessed an injustice; had the authority or capacity to make a difference; or saw it to be a requirement of their rank. For example, Army Officers/Senior Non Commissioned Officers spoke of “*moral courage, values and standards*” and of “*doing the right thing*” for those working for them. Support was often described as “*paternalistic*” and where participants were able to offer guidance or advice, this often led to a sense of enjoyment and satisfaction. Some participants reported a sense of “*privilege*” for being able to command and lead others, suggesting support is more than an obligation or duty. This was most notable in the military, perhaps due to the greater emphasis upon the team.

Influential Working Relationships - Key Messages and Actions

- Participants readily identified those senior leaders who lacked ‘true’ engagement and commitment to D&I. In some instances there were cited examples of discriminatory attitudes in the very people who were supposed to be figureheads for D&I. This served to not only undermine the credibility of organisational messaging but led to further damage when senior leaders failed to act against those that had publicly demonstrated derogatory attitudes towards minority groups. Placement of leaders who demonstrate belief in D&I is needed to ensure that organisational messaging on D&I has the intended impact. Consideration may need to be given as to how to ‘select’ leaders who are the ‘face’ of D&I as well as further exploration of how D&I messaging is received within the organisation. [REDACTED] highlighted that diversity “champions” should be those that are committed to the cause; have sufficient time to devote to the issue as well as being people with the requisite authority to make a difference within the organisation.
- A lack of representation of minority groups at the highest levels of the CS and the military undermines some female and ethnic minority participants’ belief that these roles are open to them. Those role models that were visible were not always seen to be ‘authentic’, but rather as adopting the dominant values and behaviours of the existing culture. Minority group participants stressed that authentic role models are needed so that they feel that there is a place for them in the organisation. Steps to understand how diversity of thought and behaviour can be retained as personnel move through the grades/ranks may be needed as well as exploration of strategies to challenge minority groups’ perceptions that the senior levels are not ‘for them’.
- The MOD, most notably the CS, was felt to be elitist, valuing what school or university an individual had attended. This was felt to be most evident in the top levels of the organisation. In the military, individual ability was recognised but there were pockets of elitism whereby holders of a ‘higher’ social class were said to acquire the highest profile roles regardless of merit. This further undermined messaging about inclusivity as those who did not fit this mould were less likely to feel they could progress into senior roles. Steps to accept and facilitate diversity are needed across all levels of the organisation and recognition of social class as a factor should be a key part of this.
- Line management/Chain of Command had the greatest impact upon participants’ everyday experience of the organisation. There was evidence of behaviours and attitudes that were valued across the sample and which research suggests have benefit for embracing diversity. Understanding the drivers and barriers to the emergence of these behaviours and how they can be more widely disseminated through the organisation may be beneficial.
- Negative behaviours from Chain of Command/line management were reported across the sample including bullying, favouritism and abuses of power. BAME females seemed to suffer the most in terms of frequency and severity of event, often experiencing both sexism and racism. It was

frequently difficult for them to manage these situations as many of the negative experiences were not overt. Management have a strong influence over the culture of the local working environment and are therefore key in informing the participants' day-to-day experience of the workplace. This suggests that any attempts to improve D&I need to have genuine buy-in and acceptance from management. This may require exploration of where and why negative management behaviours emerge and how best to mitigate the likelihood of their occurrence.

- Line management as well as senior others often acted as role models or mentors, in informal or formalised interactions. Aside from support being seen as a requirement of rank, there was often a key trait similarity (be it gender, ethnicity, social class, background, trade) between the 'mentor' and the 'mentee' that led to the development of the relationship. A desire to make things better for others, often due to a personal understanding of what it was like to lack support or guidance, often acted as motivation. The organisation may wish to explore how it could exploit these behaviours to confer benefits upon a wider audience.

5.8 Belonging and Social Identity

This theme covers the extent to which individuals feel like a valued, accepted and legitimate member in their domain. Social identity refers to a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s) (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). A sense of belonging to social groups has long been recognised as an innate human need and an important driver of physical and psychological well-being (Tajfel and Turner, 1979).

This theme comprises the following sub-themes:

- Facilitators of Belonging.
- Barriers to Belonging.
- Social Activities and Belonging.
- Visibility and Isolation.
- Strategies for Managing Difference.
- Other Characteristics that Impact upon Belonging.

Points to note: This theme focuses upon the factors that participants identified as impacting upon their social identity and sense of belonging and the ways in which they attempted to fit in to the organisation. Data were generated through the discussion of critical incidents in the interviewee's timeline. Some of the issues that might impact upon an individual's sense of belonging such as the culture, HR and induction processes are discussed elsewhere in the report and will not be repeated here. The focus in this section is at the individual level, on people's experiences rather than their comments about the organisation as a whole.

Synopsis

The majority of those interviewed experienced a sense of belonging to the MOD and believed that it was a good place to work, however, there were clear differences in the extent to which participants felt they belonged and the ease with which they had fit in to the organisation. Almost all participants viewed the white male prototype, often characterised by alpha male traits (dominance, assertiveness, a strong physicality etc.) as pervasive across Defence (particularly in the military). This had a strong influence upon the extent to which those who did not fit the dominant male prototype felt that they were able to develop a sense of belonging. White males were largely unreflective about their own privilege and assumed the organisation operated as a meritocracy. This enabled them to develop a sense of identity based on their membership of a fair and equitable organisation where their successes were the result of their own skills and hard work. Females and BAME personnel found it harder to fit in initially and both military and CS participants reported challenges developing and maintaining their sense of belonging. Females and BAME personnel experienced a lack of fit due to stereotypes, lack of understanding and a lack of value being placed upon their skills and attributes. Females in particular felt that they were continually required to prove their competence. The lack of BAME personnel and females (in the military) in general, and particularly at more senior levels, meant that individuals from these groups suffered from excessive

visibility. This was found to be a double-edged sword; they were judged more harshly than white male peers but were also more likely to be remembered by senior personnel. Females at more senior levels across the MOD discussed feelings of isolation. They developed behavioural strategies to cope with this including developing more stereotypically masculine ways of operating. Similarly, BAME participants talked about the importance of playing down their difference in order to fit in. In the CS, African Caribbean participants were most likely to report difficulties fitting in and BAME females experienced most challenge developing a sense of belonging.

5.8.1 Facilitators of Belonging

Belonging was generally seen as unproblematic by the white male majority and respondents across the sample identified the importance of camaraderie and team work and how that created a sense of belonging to the organisation.

"We were all good friends, you know, we all, it wasn't just nine till five we saw each other and then we went home, you know, we'd tend to have, you know, not every day but we would try to get, you know, occasions outside of work where we would socialise, and things like that. So, you know, we, we'd learned, you know, how to work, work as a unit, how to work individually and, you know, sort of a good team spirit" (CS, white, male)

The white male population did not generally question the extent to which they fitted in as for the majority this was unproblematic; it was automatic, something they did not have to consider. However, when asked to consider this, many of them did recognise that their position as white males made it easier for them to fit in to a majority white male institution.

"I was a 6'2" white male from the north-east of England, I knew probably, unconsciously...at the time I never gave it a conscious thought but thinking about it now, I knew I was going to be able to fit into what the Army was then fairly easily" (Military, white, male)

The idea of the organisation as a meritocracy where people can progress on their own merits was supported by many participants but was most strongly supported by white males. Putting aside frustrations around time-related promotion, meritocracy was a strong narrative amongst white males across the sample where there was a general perception that gender and ethnicity has (or should have) little impact on the extent to which an individual feels they belong and can progress in the organisation. A few white male military participants talked at length about how *"standards should not be diluted"* by increasing numbers of females and were suspicious of any 'special accommodations' that were given to females in terms of strength or fitness tests. Across the sample the assumption of meritocracy and fairness enabled those who had done well to attribute their success to their own behaviour without acknowledging the influence/power of the situation whereby they fit the 'prototype'; a common attribution bias (Heider, 1958).

"I'd like to think everything that's positive or negative that's happened is because of who I am and what I have done, not because of where I'm from or how I speak" (Military, white, male)

White male participants often talked about their own experience of working hard *"proving themselves"* and *"fighting"* for what they wanted as the correct way to progress in the organisation, suggesting that others should get on and *"not have a chip on their shoulder"*. This view ignores the potential privilege that being part of the white male majority bestowed. It also ignores some of the disadvantages that members of certain social groups experience because of their relative position in society, for example material hardship, and restricted educational and other opportunities (Bakouri and Stearkle, 2015) that can disadvantage female and BAME personnel. Drawing on this type of narrative allows 'blame' or responsibility for the absence of female and BAME personnel in the higher ranks to lie with those minority groups; for example, in the case of females, the choice to become a mother or because they lack the right 'mentality'.

"I think with some of the females it might be more of a mentality thing from themselves, you know, certainly I've never seen any part of the organisation which demonstrates any sort of misogynist view or anything like that, it's completely neutral in that respect" (CS, white, male)

It is very common for the dominant majority to assume that they have earned their place in an organisation/society based entirely on their own merits. However, many years of research have identified

that definitions of skill and merit are not objective and fixed; they depend upon the views of those groups who have the power to define them – usually in their own image (see Duberley and Ashley, 2016). The specification of job requirements and working practices and assessments of people's attributes in relation to these requirements depends very much upon the subjective judgements of those in power. Wajcman (1998) sees merit as the blackbox of the equal opportunities process and argues that *"out-groups remain out-groups because in-groups assess them by reference to their own image"* (Wajcman, 1998, p. 158).

Female and BAME participants found achieving a sense of belonging more challenging than white males, but working in close collaboration with others helped. Being a member of a social group that is a numerical minority can lead people to feel less valued in their work team or by the organisation as a whole because of their social identity (Inzlicht, Aronson, Good and McKay, 2006; Veldman, Meeussen, Van Laar and Phalet, 2017). For females and BAME participants, achieving a sense of belonging was more difficult. They did, however, point to a number of factors that they felt helped them to fit in to the organisation. For military personnel this included going on deployment. Participants from all backgrounds commented that on deployment they felt part of the team as they had shared purpose and a common goal. Other factors that individuals pointed to as enhancing their sense of belonging included working together in small teams (*"people look out for each other naturally when you are in little teams"*) and social support from other team members. The importance of close collaboration to develop belonging is supported by literature (see Finseraas, Johnsen, Kotsadam and Torsvik, 2016) as it enables close communication and the development of empathy.

Relationships within the immediate work group had an important impact upon feelings of belonging. BAME personnel and females across the sample talked at length about the importance of social relations within their work team for developing a sense of belonging. Effective induction and good line management/Chain of Command were highlighted by all participants as important to supporting this.

"I'm very lucky, I think here on my current management team I have people who are really committed and really take people for what they are and not for what they look like" (Military, white, female)

Whilst the proliferation of D&I interest groups was noted as a positive step towards developing a diverse and more inclusive workplace, and networks were generally viewed positively across the whole MOD, there was very little discussion of them in terms of belonging. Discussion of networks may, in part, have been influenced by the launch of the Army's new BAME network in late 2017 (see Figure 2 and in Appendix I). Belonging appeared to depend far more on an individual's experience within their immediate work group, suggesting that whilst networks have a positive role to play, on their own they cannot create or make up for the lack of an inclusive work culture.

Military male BAME participants who were enthusiastic or talented sportspeople considered that they had a route into making friends with the white male population through the achievement of a common goal. They were quickly accepted and appreciated by their white peers for the contribution they could make on the 'sporting field'. Sport was mentioned by both F&C and UK BAME participants, though it seemed to be particularly important to F&C participants as a potential integrator. This is supported by existing theory examining the role of sport as a potential integrator (Hagerty, Williams, Coyne and Early, 1996). Many F&C BAME participants spoke of sport being one of the aspects of the AF that had attracted them at recruitment and participants who were keen sportspeople spoke of how beneficial sport was to their sense of belonging in the organisation (see also Organisational Culture, Section 5.9.4).

The accommodation of religious and dietary requirements enabled BAME participants to feel valued. Examples were given of accommodations that had been made such as the recognition of the needs of Muslims observing Ramadan and better availability of particular types of food. Participants spoke positively about how this made them feel more valued.

"Your dietary needs are, are logged... And sent to the deployment point and the needs are addressed where, whenever you are there. And yeah, like I say it works to an extent. It's not perfect but, you know, it's a start process that says, 'we are listening'" (Military, BAME, male)

A small number of military females commented that wearing a uniform was a potential facilitator of belonging. It was felt that the uniform removed the potential of being judged on the basis of appearance and clothing choice, which was seen as being particularly problematic for females. That said, as discussed in

Section 5.8.2 below, frustrations were also expressed at the lack of appropriately sized or poorly designed clothing for females, which negatively impacted on their sense of belonging.

5.8.2 Barriers to Belonging

A clear prototype of masculinity and how to behave is embedded within the culture of Defence, as evident from what participants said. Many participants discussed the stereotypically masculine types of behaviour that were valued in the MOD, including assertiveness, banter and dominance. This is a clear example of hegemonic masculinity; defined as a practice that legitimises men's dominant position in society and undervalues women, and other marginalised ways of being a man (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Studies have shown how hegemonic masculinity places men as superior to women (Connell, 1987; Berdahl, Cooper, Glick, Livingston and Williams, 2018) and that male dominated workplaces are likely to engender 'masculinity contests' where top job performance is conflated with masculine gender performance. An alternative theoretical approach to consider is that of the 'glass slipper' (Ashcraft, 2013), which highlights how certain occupations (or hierarchical levels) come to appear 'naturally' possessed of features that fit certain people yet are improbable for others.

The dominant version of masculinity can exclude white males who feel that they do not fit the norm as well as those from minority groups. Whilst a 'hyper-masculine'⁶⁰ culture, which values stereotypically masculine traits, was more prevalent in the military, a male dominated culture where masculine (often described as alpha male) behaviour is valued was perceived by participants across the sample to exist throughout the organisation. As the literature (e.g. Duncanson, 2013) would suggest, and as supported here, not all white males are able to fit into this prototype. Thus, although most white males talked about fitting in easily, a minority of military white male participants (in particular) talked about the pressure to comply with masculine norms, the need to wear the right clothes and come from the right background in order to fit in.

"I've seen male members not deal with it very well because they're quiet, because they might be a little bit more feminine, they might like this sort of music, whatever and are seen as a little bit of an oddball. So I should imagine for a female to come through here you've got sort of years and years, generations of people's attitudes to deal with and it's engrained in the society" (CS, white, male)

Some participants raised concerns about the ways in which a hyper-masculine military culture impacted upon them. They talked about being expected to "man up" and hide their emotions.

Thus, it is evident that not all personnel fit the 'hegemonic ideal' or even that the majority do; rather, that this model acts as a cultural ideal, in more or less overt ways. The workings of hegemonic masculinity are complex. At times it acts as a glue; a shared respect and admiration for the idealised model that can provide common ground to mask the differences of class, rank, and age. At other times, hegemonic masculinity serves to undermine the qualities of those who do not fit the prototype model, such as females and those from minority backgrounds. Although there were females and BAME participants who felt that their gender and ethnicity had no bearing on their experience in Defence, for the majority of participants, being female or BAME made it more difficult to fit in initially. There was a process of adaptation that needed to take place that recognised the reality of being within an organisation where the vast majority of people were white British males. Whilst this was most obvious in the military, participants discussed the existence of a masculine environment in most parts of the MOD. The CS may not have the same assumptions about masculinity that are found in the military, however, hegemonic masculinity remains a key issue and a dominant image of the MOD as (white) males prevail.

Females across the sample argued that their skills were undervalued and they were continually required to prove their competence. Females felt that some males, particularly older colleagues with more traditional views, were uncomfortable working with them and were unsure how to treat them. Females discussed how they were, initially at least, assumed to be less competent, weaker and not able to do the same jobs as their male counterparts.

⁶⁰ Hyper-masculinity is characterised by "an exaggeration of traditionally masculine traits or behaviour".
<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/hypermasculine>.

“Because you, I think as a man ... people will assume that you’re competent, but as a woman walking through the door people will go ‘oh, it’s a woman’, and you’ll have to prove that you’re competent before people will respect you. So, there’s an extra, extra barrier... it’s a battle that men wouldn’t face” (Military, white, female)

This perception seemed to be particularly prevalent in more male dominated parts of the military. It was also experienced by CS females working closely with the military (“you have to prove that you’re not just a silly little woman”). Females at the interface of the CS and the military also felt that it was more difficult for them to integrate with military colleagues than it was for their male colleagues.

“That’s a kind of civil-mil kind of thing but it becomes worse, I think, if you’re a woman...it’s probably much easier for him to integrate than it would be for me to integrate at that kind of, at that kind of level” (CS, white, female)

This need for females to continually prove their competence has been identified in the literature on females in male dominated sectors (see Fernando, Cohen and Duberley, 2018) and has been shown to impact negatively on a female’s experiences at work (Fernando, Cohen and Duberley, 2018); their confidence (Martin and Phillips, 2017); and their likelihood of staying in the field (Powell, Bagilhole and Dainty, 2009). Within the military, females may be perceived to threaten the social cohesion that is seen to underpin effectiveness; females therefore may perceive their working environment to be hostile and work harder to be noticed and rewarded (Basham, 2009).

A perceived lack of investment in resources for females or a lack of obvious concern for their needs impacted upon military female’s feelings of being valued members of the team. In particular, a number of military females spoke of issues with facilities and equipment. Whether on base, on exercise or deployed, the provision of particularly poor basic facilities such as toilets, showers and where appropriate, accommodation, was commonplace and could be non-existent for military females. Toilets were in need of repair, used as storage cupboards, located remotely and (less routinely) commandeered for other groups to use. There were instances cited of female Officers having to share facilities with female OR, which it was felt would never happen to male Officers. CS females in more remote locations on military bases were just as impacted as the military. For military females, the lack of availability of appropriate uniforms was also frequently reported with clothing and equipment (including body armour, bergens and respirators) not fitting, which could have potentially life threatening consequences.

“I went to Afghan and they said ‘size of boots?’ I said ‘three’, so they put the boots up and I tried them on. I said, ‘these are huge’. And then I looked, ‘it says this is a five, not a three’. ‘That’s the smallest size they come in, wear three pair of socks’. I said, ‘it’s gonna be 50 degrees, I’m not wearing three pairs of socks’. ‘Oh, you’ll have to wait then.’ And then you’d get a pair of boots that had been lying on a shelf for years because nobody had your size of feet, and within a month the soles had disintegrated cause they’d dried out” (Military, white, female)

The remoteness of facilities for females on bases and on exercise meant they sometimes missed out on important information and could compromise their ability to meet the same deadlines (i.e. be on parade square in a matter of minutes) as their male peers whose facilities were designed to be where they needed to be. It suggests that females have had to fit into a legacy environment which was designed by males for males which do not always take account their needs, and is no longer viewed as acceptable.

The experience of perceived stereotyping effected feelings of belonging amongst BAME participants. Some BAME participants spoke of the existence of stereotypes about the roles that BAME personnel were most likely to occupy in the AF. F&C BAME OR in particular reported difficulties fitting in and felt that they were subject to wider assumptions about the reasons why they had joined the AF and the expectation that this relationship was transactional (and as a result they were perceived to be less committed). In addition, the extent to which they felt valued often depended to some extent upon where they were from. For example, F&C BAME OR reported that they felt their white peers perceived Gurkhas as “good soldiers”. African and Caribbean soldiers also discussed the way they felt that cultural differences impacted upon judgements that were made about them, for example with regard to being seen as lazy or laid back or how they respond to authority.

“One of the things I learnt when I came to this country was...to look the person in the eye. And the funny thing was where I come from, if a parent or an elderly person is talking to you and you are looking at them straight in the eye like that, it is like an affront to them” (Military, BAME, female)

There were mixed accounts of how ethnicity was experienced by BAME participants. Some did not feel that their ethnicity had much impact on their experience and felt that they were taken on their merits. Others argued that they did experience the MOD as a white exclusionary organisation where they were not given the same opportunities as their white counterparts and unconscious bias was a feature of their experience. They highlighted subtle things that occurred as a result of assumptions that were made.

“You go into a meeting; you might be the senior there...but the person you are meeting will always assume that it is someone else in the group that’s the most senior...or if you’re talking to a group...you need to work hard initially to win them over...” (CS, BAME, male)

Some black CS participants expressed strong concerns about how their ethnicity was regarded in the MOD. They seemed to have a more directly negative experience. They spoke of experiences of direct racism as well as more subtle racism. A number of them directly related being BAME to ill-treatment. Others discussed how their sense of belonging was challenged when they looked at the composition of the organisation.

“I suppose what I am thinking is when you look at the MOD and you look at the demographic, most of them are at the bottom, so all the cleaners are black....so when you look at who’s doing the menial jobs, it’s the ethnic minority...when you look at the lower bands...” (CS, BAME, female)

Lack of understanding of difference was an issue that was raised particularly by F&C BAME participants. Some F&C BAME Army participants felt that aspects of their ethnic, cultural or religious background were not very well understood in an organisation predominantly comprised of white males. Hence they welcomed the opportunity to educate others about these through cultural events. It was interesting that those who spoke about these events felt that they benefitted from them and enjoyed trying to explain or share aspects of their cultural or religious background. For some it was important that these features of their identity were better understood. A few spoke as though it was a part of their remit to educate others about their ethnic or religious group to reduce the type of ignorance that leads to divisions. Others who also practiced minority religions found there was a lot of curiosity about their religious practices and participants found themselves fielding quite a number of questions.

“But you get people asking questions like, ‘oh so in your religion, in your religion do you, do you do this, do you do that?’ And you’re like, ‘well no actually we do this’, or, ‘yeah’. So you’ve gotta try and answer everyone’s questions and try and make them understand cause because of everything that’s going on at the minute, you know, abroad and in the East and people tend to get a...I dunno what I’d say. It’s, it’s a bit of a stigma attached to it” (Military, BAME, male)

For some BAME participants, working for the MOD caused challenges for their social identity. Ethnicity and religion were closely paired by some BAME participants when they were discussing how they felt about being part of Defence. This was raised across the sample but was particularly an issue for Muslims in the military who were deploying to Muslim majority countries. Participants discussed the ways in which their legitimacy as Muslims was challenged in the community and the impact on family relations. Some personnel discussed how they did not publicise the fact that they worked for the MOD widely as they felt that some members of their community would not understand this (“you’re actually creating problems for yourself”). It was also considered to be isolating as peers were unaware or did not have to face such challenges.

“I think being a woman and being Asian is very, very difficult. There are lots of challenges with that in itself...So, it’s quite tough to actually get into it, in the first place and then in some way because that’s not widely by your peers and your colleagues and people you work with because they don’t understand that, and it’s understandable that they don’t get that ‘cos they don’t necessarily have to face the same challenges. But, because of that...it is sometimes quite isolating” (Military, BAME, female)

5.8.3 Social Activities and Belonging

The MOD (particularly the military) was reported by females and BAME personnel to socialise in a particular way that can be exclusionary to these groups. This finding is supported by research highlighting the potential positive and negative impact of out of work socialising upon belonging (see Grugulis, Dundon and Wilkinson, 2000). There was a strong expectation amongst Regulars that they would attend social events

and this was seen as important to fitting in and being accepted. In some cases, females challenged this on the basis that the activities available were not attractive to them or that they would rather spend their free time with family and friends. This often led to a feeling of being ostracised.

“All the guys went out to this strip club, and she didn’t want to do that. But she was the only member of the team who was female, and females generally don’t want to go to strip clubs. Because they all bonded more, and they all got closer, and she felt excluded because they were undertaking an activity that she had no part in” (Military, white, male)

Others, who chose not to take part in social activities involving alcohol, either because of their age, gender or religious beliefs, similarly discussed feelings of being left out and not being part of the group (noted to be a particular problem for F&C military BAME in prior research by Greene (2016)). Military and CS BAME and female participants discussed the continuing importance of alcohol in both formal and informal social settings and the difficulties they experienced as a result of not wanting to partake. Whilst participants recognised that those arranging events often made it clear that it was not necessary to drink alcohol, they often felt that they stood out as different if they did not (see also Organisational Culture, Section 5.9.4).

“Although I drink alcohol I sometimes opted out because I’m not a heavy drinker. But if you go to these events in the evening you may feel you are excluded” (CS, BAME, male)

This was particularly a cause for concern for minority groups who felt that it impacted upon their ability to develop good working relationships with their peers and also had negative career ramifications.

CS participants who were not invited to socialise with their military colleagues felt excluded. CS participants who had been invited to military social events (formal dinners, informal barbecues) saw these as positive experiences that had helped them to feel part of the team. Some CS participants working in close proximity to the military bemoaned the removal of civilian involvement in some of the social events, such as mixed team building events and barbecues. They also had feelings of exclusion as a result of not being invited to social and/or team building events organised by their military colleagues.

“They have their Summer Ball or whatever and never think to ask you, because you just get overlooked, which is sad. But you know that’s the way it goes...But you know it’s a question of not actually being quite inside the department...And it’s just a question of everybody kind of doesn’t think about you” (CS, white, female)

Military UK BAME participants experienced greater conflict in belonging in the Mess compared with their white peers. Many said that personnel socialised with those from similar ethnic backgrounds rather than those from different backgrounds. Whilst feeling part of a group could help minorities with issues of belonging at an individual level, this type of ethnic segregation can reduce opportunities for developing mutual understanding. This clustering was commented on by UK BAME participants who spoke about either not being sure of which group (F&C BAME or white British personnel) to socialise with or of being able to move between both groups.

5.8.4 Visibility and Isolation

Feelings of isolation and a perceived lack of support were common amongst BAME and female participants and many Reservist participants. A number of Reservist participants argued that their ethnicity made it more difficult for them to settle into their units and they felt that their cultural differences led them to initially stand out. Some CS BAME participants also described the negative impact of being in the minority and not having anyone similar to talk to, suggesting that an increase in numbers of BAME personnel across the CS could overcome such feelings of isolation.

“It wouldn’t be bad if we had more ethnic minorities....the more we are the more they would listen and the more our voice becomes louder. But because people leave more than they come in....because when you experience something and the only person you share it with is no longer there...the impact is even more felt than if there was someone else going through the same thing with you” (CS, BAME, male)

However, a sense of isolation was not only related to protected characteristics. Many Reservists felt that their support needs (e.g. on return from deployment) were overlooked by the MOD, making them feel less valued than Regular personnel. Whilst Regulars would remain in their unit on return, Reservists could feel isolated when they returned home. Reservists spoke of finding it difficult to re-establish relationships even

within their Reserve unit on return, as fellow Reservists had assumed that their absence was through lack of commitment rather than from additional and full-time commitment on deployment. This adds further support to similar findings by [REDACTED].

“And I came back from Afghanistan, I was painting a door at three in the morning. I’ve nothing else to do, I’ve got an empty flat, nobody here, just me, where I’d shared a room with three other people, and you just miss that when you come back, and a lot of people who join the Reserves, after their first deployment come back and can’t cope, because a Regular will come back to what they left, but Reserves don’t” (Military, white, female)

Some females and BAME participants felt like tokens in the military and at more senior levels of the CS because they felt in a minority. Kanter (1977) argues that when an employee is from a sub-group that represents less than 15% of the population they are at risk of being treated as a token. A token may feel highly visible due to their differences to the majority, but at the same time might find it difficult to have their achievements noticed. Female participants in this study commented that they often found themselves in a contradictory position. To be considered capable they felt they had to work harder than their male counterparts. However, if they earned attention or reward as a result of their performance they were suspected of having benefited from favouritism. They are also more vulnerable to being stereotyped. Working in a male-dominated military environment made gender a stark issue for many females; something most had had to become acclimatised to.

Many military females said that being noticeable as females in a male-dominated environment did at times cause embarrassment and awkwardness. Military females talked at length about the way they stood out from the majority, particularly in more male dominated areas of the organisation.

“I am the only woman in the room aren’t I, do I stand up and wave, or do I just sat here really awkward, because I felt like I was representing a nation, he said look even a woman is here, everybody claps, yes, well done. It was moments like that I found really funny, but yes, you just suddenly realise you are the only one” (Military, white, female)

Some military females also expressed frustration that some of their male colleagues did not know how to relate to them and found that they were treated differently to their peers.

“I think I’ve been talked to a little bit differently in certain scenarios or instances...I know my boss at the moment kind of talks a little bit softly to me, I’m like, why are you talking to me differently than you would one of the male colleagues?” (Military, white, female)

Being the only female also created a sense of isolation which is deepened by the nature of the language used. Females talked about how in mixed groups they were addressed as “blokes” or “men” with no consideration of how excluded this might make them feel. They also commented about how feminised terms were used in a derogatory way (such as calling a male colleague a girl when reticent to do something), thus reinforcing the idea that being female is inferior.

High levels of visibility experienced by females meant they sometimes felt more harshly judged for both work and social behaviour. Military females talked about the lengths they go to, to protect their reputations, such as moderating their behaviour with regard to things such as alcohol consumption and social relations with males in an attempt to be accepted and fit in.

“I certainly get...and I have seen this with other female colleagues, we get held to a different standard. If I was on-board the ship absolutely smashed, drunk, I would get torn apart by my boss. Whereas I have known male colleagues do it, and it is like ‘wahey, one o’ the lads’ so it is...absolutely it is made harder” (Military, white, female)

A small number of military females objected to the assumption that they were more comfortable with other females. Sharing accommodation with other females was an issue for some female OR with references made to their lack of common-ground with other females, and difficulties fitting in, but also feeling they had been made to feel out of touch with the rest of the team.

“And I don’t, typically in my social life I don’t surround myself with 30 girls, because, because of my personality I get on better with guys, so I found it difficult to be with that many girls...I just wanted to get on with it” (Military, white, female)

This highlights the complexity of the situation and the need to consider individual differences in addition to needs based upon gender. In particular, given the practical limitations of providing single room accommodation, it is important to manage expectations at recruitment.

In the CS, isolation was a particular issue felt by females who had reached more senior levels. Amongst these participants there was a lot of reflection about being in the minority or “a token” female. Being or perceiving oneself as the ‘only’ or the ‘other’⁶¹ in the workgroup was not considered a positive experience. CS females noted the difficulties of being “*the only female in the room*” arguing that this meant that they had to “*work harder to make [themselves] heard*”. Extending the work of Kanter (1977), the impact of being a token female, the related, yet contradictory themes of visibility and isolation and the influence of the gender mix of an organisation on women's progress within it are still relevant in gender research (Simpson, 1997; Lewis and Simpson, 2010).

BAME participants reported similar consequences of visibility and social isolation. They spoke of their achievements taking on a meaning that the achievements of their white colleagues did not. For example, promotion sometimes took on an additional meaning when achieved by a BAME candidate as they were seen as a representative of their group rather than just an individual, which not all BAME personnel were comfortable with. If they were seen to be doing well they were used to show that the MOD offers equal opportunities and progression to all and sometimes felt they were used as “*poster boys and girls*”. Male BAME participants who mentioned this mostly seemed content. Female BAME participants, who were in a minority with regard to both gender and ethnicity, seemed a little more wary, perhaps because of their double visibility. They talked about feeling exhausted by the responsibility and being ‘wheeled out’ at opportune occasions. In addition, if they failed to live up to expectations in any way this was then taken as representative of all individuals from their social group. This supports the literature on social isolation highlighting the difficulties faced by those who feel singled out or on display as a representative of a racial ethnic or gender group (Sutherland, 1990). BAME females argued that this high-level visibility created resentment from others and that it could make them a target for discrimination and abuse as others felt they were receiving preferential treatment.

Both female and BAME participants talked about what has been termed the double-edged sword of excessive visibility (Van den Brink and Stobbe, 2009). These participants felt that whilst there was a risk they may be judged more harshly at times, being different from the majority meant that they stood out and were more likely to be remembered by those in more senior positions. For some, at least, it seemed that this offered an opportunity to shine.

“My ethnicity has been a positive because it’s made me stand out from the crowd and it’s probably been a negative because it’s made me stand out from the crowd” (Military, BAME, male)

A minority of participants saw their status as ‘other’ as a potential advantage. Feeling able to ask the questions other, more status-aware colleagues (particularly those from the military), felt unable to ask was cited as a benefit. A small minority of females discussed how it was possible to take advantage of “*benevolent paternalism*”, where they felt that senior males did not expect them to be technically proficient. Others commented upon the benefits of being able to surprise colleagues with their levels of knowledge and competence.

“I am quite comfortable with being underestimated, I think that can be an advantage for a woman at times” (CS, white, female)

5.8.5 Strategies for Managing Difference

Across the sample, females and BAME participants discussed the need to adopt strategies to fit in. In line with social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979), this included modifying behaviour in order to play down their differences and fit in. This is consistent with prior research with the CS which reported that some BAME personnel felt they had to play down their “*cultural and ethnic characteristics*” (Ethnic Dimension, 2014). Similarly, in this current study, some BAME Regulars talked about having to “*let go of [their] culture*” to enable them to fit into a white Eurocentric culture. Some females and BAME participants worried that there was too much talk about diversity and difference and that it was sometimes counterproductive and led

⁶¹ Where an individual or group becomes mentally classified in a person’s mind as “not one of us”.

colleagues to believe that they were being given opportunities due to their minority status and the need to fulfil externally imposed targets. These individuals focused on minimising their difference in order to fit the prototypical mode of being in the MOD. This is a problem because this pressure to fit in has been argued to limit the extent to which organisations can benefit from the diverse perspectives that people from different backgrounds can bring (Ellemers and Rink, 2016).

Displaying what were perceived to be appropriate behaviours and/or personality characteristics was a key strategy for females and BAME participants to fit in. Those who feel excluded or who are in minority groups often engage in social identity-based impression management. This involves attempting to influence others' perceptions of one's own social identity to project a desirable, professional image (Roberts, 2005). Across the sample, there were remarkable similarities in the way females argued they had to behave to do their jobs and progress. This included being robust and projecting an assertive and confident image.

"So from my point of view...if I start a new job, I go in there and I'm...extra bullish, I'm extra assertive... so that nobody, no-one messes with me because I've kinda gone in there kind of all guns blazing a little bit. Whereas I'm not really like that. And actually, once people get to know me I'm quite chilled out, I don't really need to be like that. But if you don't set that kind of expectation of not being messed around from an early stage, I think that...I think that people will think you're a pushover" (CS, white, female)

Military females also reflected at length on the resilience required as a female in the Services, particularly in those trades where there is little female representation. They discussed the need to be "well armoured" and "have a thick skin", arguing that to gain respect they had to be "tough", "pushy" and have "a robust character".

"If you are not confident, then you are deemed as being a timid person who isn't able to achieve anything" (Military, white, female)

They also talked about becoming "hardened" to sexual comments and comments about their clothing and appearance.

"If you're easily upset or easily offended erm...by sexual comments or men talking about women and you know...in a sexual nature then you're going to get offended. ...I know it shouldn't be like that but to me it is" (Military, white, female)

Although discussion of appropriate behaviour was particularly prevalent amongst females, some military BAME personnel also discussed how things were more difficult for a "shrinking violet" and the importance of being an extrovert and able to "give good banter", to fit in. The "boisterous" person in this sense was seen to be devoid of race or gender, when this could be understood, alongside 'banter', drinking etc. as an aspect of 'lad culture'.

"So if you're an extrovert then to be honest it doesn't matter what colour, race, gender you are or anything...the banter...the ability to...the ability to give back as good as you get will then make you fit...If you're introverted then you're more likely to fall victim to that discrimination" (Military, BAME, male)

There was recognition amongst females and BAME participants of the need to have, or at least portray, certain types of behaviour or character traits to fit in. Whilst adopting such strategies can be an effective way of fitting in to the organisation, it serves to reinforce the existing culture and does little to benefit other members of the minority group. Females adopting these strategies also potentially face a double bind situation as Powell, Bagilhole and Dainty (2009) suggest that they are often penalised for not being perceived as 'womanly enough'.

Whilst most females (particularly in the military) were aware of the required behaviour, a small number talked about the impact that this had upon them and the personal cost of having to behave in this way. For some this involved a sense that they risked losing personal authenticity as they had to act in a way that was unnatural to them to fit in. For others, there was a concern that their ability to develop relationships with other females had been affected, as well as feelings about their femininity.

"I just really struggle to sometimes associate with some girls, which I never had that problem before. I don't do girlie things like I used to anymore" (Military, white, female)

5.8.6 The Impact of Other Characteristics upon Belonging

Age was seen to impact upon belonging in both positive and negative ways by participants from across the MOD. Reservists were most likely to view age and maturity in a positive light as they recognised the contribution that more experienced personnel could bring. In contrast, there was a perception in both the military and the CS that D&I-related change was often stifled by older personnel, “*the old dinosaurs*”, who held outdated views. Younger CS participants were most likely to comment that the MOD had an ageing profile and younger female CS participants in particular felt disadvantaged as a result of this as the need for females to prove their competence was magnified for them. Some CS females discussed being viewed as “*naïve*” as well as having difficulties integrating.

“I think if you are a woman and you’re younger, you’re automatically not part of the gang” (CS, white, female)

Older participants felt that their experience was sometimes undervalued and that the organisation was less inclined to invest in training for them.

Social class was identified by participants as having an impact upon people’s ability to fit in at senior levels of the MOD. Using the work of Bourdieu (1986), it is evident that certain types of cultural capital (the accumulation of knowledge, behaviours, and skills that one can tap into to demonstrate one’s cultural competence, and thus one’s social status or standing in society) were seen as necessary to operate successfully at senior management level.

CS participants talked at length about the culture of elitism and snobbery that exists at higher levels of the organisation.

“I think the biggest factor is elitism. There is an element of elitism, which University you went to, which private school you went to” (CS, BAME, male)

Although senior participants often identified themselves as middle-class and from private school backgrounds, there were a few from working class backgrounds who had progressed to senior grades. Some of those, however, discussed the ways in which they felt they had had to change to fit in, particularly with regard to class/accent.

“I, you know, at the time, you know, I probably wouldn’t necessarily have fitted the profile of somebody who was gonna do particularly well within the civil service. ...I have changed. I’ve had to change” (CS, white, male)

Others commented that they felt there was a “*glass ceiling*” in terms of how far they were likely to be able to progress as a result of their working class origins.

The MOD was seen by participants from across the sample as making progress in terms of promoting LGBT and inclusivity. Across the sample increasing acceptance of different sexualities was something commonly commented on and there was also increasing awareness of transgender issues. Participants in the RN were especially proud of this. However, concern was raised by a minority of participants that the “*masculine culture of the military*” continued to mitigate against an openness amongst gay personnel as it was argued that although rules and regulations had enforced better behaviour, there was some variation in levels of acceptance according to individual units. However, it is important to note that LGBT personnel were not actively sampled in this study therefore this perception would need to be more fully explored with them as it may represent the majority view rather than their perspective.

Belonging and Social Identity - Key Messages and Actions

- White males were largely unreflective about their own privilege and assumed the organisation operated universally as a meritocracy. The idea that their success depended on their own merits was important to their identity and belonging within MOD. This meant that they often attributed female and BAME personnel’s lack of progression to their characteristics rather than considering the structural causes of inequality. As a result, some white males tended to view any positive action targeted at minority groups in a negative way. This does not mean that no action should be taken. There is a need to challenge existing ways of working and focus on diversity in its broadest sense (Bohnet, 2016) as not all white males felt that they fitted the masculine stereotypical themselves.

- Facilitators of belonging included working in close collaboration, deployment, engagement in sporting activities, uniforms and the actions of the immediate work team. Task cohesion in these activities enables a sense of shared purpose and respect for the talents that individuals bring. Mentoring and informal help from immediate superiors aided the sense of belonging. This highlights the importance of role modelling and rewarding inclusive behaviours at all levels of the hierarchy, not just senior management. Senior leaders need to recognise how everyday experiences of inequality and 'micro-aggressions' can impact negatively on the retention of this diverse talent (see Shore, Cleveland and Sanchez, 2018). Evidence suggests that senior leaders play an important role in setting the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and modelling comfort with difference (see Shore, Cleveland and Sanchez, 2018).
- Females and BAME personnel often found it harder to develop a sense of belonging as a result of being stereotyped, a lack of understanding and a lack of value being placed upon their skills and attributes. Females in particular felt that they were continually required to prove their competence. It could be argued that this will change if more females and BAME personnel progress through the organisation; however, this change will be slow unless all individuals are exposed to alternative ways of operating. Although participants spoke positively about formal D&I policies and networks, their sense of belonging relied upon the ways in which these were implemented and experienced on a daily basis. This points to one striking way that inclusion and exclusion coexist: when participants experience disconnect between the presence of formal programmes or policies and the day-to-day reality of informal norms that allow exclusion to arise. It suggests that attention should be given to the extent to which policies are adhered to across the MOD.
- The lack of BAME and female personnel in the organisation in general, and particularly at more senior levels, mean that they suffer from excessive visibility. This can be a double-edged sword; felt that they are judged more harshly than white male peers but are also more likely to be remembered by senior personnel. Consideration should be given to the support needs of those individuals who are excessively visible – particularly those who are used by the MOD in promotional materials as potential role models.
- Female participants within the MOD discussed feelings of isolation. They developed behavioural strategies to cope with this including developing more stereotypically masculine ways of operating. Although this can be an effective individual strategy as it enables them to fit in, it also serves to reinforce the existing culture. Role modelling and rewarding alternative ways of operating by both males and females is an important way of challenging the dominant masculine mode of behaviour.
- Of all groups, BAME females experienced most challenge developing a sense of belonging. This is likely to be a result of the potential double disadvantage they suffer (St Jean and Feagin, 2015) and their underrepresentation within the organisation. Attention should be given to both formal practices (such as policies) and informal processes that create inequality and make individuals feel excluded.

5.9 Organisational Culture

This theme focuses on perceived organisational culture (values, beliefs, practices, rituals and customs) and sub-cultures across the MOD that act to shape members' attitudes and behaviours. The theme also explores the extent to which Defence could be described as a diverse and inclusive organisation.

This theme comprises the following sub-themes:

- Perceptions of a Diverse and Inclusive Organisation.
- The MOD "Family" and Implications for D&I.
- The MOD as a Hierarchical Organisation.
- Informal Cultural Practices that Include and Exclude.
- Subcultural Differences across the MOD.

Points to note: Participants were asked directly about the extent to which Defence could be described as a diverse and inclusive organisation. Additional comments about broader aspects of culture emerged organically during the timeline interview.

Synopsis

Although there was broad recognition that Defence was making attempts to be more diverse and inclusive, it was evident that D&I remained an issue. Those who fell outside of the white male middle class prototype for senior leadership found it more difficult to feel fully included and accepted in senior roles. Whilst there was recognition of the MOD's efforts to include personnel by accommodating cultural and religious practices, for example, there was concern amongst military white males that some of these accommodations could lead to a detrimental 'watering down' of Defence's strong organisational culture. This strong culture included a sense of being part of a Defence *"family"*. Whilst this was referred to quite positively, aspects of this were sometimes exclusionary and detrimental to female and BAME participants' sense of inclusion and power to challenge, so the use of this family metaphor is not necessarily as inclusive as it seems. Similarly, cultural practices across Defence that support bonding, such as banter, sport, and socialising around alcohol, serve important functions whilst simultaneously excluding some, especially females and BAME personnel. Whilst there was a widespread sense that the rules around what was considered appropriate banter and language had changed over time, there were still many occasions when banter slipped into more offensive territory, supporting the evidence that racism and sexism often operate more covertly. Language used by the organisation, and the personnel within it, was deeply gendered, and signalled females as 'other'. A drinking culture in the military forged bonds, but was particularly detrimental to military and CS females, who were concerned about damage to their reputation and sexual harassment at social events. There was a sense of cultural differences across the MOD, between the Services and CS. These often presented themselves along gender and class lines. Although there was a sense that the male-domination of the MOD culture has decreased, there was still evidence of its persistence.

5.9.1 Perceptions of a Diverse and Inclusive Organisation

Participants across the sample did not perceive the MOD as a diverse organisation, particularly in relation to other CS departments. The organisation was noted by participants across the sample as predominantly white and male. Many participants across the sample saw the MOD as getting increasingly better at female representation at all levels across the organisation. Despite this, many participants across the sample noted the lack of females in particular contexts that were still male-dominated. Many participants also noted the lack of females at senior levels. Some female CS directly compared this to other CS departments, whom they perceived to have greater representation of females at senior levels. There were mixed views on how well the MOD is doing in terms of ethnic diversity. The Army was considered to be more ethnically diverse than the other Services because of the large number of F&C BAME personnel.

"I've been across, up and down the country in different garrisons and units and stuff like that and I've seen a decent level of diversity you know...the main diversity proof that...I've seen is the Ghurkhas..." (Military, BAME, male)

The lack of BAME representation in other Services and the CS was attributed by white participants to the RN, RAF and CS requiring those with specialist skills and qualifications, whereas the Army was more accessible to a wider range of personnel, including F&C BAME. This suggests that some participants have a perception that some BAME personnel lack certain skills/qualifications, which does not necessarily reflect reality. For example, data from Gov.UK, ethnicity facts and figures (2017/18)⁶² reported that students from a mixed ethnic group were more likely to achieve three A-grade A-levels compared with white students. Most white males did not think there was anything particular about the military that made it white, but that BAME personnel are less willing to 'sign up', mainly due to a misconception about what the military was actually about.

⁶² <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/a-levels/students-aged-16-to-18-achieving-3-a-grades-or-better-at-a-level/latest>. Accessed 22 March 2019.

“Obviously the vast majority of Marines are white...But... that’s not down to being...advertised as a white only camp...” (Military, white, male)

CS BAME participants reflected on the MOD as being less ethnically diverse than other CS departments, where they had worked previously. Some argued that this lack of diversity was partly to do with the recruitment of ex-military personnel into MOD CS roles and so the organisation recruited from a potentially less diverse pool than other CS departments. The lack of ethnic diversity was considered more acute at senior levels of the organisation. There was a sense that the lack of ethnic diversity in senior ranks of the CS was more than just a pipeline issue and that more needed to be done to ensure fair access to more senior roles and go beyond a ‘tick box’ approach to diversity.

Although the MOD was seen as not diverse, not everyone viewed this through the same lens because of their different vantage point (i.e. whether they are white/BAME, male/female, military/CS) within the organisation. The lack of female representation in the military was seen as more problematic by female participants than by males. White and BAME military females frequently commented on the lack of serving females. There was little effort by male participants to account for the lack of females in the military. There was a general assumption that females are less attracted to working in the military and so their under-representation was not viewed as problematic. Across the sample, even those males who worked in single-sex teams perceived females to be well represented in other parts of Defence. Many of the white females CS (especially those at lower levels) perceived females to be well represented in the organisation. A number of CS white males did not work with females but cited their presence in other roles as evidence that they were well-represented. In reality, females are well represented at the lowest grades within the MOD but their representation tapers to around 28% in the SCS (Cabinet Office, 2018). Overall 38% of MOD CS are female, which makes the MOD the CS department with the lowest level of female representation (Cabinet Office, 2018). CS females discussed how the lack of diversity meant that there was a lack of experience and knowledge about the needs of those with differing backgrounds. In majority-male teams, females were more likely to feel their gender more keenly, especially when the team was predominantly military.

The perception amongst some participants that the military is ‘doing well’ in terms of increasing BAME representation led some participants to underestimate the need to increase BAME representation in the military. The tendency for white participants to overestimate the presence of BAME personnel in the Army may be due to a couple of reasons. Firstly, the clustering of F&C BAME personnel in particular units and branches may make this group seem more numerous. Secondly, polls show the British often overestimate the number of people in the UK who are from minority groups, e.g. Muslims (Kentish, 2016) and immigrants (Duffy, 2014). Hence there may be a tendency amongst some white personnel to assume that there are more BAME individuals in the Army than is actually the case. This is also in accordance with Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Wetherell’s (1987) social categorisation theory that argues that social categories that are salient (such as ethnic difference) are more easily called to mind. Although F&C BAME participants commented on the ethnic diversity of the Army, UK BAME participants were more likely to note that the Army was not ethnically diverse or that the ethnic diversity was largely due to F&C personnel. Some UK BAME personnel discussed how they were often assumed to be foreign by those seeing and meeting them for the first time. This indicates that there are some personnel within the organisation with old fashioned views towards ethnicity whereby BAME personnel are assumed to be from overseas rather than British.

Although the majority of participants did not see the organisation as diverse, Defence was seen as inclusive because of D&I-related policies and practices. Networking events, cultural days, enabling personnel to practice different faiths/religions and accommodation of different dietary needs were all cited as evidence of this. Shore, Cleveland and Sanchez (2018) argue that inclusive practices are those that ensure ‘...diversity is not a disadvantage.’ Participants who argued that the organisation was inclusive discussed both their personal experiences of feeling included as valued team members, and their perceptions of the organisation as one that embraced and celebrated difference. Some participants argued that the MOD is inclusive because it accepts and recognises different cultures and religious beliefs, making allowances for diets and worshipping practices. BAME CS and Regular personnel were most likely to speak about this aspect of the MOD. They spoke of being able to attend networks and events that related to religion or culture, which they viewed positively. Organisational changes to enable those who followed minority faiths to practice their religion were discussed as a mark of organisational inclusivity by BAME participants and some white military males who saw this as helping to build friendships and bridge gaps in understanding between personnel of different backgrounds.

"I've got a Muslim soldier who works with us, for Ramadan last year everyone was kicking off about how this guy is not doing PT or is not doing this, everyone is kicking off. This year, I noticed...people there were like learning and understanding it. We also have an Officer...who is also Muslim and I think that's helped in the way of he has educated people more...he's helped encourage, you know to explain to people that...we can still do stuff, we can still perform" (Military, BAME, male)

CS participants also discussed these aspects as a sign that the organisation could be inclusive and show that it valued those from different cultural backgrounds. The suggestion was made, however, that celebration of religious festivals such as Eid might only take place at head office locations, perhaps due to the higher proportion of those from minority religious groups. Participants from the Army also discussed culture days and events where those from outside of particular ethnic, religious or cultural groups could learn about that culture. Those who were involved in delivering these activities felt that they were important events for increasing cultural understanding and acceptance. It was also argued that such cultural events could be more effective than written policy for encouraging inclusion.

"In the Army people don't really respond to policy...so...we need to find more innovative ways of getting the point across. So, things like the cultural events yes, it makes a lot of sense that's a very practical hands-on way of getting them to learn about other people's culture and things like that" (Military, BAME, male)

Some military participants argued that the AF were inclusive because of its requirement for working in close teams and living in close quarters. Many military white males argued that the organisation was *"naturally"* inclusive because of the nature of the work. This narrative was especially strong amongst the RN (especially the RM), who saw the demands of living in confined quarters for lengthy periods of time as necessitating acceptance and inclusion. White military males generally took their positive experiences of team working for granted and hence the focus on inclusion was largely on the extent to which minority groups were included into existing structures. Both females and BAME participants spoke of feeling accepted within their immediate work team, being judged on what they had achieved, irrespective of differences.

"I would say that from what I've seen it's generally it's just fairly inclusive as long as you're good at your job we don't really care" (Military, white, female)

Often this was due to the demands of the job and the need to work in teams. This is congruent with research that suggests that any issues with integration and performance in diverse teams often lessen over time, especially in high interdependent team working situations (Guillaume, Dawson, Otaye-Ebede, Woods and West, 2017).

"So for the days off they wouldn't just disappear individually, they'd gather a cohort, and it didn't ever feel like there was a cliquey cohort, it was always just a very inclusive and very malleable group of people. Which I suppose....with a mix of male, female, infantry, black, white, Asian, everybody just felt like they were there to do a job and would help each other out really, enjoy each other's company regardless of whether they were...." (Military, white, female)

A key tension was the extent to which the MOD can genuinely accept and include demographic diversity and cultural difference whilst retaining its strong organisational culture. Military organisations rely on a strong organisational culture and a hierarchical structure to achieve their goals as efficiently as possible. Although the organisation seeks a demographically diverse workforce, to fit into the organisation, personnel need to subscribe to particular values and standards of behaviour. There was a concern by many white military male participants that demographic diversity and the inclusion of some related cultural practices (around religion and appearance, etc.) could impact negatively on how the work was performed. Some white male Regulars argued that the military should drive integration more strongly rather than allowing too much cultural difference.

"The failure of diversity in the Army is quite simple. It is because the Army does not insist on a form of integration...and it doesn't robustly drive integration, it means that people are free to be as different as they like, and because the Army is so averse to the risk of any kind of statutory stuff coming at them, they won't support you. So what is, people are not integrated. People are from different groups, and because there isn't the overarching 'I won't put up with this nonsense', so forcing people together, you get problems" (Military, white, male)

This is significant in the sense that it captures a sentiment that many white males in the sample share: whilst diversity and including females and BAME people is good, diverse people must integrate. Some white male military participants talked at length about how “*standards should not be diluted*” by increasing numbers of females and were suspicious of any ‘special accommodations’ that were given to females in terms of strength or fitness tests. In this sense, inclusion was permitted only on relatively limited terms: those who wish to be included must adhere to the same standards and values of old. Such attitudes exclude the possibility that a more diverse workforce could bring positive evolution not merely negative dilution. This sentiment was echoed by some BAME Regular participants who described the MOD as diverse but argued that the organisation was not genuinely inclusive with regards to accepting difference.

“There is a culture there is just a culture within the Armed...whether that is a white Eurocentric culture. I think you do have to let go of our own sort of background culture to be able to be a member of that team and you do have to let go of some sort of things” (Military, BAME, male)

Adaptations to uniform or beard wearing should not affect how personnel behave. However, for some military white males, it was equated with a breakdown of order and discipline that would impact on behaviour. These signal for some in the white majority a change to the organisation that is threatening as they are a visible manifestation of change. There is evidence that diverse teams can be useful for problem solving. Therefore, difference does not need to detract from the fundamental essence of the organisation but could be a way to enhance it (Ellemers and Rink, 2016). Hence, although a diverse workforce can share values, the organisation has to be open to some level of change if the benefits of a diverse workforce are to be reaped (Ellemers and Rink, 2016).

5.9.2 The MOD “Family” and Implications for D&I

Irrespective of gender and ethnicity, informal discourses and practices of “family” were prominent across the sample and had both positive and negative implications (see Table 5-1). This table was produced by doing a search across the data set to examine how and when the word ‘family’ was used. Across the sample, the word family was used to denote both positive sentiments such as support and protection as well as more negative sentiments such as paternalism and patriarchy.

Table 5-1: Words typically referred to by participants drawing on the ‘family’ metaphor

Words typically referred to by participants drawing on the ‘family’ metaphor	
Positive aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support • Equality • Protection • Humour 	Negative aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hierarchy • Paternalism • Patriarchal

Cultural metaphors like “family” were regularly drawn on positively by participants, particularly by the military (especially Army OR). Although less prevalent in the CS, the family narrative was present, albeit more prevalent amongst those working closely with the military. The metaphors of “family” and “team” were used to denote unity, integration and shared goals. Family and team, in this sense, were understood as positive and generative social practices.

“Everybody is equal, everybody loves each other, what I love about the military is regardless of your background, your gender, ethnicity or whatever, we are here as a family...So that is why I regard the Army as my family. The comrades I work with as my family. Because I know that they will be there for me when I need them. Especially when we are out and we are...I can depend on them with my life” (Military, BAME, male)

Being able to depend on this ‘family’ during deployment or difficult times was important to those drawing on the family narrative. Family metaphors were often used to describe peer relationships amongst the military OR. Male OR spoke about their “band of brothers” and the close bonds they had with those they served alongside. Although female OR did not speak of “brothers”, many across the sample referred to family when describing their workplace relationships. Relationships within the military were also perceived to be

closer than friendships in civilian life. This camaraderie and family-like way of relating was a defining and positive feature of the experience for those in the military. However, some females and BAME participants in the military, in particular, also felt excluded from the “family”, which often led to a sense of isolation. These participants sometimes found it difficult to ascertain the cause of their marginalisation.

“I couldn’t have felt less like I was in a family. I wasn’t invited to a single person’s house for dinner or included in anything...I don’t know whether it was cap badge or female based, I felt it was both” (Military, white, female)

The idea of the MOD as a family also had gendered implications, since it evoked patriarchal management styles with the ‘boss’ as a father figure. Some females in the CS and military described instances of male line managers “protecting” them; this had detrimental impacts on the participant (e.g. marginalisation), on the unit/department (e.g. team cohesion) and evoked suspicion from peers. Some females reported more senior males acting like ‘fathers’ towards them. This included advising females against working in particular male-dominated units (for fear of bad treatment or isolation), as well as examples of male managers directing females’ careers in a particular way due to expectations about children and being the primary care-giver. The family metaphor can therefore be both a means of creating a sense of belonging whilst simultaneously creating difficulties for females.

“And the reason he told me that he thought it was going to be good for me was that ‘my dear, when you have children you won’t want to go back to sea, and I’m setting you up now with a good staff basis so that, you know when that time comes...I found it difficult to go to sea as a man and my wife just wouldn’t have been able to do it’. And I just thought ‘hmm, I genuinely cannot believe you just said that” (Military, white, female)

Whilst the gendered dimensions of this are clear, with some females describing being marginalised, patronised and isolated from ‘the family’, the impacts of this for BAME participants were less obvious. However, one of the most damaging aspects of paternalistic attitudes is what might be termed the ‘father knows best’ syndrome (Kaplan, 2001), whereby subordinates follow orders, tend not to challenge those in authority and those in authority make decisions on behalf of subordinates. This culture of not challenging negative behaviour was especially detrimental to both female and BAME employees who often found it difficult to complain.

5.9.3 The MOD as a Hierarchal Organisation

There was a sense across the sample that whilst females had made some progress in progressing towards the upper echelons of the hierarchy in certain areas, this was not the case for BAME personnel. This is consistent with research on hierarchal organisations, which suggests that they are usually gendered and racialised, especially at the top (Acker, 2006). Evidence suggests that males who display particular masculine traits continue to dominate the MOD, in terms of power, position, leadership, and management. This is consistent with Hearn and Collinson’s (2017) work on ‘gendered divisions of authority’, whereby males, or certain males, exert more power and authority over both females and other males.

The rigidity of the rank and grade system framed everyday interactions across the MOD; this was sometimes more significant than gender and ethnicity. The military was perceived by participants from across the sample as being “overly rank conscious” to the detriment of getting the best out of people. Similarly, the grade system in the CS was seen to govern interactions and mark status. CS participants, particularly those in C grades and lower, often complained about how they were viewed in relation to the military rank system.

“Because of the rank culture that the military have where if you’re a higher rank than somebody else, you’re expected for a lower rank to listen to everything you say and do without question, on time” (CS, BAME, female)

The focus on rank and status was a source of frustration for many females across the sample, with some reporting being made to feel inferior to their male colleagues in a highly structured organisation where rank, grade and position are highly prized. Many felt that it was the rank and grade system that had impacted more on their experiences within the organisation than gender and/or ethnicity.

"I think my pay grade is more likely to be a hindrance. Because everything that we, you know emails and everything that you send out has your grade on it...So everyone I correspond with knows that I am the bottom of the food chain, which can make life difficult" (CS, white, female)

A strong minority of BAME and white females in the military suggested that their gender and/or ethnicity became more apparent as an issue as they rose through the ranks/grades, suggesting that informal interactions and practices that reproduce inequalities exist. Some participants attributed this to the lack of BAME and/or females in senior ranks across the military and the CS. Females across the sample working in military-led, male-dominated departments often adapted their management styles to be more "masculine" or "shouty" than it would be in less macho environments, finding this the only way to be taken seriously. This is clearly indicative of the struggle for status as a female at senior leader levels and the constraints exercised by existing norms for behaviour.

The rank structure conferred power to individuals but the constraints of hierarchy, rules and procedures made it difficult for behaviour to change. Weber's (1978) definition of power as the ability to direct or influence the behaviour of others or the course of events, even 'in the face of resistance', sheds light on the hierarchal nature of power in the MOD. The acceptance of such power is dependent on the possession of authority (as an institution or as an individual) that is regarded as legitimate to those being subjected to it. Weber (1978) also identified that authority can be conferred by official rules and procedures, so that the power resides in the role rather than the individual. This is an important point, because it raises questions about how women and minorities behave when they rise to positions of power, and whether, once in these positions, their behaviour is likely to 'open doors' to minority and women's power attainment in the future.

Deference to rank and grade was perceived as a mechanism that urged conformity across the sample, which could reinforce and reproduce sexist and racist attitudes. Some white male participants in the military suggested that deference to rank could allow sexist and racist undertones to spread.

"If you've got a racist Commanding Officer, your Regiment will become, will have racist undertones. But if you've got a non-racist Commanding Officer, your Regiment would be more inclusive, wouldn't it?" (Military, white, male)

The reverence of the hierarchal structure was also perceived to contribute to the continued homogeneity of the MOD, with some of those who were not white, middle-class and male critically commenting that they remain silent when in homogenous environments in contrast to more mixed environments where they believe that a variety of views were welcomed and expressed. There were notable differences between the Services with regard to the rigidity of rank, with the hierarchy within the RAF sometimes described as having looser structures and codes of behaviour compared to the Army, for example. This deference to and respect for rank was engendered through participants being made aware of their experience and training.

"He didn't treat me as a...as an individual, didn't take those skills and qualifications, everything that I had to bring out there. It was "No, that's your rank. You're seen and not heard" (Military, white, female)

Expected behaviours in military contexts included how to address those more senior, not challenging/or being willing to challenge those of a senior rank, which as the complaints section illustrates, is a probable blocker to raising inappropriate behaviours by senior people. Although less rigid in the governance of such norms, expected behaviours between CS grades also existed, similarly governing who should speak first. Some CS participants also noted not being able to speak to people a few grades above and having to go through the line management chain. The hierarchal organisational setting also appeared to influence opportunities for friendship making, with some participants expressing reservations about workplace friendships crossing organisational hierarchies. There was evidence that rank could compound the sense of isolation for minority participants in the military in particular, who felt they were not always allowed to socialise with those they may be demographically similar to but who were beneath them in rank.

"...I literally can't be their friend...I don't have the support network, I don't have the benefits of working in a multicultural environment. So, when people quote the statistics to me [indicating the ethnic diversity of where she works], I'm like, I don't care, it doesn't make my life better, it doesn't improve my quality of life because I don't have access to those people, and it's just for show" (Military, BAME, female)

The above quote highlights the difference between data and first-hand experience. It speaks to the diversity without inclusion observation and how diversity, including available data, is communicated and used in strategy.

5.9.4 Informal Cultural Practices that Include and Exclude

Banter was seen as an important aspect of Service culture that could promote inclusion. Banter between white/BAME and male/female personnel was perceived of as indicative of the inclusion of minority groups in the military in particular. The routine and cohesive nature of banter was understood as essential to the development of close bonds and a fundamental part of Service culture. Across the military, most personnel referred to this aspect of their workplaces in the context of a source of group bonding, teasing, encouraging and firming-up friendships in teams (the cohesive function of banter was especially referred to by older, longer serving white males). The importance of relationships and contexts for banter were noted as significant as it could be used to both bond and undermine depending on the context. Plester and Sayers (2007) showed how banter in the workplace can touch on contentious topics such as racial differences, gender and sexuality yet signal inclusiveness between those who know each other well. This was evident in the data amongst the military in particular.

“If you are only taking the mick out of your white male friends, that is just as un-inclusive as only taking the mick out of your black buddy. You know what I mean? So if you are not inclusive in the banter as well as the...then that is just as bad as singling them out, does that make sense? If you have got...one guy from Jamaica on your team and you never take the mick out of him out of fear of being racist or whatever, but you are taking the mick out of everybody else all the time, then that is un-inclusive” (Military, white, male)

Echoing this, military females and BAME participants described being at the receiving end of comments that could be perceived as being offensive. There were mixed responses to this, with many interpreting such comments in this way; others saw it as reflecting their friendships and comfort with one another. Similarly, white males across the AF described incidences where they made comments to peers or subordinates that could be construed as racist or sexist, but were not intended nor interpreted that way. Rather, these males perceived these jokes as signs of friendship and comfort with each other. However, there were often hierarchal power relations between the person ‘giving’ the banter and the recipient. For example, the BAME person or female being mocked was often in a subordinate position to the white male. Given that the findings show that such differences in rank and status can make it difficult to challenge power, these everyday interactions may also be illustrative of the enactment of power relations. Nonetheless, the majority of participants welcomed and supported the establishment of rules around appropriate banter to reflect the changing values of the MOD with regard to gender and ethnicity.

“When somebody has crossed the line, they know it quite quickly cause a sharp intake of breath takes place or something. And more often than not the individual who has transgressed will apologise. If they need to be told, someone will tell them in the right manner then 999 times out of 1,000 that person will apologise sincerely” (Military, BAME, Male)

Sincere apologies following offensive comments were described quite often by white male Regulars, who either witnessed other white males apologising or described apologising themselves for inadvertently harmful comments. Some participants who did not fit the white male mould questioned the sincerity of these apologies though, suspecting that banter hid racist and sexist attitudes. There was also resistance to the establishment of rules with regard to banter from some (white males in the military particularly), who thought that D&I initiatives were a threat to banter and humour and therefore the culture within the Services.

Whilst there was a pervasive sense that banter has changed, females and BAME participants (and some white males) across the sample described banter being used in sexist and racist ways by military colleagues. Whilst boundaries on what was considered acceptable were already in place, banter was also reportedly the source of irritation and offence to females and BAME participants in all Services. Many participants across the sample stated that this more offensive banter was an ongoing problem at the time of interview (2017/18). Although some male participants that did not typically fit the stereotype described harmful banter, it was typically females and BAME participants that were more negatively affected by this. Lines were often blurred between good humour and bullying behaviour.

"I've seen women come and go who perhaps haven't been able to cope with what other people would deem to be banter" (Military, white, female)

Situations where banter became offensive or made females feel uncomfortable were common across the sample. As suggested by Pullen and Rhodes (2013), humour can *"reproduce oppressive and patriarchal cultural norms and structures"* (p. 514). There were examples of this across the ranks and grades although senior females were more likely to talk about this retrospectively, and less likely to tolerate this behaviour. This suggests that they were subjected to offensive banter in the past and when they were at lower grades. Along with their seniority came the power to challenge these types of behaviours. Challenging these norms was also difficult, not only for females but for some males who feared that objecting would set them outside of the male-dominated 'gang'. Having a *"thick skin"* or *"robust"* character was seen as essential to deal with this. BAME (males and females) and white females regularly negotiated the boundaries of what was deemed acceptable or inappropriate with regard to banter around ethnicity and gender.

"I know what it's like going to a new place and people are like, 'well what can I say, what can I not say'. And so I just went straight in there, I just told everyone, 'you wanna say anything say it. I'm not gonna take it in no bad way, it's alright'. Cause I'm, I'm quite a joker myself in that way. I like that kind of humour" (Military, BAME, male)

This illustrates how power dynamics are enacted and reproduced in everyday interactions. This was not always intentional however, since there was evidence of white male military participants describing recent events of inadvertently saying something offensive to a female subordinate or not understanding why something might be deemed harmful.

Some F&C BAME participants discussed not understanding 'British humour', which led to a sense of marginalisation and exclusion. Some white participants across the sample saw this as a contributory factor in the establishment of 'cliques', whereby personnel from similar cultural backgrounds socialised with each other.

"It's probably they've got their own jokes that they understand from back home, and just the way they are. They still talk to you but sometimes you'd have to go 'what, what's that, didn't quite catch that you were a bit quick' or 'I don't understand what you mean' by certain things. So it's probably easier for them to just sort of sit and chat together when they're relaxing outside of the work environment" (Military, white, female)

This was echoed by some F&C BAME participants, who felt they did not understand enough of the subtlety of the English language when people made jokes or were sarcastic. The exclusionary feelings resulting from these experiences can be understood as a consequence of their situation as migrants in the UK and their difficulties in fully connecting with others.

"I don't understand the sarcasm either so...it is the cultural differences like, I don't know...What am I to do so I do I need to react to this, do I need to laugh or do I need to...? So, what if anything, I will just give you a laugh for the thing I don't know, I give a laugh. If I say "I don't know" I feel like I will stand out in that conversation, I'll stand out on this one...But I don't know whether the laugh is also right and it is also not the right answer. I don't know whether to laugh" (CS, BAME, male)

Whilst language across the MOD has changed in positive ways, especially with regard to banter, the gendered nature of language used by personnel and the organisation was still problematic. There was a general perception that personnel have become more mindful of the language they use in recent years, with many noting that derogatory language around race and gender that would have been tolerated a decade ago is no longer accepted. Nonetheless, many females spoke about how sexualised language persisted and across the sample, there was evidence that gendered language was entrenched in the organisation, with females referred to as *"girls"*, *"girlies"*, and *"ladies"*.

"I think if you're female, there's quite a lot of that stuff around. It's little things, its phrases, its words, it's probably...being an adult and referred to a girl" (CS, white, male)

A vast sociological literature exists on gender and language, broadly demonstrating that the ways in which males and females talk is deeply gendered. Using the term *"girls"* tends to (subtly) mark gender difference in ways that support and reinforce the power and privilege of *"dominants"* over *"subordinates"* (Messner, Duncan and Jensen, 1993). This literature also suggests that referring to females as *"girls"* and *"ladies"*

reflects the lower status of females. Similarly, the language used by the organisation can be understood as marking females as 'other'. Language such as "manpower", "manning", "Servicemen", and the use of masculine gender pronouns in documents to refer to males and females, all contribute to this reinforcement of a system where 'men' in the abstract are privileged over females.

"I suppose a funny example that I noticed today was on my JPA [Joint Personnel Administration] workflow. And it said 'this Serviceman...' I was just checking all my previous activity, and it said 'this serviceman has submitted early termination'. I thought 'oh that's funny, they've not changed that bit yet even though we've had a JPA upgrade'. And I thought it was funny they still referred it to servicemen. Yeah I thought that was just quite funny. So it's just little things like that, little points that you think 'you could probably work better on that because else it makes you look antiquated'" (Military, white, female)

To some extent, males across the sample appeared to recognise particular terminology (e.g. "man up", "manpower", "grow a pair") as increasingly inappropriate and there was clear evidence that personnel were reflecting on their own use of language. Of note, some senior newcomers to the CS were surprised at the extent to which they found widespread unacceptable terminology within the MOD, and they regarded some parts of organisation as a "step back in time".

Some military white males in particular saw the increased awareness about the inappropriateness of using gendered language as symptomatic of encroaching political correctness in the organisation. Others saw not being able to make jokes about race as tiptoeing around issues that need to be treated humorously. Some white males, especially those who see the emphasis on appropriate banter as a form of political correctness, were fearful of "putting their foot in it" unwittingly and the consequences of using the wrong language. The interview context itself revealed some of this discomfort, with many participants stumbling over words when talking about ethnicity and being unsure about what words were acceptable to use in a way that was not apparent when they discussed gender. It is also worth noting that many participants, both white and BAME, across the sample used inappropriate terminology when referring to BAME personnel (such as referring to people as coloured).

Fitness and sport were recognised as important aspects of military culture, providing an opportunity for inclusion whilst simultaneously acting to exclude some minority groups. There was some sense that sport could bring a team together and reinforce camaraderie. Playing sports in teams appeared to be an informal inclusionary cultural practice, particularly for F&C BAME, and was perceived to create a more equal grounding beyond rank, Service, protected characteristics and personal backgrounds.

"I know people who have gone down the road of things like CrossFit fitness wise...and that's brought everyone quite close together 'cos that's very family orientated as well...and that's brought a lot of you know...male/females of different grades together. It doesn't matter how like race or male or female you're fitter...you're fitter and it will be like "Oh, mate, I wish I'd stick to you like, you're so good at that" (Military, white, male)

However, sport and fitness in the military was not necessarily inclusive of social, personal and ethnic differences. There were some assumptions of certain ethnicities being naturally 'good' at certain sports, e.g. Fijians are good at rugby, suggesting that stereotypes are reproduced even in this inclusive space. There were barriers to female's participation in particular. PT and sports could sometimes be a focus for feelings of isolation and marginalisation.

"...it's just kind of like basically they would rather be with a...have a male partner because they feel like they're going to get more out of the session, or that I'm going to like...I don't know, like they wouldn't enjoy the session as much I guess" (Military, white, female)

Some military females said they were not taken as seriously by males and felt patronised or protected or that they had to be better than the males. However, some described respect and acceptance from their male peers based on their physical achievements. Sport and fitness carries particular meanings in relation to masculinity, such as competition, physical size and strength, all of which are synonymous with 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 1995). Sport then has the radical potential to be an inclusionary cultural practice whilst simultaneously reproducing existing gender and other relations of power. With sport and fitness understood as central aspects of military culture, promoting alternative and non-traditional sports that have less emphasis on competition may allow more flexibility from traditional gender roles in traditional sports cultures.

Drinking alcohol as a means of bonding was a common cultural practice. However, although this was seen as an important aspect of MOD culture, it sometimes excluded females and BAME personnel. The social and stress advantages of recreational alcohol use were discussed by white males, with many white males seeing it as facilitating a sense of community and trust with peers. In this sense, it was seen as an important aspect of the organisational culture, contributing to male bonding behaviours and group cohesion. However, these male-dominated drinking cultures were often excluding to females and BAME personnel, and those white males who did not drink. Although the drinking culture seemed more prevalent in military contexts, evidence suggests that some CS Headquarter locations still had a drinking culture, which involved going to the pub after work, often in 'cliques', and alcohol served at events, which some BAME CS participants mentioned that they found difficult to participate in because they did not drink alcohol or chose to spend time in pubs.

"Half the Asian community don't drink and don't like going to pubs after work. I don't drink but I don't like going to pubs after work so immediately that cuts me out of things like that" (CS, BAME female)

There was also some reference to the practice of "naked bars", whereby nudity was encouraged during drinking sessions in the military. Whilst this involved only some male military personnel, it portrays the kind of informal masculinist culture present in the military. This is consistent with other research of similar hierarchal and male-dominated organisations. In her research on gender and the Police Force, Franklin (2007) found that drinking subcultures isolated and ostracised females from recreational peer group gatherings, whereby females miss out on bonding and networking opportunities. Within Defence there was a sense that female behaviour was judged in social situations much more harshly than male behaviour, with some females across the sample suggesting that they avoided alcohol at these events, or avoided the events altogether, due to anxieties about being told off by superiors or because of concerns about sexual harassment from military males. There was also a sense that females with care-giving responsibilities were not able to participate in these activities because they were after-hours. Whilst there was a sense that this drinking culture had decreased across Defence, as illustrated by, for example changes in lunchtime drinking, the move away from alcohol was linked to wider changes in society. The reduced focus upon drinking was also linked to the possibility that this may make the organisation more attractive to individuals with particular religious beliefs. Whilst socialising based around alcohol was seen as helping create important bonds and had therapeutic value, there were some concerns that using alcohol as an outlet for stress perhaps substituted for counselling. This was also linked to a culture of males keeping things to themselves.

"There wasn't any opportunity to talk about how you might feel, which I think would have been useful, but there was, and I think this is a typically male way of dealing with things, there was a five day trip to Majorca, to basically hang one on, to just go and get mortifiably drunk" (Military, white, female)

5.9.5 Subcultural Differences Across the MOD

There were notable cultural differences across the Services and between branches that impacted on females. Differences in branches in the military regarding the acceptance of females were emphasised by male and female military participants with, for example, some branches noted to have a greater numbers of senior females or some having low numbers of females. Some attributed this to the perception that certain branches are perceived of as more macho and more difficult for females to fit into.

"So I think because of the lack of testosterone and the lack of sort of like para, para reg [Parachute Regiment] bravado and stuff like that, it's just an easier place for women to fit into" (Military, BAME, Female)

However, there were also positive examples of females training in these more macho environments, suggesting that the reputation of some branches as racist and/or sexist does not always match the reality. However such environments may still be labelled as negative environments for females by those whose associations with them are in the past. This provides evidence that reputations need to be updated considering the evidence that military males often steered their daughters and some subordinate females away from particular branches with poor reputations towards minorities.

Geographical location often shaped BAME participants' experiences across Defence, since the physical location of many MOD sites was given as a reason for the lack of ethnic diversity, especially in relation to the CS, Reservist units and parts of the Regulars (RN and RAF). These narratives coalesced around the idea that the MOD tended to be located in areas with fewer ethnic minorities and that the type of work carried

out by the MOD made it less attractive for ethnic minorities. Some participants discussed this aspect and argued that this was not something the MOD could realistically influence.

"I think you still find if you go to satellite sites, in the middle of nowhere...you will still have that, what I call 'bubble' effect going on" (CS, BAME, male)

However, even in locations where there were large numbers of BAME people living locally, they were under-represented in the MOD workforce. The MOD Main Building was given as an example of this as 40% of locals (i.e. Londoners) are estimated to be from BAME backgrounds (Office for National Statistics, 2018) yet many CS perceived the MOD Main Building as overwhelmingly white. Certain geographic locations, such as Abbeywood, were noted by some BAME CS participants as having low ethnic representation, lacking the diversity of MOD HQ, which made some CS personnel feel uncomfortable. The ethnic diversity of Army Reserve units was commented on and argued to depend upon geographical location. Some Reserve units in urban areas had managed to recruit a reasonable number of BAME personnel.

"...we've actually got eight people in the squadron that are not from a Caucasian background...that's a lot...." (Military, BAME, female)

Some BAME participants spoke of experiencing racism in the wider community according to geographical location. Locations such as Birmingham or London, where there is greater ethnic diversity, were felt to provide a better experience for the serving person's family and therefore, for the serving person. The importance of being able to build up support networks (particularly vital if the wider family were not in the UK or nearby) was not always felt to be understood by the Services; with the caveat that there were examples of families being looked after and their cultural needs understood and accommodated.

The CS and three Services often differentiated themselves from each other along gender and/or class lines.

Many participants in the RAF did not see their Service as having a macho and masculine environment, and perceived themselves as more 'educated' and 'middle class' than the other Services. Whilst not cited frequently, there was a sense that participants across the sample did not appraise being an alpha male (as they described it) as necessarily a positive thing, associating it with a number of negative attributes. The Army was perceived by some as being more of a "lad" and "ladette" culture. White males in the RN often described themselves as more 'tolerant' than the other Services, with many referencing the historical acceptance of homosexuals in the RN. However, this tolerance did not extend to a perceived "ladette" culture which some white RN males critiqued. SCS, submariners, RM, the Parachute Regiment, Infantry in the Army and some engineering branches were perceived of as "boys clubs" or as "rugby boys clubs" by participants within and outside these areas of work. The introduction of females into these spaces was sometimes seen as threatening to that subculture, with for example, many RM and submariners believing that females would damage the sense of cohesion amongst these tight "bands of brothers". There was also a sense amongst Reservists that they were more likely to experience broader diversity than Regulars through their employment beyond the Services, and they felt that this made the Reservists more inclusive than the Regulars.

Regular/Reservist peer relationships were a strong presence in Reservist interviews (especially in the white male Army/RAF cohort). Many participants described tensions between Regulars and Reservists when working together. These tensions sometimes played out in intersectional ways, whereby some minorities described feeling undermined on the basis of their gender, ethnicity and being a Reservist. However, being a 'Reservist' seemed to impact on these relationships more significantly than gender and ethnicity. For example, some Reservists described negative attitudes from Regulars who questioned their commitment to the organisation and their motivations for joining, and drew on stereotypes about Reservists being "lazy" and "in it for the money". This is further supported by findings from the AFCAS (2018), which indicates that the Regulars do not unanimously hold the Reserves in high esteem with 67% of respondents (Regulars) rating the Reserve Forces as professional, rating the professionalism of CS comparatively higher (75%). When treatment and abuse was particularly bad, some Reservists suggested that they (as Reservists) would just not turn up since they were volunteers and not obliged to be there. However, there were also instances of positive experiences of Regular/Reservist peer relationships. Some Reservists noted more positive integration between the Regulars and Reservists, but also suggested that there could be more "cross fertilisation".

"I believe that there isn't full utilisation of the Reserves at the moment. So, the Reserves, certainly within the unit I'm working in, has so much experience and knowledge, and I don't think it is fully utilised"
(Military, BAME, male)

This reflects the sentiment across participants from the Reservist cohort that the MOD does not fully recognise the skills or experience of Reservists. This is in spite of the increased investment in the Reserves and intent to grow their trained strength (see timeline). However, there was also lots of examples of Reservists (males and females) feeling special, respected and valued for their skills in the MOD, suggesting some inconsistency in the utilisation of Reservists' skillsets. Interestingly, the Regular participants rarely mentioned Reservists in their interviews. Similarly, the CS talked about the Regulars, but the Regulars tended not to mention them. This tendency suggested that Regulars saw themselves as being at the centre of the organisation, and their relationships with Reservists and CS were not a cause for concern.

The relationship between the CS and military was prominent in CS interviews, in both positive and negative ways. Many CS took pride in supporting the military, seeing their role as providing valuable support to the people who serve and their families. Some enjoyed the banter and sense of camaraderie when working on bases. However, some female CS reported feeling more vulnerable to sexual harassment from military males in rural locations where bases were located. The most common perspective was of military managers or ex-military personnel involved in managing CS personnel treating them as they would a member of the military (most notable in the Army). Some CS participants took umbrage to the way they were ordered about, expected to work until the job was done rather than their allocated hours, and to military attitudes to civilians feeling unwell (*"man up"*), working flexibly or reclaiming time. This accords with the findings of a NATO (2018) study on the relationship between military and CS personnel which found that a third of UK personnel surveyed cited problems with workstyle or work ethic of their CS colleagues as the greatest challenge in working with them. Only 9% of the CS participants made the same observation about their military colleagues, instead the biggest issue for them was what they saw as the poor attitude of their military colleagues towards others, including them (20%). Although hierarchal relationships were an aspect of CS culture, many CS found working with military personnel difficult since the hierarchy manifested in different and more rigid ways that went against the idea of the CS as a civil place to work. The importance of civility or lack thereof in working relationships was therefore common in CS and Reservists' reflections on relationships with Regulars. This was a source of tension for CS, who did not enjoy this mode of working. The value placed on civility amongst CS personnel, Reservists and amongst many Regulars was evident and in accordance with research on the detrimental effects of workplace incivility. Workplace incivility is recognised as a major issue by researchers and its negative impacts for targets and witnesses include increased stress, job withdrawal and higher turnover (Schilpzand, de Pater and Erez, 2016).

Age was both a positive and negative factor in peer Reservist/Regular relationships, more significantly than gender and ethnicity. Some Reservists felt their older age made them more mature in their outlook than their younger Regular peers of the same rank. This enabled them to bring new perspectives, challenge embedded ways (though the MOD was still criticised by some Reservists for reverting to traditional established ways of doing things) and also help younger peers navigate the interpersonal aspects of working with Regulars in particular. However, being in a lower rank at an older age than the norm was also a barrier insofar as negative perceptions of their capability by the Regulars i.e. they should be a higher rank given their age. This can be, and was, overcome by working alongside their Regular peers. Deployment was a similarly polemic factor in Reservist-Regular relationships. For some, it was required (by themselves probably more than their Regular peers) to validate their worth as a member of the military; for others, it was the factor that led to their disadvantage and exclusion from their Reservist peers who had moved on whilst they had been away.

Organisational Culture - Key Messages and Actions

- In spite of noted progress, the organisation was not perceived as diverse by participants, although it was considered inclusive because it accommodated cultural, religious and sex-based differences. However, it was notable that those who were not white, male and middle class found it difficult to feel fully included in the organisation. It was apparent that increased cultural understanding allowed for the development of friendships and acceptance. The organisation may wish to consider how it can further facilitate cultural awareness. Increasing understanding may also help integrate the Whole Force. For example, some Reservists did not feel valued by Regulars with a sense that their skills and civilian experience are not utilised. The idea of “*cross fertilisation*” between the two is worth considering as a means to both value and utilise what Reservists bring to the organisation.
- There were concerns from some white military males about whether accommodating differences would lead to a ‘watering down’ of the culture of the organisation. Neglecting the concerns of majority personnel can cause resistance to change but expecting minority personnel to fit in can undermine the added value of a diverse workforce. The key issue to be unravelled is the extent to which values and behaviours can remain common in the organisation whilst allowing the benefits of diversity to be fully realised. This could include involving those with a diverse background in the decision making process whilst also increasing clarity around the message on accommodations that are made for gender-based, cultural and religious differences.
- Many participants saw themselves as part of a “*family*”, seeing this as inherently a positive thing. However, included in this “*family*” narrative were patriarchal management styles that were sometimes detrimental to females’ sense of inclusion and team cohesion, although often well-intentioned. This suggests that there is a need to shift the focus from ‘protecting’ to ‘supporting’ females and BAME in the workplace. This could include training for managers on the management of diverse teams.
- There was evidence that females often felt inferior to male colleagues due to the hierarchal structure where rank and grade were highly prized. BAME participants felt the organisation’s focus upon ‘status’ and position prevented them from crossing organisational hierarchies, thus restricting their opportunities to form a support network with like-minded people and increasing feelings of isolation. Junior personnel felt overlooked. Deference to rank and grade in the organisation also spurred an urge to conform, acting as a barrier to inclusion and diversity of thought. Consideration may need to be given as to how to move towards a culture where the knowledge and experience inherent in rank and grade are acknowledged, whilst giving voice to diversity of opinion across the hierarchy. Further exploration of those instances where the formal hierarchy isolates and excludes may also need to be undertaken. This is particularly important for BAME personnel who sometimes experienced racism in the wider community, particularly in those locations with little ethnic diversity. The importance of support networks for BAME personnel may assist in making them feel looked after and understood.
- Banter was a complex issue as a signaller of both inclusion and exclusion (for anyone who was different), forging bonds and friendship but offending and problematic for many females, BAME personnel and anyone who did not fit the white male stereotype. A minority of military white males expressed resistance to the drawing of boundaries around what is considered appropriate banter. Many white males also did not appear comfortable speaking about race, suggesting that the boundaries of banter and appropriate language (what is okay to say – especially in relation to ethnicity and cultural differences) should be regularly negotiated/discussed within teams and units.
- Organisational communication was often gendered, which reinforced an organisational culture where males are perceived to be the norm and females are ‘other’. Removing gendered language used in organisational communication could lead to females feeling more included in the organisation. Whilst it is noted in the Joint Service Publication 101 Defence Writing Guide that sexist language and traditional single-sex terms should be avoided this could be taken a step further by encouraging open conversations about what is considered acceptable (or not) within particular individuals/teams (and making sure that this language is reflected by the CS too). Language is never neutral but is instead embedded with social meanings, including overt and covert biases, stereotypes and inequalities. The UK Fire Service has sought to address similar issues by campaigning to use the

term 'firefighters' rather than 'firemen' as part of a wider campaign to encourage more females to consider a role in the fire brigade. The MOD may be able to learn lessons from this approach.

- In an era when opportunities to deploy are reducing, sport is an important leveller and informal inclusionary practice for F&C BAME. However, it can also exclude females especially, suggesting that female participation in sport needs to be taken seriously. Barriers to females' participation also need tackling. One mechanism for this would be through promoting alternative sports that have less emphasis on competition than in traditional and competitive sports, where dominant relations between females and males can still be seen. It also points to the broader issue of task cohesion being strengthened through shared activity.
- Whilst socialising can cement working relationships, they also bring several problems. From a D&I perspective, CS and military females sometimes felt vulnerable in these spaces when alcohol was involved due to anxieties of being judged harshly and concerns about sexual harassment. Some BAME participants did not drink alcohol and this also excluded them from such informal socialisation as well as making them uncomfortable at formal events. Thus, there is always potential for in-group/out-group dynamics to be played out around this form of socialising, excluding and isolating members who are not part of the in-group. Having informal meetings at different times of the day, such as lunch meetings, rather than drinks after work is one way of ensuring that people are not (un)intentionally left out.
- The CS participant and Reservist experience was often shaped by their engagement with military colleagues. Many CS participants were disappointed by their treatment by military colleagues, especially those working in mixed environments. There were serious concerns from CS personnel about the norms of behaviour, (in)civility and bullying that they often experience from military colleagues and managers. This suggests that the MOD may need to explore what steps could be taken to ensure that military managers or ex-military personnel who are involved in line managing CS personnel understand the most effective management style for use within this working environment. This could include a specific focus on how to manage a diverse team. Healthcare professionals advocating for the importance of civility in organisations have launched the 'Civility Saves Lives' campaign. The NHS now has unofficial 'civility' champions to advocate for the importance of respect, professional courtesy and valuing each other in the workplace (Hurst, Farmer and Turner, 2018). Similar initiatives for promoting a more positive working environment may help solve such problems.

Part Three

Options for Action

6 Options for Action

The literature suggests that there is no simple solution to addressing Diversity & Inclusion (D&I); whilst some approaches might be suitable in some contexts they are less suitable in others. Consequently, the best approaches are those that are tailored to the specific organisation. That said, there are some underlying principles that apply across organisations (evidenced by [REDACTED]), which should be considered before embarking on any approach to diversity management to effect positive change. These relate to: leadership (the importance of support and leadership from the top); vision (clarity of vision and objectives); policies (establishing clear policies and standards); staff engagement (involving staff in the change process); culture change (not accepting bad behaviour); and the role of resources (investing resources in addressing the issue). With this in mind, a table (Table 6-1) of six focus areas with associated options for action is presented below (other lower level suggestions for action are embedded in Part Two of the report). These are based on the findings that emerged from the theme write-ups in Part Two. It is suggested that the information in this table could be used by stakeholders to help inform planning and investment decisions.

The table presents the following information:

- Six areas of focus.
- Suggested actions.
- The desired outcome (what the likely impact of taking the action would be).
- Evidence thread (the evidence that underpins the suggested action).
- Scale of impact (how many people would be affected by the change).
- Size of impact (how much of a difference the change would make to all).

The scale and size of the impact are rated from low to high. For example, a suggested action which is likely to impact most people across the organisation is rated as having a high impact for scale whereas a suggested action which might only impact one specific group is rated as low. In terms of size, if the suggested option for action is likely to make a substantial difference to the lived experience of personnel (regardless of how many people would be affected by the change) it is rated as high whereas if the impact is considered to be limited, it is rated as low.

Areas of focus were derived from the aforementioned principles cited by [REDACTED] in conjunction with the specific findings from the research, evidence from the literature, insight into what other organisations have done to address similar challenges, and the expertise of the research team. Whilst initiatives utilised by other organisations were considered, it is important to note that these are not always evaluated; therefore, their impact is not always clear. It is also important to note that the different components of the Whole Force are in different stages of change and the findings have shown that, in some cases, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) needs to operate differently across groups. Therefore, whilst some suggestions are common to all, others are more specific to a particular Service/Civil Service (CS). The six suggested focus areas are as follows:

1. Challenging/changing the culture of the organisation.
2. Clarity in organisational communication.
3. Reviewing recruitment, selection and induction processes.
4. Reviewing leadership and management behaviours.
5. Implementing new policies and practices (or reviewing existing ones).
6. Increasing opportunities for education and training.

Whilst the literature suggests that attention should be paid to all six areas, the one likely to have most significant impact on improving D&I, in terms of scale and size, is 'culture change'. However, in addition to the scale and size of the impact that could be achieved, it is also suggested that stakeholders should assess the feasibility of the suggested action. If the action is deemed feasible, an action owner should be assigned (or take responsibility) for the action. The timeframe should be established alongside the resources and

materials needed to implement the action. Finally, a measure of success should be identified to enable effectiveness to be evaluated in the short, medium and/or longer-term.

Table 6-1: Options for action

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
Cultural change	Continue to challenge existing ways of working and focus on diversity in its broadest sense (not just focusing on protected characteristics). Review how to reduce the emphasis (overtly and unconsciously) on the macho male stereotype and create a diverse alternative model to enable inclusion of individuals who do not fit the stereotypical masculine prototype (including some white males).	An organisation where all individuals have a sense of belonging; where personnel from diverse backgrounds are successfully integrated and D&I is accepted as a way of life.	A particular personality type, background/social class and interests were perceived as required in order to progress and 'fit in' with the dominant (masculine) norms of the organisation (see Sections 5.5.2, 5.7.1, 5.8.2 and 5.8.3).	High	High
	Identify/develop a cultural change theoretical framework, using the data from this study as the basis. This could involve conceptualising the nine themes to represent relationships and impacts between/amongst them, recognising that most themes are direct consequences/outcomes of culture. This framework could then be used as the basis to direct future cultural change initiatives within Defence.	Advance understanding of cultural change in the MOD and help direct future change initiatives.	This suggestion is not based on a particular finding but the data and study as a whole.	High	Medium
	Consider more radical (for Defence) change including: reviewing organisational structures such as adopting a flatter structure; introducing lateral entry into the Armed Forces (AF) (as already being explored by the MOD); moving away	An organisation better structured to fully and successfully integrate people from diverse backgrounds across the board, i.e. where promotion is	Dissatisfaction with the speed of career progression (particularly from Foreign & Commonwealth (F&C) Black, Asian and	High	High

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
	<p>from being overly focused on age/time-served in relation to promotion (particularly in the military); and amending the career path/commissioning structure within the military so that nobody is disadvantaged.</p> <p>Mechanisms to challenge the perpetuation of old models and values that sustain the status quo should be explored.</p>	<p>based on performance rather than rank/grade and/or time-served.</p>	<p>Minority Ethnic (BAME) personnel was evident (see Section 5.5.4).</p> <p>The current organisational structure was felt to encourage conformity (see Section 5.5.3) and to act as a barrier to people complaining (Section 5.2.6).</p>		
Organisational communication	<p>Increase clarity in relation to the D&I message (in its widest sense, not just in relation to females and BAME personnel) and the benefits of having a diverse organisation to all (military and CS). Be clear that demographic diversity does not 'water down' the organisation's purpose, goals and activities and highlight what it does bring.</p>	<p>D&I is viewed positively and taken seriously organisation-wide, leading to greater support for the inclusion agenda.</p> <p>Increased representation of females and BAME personnel across the organisation.</p>	<p>Some white males perceived D&I to be an issue for females/ethnic minorities only and associated a more diverse organisation with negative outcomes (see Sections 5.3.2 and 5.3.3.3). Some racist and sexist views persisted (see Section 5.2). Senior leaders were appraised negatively where they failed to respond to resistance to D&I initiatives (see Section 5.7.1).</p>	High	High

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
	<p>Address myths and common misconceptions through consistent and accurate top down organisational messaging. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be clear on the difference between positive action and positive discrimination. Articulate to personnel (military and CS) at all levels of the organisation that Defence does not positively discriminate in its recruitment and selection practices. • Address common misunderstandings around changing (physical) standards relating to the front line role of military females. Acknowledging the work undertaken by the Army on physical employment standards, and [REDACTED] looking at trade related physical standards, there is a wider need to ensure that standards across all Services (for selection into as well as in-Service) are relevant to the role and importantly are clearly articulated. • Provide clarity on the difference between quotas and targets, which approach the MOD is using and why. • Provide stronger messaging about the benefits of having females in 	<p>Accurate understanding of D&I leading to reduced resistance and increased support for D&I issues.</p>	<p>Stereotypical assumptions regarding the roles females/BAME personnel should undertake impacted on their sense of belonging and feeling of inclusion (see Sections 5.3.3.3 and 5.8.2).</p> <p>False assumptions about the preferential treatment (positive discrimination) of females and BAME personnel existed (see Section 5.2.2).</p>	High	Medium

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
	<p>combat roles, for example, to dispel anxieties.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Break down stereotypes about what personnel in particular roles look like, such as a typical Warfare Officer or Infanteer, for example. 				
	<p>Remove gendered language used in Whole Force organisational communication (i.e. references to manpower, manning, etc.). Gendered language is a signaller of a lack of inclusion of some personnel. Whilst the Joint Service Publication 101 Defence Writing Guide notes that traditional single-sex terms should be avoided this could be taken a step further by encouraging open conversations about what is considered acceptable (or not) within particular individuals/teams (and making sure that this language is reflected by the CS too).</p>	<p>All personnel (including females) would feel truly included and part of the organisation.</p>	<p>Language used across Defence was found to be masculine in nature, marking females as 'other' (see Section 5.9.4).</p> <p>Informal gendered language was found to impact on females' sense of belonging (see Section 5.8.4).</p>	Medium	Medium
	<p>Make D&I issues even more visible through additional reporting of statistics. [REDACTED] suggested that the MOD should ensure that diversity outcome data are regularly produced and scrutinised (including considering strategies for how data collection and reporting can avoid reinforcing dichotomies). With this in mind:</p>	<p>The ability to accurately baseline and explore D&I issues to understand and respond to differences and similarities within and between groups.</p>	<p>Organisational statistics are not formally reported by gender AND ethnicity, providing an incomplete picture of the situation (see Section A.7).</p> <p>In reviewing the literature it became</p>	Low	Medium

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational statistics should be reported by gender AND ethnicity combined. At present the data are reported separately, which provides an incomplete picture which is difficult to use when trying to baseline and explore the complexity of the issue. Where possible the suite of staff attitude surveys should publically report on differences in satisfaction between (and within) males and females. Surveys should also report, as a minimum, differences in satisfaction between (and within) white and BAME personnel. This will enable visibility and monitoring of issues. 		evident that findings from the MOD staff attitude surveys are not routinely reported by gender and ethnicity. This masks differences that may exist within these groups.		
Recruitment, selection and induction	Continue to undertake sustained outreach activities designed to engage BAME communities and educate gatekeepers about the military. This includes advertising the opportunities and the range of careers especially those that lead to professional qualifications. The effectiveness of these outreach activities should be formally evaluated (as per the guidance set by MOD Centre).	Increased awareness of MOD job opportunities. Positive impact on recruitment of hard to reach groups.	Some BAME communities were found to have an inaccurate view of Defence and were not aware of the available job opportunities (see Section 5.4.5).	Low	High
	Review the processes by which CS candidates are selected and the efficacy/ needs of those involved in such assessments. Ensure that same-	The routine use of fair recruitment and selection processes.	Some recruitment and selection processes were viewed as being exclusionary or	Medium	Medium

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
	gender (and ethnicity) interview panels are only used by exception if possible (as advised in policy) and that unconscious bias training is not only being completed but adhered to by interviewers.		discriminatory by some females and BAME personnel (see Section 5.4.3).		
	Monitor recruitment processes for internal roles and temporary promotions within the CS to ensure fairness and openness is promoted and upheld and these posts are not being filled through the use of informal networking, which disadvantages BAME candidates.	All internal CS roles and temporary promotions are openly and widely advertised. Selection processes for internal CS roles and temporary promotions are fair, and perceived to be fair, to all.	Informal networking and 'favouritism' were felt to advantage white personnel and disadvantage BAME personnel (see Section 5.5.3).	Medium	Medium
	Investigate potential improvements to the vetting process, such as whether it can be 'sped up' and better communication to candidates in terms of information about the length of time it takes and why certain investigations are required, irrespective of the background of the applicant.	Transparency in terms of the process/rationale underlying security vetting. Minimal time lag between application and clearance. Applicant satisfaction with security vetting process.	Dissatisfaction across the sample with the speed of the vetting process. This was greatest for overseas applicants (see Section 5.4.3).	High	Medium
	Review the level of security clearance required for all Defence roles and open up job opportunities to a wider	Job opportunities open to all.	Restrictions apply to the roles F&C BAME personnel can	Low	High

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
	pool of candidates if possible. If not possible, ensure restrictions are clearly communicated to personnel on joining and what this means in terms of future job opportunities and career progression.	OR Transparency with regards to available opportunities and subsequent career progression (effective expectation management).	undertake. Some participants reported being unclear about this on joining (see Section 5.5.1).		
Leadership and management	All senior leaders (not just those working in the personnel domain) must demonstrate visible and sincere commitment to D&I. They should be advocates of the D&I message, role model good behaviours and call out inappropriate actions. Clear direction provided in the Defence D&I Strategy (2018-2030) should be followed. Their behaviour should drive integrated and committed investment within the organisation beyond top level messages.	D&I having far greater traction and support across the organisation. Increased understanding by personnel of why D&I is relevant and how it impacts upon organisational outcomes.	Some senior leaders were perceived as only paying 'lip service' to D&I issues (see Section 5.7.1).	High	High
	Managers must also be visible advocates of D&I, role model good behaviours and call out inappropriate ones. Guidance and good practice is available, e.g. the CS new line manager Gateway signposts to all relevant policy and training to promote good behaviours and best practice. Role modelling and recognising alternative ways of operating by both males and females is an important way of	Role modelling of 'good' behaviours by management across the organisation. A willingness to tackle negative behaviours. Acceptance and understanding of the benefits alternate	Poor line management behaviours (e.g. bullying) were reported (see Section 5.2.3). Line management/the Chain of Command were found to be key influencers of the extent to which the	High	High

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
	challenging the dominant masculine mode of behaviour. So too is recognising the commitment made by those who, despite negative experiences, express pride in the organisation.	ways of working may bring.	local culture was inclusive (see Section 5.7.2). Section 5.7.3 emphasises the importance of role models for shaping career expectations and the self-efficacy of minority groups.		
Policy and practice	Formalise practices around D&I: continue to ensure (as already underway by some) that all D&I networks have a clear remit and terms of reference; establish a strategy to evaluate D&I initiatives (taking initial baseline measures and assessing improvement against the Defence Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Maturity Model); and monitor feelings of inclusion across the organisation, beyond this study (potentially using the Cabinet Office's measure of inclusion if suitable).	Maintain focus on the D&I message enabling Defence to monitor progress towards its Strategic Equality Objectives. Formalising the D&I networks will provide greater clarity on what level/type of support minority groups can expect from them.	Whilst BAME participants were more likely to have access to formal networks than the white, male majority, access to these networks was not a career advantage (see Section 5.5.3).	Low	Medium
	Assess Service personnel's' childcare needs to determine if additional provision is required (e.g. more nurseries) or whether changes to the current provision are needed (e.g. longer opening hours/subsidised placements). Determine if need differs by Service/individual circumstances	Clarity of the nature and extent of childcare support needed across the Services and how needs may differ across	Personnel, most notably in the AF, struggle to manage both home and family commitments (see Section 5.6.2). Females were found to be	Medium	High

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
	(e.g. single parent families/dual serving couples). Explore whether need is constant or whether it is impacted by Service demands, e.g. during periods of deployment/exercise.	time/location/individual circumstances.	disproportionately affected by childcare responsibilities (see Section 5.6.2).		
	Implement a support programme to assist the 'hidden assets' within the 'settled middle' to progress. This could take the form of a skills audit focussed on identifying overlooked or latent talent, with meaningful job enrichment and personal development actions to follow to enable those who want to progress their careers within the organisation to do so.	Increased productivity of the 'settled middle'. The recognition and inclusion of knowledge skills and experience of all personnel. A more positive engagement between the 'settled middle' and fast track candidates.	The injustice felt by some longer serving personnel (the 'settled middle') who felt their career progression was being overlooked in the workplace was evident (see Section 5.1.4).	Medium	Medium
	Consider whether there should be an increase in task focused, team-based working in the CS (i.e. working more collaboratively on joint projects) more akin to the military way of working.	Greater team cohesion and inclusion and feelings of belonging.	Shared goals and a common purpose were found to facilitate a sense of belonging amongst military personnel (Section 5.8.1). Some CS personnel cited a lack of support in the workplace leading to feelings of	Medium	Low

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
			exclusion (see Section 5.4.4).		
	Pilot anonymous promotion boards in the military, where names and gender identifiers are removed from reports. This could help to reduce bias.	Career progress based upon ability and merit rather than background, gender or ethnicity.	Concerns around the fairness of formal career progress mechanisms were noted (see Section 5.5.3).	Medium	Low
	Before implementation of the AF Flexible Working Act, take baseline measures to capture data on the current situation. Once implemented, monitor/review uptake of the AF Flexible Working Act to assess its effectiveness; whether it is being used and by whom.	A clear understanding of the appetite and uptake of new flexible working policy. Appropriate actions would be taken on the basis of these findings.	Policies relating to flexible working and maternity were felt to have had positive impact upon career progression for females across the sample, but were perceived to be implemented inconsistently (see Section 5.3.2, Section 5.6.1 and 5.6.2).	Medium	Low
	Sustain a drive for flexible working opportunities for all (whilst recognising that flexible working can have workload impacts on others).	This would enable a more diverse range of people to participate within the MOD whilst also reducing the 'cost' to some cohorts.	Flexible working was seen to have a 'cost' for some participants (i.e. those without children) who felt they picked up the 'slack' (Section 5.6.2).	High	Medium
	Undertake further research to determine whether proportionally more female D grade CS request alternative forms of working (and have	Fair and consistent application of policy	More junior CS grades reported having their requests for alternative forms of	Low	Medium

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
	it turned down) or whether these grades are more likely to be subjected to negative treatment than their counterparts in higher grades.	(and treatment) for all.	working turned down (see Section 5.6.2).		
	Review the process for changing trades in the military. Ensure clarity in the messaging around the policy/process (how, when, if possible) and consistency of the recruiters message regarding to career options.	Increased ease of movement between trades (as appropriate). Clear expectation management on joining.	Some (F&C BAME personnel) tried to change trades to improve their career prospects but this often proved very difficult or impossible (see Section 5.5.1).	Low	Medium
	Conduct a more detailed study to identify whether there is an issue with F&C BAME progression in the military. This work is important, especially in light of further F&C BAME military recruitment.	Evidence based understanding of the barriers (if any) to F&C BAME progression. Identification of steps/actions to remove barriers for current F&C BAME personnel and to offset the development of any identified issues for future recruits.	F&C BAME personnel perceive their career progression to be slower than that of their white peers (see Section 5.5.4).	Low	High
	Attention should be given to the implementation (and impact) of policies across Defence to ensure that they are implemented fairly and there are no unintended/adverse consequences for particular groups.	Policies applied consistently and fairly for all, irrespective of background.	Universal funding decisions were perceived to impact unequally on females	High	High

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
	<p>Transparency of implementation and continual monitoring/auditing is advised.</p> <p>Priority should be given to the provision of appropriate equipment for female military personnel, and then to the provision of infrastructure to match their male peers.</p>	Males and females to have access to the same resources.	<p>and BAME personnel (see Section 5.2.2).</p> <p>Lack of investment in facilities and equipment was felt to disproportionately (negatively) impact females (see Section 5.2.2).</p> <p>Variable implementation of policies is reported in Sections 5.6.2, 5.6.3 and 5.3.2.</p>		
	Suggest moving away from the traditional annual reporting process for the AF to a more continuous feedback approach. This may further offset some of the noted problems with reporting being dependent on the participant's relationship with their line manager/Reporting Officer.	No longer a 'once a year' activity leading to more accurate and regular feedback, greater engagement/satisfaction with the process and improved performance.	The subjective nature of the AF appraisal process was raised (see Section 5.5.5).	Medium	Medium
	Evaluate the new appraisal process in the CS to assess the effectiveness of the approach.	Greater understanding of requirements of reporting and evidence of accuracy and utility of feedback given.	<p>CS were dissatisfied with the old appraisal process (see Section 5.5.5).</p> <p>Section 5.5.5 highlights frustrations with the appraisal process. CS</p>	Medium	Medium

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
		Increased satisfaction with the process and outcome.	participants felt that some military personnel lacked understanding (or motivation to understand) CS reporting processes leading to poor quality reports.		
	Appraise the complaints process (recently reviewed in the military and soon to be reviewed in the CS). Review what support is in place for those personnel involved in a complaint and options for mediation where appropriate. Monitor and evaluate the speed of resolution of complaints. Conduct research to identify which actions could have most success in breaking down cultural barriers to complaining. Greater communication with the complainant may also be needed to ensure that they do not feel excluded from the process and are aware of the steps taken as well as any outcome. Monitor the outcomes for both parties for some time afterwards, to address concerns around retribution.	Increased satisfaction with the complaints system (and the support provided) by all parties involved in a dispute. Reduced time to process and resolve complaints. Greater awareness in personnel of the options available to them to effectively deal with a dispute.	Dissatisfaction with the complaints process, including speed of resolution, was reported across the sample. Some personnel do not complain due to perceptions of a lack of parity in the complaints process and outcome (see Section 5.2.6).	Low	High

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
	Evaluate the effectiveness of Regimental Inclusion Councils (RIC) ⁶³ (using units with without them as a comparator group) and whether this approach might work more widely (including in the CS). Consider their role in supporting D&I across Defence, as appropriate.	Understanding of the impact of RIC upon desired D&I outcomes. If shown to be effective, wider use, e.g. across the CS and in other Services could be explored.	As evidenced in Section 5.2.1 some white males feel that there is no longer any issue with discrimination, yet evidence (Section 5.2) highlights that racist and sexist behaviours are still an issue.	Medium	Medium
	Provide more opportunities (at least annually) for (Whole Force) inclusive team building activities/events that all personnel can participate in.	Improved integration and cohesion across the MOD.	Team and sporting events increase the sense of belonging of individuals and groups. The loss of these activities in certain areas was commented upon negatively (see Section 5.8.1).	High	Medium
	Opportunities for sporting activities in the AF should not be cut but consideration to the type of sporting activity should be given. A balance should be provided between competitive and non-competitive	Increased inclusion across the organisation by making a range of sporting activities accessible to all.	As outlined in Section 5.8.1, talented sports men and women from BAME backgrounds commented very positively on the ways in which sporting events had enabled	Low	Medium

⁶³ A RIC is a forum where personnel can raise D&I issues either in person or anonymously. These issues are reviewed by the council who are a collective group of personnel from a diverse range of backgrounds empowered to make decisions. This is a bottom up initiative originating in 10 The Queens Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment.

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
	sporting activities to enable all personnel to participate.		them to integrate with the white male majority ⁶⁴ .		
	Ensure that representatives from all populations are consulted about policy decisions that impact them through the use of shadow boards ⁶⁵ .	Consultation with personnel from a wider variety of backgrounds about policy decisions that could impact them. Improved applicability of policies for all and increased buy-in for them.	Evidence for minority groups feeling that they do not have a voice is outlined in Section 5.3.3.2. Section 5.1.3 highlights that policy can be perceived as disproportionately impacting personnel in the lower CS grades negatively.	High	High
	Establish widespread, Whole Force adoption of coaching and mentoring for all (including reverse mentoring for leaders).	Increased senior leader awareness of (and action in response to) the issues faced by junior personnel within the organisation, including minority groups. Increased attainment of career goals across the organisation	Role models are important in influencing females and BAME personnel's; beliefs that they could obtain a senior post in the organisation (see Section 5.7.3). Coaching and reverse mentoring increased communication and	High	Medium

⁶⁴ The employee group who identify as 'white' as a racial classification specifier and 'male' as a sex classification specifier where being white and male is the most common, or majority, employee group.

⁶⁵ A shadow board is a group of individuals (from a variety of grades/ranks and backgrounds from across the organisation) who meet separately from an Executive Committee to provide their input on policies/outputs/decisions taken by the Executive Committee.

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
		through greater use of coaches and mentors.	understanding between different grades, genders and ethnicities (see Section 5.7.3). Section 5.3.3 reports that white CS participants were seeking support from coaches and mentors in the absence of career managers.		
	<p>The military should continue work to reduce the stigma associated with mental health including promoting help seeking behaviours. These efforts should be evaluated (including taking a baseline measure before any interventions are implemented).</p> <p>The impact/effectiveness of welfare support for CS should also be evaluated (as described above), including the provision of mental health first aiders, and the extent to which line management feel suitably trained to identify and respond to mental illness in the workplace.</p>	<p>A greater understanding of the impact of interventions to reduce stigma and the efficacy of current welfare services and practices designed to manage mental health in the workplace.</p> <p>Continued investment in existing forms of support or identification of where further change or training is needed.</p>	<p>As outlined in Section 5.6.3, Regular serving personnel are reluctant to admit to mental health problems due to stigma.</p> <p>Reports of work-related stress, anxiety and depression were noted across the sample (Section 5.6.3).</p> <p>Greater responsibility upon line managers in the CS to manage mental ill health were felt to be negative changes (Section 5.6.3).</p>	High	High

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
Education and training	Better prepare/educate F&C BAME recruits with regards to cultural differences before joining Defence alongside educating those in leadership/instructional roles on cultural differences.	A smoother transition and a more positive experience on joining the organisation for F&C BAME. Improved advocacy and retention of these groups.	As reported in Section 5.4.4 evidence suggests that F&C BAME recruits face particular challenges integrating into Defence. Coupled with this are suggestions of unfair treatment of recruits by instructors (Section 5.4.4).	Low	High
	More generally, increase opportunities for personnel less familiar with some minority communities to gain opportunities to improve cultural competency and feel more at ease interacting with those who are different to them. This could be as simple as providing more opportunities for open discussions within teams where BAME personnel are able to brief their colleagues about their religion or culture to improve understanding between ethnic and religious groups.	An organisation that is comfortable with cultural and ethnic difference.	Section 5.8.2 reports the ways in which a lack of understanding from peers can impact upon BAME participant's sense of belonging. Section 5.9.1 highlights the value some BAME military participants place upon cultural and religious discussions. Diversity training was felt to need to be more interactive (see Section 5.3.2 and 5.3.5.2).	Medium	High
	Sustain vigilance of basic military training (beyond initiatives such as the Recruit Trainee Survey (RTS), which	An organisation where abuse of power is not enabled	Reports of potential negative treatment of minority groups during	Medium	Medium

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
	does not always capture the views of those who leave training early) to understand whether there is an issue of negative treatment/abuse of power of BAME and female recruits. Further to this, continue to sustain spotlight on parts of the organisation that have faced problems (such as abuses of power) in the past.	nor allowed to go unchecked.	basic training are outlined in Section 5.4.4.		
	Provide support for military females' needs post-partum including guidance on how to regain physical fitness. Tri-service collaboration is suggested to identify (successful) initiatives already in place to support females, or where original research is needed, and how the Services can learn from each other as to what guidance or strategies have best effect.	Production of evidence-based guidance for females and PTIs to support regain of fitness. Reduced risk of injury/ill-health on return to work post-partum. Suitable facilities for females if they need to continue breastfeeding whilst in the workplace.	Some Regular serving females experienced difficulties (e.g. regaining fitness; injury; support to breastfeed in the workplace) on returning to work after maternity leave (see Section 5.6.1).	Medium	Medium
	Provide more support/guidance and training to managers (military and CS) on how to manage personnel working flexibly, particularly in relation to issues of fairness and trust within a team setting, so that the implementation of such policies does not become divisive. Managers (military and CS) also need training on how to manage and support diverse teams. Ex-military personnel joining the CS need particular guidance on	Greater line management awareness of policy and provision of support to aid their decision making. Improved working relationships between CS and military personnel.	Variable implementation of policies was evident (see Sections 5.3.2, 5.6.2, 5.6.3). Military managers were sometimes perceived by CS as 'bullying' (Section 5.2.3) or as creating a culture at the local	Medium	High

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
	appropriate management style. This should in part (for CS) be addressed by the mandatory learning pathway for all new line managers of MOD CS, which is due to commence in April 2019. Once rolled out, the effectiveness of this approach needs to be established. Similar support for managers managing diverse teams in the AF is also needed.	Increased perceptions of parity of process and outcome in regards to implementation of policy.	level that failed to be inclusive or accepting of diversity (see Section 5.7.2). Single personnel felt excessively 'leaned upon' to cover duties that those with families could not (Section 5.6.3).		
	<p>Improve D&I training. Take it out of the classroom (and offline) and make it interactive and practice-based (i.e. discuss real situations), particularly for managers and senior leaders. Within this, ensure that open discussions around the boundaries of appropriate language (what is okay to say, especially in relation to ethnicity) are included. Also include open discussions around power exploring why females may accept (or even join in with) humour that they do not really appreciate.</p> <p>D&I should be mainstreamed within all leadership training. Greater emphasis should be placed on values early on induction/training making sure that instructors in Phase 1, in particular, are bought into D&I and act as role models so that a very clear and</p>	A workforce that is competent around issues of diversity and difference and feels empowered to challenge bias, harassment and misunderstandings as they arise.	<p>Participants suggested the need for D&I training that was more interactive and enabled deeper understanding of cultural differences (see Sections 5.3.2 and 5.3.5.2).</p> <p>Discrimination, bias and harassment persist though were often invisible or subtle (see Section 5.2.1).</p> <p>Section 5.1.2 documents the feelings of injustice felt by males relating to their perceptions of scarce resources being diverted into D&I</p>	High	High

Focus Area	Suggested Actions	Desired Outcome	Evidence Thread	Scale of Impact	Size of Impact
	<p>positive message is relayed from the start.</p> <p>The diversity training evaluation framework (developed during this research) should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of this change.</p>		<p>initiatives. Some white males did not understand the relative privilege of their gender and/or the disadvantages of being female and/or BAME.</p>		

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Appendix A Method

This section outlines in detail the methodical approach used for the study. Specifically it covers: the research design; study management and co-ordination; recruitment of study participants; data collection; data analysis; and reporting.

A.1 Research Design

A.1.1 Research Paradigm: Ontological and Epistemological Perspective

The research was situated in a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm which sought to obtain an understanding of the world from an individual viewpoint. Ontologically, within an interpretivist paradigm reality is created by individuals in groups. Epistemologically, an interpretivist paradigm looks to discover the underlying meaning of events and activities. An interpretivist paradigm is typically associated with qualitative research.

A.1.2 Benefits of a Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research is well established in the social sciences domain; it is a widely used and highly valued means of exploring the social world. Qualitative approaches can elicit the range of issues that underpin a topic therefore allowing a depth of understanding about the subject to be captured. This differs to quantitative approaches which typically seek to understand the prevalence of a phenomena using statistical analysis of numerical data. Whilst these are complementary approaches (one is not superior to the other) qualitative data is sometimes dismissed as being 'anecdotal evidence' or 'individual perceptions' rather than reality. However, it is essential to highlight that an individual's perception of a situation is their reality; it is valid because it informs their experiences. The rigour of qualitative research comes from its iterative nature and critical reflection. Qualitative research can produce a wealth of data whilst maintaining context. Nuances within the data are more likely to be uncovered in qualitative studies compared with other approaches (see Silverman, 2001, Blaikie 2009, Robson, 2011). Aggregate analysis of individual experiences and perceptions therefore provides a rich dataset from which recurrent themes or 'patterns' can be identified and a valid basis upon which actions for change can be identified. With this in mind, it is important to be aware that qualitative approaches are well used in the MOD and wider government. Such studies have provided robust rich evidence to support significant policy and procedure change across a wide range of issues.

A.1.3 Study Design

A large-scale qualitative, cross-sectional design to explore the Lived Experience of CS and Service personnel (Regulars and Reservists) was used. Data were gathered via face-to-face/telephone/video call interviews with females and BAME personnel, as well as the white, male majority.⁶⁶ Data were obtained from white males to enable group comparisons and confidence that findings were attributable to differences in gender and/or ethnicity rather than being an issue faced by all personnel equally. Data were captured from personnel across the course of the Human Resource lifecycle; from personnel who had recently joined through to those who had put in their notice to leave. In total, 405 interviews were conducted. Participants were recruited for the study using an open advertising campaign as well as a targeted approach, contacting individuals directly, to fill gaps in the sample. The interviews were recorded and transcribed (where participants did not consent to audio recording detailed notes were taken instead). The research team analysed the data using thematic analysis, interpreting the findings in light of the wider Defence context, previous related research/literature and relevant theoretical models.

A.2 Study Preparation

A.2.1 Obtaining Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was sought before commencement of the research. The study design was reviewed for scientific rigour by the Dstl Scientific Advisory Committee and for ethical considerations by the MOD Research Ethics Committee (MODREC). Following a pilot study some adjustments were made to the technical

⁶⁶ The employee group who identify as 'white' as a racial classification specifier, and 'male' as a sex classification specifier where being white and male is the most common, or majority, employee group.

approach. These were approved by the MODREC amendments sub-committee (22 May 2017) prior to undertaking the main study.

A.2.2 Piloting the Technical Approach

Before embarking on such a large-scale study the research team piloted the approach with a sample of 30 participants. The aim of the pilot was to assess whether the approach worked effectively across all groups (Regulars, Reservists, CS, BAME and white personnel and males and females) and mediums (face-to-face/telephone/video call interviews). With some relatively minor adjustments, the pilot was concluded to be successful in achieving its aims against the following Key Indicators of Success (KIS)⁶⁷:

1. KIS1: Personnel were willing to volunteer for the study.
2. KIS2: All groups were able to be accessed.
3. KIS3: The timeline approach elicited data to address the research questions.
4. KIS4: The three interview mediums elicited the same quality of information.
5. KIS5: The data management approach between the three organisations was secure and robust.
6. KIS6: The approach was deemed to be viable on a larger scale.

A.3 Study Management and Co-ordination

The study was managed centrally by one organisation (QinetiQ). Three guidance documents were produced to make clear the roles and responsibilities of all researchers involved in the study, across the three organisations:

1. **How QinetiQ, Edinburgh Napier University and the University of Birmingham will work together on the Lived Experience Study:** Outlined the roles and responsibilities of key research team members with regards to allocating and arranging interviews, storage of data and communication.
2. **Study Management: Research Team Responsibilities:** Explained how to manage email and telephone requests from volunteers; eligibility criteria; selecting participants; how to allocate participants to interviewers; the management of audio files and transcripts; and provided interviewer contact details.
3. **Guide for Interviewers: Arranging to Interview a Participant:** Described the process for arranging an interview, how to use the audio recorder, how to upload audio files, where to save transcripts, and who to pass interview materials to post interview.

During the data collection period the team held a weekly teleconference to discuss project progress.

Alongside these guidance documents, a Data Management Plan⁶⁸ and a Data Analysis and Reporting Plan were produced. The former outlined how the data would be securely managed during the study. Specifically, it covered:

- Data collection: information about the process for collecting data from study participants.
- Data entry, sanitisation and checking: how the data should be sanitised, checked and cleansed where appropriate.
- Third Party Applications: use of third-party applications.
- Information storage and access management: approach to storing data and relevant access controls.
- Risk management: identified risks and relevant mitigation approaches.

The Data Analysis and Reporting Plan explained how data from the study would be analysed and reported back to the customer and key stakeholders. Specifically, the plan covered the:

⁶⁷ More information on the pilot study report is available: [[REDACTED]].

⁶⁸ The Data Management Plan is being updated to outline how the data will be securely stored, managed and accessed following completion of the study.

- Overview of the data analysis approach.
- Data analysis schedule and resources.
- Preparing the data.
- Conducting the analysis.
- Data validity and reliability.
- Reporting the findings (including presentation, implications and recommendations).

A.4 Recruitment of Study Participants

Participants were recruited over a 12 month period (from June 2017 to June 2018).

A.4.1 Communicating the Research

A formal communication plan was developed in liaison with the Directorate of Defence Communications. The plan outlined the: communication objectives; timescales; key messages; audience; plan implementation; and, how the plan would be evaluated. It further identified recruitment avenues that could be leveraged to raise awareness of the study and aid participant recruitment. This included formal and informal avenues to use with different groups as appropriate, such as: announcements (e.g. on the Defence intranet, MOD social media networks); MOD publications (e.g. Navy News, Defence People Magazine); via the diversity networks; MOD D&I policy desk leads; the research team's personal and professional MOD contacts; and, a snowball/referral sampling technique (see Appendix B).⁶⁹

A variety of recruitment materials were used to advertise the study via the aforementioned communication channels:

- Study article, endorsed by [REDACTED] (Appendix C).
- Poster advertising the study (Appendix D).
- Study business card to hand out at events, face-to-face unit briefings and to participants to pass on to other interested parties (Appendix E).

A.4.2 Requesting Volunteers

Study participants were recruited in one of two ways. The first was an open approach; research material was distributed electronically (and in hard copy) via the communication channels outlined above and in Appendix B. The second was a more targeted approach to address gaps in the sample. The team were not permitted to use protected characteristics as the basis for targeting personnel; therefore, this targeted approach was used to fill gaps in relation to Whole Force component. Specifically, Reservists and RM were emailed directly (addresses provided by Defence Statistics) by the Dstl Technical Partner to raise their awareness of the study.

A.5 Overview of the Data Collection and Analysis Approach

Figure 5 provides a diagrammatic overview of the data collection and analysis process which is described in more detail in the proceeding sections. Whilst this was the process used to arrange the majority of interviews, the researchers flexed the approach slightly when visiting units. For example, Participant Information Sheets and demographic questionnaires were handed out in hard copy during some visits.

⁶⁹ Study volunteers were asked via the demographic questionnaire where they heard about the research. Further information about the effectiveness of these communication channels can be found in the lessons and observations report: [REDACTED]

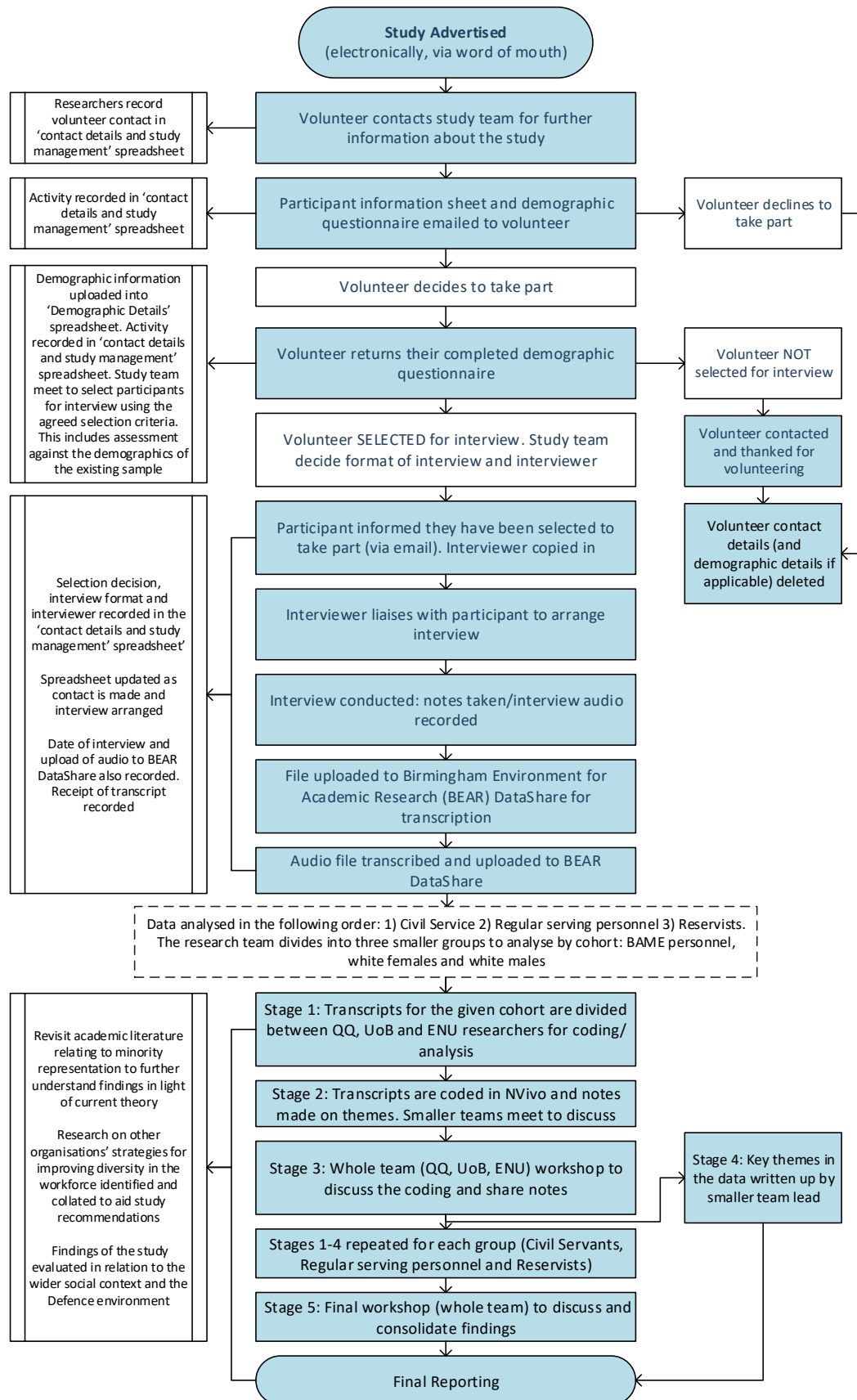


Figure 5: Overview of the data collection and analysis process

A.6 Data Collection

Data were collected between June 2017 and September 2018.⁷⁰

A.6.1 Reviewing the Literature

During the course of the study (from design through to producing the technical report) the research team continually drew upon relevant literature and theoretical models of minority representation in organisations. This information was used to inform the study design as well as aid analysis and interpretation of the findings for the pilot study and main report.

During the scoping phase the research team produced a summary review of relevant literature. The majority of the literature was provided to the research team as Government Furnished Information; however, information from the wider literature was also sourced. This included what is known about minority representation from an organisational, psychological and sociological viewpoint. Researchers identified published research that related to how females and BAME employees experience organisations, such as the Armed Forces, where they are a) in the minority and b) where strong team cohesion and trust is necessary to aid fulfilment of the organisation's goals. Literature exploring how being different might be experienced, and some of the barriers to the full inclusion of diverse team members, was also drawn upon.

The wider literature was sourced using Web of Science, Google Scholar and the Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts using the following search terms:

- 'Ethnic' and 'Armed Forces' and 'British'.
- 'Gender' and 'Armed Forces' and 'British'.
- 'Diversity' and 'Armed Forces'.
- 'Ethnic' and 'organization/organisation'.
- 'Ethnic' and 'career'.
- 'Emergency Services' / 'Fire Service' / 'Police' and 'gender' or 'ethnicity'.

Relevant papers were examined and investigated for other potential sources. The research team also drew on their existing knowledge of existing studies/papers in the field. Whether the information was suitable (in terms of scientific rigour and having a robust evidence base) for inclusion in the review was determined based on the quality of the source (i.e. whether it was from a peer reviewed journal article), how recently it was published and whether the literature findings were supported by other research.

This summary review was further developed and expanded upon during the data analysis phases of both the pilot and main study. As the analysis was data led, the research team sought additional, relevant literature as and when new findings emerged from the data. This information was sourced from various sources, but mostly peer reviewed journals (using the same search tools but different search terms, as appropriate), textbooks, Government Furnished Information and grey literature.⁷¹ Emerging findings were also reviewed in light of theoretical models relevant to minority representation in organisations and work in general. Examples of some of the models and theories that were reviewed and included are: social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979); capital (Bourdieu, 1986); tokenism (Kanter, 1977); gender and inequality regimes (Duncanson, 2013); power (Weber, 1978); and various theories of work (i.e. organisational commitment, organisational justice, psychological contract). In addition, the research team also explored what other (similar) organisations had done to address D&I issues within their own organisations. Open source information on the Police Force, Fire Service, National Health Service and Ministry of Justice⁷² was obtained. This information was compiled together into one document which was shared amongst the team for use during the analysis and report writing stages of the project⁷³.

⁷⁰ Interviews continued for three months after recruitment ended to allow time for interviews to be arranged and conducted.

⁷¹ Grey literature covers 'non-standard' or unpublished academic literature, e.g. theses, technical reports, government documents, working papers, white papers and evaluations.

⁷² The team also met with [REDACTED] at the Ministry of Justice to discuss their progress and initiatives.

⁷³ Information which was sourced during report writing was included directly in the report rather than added to the document.

It should be noted that a systematic literature review to explore what is known about how aspects of gender and ethnicity affect the Lived Experience of employees was not deemed suitable due to the nature of the study. A qualitative research paradigm emphasises that research is not necessarily systematic and linear. The rigour of qualitative research comes from its iterative nature, critical reflection and strategies to pursue ideas of interest as themes for further exploration emerge from the data. This literature review process reflects this philosophical approach to knowledge discovery. Whilst quantitative researchers place great weight on a systematic literature review qualitative researchers see this as constrained by infrastructures and institutions and dominant discourses (see MacKay, 2007). Whilst a formalised literature search is often part of a qualitative study, it is one strand of a more fine-tuned, emergent pursuit of possible avenues of exploration. The validity of a qualitative literature review stems not from its clearly defined parameters at the outset, but in the documented logic of the avenues to be pursued before and during the course of the data collection period. Reviewing the literature in light of the emerging findings was considered to be more appropriate.

A.6.2 Production of Timelines

Prior to gathering data from participants a log was opened by the research team to gather information about events that occurred in wider society during the data collection period that could have impacted on participants' experiences. These stories mostly related to the UK unless they had global significance and were reported more widely. During the course of the data collection phase the research team also reviewed a number of media sources for relevant stories including the: BBC, Guardian, Telegraph and New York Times online editions. The following key words formed the basis of the search criteria: diversity, gender, race, ethnicity, intersectionality, inclusivity, inequality and Defence.

In addition to the above, a timeline outlining the key global, national and Defence events and policy changes during the period covered in the timeline interview (2000 onwards) was also produced in collaboration with the Dstl TP. Information on key events was sought from MOD stakeholders, this included any significant events relevant to D&I that shaped the political landscape of the country.

The production of both timelines was a collective and iterative process.

A.6.3 Sampling Techniques

Participants were recruited using the following sampling techniques:

1. Purposive/theoretical sampling. This involved identifying specific people within the population, concentrating on those with particular characteristics (i.e. BAME personnel, females).
2. Snowball/referral sampling. This involved existing study participants recruiting future participants by circulating study information within their networks. This was effective for accessing harder to reach populations.

A.6.4 Managing Volunteers

Interested parties were directed to a group mailbox ([REDACTED]) or via telephone to request more information about the study or to volunteer. Potential volunteers received a standardised email response thanking them for their interest and were provided with more information about the study, via a Participant Information Sheet and Demographic Questionnaire (See Appendix F for a copy of the demographic questions). If, after reading the Participant Information Sheet, personnel were interested in taking part they were asked to complete and return the Demographic Questionnaire (demographic data were used to select personnel to take part in the study).

The name, email address and telephone number of those who expressed an interest in taking part were recorded on a password protected Microsoft (MS) Excel spreadsheet: Contact Details and Study Management (CDSM⁷⁴). Once volunteers completed and returned the Demographic Questionnaire⁷⁵ their

⁷⁴ Other information collected about the participant during the course of the participant journey (such as when they made contact, whether an interview had been arranged etc.) was also populated in the CDSM.

⁷⁵ Two versions of the form were created: an electronic form created in Adobe® which enabled automatic importing of the data; and a MS Word version. Two versions were created because the Adobe® form was not compatible with the Information Technology systems used by all participants.

information was input into a separate, password protected MS Excel spreadsheet ('Demographic Details'). Individuals' data on the two spreadsheets were linked by a unique identifier.

Volunteers who did not return a Demographic Questionnaire within two weeks were sent a 'chaser email' reminding them about the study but not pressurising them to participate. If participants did not respond to this email they were not contacted again. Participants who returned Demographic Questionnaires were sent 'holding emails' to confirm that their information had been received and the research team would make contact as soon as possible to confirm whether or not they had been selected to take part.

A.6.5 Selecting Participants

Demographic data were reviewed by the research team to confirm whether volunteers were eligible to take part in the study. Exclusion criteria were applied to the following individuals/organisations because their T&C differed from core MOD personnel (see Table 7-1 below). Those under 18 years of age were excluded because the 'cost' (in terms of time and resources) of speaking to these individuals was considered to outweigh the 'benefits' of including them in the study. The 'costs' included a requirement for parental consent for minors to participate and a requirement for a Disclosure and Barring Service cleared individual to be present during interviews, amongst other factors.

Table 7-1: Individuals/organisations who were excluded from the study

Individuals/organisations excluded from the study	
MOD Police	Trading Fund staff
Royal Fleet Auxiliary	Dstl Civil Servants
Non Departmental Public Body staff	UK Hydrographic Officer
National Museum of the Royal Navy	Defence Support Group
National Army Museum	Public Corporation
Royal Air Force Museum	Oil and Pipelines Agency
Single Source Regulations Office	Personnel under 18 years of age

Volunteers who were not eligible to take part were informed of this and thanked for their interest.

Eligible volunteers were initially selected based on a number of tier one variables (see Table 7-2). Once these had been selected for, tier two variables were considered. For groups with an abundance of volunteers, tier three variables were further considered. New volunteers were selected for interview on a weekly basis by two researchers. Two individuals were used for robustness: to 'double check' all relevant variables were considered during the selection process.

Table 7-2: Sampling framework variables

Tier One	Tier Two	Tier Three
Regular, Reserve, Civil Servant	BAME groupings: Asian, African or mixed ethnicity. If greater granularity can be achieved split by: Indian, Pakistani/Bangladeshi, Black Caribbean/Black African and mixed ethnicity.	Marital Status
Service: RN, Army, RAF, RM	Religious/Not religious	Location (HQ or not)
BAME/White	Dependents/No dependents	Deployment/or not
Female/Male	Length of time in Service/Age	
Officer/OR (Regulars)	UK Ethnic Minority/F&C	

Industrial (Skill Zone 1-4)/Non-industrial (split by: Band E band D, Band C and Band B/SCS)	Branch/specialism/capbadge	
	Reserves (Officer/OR)	

When a volunteer was selected to take part they received a standardised email informing them of this; the researcher allocated to conduct the interview was copied in on this correspondence. The researcher was then responsible for arranging the interview. The volunteer's unique identifier and demographic profile were emailed to the researcher separately from the participant's contact details to safeguard anonymity.

Eligible volunteers who were not selected to take part in the study were informed using a standardised email. The email was sensitively worded and made clear to participants why they had not been selected (to try to mitigate feelings of rejection).

A.6.6 Interviews

In total, 14 researchers across the three organisations undertook 405 interviews (see Appendix H for more information on the sample). Interviews were conducted face-to-face (at a participant's place of work), over the telephone or via video call. On average, interviews lasted 1.5 hours. Participants were asked (in the Demographic Questionnaire) to select their preferred medium⁷⁶. These preferences were met in almost all cases. Table 7-3 shows the breakdown of interviews by medium.

Table 7-3: Breakdown by interview medium

Interview medium	Proportion and Number
Face-to-face	55.3% (224)
Telephone	41.5% (168)
Video call	3.2% (13)

During the first part of the interview participants were asked to think back over their MOD career (since the year 2000, or when they started if later) and plot on a timeline any significant or memorable events (both positive and negative) that particularly stood out for them. They were informed that this could include a key milestone or an achievement or could be a common place occurrence that was particularly memorable or important to them. This information was captured in a timeline by the interviewer on an A4 sheet of paper. The second half of the interview comprised more direct questions about gender and ethnicity, general experiences of working in Defence, future improvements and items specifically for leavers. In this way, the first part of the interview was constructed/led by the participant and the second part by the researcher (see Appendix G for a list of the interview questions).

A.6.7 Informed Consent and Withdrawal

Participants were provided with enough information about the research (via the Participant Information Sheet) to enable them to make an informed decision about taking part. All participants were sent a copy of the Participant Information Sheet at least 24 hours in advance of the interview. Participants who were interviewed via telephone or video call were emailed a copy of the consent form and were asked to complete and return it (electronically) prior to the interview. They were also sent copies of the MOD no fault compensation scheme form and the 'thank-you and more information' sheet (which signposted participants to support services) electronically prior to interview. These documents were explained to participants before the start of the interview. Participants who were interviewed face-to-face were handed hard-copy versions of the documents on the day of the interview. All participants who were interviewed face-to-face were asked to sign the consent form at the start of the interview.

⁷⁶ Participants could select all options.

There were 'exit points' at various stages along the process for participants to withdraw from the study (and up to one week post interview). In total, 60 participants withdrew from the study after being allocated an interview (see Appendix H, Section 0 for more information).

A.6.8 Audio Recording

Interviews were audio-recorded, with the participant's permission. Where participants did not give consent for their interview to be recorded, detailed hand-written notes were taken by the researcher and typed up. Of the total sample, the majority of participants (95.3%, N=386) agreed to be audio-recorded. Of those who did not want to be audio recorded (4.7%, N=19), disproportionately more BAME participants (7.5%) than white personnel (3.5%) declined.

A.6.9 Data Transcription and Transmission

Audio recordings for all interviews were transcribed (verbatim) by transcribers at Edinburgh Napier University and the University of Birmingham. Audio files were zipped and password protected and sent to transcribers via Birmingham Environment for Academic Services (BEAR) DataShare⁷⁷. Transcripts were returned, password protected, via the same medium.

A.6.9.1 Data Cleansing

Once an interview was transcribed it was returned to the interviewer for an anonymisation and accuracy check. This involved:

- Removing names of individuals from the text and replacing with #NAME or something more descriptive as appropriate, e.g., #NAME of MANAGER or #NAME of SPOUSE.
- Inserting any missing text (by listening to the audio recording).
- Checking for misspelt information (e.g. location names, acronyms etc.).

To make the process quicker, transcribers:

- Included a '#' before a name in the text so that the interviewer could easily search for these in the text.
- Included time points for missing text so that interviewers could identify the missing audio quickly.

Once these activities were complete the transcript was input into NVivo ready for coding.

A.6.10 Saturation, Validity and Reliability of Data

Initially the research team were using the concept of saturation to establish when they had collected sufficient data to achieve meaningful analysis. In line with best practice guidelines, the intention was to look at commonality of themes by cohort after six interviews had been conducted for that cohort. If no new themes emerged after a further two interviews, interviewing for that cohort would cease; if new themes emerged a further two interviews would be conducted and so forth. The team planned to use NVivo to further check for saturation of themes by exploring the consistency of application of data analysis codes across the transcripts per cohort.

Where possible, saturation was reviewed; however, in reality, saturation was very difficult to assess for two key reasons:

1. Sample sizes. These were too small for a number of cohorts to assess saturation using the intended approach. For approximately half of the cohorts (mainly BAME groups) fewer than six interviews were conducted.
2. Timings. The time taken to recruit the necessary number of participants within a cohort, arrange and conduct interviews, transcribe the audio files etc. meant that it was not possible to assess saturation as early on in the data collection phase as the research team would have liked.

⁷⁷ BEAR DataShare is a file synchronisation and sharing service. Based on PowerFolder the service allows users to securely save and sync files with colleagues and partners anywhere in the world, from any device.

In addition to the above, there is also limited robust evidence in terms of how to assess saturation in the literature (Saunders and Townsend, 2016) as well as a lack of consistency with regards to the meaning and issues surrounding transparency (O'Reilly and Parker, 2012). The team sought further advice from their external assurer⁷⁸ on the issue of saturation. Her view was that saturation is a strategy more relevant to grounded theory research where the objective is to develop new theoretical insights and was therefore less relevant to this research. Whilst she acknowledged that in a military context it is often the case that data are collected beyond the point of saturation to satisfy stakeholder concerns with regards to generalisability and face validity she did also state that there is a need to pay more attention to what is missing if research is consistently exceeding saturation without discovery or recognition of different experiences. She felt that the concept of saturation might result in things being missed as the difficulty in reaching saturation within a particular demographic intersection could be a finding in itself. For example, this may indicate that the selected demographic is not a valid representation of similar experiences. Experiences within a particular demographic group may be further impacted by other factors, such as being a parent or sexuality/orientation, thus reflecting further diversity within a group.

With this in mind, and given the need for confidence in the reliability and validity of the data, the team examined alternative approaches (to saturation) to assess the trustworthiness of the qualitative data. This began with a review of Guba and Lincoln's (1989, 2005) seminal works on the assessment of validity and reliability in qualitative research and included analysis of approaches offered by Silverman (1993), Lather (1993), Creswell (2007), Bochner (2000) and Tracy (2010). Based on their review, the team selected Tracy's (2010) eight 'big tent' criteria for assessing qualitative research as this framework was deemed most relevant to the current study. These eight criteria include: worthy topic; rich rigor; sincerity; credibility; resonance; significant contribution; ethics; and meaningful coherence. Tracy (2010) suggests that these criteria provide *"a common language of excellence"* (p. 849) for qualitative research that can help promote dialogue with stakeholders around the quality of qualitative research. These criteria should not be seen as fixed standards which can be assessed objectively out of 10 to prove the validity of approach. Instead they provide a benchmark to reflect against in the design and operation of the research method.

Table 7-4 outlines each of the criteria that Tracy (2010) proposes and the extent to which they were achieved in this research.

Table 7-4: Assessment against research quality criteria

Criteria for quality	Means and practices through which to achieve	Undertaken in this research
Worthy topic	<p>The topic of the research is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant • Timely • Significant • Interesting 	<p>The project deals with an issue (D&I) that is of great significance, relevance and timeliness to the MOD and wider society.</p> <p>A key strength of the project was that the research team were involved in scoping the study and setting the research questions.</p> <p>A possible limitation was the lack of focus on all protected characteristics. This limited the extent to which the team were able to assess the experiences of other potentially disadvantaged groups and the impact of intersectionality between demographic variables.</p>
Rich rigour	<p>The study uses appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theoretical constructs 	Well established theoretical constructs with regard to organisational culture,

⁷⁸ The study approach was externally assured by an experienced researcher from the Government Organisation, Defence Research and Development Canada.

Criteria for quality	Means and practices through which to achieve	Undertaken in this research
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data and time in the field • Sample • Context • Data collection and analysis process 	<p>social identity, power and inclusion were utilised in the research.</p> <p>This was a very large scale qualitative study. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that all relevant groups were involved in the research. This was augmented by snowball sampling with hard to reach groups. Despite extensive attempts it was difficult to access members of some groups (for example BAME Reservists).</p> <p>Whilst participants were selected to take part in the study it is possible that those who volunteered had greater interest in the topic as a result of their own negative experience(s).</p> <p>The size of the sample and the inclusion of females, BAME personnel and white males, in conjunction with the method, have provided the team the privilege of insight into the Lived Experience of these groups rarely matched. The complexity of lives, the sharing of feelings, events and opinions on this scale has led to a more complex understanding of all groups. Thus while the report may include occasional expressions of sexist/racist views, the vantage point the research team has been afforded by the scale of this study has enabled these to be viewed in a wider context and in a more nuanced way than a smaller study would permit.</p> <p>Attention was given to the context (societal and organisational) within which the research was undertaken. The use of the timeline approach in interviews also encouraged participants to think about the temporal context of the incidents and experiences they discussed.</p> <p>Precise guidelines were adhered to in data collection and interviews were fully transcribed. Clear data analysis protocols were developed and applied, with tests undertaken to ensure reliability.</p> <p>A potential limitation relates to the retrospective nature of the interview, asking people to recall experiences from up to 18 years ago. Experiences might not be recalled accurately or could have become distorted over time. However, the</p>

Criteria for quality	Means and practices through which to achieve	Undertaken in this research
		<p>sensitive nature of the data and the timespan covered make it impossible to have collected this data in real time. Furthermore, the use of the timeline interview approach enabled a structure to be placed on the interviews and interviewers were able to probe and challenge participants to test out their understanding of the interviewee narratives.</p> <p>External and independent technical assurance (both local and international) provided confirmation that the technical approach was sound.</p> <p>The timeframe for data analysis was challenging. Whilst the research team maintained standards of rigour during this process more time and opportunity to 'step back' and reflect on the findings might have enabled space for deeper insight.</p>
Sincerity	<p>The study is characterised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-reflexivity about subjective values and potential biases of researchers • Transparency about methods and challenges 	<p>There is always potential for bias as there are numerous points of connection and distance between all parties involved in the data collection and analyses, (which may have more or less significance at any point in the interview). Parenthood, social class, health issues, employment experiences, age etc. and the research team's ability to share and reflect upon individual experiences of these points of connection/difference in research meetings helped to produce valid claims from the data. Furthermore members of the team came from different disciplinary backgrounds and this, alongside the team's biographical differences, also helped to interrogate each other's claims.</p> <p>The research team engaged in regular discussion at team workshops to identify potential challenges and biases. Biases (related to disciplinary differences and research interests) became evident during the coding phase. Joint coding of transcripts enabled a clear sense of agreement of the meaning of codes and an agreed approach towards the application of the coding framework. However, despite mitigating against this as far as possible, it is acknowledged that some biases related to disciplinary</p>

Criteria for quality	Means and practices through which to achieve	Undertaken in this research
		differences and areas of research interest persisted. A potential limitation relates to the lack of diversity in the research team (comprising of predominantly white females). Greater male and BAME representation in the research team during the data collection and analysis phases might have brought new insights. Whilst mitigated against as far as possible, it is impossible to say whether this would have had any impact upon the themes identified during analysis. In fact, it could be argued that male-male positionality could have closed down possible revelations.
Credibility	<p>The research is marked by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thick description • Multivocality • Member reflections 	<p>The discussion of the findings provides in depth illustrations that give culturally situated meanings and abundant detail. Multivocality is provided by an analysis of multiple and varied voices in the report of the findings. Member reflections have been sought through feedback of the results to the stakeholder group.</p> <p>Protection of participants meant that the presentation of experiences was adapted, potentially to a greater extent than may be usual, but not to a greater extent than was necessary. Whilst researchers conferred where they believed guidance was necessary/to sense check their anonymisation decisions, it was impossible (or deemed unnecessary) to do this in every instance, given the scale of the data set. The team accept that other researchers may have made different decisions and thus different voices may have joined or replaced those present in the report.</p>
Resonance	<p>The research influences, affects or moves particular readers or a variety of authors through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aesthetic, evocative representation • Naturalistic generalisations • Transferable findings 	<p>Attention was given to ensuring that the research was communicated (throughout the lifecycle of the project) in such a way that it maximised resonance with stakeholders. This will continue as the findings of the project are further disseminated. However, the project could possibly have benefitted from more extensive stakeholder engagement early on in the project to test out emerging findings.</p> <p>The project focuses exclusively upon the MOD and no attempt was made to</p>

Criteria for quality	Means and practices through which to achieve	Undertaken in this research
		generalise the findings. However, certain key findings and options for action will resonate/be applicable to other organisations and it is envisaged that papers written by the research team will influence practice in other organisations.
Significant contribution	<p>The research provides a significant contribution either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theoretically • Heuristically • Practically • Methodologically 	<p>The study represents qualitative research on an unprecedented scale. Numerous lessons have been identified that other researchers undertaking similar size research can benefit from understanding.</p> <p>Theoretical insights and frameworks have been used to inform the development of the research and discussion of the findings. The practical significance of the research is highlighted in the options for action that are made to the MOD although at this stage it is impossible to evaluate the practical contribution of the study as this will depend upon the extent to which options for action are acted upon. Heuristic significance is provided in discussion of potential areas for future research. The utilisation of the timeline methodology has methodological significance which has been evaluated.</p>
Ethical	<p>The research considers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedural ethics • Situational and culturally specific ethics • Relational ethics • Exiting ethics 	<p>Procedural ethics were applied throughout the process of data collection, analysis and reporting. Situational ethics included consideration of the particular needs of MOD participants. Relational ethics were shown in the treatment of all participants with regard to confidentiality, anonymity and respect. Exiting ethics means that ethical considerations continue beyond data collection and concern the ethical storage and reporting of data. This has been, and will continue to be, paramount.</p>
Meaningful coherence	<p>The study:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieves what it purports to be about • Uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals • Meaningfully interconnects literature/research foci, findings and 	<p>A qualitative approach and timeline interview method were used to obtain data to answer the research questions.</p> <p>The researchers incorporated relevant theory, literature and findings from other studies on minority representation into the report write-up to provide a coherent narrative. The choice of theory arose from a systematic review of literature but a potential limitation is that the disciplinary biases of members of the research team</p>

Criteria for quality	Means and practices through which to achieve	Undertaken in this research
	interpretations with each other	may have influenced the literature chosen for review.

A.7 Data Analysis and Reporting

The bulk of the data analysis and reporting activities (i.e. coding, theme identification and report writing) were undertaken between May 2018 and January 2019. However, it is important to note that other key activities (data familiarisation and code generation) started much earlier during the data collection process.

It was imperative that the research team gathered sufficient data to compare different demographic groups. This included not only the ability to draw comparisons between the minority and majority groups (e.g. females compared with males) but also between groups (e.g. military females with CS females). Based on the literature on qualitative sampling (Creswell, 2007; Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006; Marshall, 1996) a sample size of 620 participants was originally specified. This was deemed large enough to allow comparisons between all tier one key demographic variables. For example, the team wanted to be able to explore whether the experiences of Regular serving white female Army Officers differed to the same demographic in the RN/RAF. However, it became evident during the course of the study that when the Defence population was broken down by gender and ethnicity and rank/grade the proportions of some groups were smaller than expected and some were hard to reach. The sample obtained was smaller (405 participants) than originally planned. Consequently, the team adapted their analysis approach because some group comparisons were not possible to undertake due to the reduced sample size. Instead data were amalgamated and reported on collectively for some groups. This was particularly the case for the BAME sample where smaller numbers meant it was not possible to draw detailed comparisons between males and females by Service and rank/grade. It was possible to look at some of these variables separately, just not a combination of them together. Specifically, it was possible to compare the experiences of:

- UK ethnic minorities with F&C personnel.
- BAME military with CS BAME.
- BAME males with BAME females.
- BAME females with white females.
- BAME males with white males.

A.7.1 Thematic Analysis Approach

A combination of thematic analysis approaches was used as the basis for data analysis; the complexity and size of the dataset did not fit one approach. Specifically, the team drew upon Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to thematic analysis and the principles of Template Analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) advocate a six-step approach to thematic analysis which includes: becoming familiar with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and producing the report. Template analysis is a particular way of thematically analysing qualitative data from interview transcripts where analysis starts with some pre-determined codes. Unlike Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach, in Template Analysis it is normal to produce an initial version of the template on the basis of a sub-set of the data. Given the size of the dataset, this was considered a suitable approach to adopt.

The research team followed the steps below in analysing and reporting the data:

1. Data familiarisation.
2. Generation of codes and coding frame development.
3. Coding the data.
4. Collating the data and searching for themes.
5. Identifying, defining and refining themes.

6. Reporting.

These steps are described in more detail in the sections below.

A.7.2 Data Familiarisation

Familiarisation with the dataset started during the data collection process. The team immersed⁷⁹ themselves in the data through repeated and active reading, looking for meaning and making notes. This was achieved through the following activities:

- Interviewers produced a short synopsis (outlining key themes) of their interviews immediately after conducting them. These were shared with the research team. This provided those involved in data analysis greater awareness of the breadth of information emerging from the interviews, beyond the interviews that they had personally undertaken.
- Interview transcripts were read and checked for accuracy by interviewers. This provided the research team with the opportunity for a first read-through of the interview transcript and enabled initial thoughts on patterns in the data to emerge.
- Interviewers conducted calibration exercises to ensure inter-rater reliability. This activity, along with coding frame development, provided the research team with the opportunity to read and become familiar with a sample of interviews prior to coding.

As all interviews were transcribed by professional transcribers these activities were essential to enabling familiarity with the data.

A.7.3 Generation of Codes and Coding Frame Development

The next step in the data analysis process was to generate codes (and sub-codes) and position these within a coding framework. During development of the study design, the research team explored some of the theories underpinning minority representation in organisations. Whilst these were borne in mind when developing the coding frame, the framework produced was more 'data-driven' than 'theory-driven'. Development of the coding framework took six months (October 2017-April 2018) and was an interactive and iterative process. Braun and Clarke (2006) stipulate that codes "*identify a feature of the data...that appears interesting to the analyst*" (p18). However, the team noted a lack of 'best practice' in the literature in terms of how to develop and apply a coding frame for/to a large dataset.

The team developed an initial coding frame during the pilot study⁸⁰; this was further developed during the main study through repeatedly applying the coding frame to a new selection of transcripts to check:

- The applicability of the framework to the new data.
- Whether there were any missing/redundant codes.

Six researchers coded 'test' transcripts⁸¹ and made notes on how well the coding frame fitted the data. Transcripts of participants from across the range of demographic backgrounds were selected to ensure the coding frame captured the breadth of experiences across the emerging dataset. The team collectively discussed (via a combination of three face-to-face workshops and teleconferences) potential adaptations to the coding frame in response to this activity. In total, the team reviewed data from over 100 transcripts before finalising the coding frame. A number of codes and sub-codes were included, merged or removed during the process of creating the coding frame in response to the emergence of new data.

The final edition of the coding frame was the fifth iteration and included 20 codes and 112 sub-codes. Each sub-code had an accompanying description of what should be coded at that sub-code and whether the data coded was what the participant actually said or the interviewer's perception/interpretation of what was being said – or both (see example in Table 7-5). For example, a participant might not describe an event as a 'micro aggression' but the interviewer might recognise it as such and would code the data accordingly. Interviewer and participant perceptions were coded and captured in the same way as each other and placed under the appropriate sub-codes. Each code included a miscellaneous or 'other' sub-code which was only

⁷⁹ Being deeply engaged or absorbed in the data.

⁸⁰ The final version of the coding frame used for the pilot study was the third iteration.

⁸¹ All test transcripts were re-coded using the final iteration of the coding frame prior to analysis.

used by exception. NVivo was used to check the coding frame for redundancy of sub-codes during the coding process. No codes were removed as a result of this process but additional information was provided under a couple of the sub-theme code descriptions.

Table 7-5: Example extract from the coding frame

Code	Sub-codes
Discrimination (Experienced or witnessed; Gender and Ethnicity only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overt - Interviewer and interviewee perceptions (Openly or actively discriminating. Any blatant or obvious different treatment of others) • Institutional discrimination - Interviewer and interviewee perceptions (Any policies, procedures or practices that have a more negative outcome for some groups compared with others. This can be intentional or unintentional) • Unconscious bias and stereotypes - Interviewer and interviewee perceptions (Bias about a group that influences attitudes/behaviour. Assumptions about individuals based on a group characteristic. This can be intentional or unintentional) • Everyday discrimination and micro aggressions - Interviewer and interviewee perceptions (Everyday indignities that communicate insults to a targeted group. Interpersonal discrimination that is episodic but relatively minor) • Response, impact and outcome of discrimination - Interviewee perceptions only (How people react, feel, behave including any longer term effects or consequences) • Positive discrimination - Interviewee perceptions only (Giving an advantage to individuals from a group that suffers discrimination) • Other

A.7.4 Coding the Data

The research team took a staged approach to coding to allow full immersion in the data and enable group differences to be seen more easily. The data were coded in NVivo⁸² by group in the following order:

1. CS data.
2. Data from Regular serving personnel.
3. Reservist data.

CS data were coded over a period of eight weeks, as were Regular data. The Reserve sample was smaller and as such a time period of six weeks was allocated for coding.

Within each group the data were clustered into three sub-groups⁸³:

- BAME personnel.
- White females.
- White males.

Two or three researchers were assigned to each group. The transcripts were split between the researchers and each coded a proportion of the data from the group they were assigned (e.g., the white, female, CS transcripts were split between three researchers to code). Data were divided by grade in the CS and by

⁸² NVivo is software that supports qualitative and mixed methods research. It is designed to help organise, analyse and find insights in qualitative data. NVivo provides a place to organise and manage material so that it is possible to find insights in the data. It also provides tools that make it possible to ask questions of the data in a more efficient way.

⁸³ Sub-groups were assigned based on a number of factors including areas of research expertise and achieving a multi-disciplinary team.

Service in the military sample (e.g. in a group of three, one researcher would code the RN and RM data, another would code the Army data and the third the RAF data). This enabled each researcher to fully understand the data for a particular sub-group, and meant differences between groups and sub-groups could be identified more easily when the data were brought back together.

The research team closely followed the advice of Braun and Clarke (2006) during the data coding process: *“a) code for as many potential themes/patterns as possible (time permitting) – you never know what might be interesting later; b) code extracts of data inclusively – i.e., keep a little of the surrounding data if relevant, a common criticism of coding is that the context is lost (Bryman, 2001); and c) remember that you can code individual extracts of data in as many different themes as they fit into - so an extract may be uncoded, coded once, or coded many times, as relevant.”* (p19). Each transcript was read line by line by the researcher and relevant text was highlighted and placed (‘dragged and dropped’) into the appropriate code. Sufficient text (i.e. at least a sentence) was placed in the corresponding code to ensure the context of the point being made was clear and critical meaning was not lost. Most, but not all, text was assigned to a code.

To ensure inter-rater reliability (that codes were applied consistently across researchers) the research team conducted the following calibration exercises:

- Listened as a group (with at least two researchers from each organisation) to the audio recording of an interview and coded collectively during face-to-face meetings with the whole research team.
- More than one researcher (two or three) coded the same transcript and then compared and contrasted any differences in coding (carried out by different researchers within the same organisation).
- Coded transcripts of interviews that the researcher did not conduct from within their own organisation.

Coding differences between team members were resolved by discussion. In this way, agreements were reached which aided consistency for future coding.

The timings of experiences were a key component of the analysis. The team needed to be clear on what evidence/experiences were recent and which events took place in the past, so they could show change over time (if applicable). This was captured during the coding process by coding the text where the date was referenced alongside the memorable event. On occasions where this was not possible (or the date was referred to much earlier in the interview) notes were made by the researchers and shared across the team (see Section A.7.5 below). This information was then used to inform the theme write-ups. The team originally intended to use memos and annotations in NVivo to signpost key segments of text related to date. Whilst annotations were found to be more useful than memos because they allowed the text to be highlighted, neither was particularly useful because the comment could not be embedded in the actual text.

A.7.5 Collating the Data and Searching for Themes

Once the coding for a sub-group (i.e. CS white females) was complete the two/three researchers responsible for coding that dataset met for a one-day workshop. The purpose of the workshop was for the researchers to obtain a complete picture of the data for that sub-group. They discussed commonalities and differences in the data and made notes during the session as to where they saw patterns or clear narrative emerging. Following this, the whole research team met collectively for a two-day workshop to compare the data across the group (e.g., discussing the CS data by BAME, white females and white males). During this session the team explored commonalities and differences within the group as well as where they saw themes emerging from the data. After the two-day workshop each sub-group team produced a set of notes (i.e. a set of notes on CS white females, another on CS males and a third on CS BAME personnel) detailing what they had found from their data using the coding frame as a template. This process was repeated for each group (CS, Regulars and Reservists). In total, 12 workshops were held and nine sets of notes were produced.

Taking a staged approach to the analysis meant it was possible to see more readily where commonalities and differences between the groups were emerging.

A.7.6 Identifying, Refining and Defining Themes

During the second two-day workshop (exploring the Regular data) the team started to sort the codes more formally into broader themes. This activity was undertaken before all data had been coded (Reservist data

outstanding) so that the research team could subsequently consider the themes in light of the whole dataset. Initial write-ups, previous discussion notes, and the coding frame, formed the basis of the session. The team used a flip chart and pens to visually place and move codes and sub-codes into theme areas. By the end of the workshop the team had agreed upon 10 preliminary themes (and the rough content of each).

Once themes had been identified, further refinement of them continued at two levels (as suggested by Braun and Clarke, 2006):

1. **Reviewing the coded data to see whether the themes were valid in relation to the whole data set.** A final two-day collective team workshop was conducted where the research team revisited the themes and made some minor amendments in light of findings from the data as a whole (including the Reservist data).
2. **Reading through the coded data within a theme and checking that it formed a sensible and meaningful pattern.** Each researcher was responsible for reviewing their own assigned themes. Where coded data did not fit within a theme (or it was felt that it might fit better under a different theme) this was raised with the Technical Lead who had early oversight of all themes. These data were then passed to the appropriate researcher to include in their theme write-up.

Through further refinement and defining of themes (to “...identify the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about”, Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92) sub-themes within each theme were identified. It also became apparent that one of the themes shared a lot of commonality with a couple of the other themes. The decision was made to merge the data from this theme into the other themes, thus leaving nine themes in total.

A.7.7 Reporting on the Data

Prior to writing the report, the research team met with Dstl to agree the format and structure of the final deliverables. It was agreed that the main report would take the form of two main sections; Part One (a concise summary of key findings, implications and options for action) and Part Two (the underpinning narrative reported by theme). The team were also cognisant of the advice by Braun and Clarke (2006) that “...the analysis (the write-up of it, including data extracts) provides a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tell – within and across themes.” (p. 23).

In producing the report each researcher was assigned one or two themes to write up. The Technical Lead produced a set of guidelines to ensure a consistent approach was taken. This included ensuring that data were reviewed in light of theoretical models and lenses relevant to minority representation in organisations and work in general. The literature was gathered during the course of the research starting with the summary review produced during the scoping study and ending with the team drawing upon additional literature as new themes emerged during the write-up. The research team also identified lessons learned and best practice from other organisations who have tried to improve the diversity and inclusivity of their organisation. Finally, the team reviewed the data in light of events that had happened both within the organisation and in wider society that could impact on the findings. Specifically they looked at what had happened in Defence (in relation to gender and ethnicity) over the course of the timeline period (from the year 2000) and in wider society both during the course of the timeline period and during the data collection period (June 2017 to July 2018). This enabled the team to situate the findings in both a Defence context and wider society.

Once further along the report writing phase, the research team undertook a half day workshop with stakeholders to ‘sense check’ the initial options for action. This was to assess whether they were appropriate and/or whether the MOD was already implementing the suggested changes. Changes to initial options for action were made based on this information. The options for action were further reviewed during and after the closure presentation and additional amendments were made in response to stakeholder feedback.

A.7.8 Study Limitations and Mitigations

Although the research team took numerous actions to design and conduct a robust and objective study, no method is without its limitations. As alluded to in Table 7-4 the main limitation of the research related to researcher bias, which is a fundamental challenge for qualitative studies. The research team are aware that they brought their own biases to the study. For example, the Technical Lead previously worked for the MOD as a CS. This brought advantages in terms of knowledge of the structure and culture of the organisation as well as an understanding of the language and terminology used by the participants. However, a disadvantage

was potential pre-conceptions about what some of the issue might be. This was mitigated as far as possible by the involvement of researchers from the University of Birmingham who had no prior experience of working in, or for, the MOD and therefore brought a fresh perspective. In addition, the team comprised predominately of white and female researchers. Although this was mitigated as far as possible by the inclusion of male and BAME researchers during the data collection and analysis phase it is acknowledged that this demographic similarity could have brought shared views/experiences and potential group think. Finally, whilst 'discipline bias' was acknowledged to be a challenge in terms of achieving a similar approach to coding, the fact that the researchers resided across different disciplines (sociology and occupational psychology) also allowed the findings to be viewed through numerous lenses.

Although not a limitation of the approach per se, it is important to note that qualitative data is sometimes dismissed by others as being 'anecdotal evidence' or 'individual perceptions' rather than a valid, reliable evidence source. The research team did experience this type of opposition on occasion during the course of the study, which they addressed. However, it is essential to highlight in this report that an individual's perception of a situation is their reality; regardless of the ground truth it is valid because it informs their experiences. Aggregate analysis of individual experiences and perceptions is not anecdotal but is valid and reliable data on which actions for change should be taken.

A.7.9 Study Strengths

Whilst there are limitations to the approach it is important to note that there are numerous strengths too. The most important strength being that the method enabled an in-depth look at the Lived Experience of females and BAME personnel, in comparison with the white male majority, which has not been fully explored through previous (quantitative) studies. Whereas quantitative approaches provide the 'what' (of a situation) they do not explain the 'why'. This approach has enabled a very rich and detailed understanding of the experiences of these minority groups to be captured, which surpasses anything that could have been obtained using a quantitative methodology. Ultimately, a rich and nuanced dataset has been captured which also has potential for further, secondary analysis.

Appendix B Communication Channels

Table 7-6 outlines the communication channels used to advertise the research and when. Please note that dates are provided where known, however, stakeholders did not always inform the research team when communication was sent.

Table 7-6: Communication channels

[REDACTED]

Appendix C Study Article

What's it like working in Defence?

Are you an MOD employee (military or civilian)?

Do you want to make Defence a better place to work?

Are you interested in giving your feedback on your experience of working here?

Then, tell us what it's like!

Help to shape Defence workplace policy and improve your working environment by participating in our 'Lived Experience' research study.

We want to better understand what it's like working for Defence. To do this, we're looking for volunteers to take part in our study. This will involve an informal conversation about your day-to-day experiences of working in the MOD, which can take place face-to-face, on the phone, or via video call.

Why are we doing this research?

The UK's demographics are changing and competition for talent is getting fiercer. As an organisation we, the MOD, need to adapt to maintain our employment levels now and in the future, and maximise the benefits of drawing on a wider pool of talent. We recognise the challenge in recruiting and retaining people from backgrounds not traditionally associated with Defence.

"This study is critical for the MOD and its future. It represents a unique and unprecedented opportunity to provide real insight into what it's like to work in Defence and how we can make it a better workplace for all our personnel." ([REDACTED])

We have contracted (via the Defence Human Capability Science and Technology Centre) experts from QinetiQ Ltd, the University of Birmingham and Edinburgh Napier University to conduct a research study to better understand the 'Lived Experience'⁸⁴ of MOD employees. This includes military personnel (regulars and reservists) and civil servants.

How to take part

If you're aged 18 and over and are interested in taking part please contact the research team on: [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] to find out more.

We look forward to hearing from you!

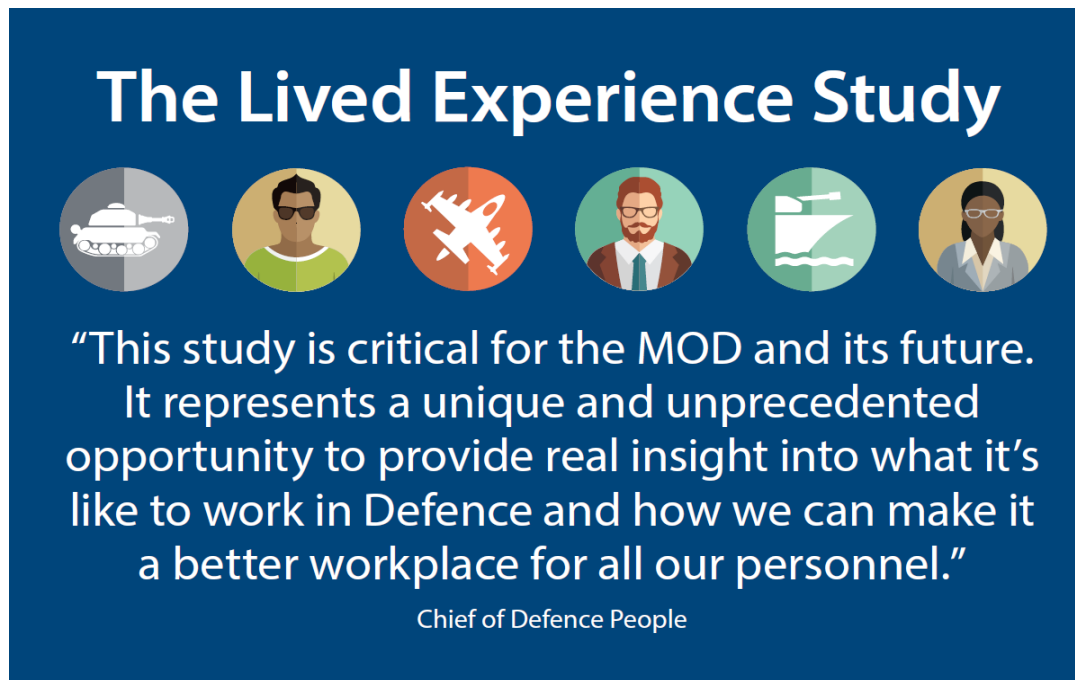
⁸⁴ The term 'Lived Experience' refers to a person's first-hand experience in everyday events.

Appendix D Recruitment Poster

[REDACTED]

Figure 6: Recruitment poster

Appendix E Study Business Card



[[REDACTED]]

Figure 7: Study business card

Appendix F Demographic Questions

1. Name (please include first and last name)
2. Contact email
3. Contact telephone number
4. Would you like to receive information about the findings of the study? YES/NO
5. Which are you CURRENTLY a member of? (Please tick all that apply. For example, you may be a Civil Servant and Army. For each option ticked, please indicate how long for)

<input type="radio"/> Royal Navy	For how long? Years
<input type="radio"/> Royal Marines	For how long? Years
<input type="radio"/> Royal Air Force	For how long? Years
<input type="radio"/> Army	For how long? Years
<input type="radio"/> Civil Service	For how long? Years
6. Have you previously been a member of? (Please tick all that apply. For each option ticked, please indicate how long for)

<input type="radio"/> Royal Navy	For how long? Years
<input type="radio"/> Royal Marines	For how long? Years
<input type="radio"/> Royal Air Force	For how long? Years
<input type="radio"/> Army	For how long? Years
<input type="radio"/> Civil Service	For how long? Years

Military Only Questions

7. Are you a?

<input type="radio"/> Regular	<input type="radio"/> Regular Reservist	<input type="radio"/> Volunteer Reservist	<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify)
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8. What is your rank?

<input type="radio"/> Officer	<input type="radio"/> Senior Non-Commissioned Officer (SNCO)	<input type="radio"/> Non-Commissioned Officer (JNCO)	<input type="radio"/> Private /Able Rate/ Airman
-------------------------------	--	---	--
9. What is your trade/branch/specialism?

Royal Navy	Army	Royal Air Force
Surface Fleet: <input type="radio"/> Engineering <input type="radio"/> Logistics and Admin <input type="radio"/> Fleet Air Arm <input type="radio"/> Medical <input type="radio"/> Warfare	Combat: <input type="radio"/> Royal Armoured corps <input type="radio"/> Infantry <input type="radio"/> Army Air Corps Combat Support: <input type="radio"/> Royal Artillery <input type="radio"/> Royal Engineers <input type="radio"/> Royal Signals <input type="radio"/> Intelligence Corps	<input type="radio"/> Air Crew <input type="radio"/> Air Ops Support <input type="radio"/> Communications and Intelligence <input type="radio"/> Logistics <input type="radio"/> Personnel Support <input type="radio"/> Medical and Medical Support <input type="radio"/> Force protection <input type="radio"/> Technical and Engineering <input type="radio"/> Other

<p>Submarine Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engineering ○ Logistics and admin ○ Medical ○ Warfare ○ Royal Marine ○ Chaplaincy ○ Other 	<p>Combat Service Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Royal Logistics Corps ○ Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers <p>Army Medical Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) ○ Royal Army Veterinary Corps (RAVC) ○ Royal Army Dental Corps (RADC) ○ Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC) <p>Adjutant Generals Corps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Educational and Training Services Branch ○ Staff and Personnel Support ○ Army Legal Service Branch ○ Provost Branch (Royal Military Police) ○ Military Provost Staff ○ Military Provost Guard Staff <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Royal Army Chaplains Department ○ Small Arms School Corps ○ General Service Corps ○ Corps of Army Music ○ Other 	
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10. Have you been deployed in the last 12 months? YES/NO

Civil Service Only Questions

11. Are you a?

Industrial	Broader Banded (<i>non-industrial</i>)
○ SZ 1	○ E1/E2
○ SZ 2	○ D
○ SZ 3	○ C2/C1
○ SZ 4	○ B2/B1
○ Other	○ SCS

12. What job family do you belong to?

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Business Management and Improvement | <input type="radio"/> Environment and Sustainability | <input type="radio"/> Internal Audit |
| <input type="radio"/> Commercial | <input type="radio"/> Estates | <input type="radio"/> Legal |
| <input type="radio"/> Communications | <input type="radio"/> Finance | <input type="radio"/> Logistics |
| <input type="radio"/> Corporate Support | <input type="radio"/> Health Professionals | <input type="radio"/> Policy, Strategy and Parliamentary |
| <input type="radio"/> Defence Intelligence | <input type="radio"/> Health, Safety and Environment Protection | <input type="radio"/> Portfolio, Programme and Project Management |
| <input type="radio"/> Economics | <input type="radio"/> Human Resources | <input type="radio"/> Security |
| <input type="radio"/> Engineering and Science | <input type="radio"/> Information | <input type="radio"/> Statistics |
| | | <input type="radio"/> Training and Education |

13. Which part of MOD do you work in?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Navy Command | <input type="radio"/> Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) |
| <input type="radio"/> Army Command | <input type="radio"/> Head Office and Corporate Services (HOCS) |
| <input type="radio"/> Air Command | <input type="radio"/> Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) |
| <input type="radio"/> Joint Forces Command | |

14. What is your gender?

15. How long have you served/worked for the Armed Forces/MOD? (years)

16. What is your age?

17. What is your current working location? (For example 'MOD Abbey Wood, Bristol' or 'Navy Command Headquarters, Whale Island, Portsmouth')

18. Which of these terms best describes your nationality? (You can tick more than one box if that best describes how you would identify yourself)

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> British | <input type="radio"/> Scottish | <input type="radio"/> Foreign/Commonwealth |
| <input type="radio"/> English | <input type="radio"/> Irish | <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="radio"/> Welsh | <input type="radio"/> Northern Irish | |

19. Which of these terms best describes your ethnicity? (Please select only one option)

White:	African/Caribbean/Black:
<input type="radio"/> White <input type="radio"/> Any other white background (please specify)	<input type="radio"/> African <input type="radio"/> Caribbean <input type="radio"/> Black <input type="radio"/> Any other African/Caribbean/Black background (please specify)
Mixed/Multiple groups:	Asian
<input type="radio"/> White and black Caribbean <input type="radio"/> White and black African <input type="radio"/> White and Asian <input type="radio"/> Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background (please specify)	<input type="radio"/> Indian <input type="radio"/> Pakistani <input type="radio"/> Bangladeshi <input type="radio"/> Chinese <input type="radio"/> Any other Asian background (please specify)
Other	
<input type="radio"/> Any other ethnic group background (please specify)	<input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say

20. Would you describe yourself as religious?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

21. If yes, please specify your religion:

22. What is your marital status?

- ☐ Single ☐ Separated
☐ Married/Civil Partnership ☐ Widowed
☐ Divorced ☐ Prefer not to say

23. Do you have dependents? (e.g. children under 18/other caring responsibilities)

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

24. If yes, please specify:

25. How did you hear about the study?

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Defence Intranet | <input type="radio"/> RAF News | <input type="radio"/> South East Reserve Forces Association |
| <input type="radio"/> Defence People Magazine | <input type="radio"/> Diversity and Inclusion Policy Desk Leads | <input type="radio"/> Career Transition Partnership |
| <input type="radio"/> 60 Second Digest | <input type="radio"/> Via the networks | <input type="radio"/> DHCSTC supplier framework |
| <input type="radio"/> Navy News | <input type="radio"/> Via a colleague | <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="radio"/> Soldier Magazine | <input type="radio"/> Social Media | |

26. How would you prefer to be interviewed? *(please tick all that apply)*

- ☐ Face-to-face ☐ Via Video Call (e.g. Skype) ☐ Over the telephone

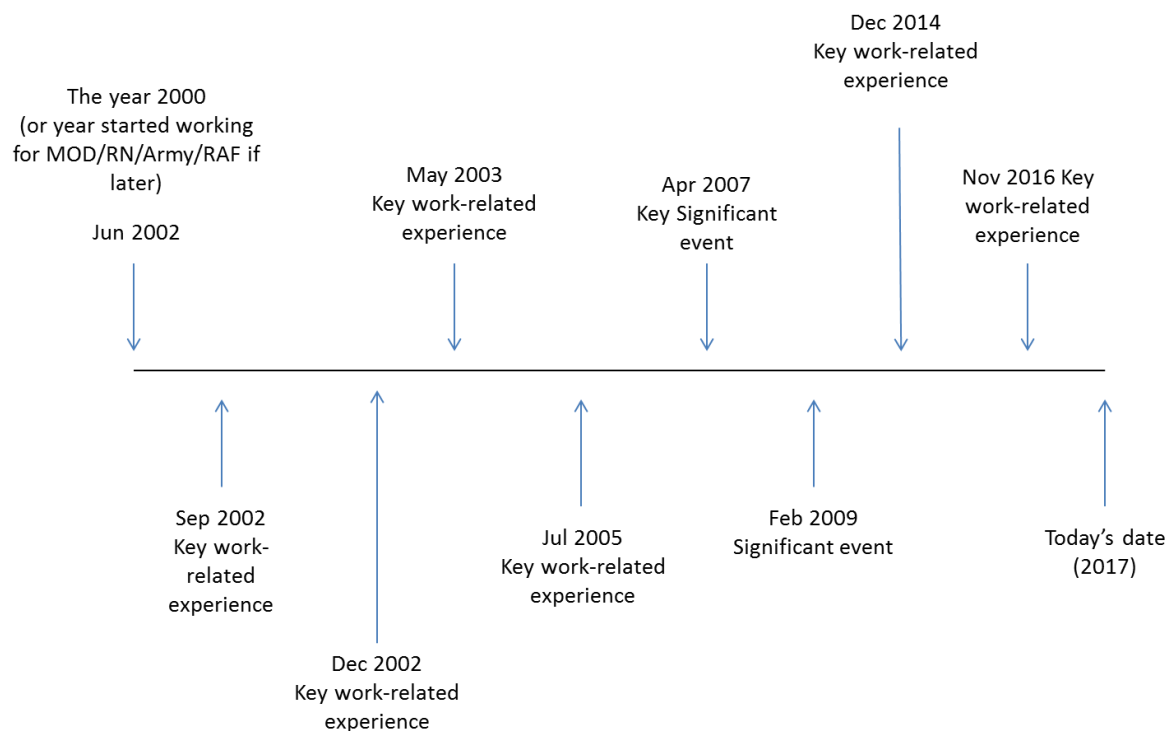
Appendix G Interview Questions

1. What attracted you to the organisation? [Probe: How did family/friends feel about you joining? Did you have any preconceptions about what it might be like? Has it met your expectations?]

Timeline Interview

Go through the (six to eight) events that participants have identified that have shaped how they feel about working for the [MOD/RN/Army/RAF]. These should be work-related events that have occurred since the year 2000 (or when they started working for the organisation, if later than this).

- Talk through each event.
- Ask the participant about the event (What? Where? When? Who? [Probe: key actors, role models, influential relationships] How?)
- Explore what makes this event particularly memorable.
- What was the outcome/consequence of the event?
- Clarify whether the event was a positive or negative experience if unclear.



Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Gender and Ethnicity

2. Now looking back over your timeline would you say that your gender or ethnicity has been a factor/impacted on any of the career events that you have mentioned?
 - Why do you say this?
 - What impact do you think it has had (positive, negative, neutral) overall?
 - Are there any other occasions when your gender or ethnicity has impacted on how you feel about working for the [MOD/RN/Army/RAF]?
3. Have these experiences shaped your views of your future in the [MOD/RN/Army/RAF] – how long you might stay or how you might progress?
4. Have you seen any cultural changes with respect to gender and ethnicity across the [MOD/RN/Army/RAF] since you joined? [Probe; Are these changes driven from the top (e.g. formal,

policy changes) or are they changes in attitude/behaviour driven from the bottom-up (e.g. informal changes)]

5. Did your gender play any part in your decision to join the organisation? [Probe: Did it make you more or less likely to feel that you would fit in?]
6. Did your ethnicity play any part in your decision to join the organisation? [Probe: Did it make you more or less likely to feel that you would fit in?]

General experiences of working in Defence

7. Overall, how has your experience of working within the [MOD/RN/Army/RAF] been?
8. Do you think that the [MOD/RN/Army/RAF] is a good place to work if you are a woman?
 - Why/not?
9. Do you think that the [MOD/RN/Army/RAF] is a good place to work if you are from a minority ethnic group?
 - Why/not?
10. Would you recommend a career/job in the [MOD/RN/Army/RAF], based on your experiences in it? [Probe: try to tease out which aspects of their lived experience are important influencers here]
11. Do you think that the [MOD/RN/Army/RAF] has an appropriate level of diversity in its workforce?
12. Do you think that the [MOD/RN/Army/RAF] is an inclusive organisation? [Probe: Are they referring to particular groups/aspects? Do they think it is necessary? Why/not? Can they give examples of inclusive practices, or exclusionary ones?]
13. Do you think that the [MOD/RN/Army/RAF] does enough to support diversity within the workforce?
 - Why do you say that?
 - Can you provide any specific examples?

Future Improvements

14. Is there anything that the [MOD/RN/Army/RAF] could do to improve the Lived Experience of minority groups (such as females and ethnic minority groups) within the [MOD/RN/Army/RAF]? [Probe: any barriers/challenges to overcome]

Leavers

15. Why are you leaving the organisation?
 - Did your gender play any part in your decision to leave the organisation?
 - Did your ethnicity play any part in your decision to leave the organisation?
16. Thank you so much for taking time to assist us in this study. Is there anything else you'd like to add about how gender/ethnicity may/may not impact on the Lived Experience of personnel within the [MOD/RN/Army/RAF]?

Appendix H Sample Information

After the issue of an earlier version of this report (V3), it was found that a coding error was made around non-binary gender, for which the researchers apologise. Subsequent checks have determined that this does not change the substantive findings of the report. Moreover, although the lived experiences of those people of non-binary gender were not explicitly covered in this report, it is recognised that this demographic faces unique challenges and issues and is a salient theme for investigation in future work.

H.1 Sample Size

Overall, 1,468 people expressed an interest in taking part in the study. Of this number, 25 were not eligible to participate because they did not meet the selection criteria. Demographic Questionnaires were returned from 932 volunteers⁸⁵. In total, 465 interviews were allocated, however 60 volunteers withdrew from the study after being allocated to be interviewed; 28 of these were replaced with alternative interviewees. Only two participants withdrew from the study after being interviewed. Most of the remaining volunteers withdrew by default by not responding to the research team's emails. However, some did say that they no longer had time to take part in the research.

H.2 Sample Composition

In total, 405 interviews were conducted (375 during the main study, plus 30 from the pilot study). Specifically, the sample comprised of:

- 44% females and 55% males⁸⁶.
- N=120 BAME and N=285 white participants.
- N=189 Regular serving personnel, N=138 CS and N=78 Reservists.
- N=78 RN (including RM), N=114 Army and N=75 RAF.

H.2.1 Sample Illustration

An illustration of the sample is provided through a number of 'pen pictures' below. These have been produced separately by CS, Regulars and Reservists and by BAME males and females, white females, and white males. To protect the anonymity of some groups, data for BAME participants is combined due to the relatively smaller number of BAME females in the military sample.

H.2.1.1 Civil Service

BAME males and females: The majority of CS BAME participants identified as Asian followed by African/Caribbean/Black, then mixed/multiple ethnic groups. BAME CS ranged in age between 25 and 62 years of age, with a mean age of 44yrs. The majority of CS BAME participants were married/in a civil partnership. Most participants did not have dependents⁸⁷; BAME males were relatively more likely to state that they did not have dependents compared to BAME females. The majority of BAME CS stated that they were religious. Their religion varied with ethnicity: African/Caribbean/Black personnel typically identified as Christian whilst Asian personnel were more likely to state that they were Hindu or Sikh. Length of time with the MOD ranged from under one year up to 40 years. Many had been with the organisation for less than 10 years (with a mean length of Service of 12yrs). The sample was skewed towards C grades; Industrial⁸⁸ and SCS were not represented in the BAME sample. Participants were drawn from across the CS specialisms and Top Level Budgets (TLB), primarily Head Office and Corporate Services (HOCS), Joint Forces Command (JFC)

⁸⁵ It should be noted that a large proportion of these were from the same cohort (i.e. over 100 C grade CS volunteered). The research team were looking to obtain data from a spread of personnel across the organisation hence why some of these were not taken forward for interview.

⁸⁶ Please note, not all participants (<5) identified in this binary way.

⁸⁷ Participants were asked if they had any dependents; this was defined as children under the age of 18 or other caring responsibilities. Many participants who did not have dependents were parents.

⁸⁸ Difficulties were experienced recruiting CS industrial grades. This may have been because of the distributed nature of the group, the group not having regular access to a computer at work (a lot of the communication was sent electronically) and, in part, due to a lack of a clear point of contact to facilitate access.

and Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S). The vast majority of BAME CS were located in the south of England with London and Bristol strongly represented in the sample.

White females: White female CS ranged in age from 20 to 64 years of age, with a mean age of 43yrs. CS females in the sample were as likely to be married/in a civil partnership as they were to be single or, to a lesser extent, divorced. The CS white female sample was represented by those with and without dependent children. The majority described themselves as not religious. Length of time with the organisation ranged from less than one year to 37 years (with a mean length of Service of 17yrs), with the majority having worked for the MOD for 10 years or over. However, a strong minority had a relatively shorter duration of employment (less than 10 years). CS white females were drawn primarily from grades B to E, with lower levels of representation from SCS and Industrial. Participants were drawn from across the range of specialisms and TLBs. The majority were located in the south of England.

White males: White male CS ranged in age from 18 to 67 years of age, with a mean age of 47yrs. The majority were married/in a civil partnership, without dependents and most did not consider themselves to be religious. The length of time that white male CS had been with the MOD varied between less than one year and 50 years (with a mean length of Service of 18yrs), however, the vast majority had worked for the MOD for over ten years. Participants were drawn from across the CS grades although there were relatively lower levels of representation of SCS and B grades in this group, compared to the other grades. The sample was represented by white males from most specialisms and TLBs and from locations across the UK (excluding Northern Ireland (NI)).

H.2.1.2 Regulars

BAME males and females: The sample comprised similar numbers of UK and F&C BAME participants. The majority of BAME participants were from the Army (notably so for BAME males); no participants were from the RM. The UK sample comprised both Officers and OR; BAME F&C participants were primarily OR. There were no Private/Airman in the sample; only Able Rates. The most commonly cited ethnicity was African/Caribbean/Black, which the majority of the F&C BAME participants described themselves as. In comparison, the UK BAME sample was more likely to contain a more diverse range of ethnicities including Asian (most representation in the UK BAME male sample) and mixed/multiple ethnic groups (most notable in the UK BAME female sample). BAME participants were aged between 23 to 50 years. The majority were in their thirties (mean age: 36yrs) with very low representation of BAME males in their twenties. The majority of BAME males were married/in a civil partnership, whilst the (small) majority of BAME females were single. Most of the participants (notably males) had dependents (children). The majority of the sample indicated that they had a religious belief (typically Christianity). Regular BAME participants had between one and 34 years length of Service (with a mean length of Service of 14yrs); the majority had been with the organisation for 10 years or more. Most RAF trades were represented. Army participants primarily worked for the Adjutant General's Corps or Combat Service Support. The majority of RN participants were within Logistics and Admin (Surface Fleet). Participants were located across the UK (excluding Wales and NI); most TLBs were represented but with notably low number at HOCS and DE&S.

White females: White female Regulars were drawn from all three Services (Officers and ORs). There was low representation of Private/Able Rates/Airman. White female Regulars were aged between 21 to 55 years with a mean age of 35yrs. The majority were in their thirties. Most were not married/in a civil partnership, with RAF white females having the lowest rates of marriage/civil partnership within the sample of Regulars. The majority of white female Regulars did not have dependents and were not religious; however, RN females were slightly more likely than females from the other Services to specify that they held a religious belief. The majority of participants had ten years or more of Service; time with the organisation ranged from less than one year to 34 years (with a mean length of Service of 13yrs). Army females were most likely to be in the Adjutant General Corp, notably Staff and Personnel Support or, to a lesser extent, from Combat Support. White females in the RAF and RN were drawn from across the branches/trade groups. White female Regulars were based at locations around the UK (excluding NI), most notably in the South of England. They were located at most TLBs, but with notably low numbers at DE&S and HOCS.

White males: White male regulars were drawn from all three Services (Officers and ORs); however, there was lower representation of RM when compared to the other Services (i.e. 13 RMs compared to an approximate mean of 20 participants from each of the other Services). There was also low representation of Private/Able Rates/Airman in the sample. The age range of white males was between 22 and 58yrs (the mean

age was 39yrs) with the majority either in their thirties or forties. White male Regulars were typically married/in a civil partnership, with dependent children. The majority were not religious. This was most apparent in the RMs where a strong majority indicated that they did not have a religious belief. Length of service ranged from two to 39 years. The majority had over 10 years of service; a sizeable minority, most notably in the RAF, had been in the organisation for 20 years or more. The mean length of Service was 17yrs. Most participants in the Army were from Combat Support or Combat; most RAF white males were from Technical and Engineering and RN males were primarily from the Surface Fleet. White male Regulars were based at locations around the UK (excluding NI) and at most TLBs, though with notably low numbers at DE&S.

H.2.1.3 Reservists

BAME males and females: The majority of BAME Reservists were Army males and were OR. There were no RM in the sample. BAME Reservists were most likely to describe their ethnicity as Asian, with the remainder of the sample comprised of mixed/multiple ethnic groups or African/Caribbean/Black. BAME Reservists were aged between 18 and 59 years of age (mean age 42yrs). The BAME Reserve sample was equally represented by those that were married/in a civil partnership and those that were not. The majority of BAME Reservists indicated that they were religious with a variety of faiths specified. Most did not have dependents. Length of Service ranged from less than one year to 37 years with a mean length of Service of 18yrs. Many were from Combat/Combat Support with the rest of the sample drawn from a mix of trades/branches. Participants were drawn from across the UK (excluding Wales/NI). Most were at Army, Navy or Air Command and from across most of the branches/trades.

White females: White female Reservists were from the three Services; the sample was slightly skewed towards Officers. Most white females were on a volunteer commitment; however, Regular Reservists formed a sizeable minority. White female Reservists were aged between 26 to 59 years of age, with most in their thirties or forties (mean age of 42yrs). The majority were married/in a civil partnership. Most did not have dependents. The white female Reserve sample consisted equally of participants both with and without a religious belief. White females' length of service ranged from less than one year to 32 years (with a mean length of Service of 15yrs). Participants were most likely to be part of the Adjutant General's Corps and, to a lesser extent, Medical, Combat Service Support and Combat Support. Participants in the RAF were employed across the range of trades. In the RN, they were typically in Warfare and, to a lesser extent, Logistics and Admin. White female Reservists were located across the UK (excluding NI), primarily within Army, Air or Navy Command.

White males: White male Reservists were drawn from the three Services; the sample was slightly skewed towards Officers. There was low representation of participants from the RM. Participants were typically on a volunteer commitment; however, a minority of male Reservists had prior experience as a Regular. Reservist white males were aged between 22 and 61 years with a mean age of 48yrs. Many participants were in their fifties. The majority were married/in a civil partnership. Most did not have dependents and were not religious. Length of Service varied from less than one year up to 42 years with a mean length of Service of 19yrs. Army Males were represented largely by Combat/Combat Service Support/or Combat Support whilst RAF males were most often from Communications and Intelligence. RN white males were drawn from across the branches, with the exclusion of Medical. Participants were located across the UK (excluding Wales and NI) and most TLBs; primarily Army, Air and Navy Command.

Appendix I Timeline Information

Table 7-7 provides more detail on the key global, national and Defence events and policy identified on the timelines in Section 4. Only years where events occurred that are relevant to the study are included in the table below.

Table 7-7: Global, national and Defence events (2000-2018)

Year	Event	Detail/Significance to the study	Reference
2001	9/11 Twin Towers UK Forces deploy to Afghanistan	The US is attacked by Islamist militant group al-Qaeda on 11 September 2001. The US accuses the Taliban of protecting Osama Bin-Laden, and declares war Britain becomes involved in November 2001. These events are major global and national events that led to many participants being deployed to Afghanistan	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-35159951
2003	UK Forces deploy to Iraq	British troops deploy to Iraq amidst concerns Saddam Hussein's government was concealing weapons of mass destruction	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34919954
2005	London terror attack	London rocked by a series of coordinated terrorist suicide attacks on 7 July 2005, which target commuters travelling on the city's public transport system during the morning rush hour	https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0/many-people-killed-terrorist-attacks-uk/
2008	Global financial crisis	The Government part-nationalises three leading UK banks with a 37 billion pound rescue package. It also pumps billions into the UK financial system after record stock market falls precipitated by the global "credit crunch"	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18028620
2009	UK Forces withdraw from Iraq	UK Forces withdraw after a six-year military mission in Iraq	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-34919954
2010	Equality Act	The Equality Act ensures consistency in what employers and employees need to do to make	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance

Year	Event	Detail/Significance to the study	Reference
	Public sector cuts are announced	their workplaces a fair environment and comply with the law The Government announces large-scale public spending cuts aimed at reducing UK's budget deficit, with an average 19% four-year cut in budgets of government departments	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18028620
	Public sector pay freeze	Public sector pay frozen for two years in 2010, except for those earning less than £21,000 a year. Since 2013, rises have been capped at 1% - below the rate of inflation	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-41241295
	Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR 2010)	The 2010 SDSR seeks to address a £38 billion overspend. It proposes a reduction of 17,000 Regulars, including 12,130 redundancies	HM Government, Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review, Cm 7948, October 2010.
2011	UK Forces in Libya	MOD engages in operations in Libya in mid-March	https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/ng-interactive/2014/feb/11/britain-100-years-of-conflict
	AF redundancy programme announced	Announcement of the implementation of large-scale redundancy programmes	https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/arm-ed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-2011
	AF Covenant announced	The AF Covenant sets out how AF personnel and their families can expect to be treated by the Government and the rest of the country in a number of areas. It sets out, for example, that personnel can expect the same access to and standard of healthcare as any other UK citizen	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/arm-ed-forces-covenant-supporting-information
2012	UK Forces support London Olympics	The AF contribute to the security and safety of the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games, deploying ships, aircraft and over 18,000 personnel in support of the police and the civilian authorities	https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/arm-ed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-2013

Year	Event	Detail/Significance to the study	Reference
2013	Public Sector pay cap extended	A 1% pay rise cap for public sector workers is extended for an extra year to 2015-16	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-41241295
	Future Forces 2020 published	Important decisions taken on the future shape of the AF	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/62487/Factsheet5-Future-Force-2020.pdf
	Reserves in the Future Force 2020 published	Reservists to have a greater role in the AF, particularly the Army, requiring an increase in size and change in the nature of the Reservist role	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/future-reserve-forces-2020
	Drummer Lee Rigby is murdered	A soldier, Drummer Lee Rigby, is hacked to death in south London by two Islamic extremists	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18028620
2014	UK forces withdraw from Afghanistan	In spring 2014, Task Force Helmand is closed, and Camp Bastion is handed over to Afghan security forces. The last UK combat troops leave Afghanistan in October	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-35159951
	Scottish Referendum	Voters in a referendum in Scotland reject independence, with 55% opting to remain part of the United Kingdom and 45% favouring independence	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18028620
2015	Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR 2015)	Introduction of female and BAME recruitment targets	https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Ensuring-sufficient-skilled-military-personnel.pdf
	Revised AF Pension Scheme introduced	The 2015 scheme is introduced after the Hutton review of pension schemes, which suggested the need to ensure the sustainability of payments of AF's pensions	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-pension-scheme-2015
2016	New Employment Model introduced	AF pay reform is introduced on 1 April 2016	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-pay-reform-explained
	BREXIT: UK votes to leave EU	A referendum to decide whether the UK should leave or remain in the European Union results in the decision to leave the EU	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-32810887

Year	Event	Detail/Significance to the study	Reference
	Ban lifted on women in Close Ground Combat roles	Women, who have previously served on the front line in support roles, will now be allowed to enter the Cavalry, Infantry and Armoured Corps	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-36746917
2017	Gender pay gap reporting regulations introduced	Employers in Great Britain with more than 250 staff will be required by law to publish gender pay figures annually on their own website and on a government website	https://www.gov.uk/government/news/gender-pay-gap-reporting
	Public Sector pay cap lifted	The cap on public sector pay rises in England and Wales is to be lifted	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-41241295
	AF Flexible Working Bill 2017-19	The Bill will enable members of the Regular AF to serve part-time or to restrict the amount of time they spend separated from their normal place of work	https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-8124
	Anti-Muslim hate crimes in London increase five-fold since London Bridge attacks	Figures released by the mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, show a fivefold increase in Islamophobic attacks in the street since the London Bridge attack, and a 40% increase in racist incidents, compared with the daily average in 2017	https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jun/07/anti-muslim-hate-crimes-increase-fivefold-since-london-bridge-attacks
2018	Women to be allowed to join the Gurkhas regiment	Further opening up of the Services to women	https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/07/15/gurkhas-recruit-women-first-time/
	Defence Diversity and Inclusion Strategy published	Strategy for diversity and inclusion across Defence is published with plans on how to deliver strategy	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-diversity-and-inclusion-strategy-2018-to-2030-a-force-for-inclusion

Table 7-8 provides more detail on the societal events that occurred during the data collection period.

Table 7-8: Societal events (June 2017-July 2018)

Date	Event	Detail/Significance to the study	Reference
1 Jun 2017	Reports on 'breathtaking' scale of	The Guardian reports that hundreds if not thousands of women and BAME personnel in the US technology industry come forward each year with complaints of toxic work environments	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/01/silicon-valley-sexual-harassment-startups

Date	Event	Detail/Significance to the study	Reference
	sexual harassment in Silicon Valley in US	largely controlled by white men. This story gained a lot of exposure in the UK and provides an example of widespread workplace sexual harassment and the increased resistance to this	
17 Jul 2017	Doctor Who: Jodie Whittaker to be 13th Doctor – and first woman in role	Following the prospect of a black or female Doctor Who in the UK newspapers, Jodie Whittaker is hired as the first woman to play the Doctor. The hiring of a woman for this role and the consideration of a black Doctor can be understood a barometer of ‘progress’	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-40624288
19 Jul 2017	BBC gender pay gap story breaks amidst legal changes over reporting pay differences	<p>The BBC’s annual report for 2016/17 reveals that the top seven earners at the corporation were all men and just one-third of the highest-paid are women. The scandal leads to discussions about the undervaluing and underrepresentation of women in senior positions, both of which contribute to the gender pay gap. Director General Tony Hall says there is ‘more to do’ on gender and diversity. Some of the BBC’s high-profile women presenters call on the corporation to ‘sort gender pay gap now’</p> <p>This story brings into focus the differences in how much women and men are paid, and the underrepresentation of women in senior positions. Moreover, the reporting of the BBC gender pay gap is part of a bigger legal change about reporting pay differences and thus speaks to wider concerns over gender, careers and the representation of women in senior roles</p>	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-40661179 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-40696402
26 Jul 2017	UK military chiefs praise transgender troops	Commanders from the British AF oppose any ban on transgender people serving in the military, following Donald Trump claiming that transgender people would not be allowed in the US military. This story is illustrative of the acceptance of transgender people in the military, and thus supports the military’s commitment to diversity and inclusivity	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-40733701
11 Aug 2017	Charlottesville ‘Unite the Right’ Rally in the US: one counter-protestor killed	One person died and 19 others injured when a car rams a crowd of people opposing a far-right rally in the US state of Virginia. The Unite the Right rally was a far-right rally whose stated goal was to oppose the removal of a statue of a Confederate Army	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-40912509

Date	Event	Detail/Significance to the study	Reference
		General. This event is illustrative of the increased visibility of and resistance to far-right politics	
1 Sep 2017	RAF opens combat roles to women amid concern from former senior Officers	The RAF opens up combat roles to women in a move that will be extended to all branches of the military. Former Commander of British forces in Afghanistan 'vehemently' disagrees with allowing women to serve in the Infantry, saying women were more likely to suffer long-term injuries than men, which would have an impact on the Defence budget as the military would likely have increased compensation payments. This story is illustrative of the drive towards equality across the military, as well as resistance to such changes	https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/sep/01/raf-opens-combat-roles-women-concern-senior-officers
7 Sep 2017	British Army officials confront homophobia in new Stonewall campaign	Senior British Army Officers feature in a new Stonewall campaign tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. Images released for the campaign feature two senior officials from the British Army. The story is relevant as it sends a message to LGBT personnel that they can be free to be themselves in the organisation, as well as emphasising the inclusivity of the military in terms of gender	https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2017/09/07/british-army-officials-confront-homophobia-in-new-stonewall-campaign/
24 Sep 2017	American footballers drop to their knees during the US national anthem to protest against police violence and racism	American footballers drop to their knees during the US national anthem to protest against police violence and racism. Although started in 2016 when Colin Kaepernick began kneeling in protest, the form of protest went viral after US President Donald Trump criticised the NFL players for being unpatriotic and called on them to be fired. The story puts a spotlight on police brutality in the US and is illustrative of resistance to racial inequalities	https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/09/24/donald-trump-calls-nfl-boycott-latest-attack-sportsmen-bend/
2 Oct 2017	RN submarine Officers removed over claim of 'inappropriate relationship' with subordinates	A RN nuclear submarine Commander is removed from his vessel amid claims of an "inappropriate relationship" with a subordinate. A few days later, his Second-in-Command was also suspended. Their alleged partners, two more junior female Officers, were also taken from the boat. After stories of cocaine and prostitutes emerge, nine crew members are discharged following testing positive for drugs. Another two resigned; whilst	https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/10/02/royal-navy-submarine-commander-removed-claim-inappropriate-relationship/ https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1256544/Sex-scandal-

Date	Event	Detail/Significance to the study	Reference
		<p>a third are facing court martials for absence without leave. Of the 168-strong crew, 7 are women</p> <p>Following the lifting of the ban in 2011 on women serving on submarines, the Daily Mail reported that some Royal Navy wives feared that having women serving alongside men on submarines would lead to sex scandals. A man and a woman having sex on a submarine contributes to the perception that women are not suitable for serving on submarines and the disruptive nature of their presence in traditionally male-dominated spheres</p>	fears-women-set-allowed-serve-Navy-submarines.html
5 Oct 2017	Harvey Weinstein accused of sexual assault by several Hollywood actors	<p>The New York Times and the New Yorker separately publish allegations of sexual harassment and assault against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein. Weinstein publishes public apology and is fired from his production company in light of more allegations. In the following days, Weinstein is accused of rape and sexual harassment from women across Hollywood. Weinstein's downfall leads to other prominent men being publicly accused of sexual misconduct, and facing similarly serious professional repercussions. This is a global movement taking accusations of sexual misconduct seriously and responding with adequate force. The culture of silence protecting men in positions of power has been challenged. In the past, accusations have been easy to bury or settle, but employers are increasingly taking allegations seriously. The context of #metoo and Weinstein and others' downfall may therefore embolden some participants to speak up about misconduct they have experienced on the basis of their gender, race or ethnicity, since it spurs dialogue about sexism and misconduct in other workplaces and industries</p>	<p>https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/05/us/harvey-weinstein-harassment-allegations.html?module=inline</p> <p>https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/from-aggressive-overtures-to-sexual-assault-harvey-weinsteins-accusers-tell-their-stories</p> <p>https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/10/05/us/statement-from-harvey-weinstein.html</p> <p>https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/08/business/harvey-weinstein-fired.html</p>
15 Oct 2017	#metoo campaign against sexual harassment goes viral	<p>Actor Alyssa Milano tweets 'If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet'. Within 24 hours, the hashtag #metoo has over 500,000 mentions on Twitter and 12 million times on Facebook. The #metoo campaign encourages women and men to share their stories of harassment in the hopes of shedding light on the scale of the</p>	<p>https://twitter.com/Alyssa_Milano/status/919659438700670976</p> <p>https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/world/metoo-shockwave/</p>

Date	Event	Detail/Significance to the study	Reference
		problem (however, the 'me too' movement originated with Tarana Burke in 2006 after an experience of sexual violence)	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/15/me-too-founder-tarana-burke-women-sexual-assault
19 Oct 2017	Oxford University accused of 'social apartheid' as colleges admit no black students	Labour MP David Lammy accuses Oxford University of 'social apartheid' after nearly one in three Oxford colleges fail to admit a single black British A-level student in 2015. Lammy said the figures showed that many colleges at both Oxford and Cambridge failed to reflect the UK's population. This story is relevant since it highlights the lack of class and racial diversity in the education sector, which may prompt some to reflect on their belonging in a different institution	https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/oct/19/oxford-accused-of-social-apartheid-as-colleges-admit-no-black-students
27 Oct 2017	Westminster sex scandal breaks as reports of sexual harassment complaints emerge across parliament	Up to 40 cabinet ministers and MPs across parliament are alleged to have engaged in inappropriate sexual behaviour, with some MPs resigning in the wake of the scandal. As the #metoo campaign shook Hollywood and business, it also exposed the UK political system as a workplace rife with sexual harassment and bullying. In the wake of the #metoo movement, the Westminster sex scandal is another example of harassment being made visible, with more women and men coming forward to discuss their experiences	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-politics-41867079/sexual-harassment-in-westminster-the-allegations-and-denials
14 Nov 2017	British Army launches new BAME network	British Army launches a new BAME network, to celebrate and support serving soldiers. This story is illustrative of the drive towards inclusivity in the Army	https://www.forces.net/news/army-launches-new-network-black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-soldiers
6 Dec 2017	'Silence Breakers' are Time's 'Person of the Year'	Time magazine names 'The Silence Breakers' its 'Person of the Year', publishing the stories of many of the women (and men) who have come forward to tell their stories of discrimination and abuse. This story contributes to and celebrates the movement for women and men who have experienced abuse to come forward and tell their stories	http://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-2017-silence-breakers/

Date	Event	Detail/Significance to the study	Reference
1 Jan 2018	'TimesUp' project launched to fight sexual harassment	<p>More than 300 actresses, writers and directors launch the TimesUp project to fight sexual harassment in the film industry and other workplaces. It provides an online resource for victims of sexual harassment, allies and advocates. The Times Up Legal Defence Fund also provides subsidised legal support for women seeking justice for sexual harassment in the workplace</p> <p>This story contributes to the overall change regarding how allegations of discrimination and harassment are discussed. Actors and activists involved have also launched the UK Justice and Equality Fund to help anyone subjected to sexual discrimination access legal support</p>	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-42534124
8 Jan 2018	British Army launch 'This is belonging' recruitment campaign	<p>The campaign aims to recruit more people from a variety of genders, sexualities, ethnicities and religions, as well as highlighting soldiers' emotional health. The series of equality-boosting ads came after research found that the 'be the best' Army slogan was perceived as 'dated, elitist and non-inclusive'. Reaction to the campaign is mixed, with some welcoming the message of inclusivity and reflecting the demographic makeup of the UK. Others accuse the Army of political correctness and say that the adverts will not target those most likely to sign-up. The nature of these ads and the emphasis on diversity and inclusivity as central to Army life may prompt more discussion of experiences of belonging and/or marginalisation amongst participants</p>	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42629529
8 Jan 2018	BBC China editor Carrie Grace resigns from her post, citing pay inequality with male colleagues	<p>Carrie Grace says she was dismayed to discover that the BBC's two male International editors earned 'at least 50% more' than their two female counterparts. In an open letter, Gracie accuses the corporation of having a 'secretive and illegal pay culture' and says the BBC is facing a 'crisis of trust'. In June 2018, the BBC apologises to Carrie Gracie over pay, with the corporation acknowledging that Carrie was told that she would be paid in line with the North American editor when she took on the role of China editor and she took on the role on that understanding. The BBC apologises for underpaying Carrie and 'has now put this</p>	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42598775 https://carriegracie.com/news.html https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-44655335

Date	Event	Detail/Significance to the study	Reference
		right' by giving her back pay. These resignations are illustrative of the 'resistance' to and support for the drive for equality	
29 Jan 2018	Banning of women as embellishment in darts and Formula 1	The Professional Darts Corporation (PDC) and Formula 1 confirm that women will no longer be used as decorative attachments from 2018. The Women's Sport Trust says the use of models in sport as 'walk-on girls, grid girls and ring girls' positions women as embellishment in sport rather than having the opportunity to enjoy the same level of funding and media exposure of men. Critics of the ban see it as a form of 'political correctness gone mad'. The banning of women as decorative attachments is illustrative of resistance to the objectification of women, as well as indicative of the support for and resistance to the drive for equality	https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/formula1/42890261 https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/darts/42841620
12 Feb 2018	Marvel's Black Panther movie debuts	The Black Panther film has a predominantly black cast and crew and is about an African hero in a fictional African nation. The cultural impact of this film lies in the celebration of black culture, the power of black women, and the preservation of identity amongst others. The release of this film is relevant to the current study because it helps break stereotypes about the roles BAME people play. Seeing black people as empowered leaders with agency and the ability to create and control sends a powerful message that may impact on some participants in the study	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-43364702?intlink_from_url=https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/c2n5w0g2222t/black-panther&link_location=live-reporting-story https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-43125828?intlink_from_url=https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/c2n5w0g2222t/black-panther&link_location=live-reporting-story
26 Feb 2018	Plaque marking slave trade victims to be put on statue of slaver in Bristol	A statue commemorating Edwards Colston in Bristol is adorned with an official plaque to acknowledge Bristol's slave trading past and Colston's part in it—between 1672 and 1689, his ships are believed to have transported about 80,000 women, men and children from Africa to the Americas. This story is relevant since it is part of ongoing examination of historical narratives and memorials, as well as acknowledging the legacies of slavery. The	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-42404825

Date	Event	Detail/Significance to the study	Reference
		recognition of these legacies is not going to eradicate racism, but it does make a statement to black people about their belonging in Britain, about their equality to other citizens	
5 Mar 2018	Royal Navy recruitment ad showcases opportunities for women and apprentices in the military	New advert in the 'Made in the Royal Navy' campaign highlights diversity in the organisation by playing on the phrase 'a woman's place'. <i>Louise's story</i> targets female recruits, demonstrating the scale of opportunities available to women and men. A similar film in the same series, <i>Modou's story</i> , also released, showing possibilities for aspiring apprentices. The release comes ahead of International Women's Day on 8 th March. These adverts are illustrative of the drive towards inclusion and equal opportunities in the military	http://www.wcrs.com/blog/2018/0305/royal-navy-launches-its-two-new-major-recruitment-ads/
8 Mar 2018	Nottingham student reports racist chants in hall of residence	Two men are arrested after a female student from Nottingham Trent University makes complaints about a group of people subjecting her to racist abuse in her hall of residence. The student also posts a video in which men are heard chanting 'we hate the blacks' and 'sign the Brexit papers'. This story is relevant since it is just one of countless stories of racism in higher education emerging in 2017 and 2018. It suggests that those who hold racist and oppressive views have become emboldened in recent times; stories such as these may impact on BAME communities' sense of belonging in post-Brexit Britain	https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/mar/08/nottingham-student-reports-racist-chants-in-hall-of-residence https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/11/racist-universities-not-tolerant-rugaro-chisango-nottingham-trent
23 Mar 018	Calls for first black British Army Officer to be honoured	A crossbench group of 127 MPS have written to the PM to ask that Walter Tull, the first black person to serve as an Officer in the British Army, be posthumously awarded a military cross at the centenary of his death on the battlefield. This story is relevant to the current study since Tull trained as an Officer at a time when BAME personnel were deemed inferior to white counterparts. Being awarded the medal posthumously may signal more acceptance to BAME Officers about their place and belonging in the Army	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/23/walter-tull-calls-first-black-british-army-officer-honour-medal

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25 Mar 2018	Uber to pay \$10m in gender and race discrimination lawsuit	Uber agree to pay \$10m in March to settle a proposed class-action lawsuit alleging discrimination against more than 400 women and minorities brought by three women engineers. One of the women removed herself from the class-action and sued the company in May alleging discrimination based on gender and race. This story is relevant since it shows how seriously organisations are taking sexual harassment given the current societal context	https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2018/08/22/uber-pay-15m-sexual-harassment-settlement/
2 Apr 2018	Students demand UK universities take urgent action against racism	Exeter University students call for urgent changes in the way academic institutions deal with racism after a spate of racist incidences occurring on campus and in student societies. This story is relevant since the students went public about their experiences of being from BAME communities in Britain's higher-education system	https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/apr/02/students-demand-universities-take-urgent-action-against-racism
14 Apr 2018	US police arrest black men sitting in Starbucks for trespassing	Two African American men are arrested in a Starbucks coffee shop in Philadelphia after a manager accuses them of trespassing and causing a disturbance. The two men were waiting for a friend before ordering when the manager asked them to leave. The arrest results in protests and Starbucks shut down 8,000 coffee shops across the US for 'race training' to prevent discrimination in Starbucks stores. The story made headlines as it underscored the reality of racial discrimination and the profiling of black people in the US	https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-43981366 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-43803756
15 Apr 2018	Windrush scandal breaks	Scandal breaks over the rights of Commonwealth citizens to remain in the UK. Members of the Windrush generation, who arrived in the UK from 1948 onwards, as well as their children, were wrongly targeted by the government's 'hostile environment' policies designed to deter illegal immigration. This is an interesting story for the current study, since there are claims that veterans from Britain's former colonies and their families are amongst those who have been threatened with deportation and denied citizenship and legal rights	https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/apr/15/why-the-children-of-windrush-demand-an-immigration-amnesty https://www.forces.net/news/windrush-scandal-raf-veteran-says-his-service-should-be-enough

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9 Jun 2018	Sikh soldier wears turban for trooping the colour ceremony	A Coldstream Guards soldier becomes the first person to wear a turban during the trooping the colour ceremony to mark the Queen's birthday. The Sikh Guardsman, Charanpreet Singh Laal, said he hoped his participation in the event would encourage those from different religions and backgrounds to join the Army. This story is relevant for the current study since it may encourage those from minority backgrounds to voice their experiences of being a minority in the military, as well as seeing that people from BAME backgrounds are increasingly accepted in the AF	https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jun/09/sikh-soldier-becomes-first-to-wear-turban-for-trooping-the-colour
12 Jul 2018	Home Office urged to go further with suspension of hostile environment	MPs and campaigners urge the Home Office to go further with the suspension of hostile environment policies, with MPs expressing concern about the ongoing impact on people who are living legally in the UK, but who do not have proof of their right to remain. Although immigration and asylum policy is not directly related to the currently study, these debates raise questions about who belongs in Britain and their value to the country	https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jul/12/home-office-urged-to-go-further-with-hostile-environment-suspension
18 Jul 2018	BAME staff at ITN paid a fifth less than white colleagues	ITN, maker of news for ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5, reveal that staff from BAME backgrounds are typically paid a fifth less than their white colleagues. The inequality for BAME staff is worse than that for women at ITN, where there is a median gender pay gap of 18.2% and bonus gap of 50%. ITN currently have no BAME members on its top executive team. It has pledged to have at least one BAME candidate interviewed for every role. This story is of interest to the current study as it is another example of pay inequality in British organisations. What is particularly interesting about this story is that these figures show that ITN, who voluntarily published the BAME pay gap figures since the law only obliges companies to report gender pay figures, struggle to tackle the lack of diversity at the top as well as throughout the organisation in terms of pay and representation	https://www.theguardian.com/media/2018/jul/18/itn-reveals-bame-staff-typically-four-fifths-pay-white-colleagues

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19 Jul 2018	Brexit will trigger rise in hate crimes, warns police watchdog	The police watchdog warns of a 'real possibility' that Britain's exit from the EU next year will trigger a spike in hate crimes. The report comes against a background of reported hate crimes rising sharply, up 57% between 2014-15 and 2016-17. This story is relevant as it speaks to the everyday lives of BAME people and the increases in hate crime in the UK since the Brexit vote and terrorist attacks	https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jul/19/brexit-will-trigger-rise-in-hate-crimes-warns-police-watchdog

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7a. Abstract: * The Ministry of Defence (MOD) understands that a diverse and inclusive organisation is a stronger, more cohesive and resilient one. However, despite continued efforts, The MOD recognises that it struggles to recruit and retain people from backgrounds not traditionally associated with Defence, namely females and Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) personnel. The MOD commissioned a Whole Force qualitative study (unprecedented in scope and scale) to better understand the day-to-day experiences of females and BAME personnel (in comparison with the white male majority) to inform actions to improve the representation of these minority groups across Defence. Data were gathered from 405 participants (Regular, Reserve and Civil Servant) via one-to-one interviews. The study found that whilst gender and ethnicity did impact the experiences of MOD personnel to a large extent they were not the only characteristics that differentiated people's experiences. Whilst some positive aspects of being female and/or BAME within Defence were noted, gender and ethnicity were found to be significant contributors to the negative experiences and organisational barriers that personnel faced. Six suggested focus areas for action were identified, focusing on: cultural change; organisational communication; recruitment, selection and induction; leadership and management; policy and practice; and education and training.		
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