



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Ministry of Defence

The Government's Response to the
**Report of Inquiry into National
Recognition of our Armed Forces**

October 2008



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Presented to Parliament on behalf of
The Secretary of State for Defence by
The Minister of State for the Armed Forces

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Foreword

**by Bob Ainsworth
Minister of State for the
Armed Forces**

Quentin Davies MP was invited by the Government last December to examine ways of improving the nation's understanding and appreciation of the Armed Forces; his report was published on 19 May. Linked to the Service Personnel Command Paper – and indeed a series of work strands to improve the lot of our Armed Forces – it is something about which I am passionate.

The context for this work must be understood from the outset. Our Armed Forces are a force for good. Working with them is a privilege. It brings home just how much is being asked of them and how difficult their lives can be. In Iraq and Afghanistan in particular they are risking injury and death as they provide the security, space and expertise for the Iraqis and Afghans to rebuild their countries. But all around the world every day they demonstrate their courage, dedication and professionalism in the Service of their country. They are a credit to the nation.

For our part we must satisfy the right and proper public desire to recognise what our Armed Forces do. Consequently the Government commissioned this Report and we endorse its findings. It was wholly independent and made a range of recommendations; we have accepted the vast majority of them. Where we have not fully accepted a recommendation, we have given meaning to its intent.

The National Recognition Study is part of a suite of initiatives designed to ensure that our soldiers, sailors and airmen are appropriately treated. The central pillar of this work is the Service Personnel Command Paper which was published in July founded upon two principles. First, to end the disadvantage that armed service imposes on our people, their families, or our veterans. Second, it set out how we can better support and recognise those who are due special treatment, specifically those who have been wounded in the service of their country.

The National Recognition Study complements the Command Paper and I commend our response to it as set out in this document.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Ainsworth'. The signature is stylized and fluid, with a large initial 'B' and 'A'.

The Establishment of the Inquiry into National Recognition of the Armed Forces and the Government's Response

1. In December 2007, the Prime Minister, with the support of the Secretary of State for Defence, asked Quentin Davies MP to undertake an independent Inquiry into the relationship between the Armed Forces and the rest of society. The terms of reference were to:

'Identify ways of encouraging greater understanding and appreciation of the Armed Forces by the British Public.'

2. The Inquiry was supported by Mr Bill Clark OBE (a senior MOD civil servant) and Air Commodore Martin Sharp OBE (a serving senior military officer), and took evidence from over 300 serving personnel from across all ranks of all three Services. It also involved consultation with a very wide range of stakeholders and people of influence in the field, including the Royal Family, journalists and editors, business, sports and local government leaders, politicians and representatives of the Service charities. The Inquiry team also visited the USA, Canada and France to draw on their experience. It ran in parallel with separate work to develop a Command Paper on sustaining and harmonising Government support to Service Personnel.

3. The Inquiry reported to the Prime Minister at the end of April 2008 and the Report was published on 19 May 2008. Copies were placed in the Library of the House of Commons. In a Written Ministerial Statement on 19 May 2008¹, the Minister for the Armed Forces (the Rt Hon Bob Ainsworth MP) announced that the Government would be responding fully to all the recommendations in the Report. This paper is that response.

¹ Hansard 19 May 2008: Column 3WS.

4. As the Minister for the Armed Forces set out in his Written Ministerial Statement of 19 May 2008, the Government warmly welcomes the Report, which sets a number of practical recommendations that we intend to take forward in consultation with the Devolved Administrations and other agencies as appropriate.

5. The Government is acutely aware of the debt it owes our Armed Forces. Our gratitude for the work they do in the service of our country is reflected in our recent initiatives on pay, tax-free bonuses, housing and health care, as well as in our decision to commission the Service Personnel Command Paper on 'The Nation's Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans', which we published in July. This was the first ever cross-Government strategy for supporting our Armed Forces personnel, their families and veterans, and sets out the Government's and the Devolved Administrations' commitments on health, housing, education and skills, and benefits, and lays down the strategic direction of travel in a set of enduring principles to 'make it last'. Similarly, Scottish Ministers detailed their commitment to the Armed Forces and their families in Scotland and to the veterans' community in their paper 'Scotland's Veterans and Forces' Communities: meeting our commitment', which it published in parallel with the Command Paper. Beyond these individual initiatives, important as they are, it is vital for our serving men and women, especially those engaged in difficult and dangerous overseas campaigns, to know that the whole of Britain understands and appreciates the work that they do in our name. That is why the Prime Minister set up the National Recognition Inquiry.

6. The Inquiry concluded that while the Armed Forces enjoy immense respect and gratitude on the part of the nation, the foundation on which that support is based has eroded over recent years and is likely to continue to do so unless countervailing measures are taken. It also pointed out that increased separation of the Armed Forces from civilian life carries risks for both parties: the material and moral support of society is indispensable to the motivation and morale of the Armed Forces, and public understanding of the military determines the climate within which the Forces can recruit and train, and the willingness of the tax payer to finance them adequately. The Report recommended a number of measures to counter this trend of increased separation between society and the military. It did so by addressing the issues of visibility, contact, understanding and support. It sought to propose measures that would involve minimum diversion of scarce Defence resources.

7. The Government accepts the majority of the recommendations made by the Inquiry, though in a few cases this is with qualification or modification. In particular, the Government is conscious of the need to avoid placing additional burdens on our hard pressed Armed Forces, especially given the present level of commitment to operations, which must remain our top priority. Nevertheless, the Government welcomes the Inquiry's objective to create more opportunities for contact between the Armed Forces and the society they serve and for the public to be able to express its support. Where the Government has not fully accepted recommendations, it is confident that it can give meaning to the intent behind the recommendation in most cases. Our detailed response to each of the recommendations is set out below. Where appropriate, it will be for the Devolved Administrations to take forward

recommendations in co-operation with the MOD and the Armed Forces in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

8. The majority of the recommendations are directed towards the UK Government although in many cases they will affect the Devolved Administrations which have been consulted in this response. The Government will continue to work with the Devolved Administrations and external stakeholders as we take forward actions to implement the recommendations through an action plan developed and monitored in MOD.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

Increasing Visibility

Recommendation 1: Wider Use of Uniforms. We believe that the Military should be encouraged – not ordered – to wear their uniforms to the full extent allowed by the present Service rules (which clearly reflect current security advice). These rules already allow the use of uniforms for travelling to work, travel across the country on duty, and all official and semi-official functions. Clearly, it would not be appropriate to wear uniform in purely recreational situations. There was very considerable enthusiasm for this Recommendation, both in the Military, at all ranks, and among the civilians to whom we spoke.

1. Government Response: We accept this recommendation and agree that the Armed Forces should be encouraged to wear uniform in all appropriate circumstances. We have therefore reviewed and updated our existing policy to make clear to all personnel that they have our support to wear their uniform more widely in public, and we have issued new instructions accordingly. Under the new regulations, Service personnel are encouraged (not ordered) to wear their uniform when travelling to and from work and when travelling by public transport between places of duty. There is already a noticeable increase in the number Armed Forces personnel wearing their uniforms in public in many parts of the country. The recent TA 'Uniform at Work' as part of the TA 100 Centenary celebrations was well received and an example of the revised policy in practice. Decisions about when to wear uniform are still necessarily at the discretion of local commanders, taking into account, for example, security assessments.

Recommendation 2: Legal Protection for the Uniform. The Government should take a suitable opportunity to introduce legislation making discrimination directed at those wearing military uniforms by purveyors of public or commercial services an offence. We further recommend that the Home Office, Crown Prosecution Service and Ministry of Justice consider issuing guidance respectively to the Police, Prosecutors and Judiciary to the effect that where victims of violence or threats of violence are wearing military uniform, those offences should be considered aggravated by that fact.

2. Government Response: We firmly believe that their membership of the Armed Forces and the uniform they wear should be a source of great pride to our personnel. We consider it inappropriate and unacceptable that anyone should ever be disadvantaged or discriminated against simply because of their service in the Forces or because of the uniform they wear. We are heartened that the vast majority of the public seem to support this view. The MOD will work with other Government Departments, the Devolved Administrations and other agencies to consider what non-legislative steps can be taken to ensure that members of the Armed Forces are

not discriminated against, but we do not think that a change in the law is necessary or appropriate. We understand that Scottish Ministers take a similar view. We are however aware of a number of unacceptable incidents and we will therefore be reminding Service personnel to report incidents where they experience discrimination in relation to the provision of public and commercial services to their commanding officer, who will then be able to communicate the details of serious cases through the chain of command to the Ministry of Defence where appropriate. This will enable Ministers to take a view about a suitable response. For example, in relation to the Birmingham airport case referred to in the Report, the policy relating to wearing military uniform in civilian airports while travelling on chartered flights has been revised, and Birmingham International airport has confirmed there is no requirement for military personnel returning from operations to change into civilian attire to transit through the airport. Regarding the second element of the recommendation, it is already an aggravating factor, under published sentencing guidelines, when the victim of a crime is serving the public. This is mirrored in the Code for Crown Prosecutors, which gives guidance to CPS lawyers on when it will be in the public interest to institute a prosecution. The Code states that in any particular case a prosecution will usually take place unless there are contrary public interest factors which clearly outweigh those in favour. The more serious the offence, the more likely it will be that a prosecution will be justified. The Code also requires the prosecutor to take into account the consequences for the victim and any views expressed by him when assessing the public interest. The position is similar in Scotland. We are confident, therefore, that Service personnel are properly protected against criminal offences by the criminal law as it stands.

Recommendation 3: More Systematic Approach to Homecoming Parades.

The regional chain of command should be tasked, as it plans for the return of units from operational deployments, to approach the local authorities where the unit is based, or another authority with which the unit has a relationship (see Recommendation 18 below), to see if there might be interest in a parade. It is important that Reserve personnel who have served in the operational theatre should be included in the parade. A Military Band should, as a general rule, be made available on such an occasion on a Category 1 (no payment) basis. The local authority for its part should be expected to make an effort to arrange publicity before the event, and to provide a reception for the marching servicemen and servicewomen and their families afterwards.

3. Government Response: We are delighted at the strong levels of public support for recent homecoming parades and believe these have an important part to play in allowing the public to show its appreciation for the work of our Armed Forces. The three 'House of Parliament Receptions' for returning brigades have been successful and very well received. We shall examine also the possibilities around greater presence of reservists and military bands. The Government acknowledges that there may be scope for a more coordinated approach and the Services are looking into how they might take this proposal forward, taking account of the different Service deployment arrangements, ethos and geographic disposition. Accordingly, the Army has recently issued a homecoming parade conduct letter and the details have been included

in the revised ceremonial instructions for the Army. The Services will look to utilise Freedom parades wherever possible, rather than mounting additional events and the MOD is grateful for an offer from the Royal British Legion for use of its branches and professional staff to work with units locally making the arrangements. We are also conscious of the need to ensure this activity is coordinated with Devolved Administrations, the Local Government Association, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Welsh Local Government Association.

Recommendation 4: Transfer of Ceremonies and Parades to Public Venues. We have identified a number of parades and other ceremonies involving a Military Band which are currently held 'behind the wire'. In our view they should, where the agreement of the local authority can be obtained, be transferred to the main square of the nearest town or city, or to another appropriate public venue.

4. Government Response: We shall ensure that, wherever possible, ceremonies and parades are held in public venues. Clearly this will not be appropriate in all cases and units will continue to conduct parades on base on occasions. For example passing out parades are special events for individual Service personnel and their families; they should continue to be by invitation only. As a policy, the tasking of military bands will always consider external venues first unless it is essential that performances have to be held within a military compound.

Recommendation 5: British Armed Forces and Veterans Day. We support the call for an Armed Forces Day. This should incorporate Veterans Day, be called British Armed Forces and Veterans Day and take place in the summer, preferably at the end of June on a Saturday (so that school children and most working adults would be available to attend events). If the Government were minded to propose to Parliament the creation of another public holiday we believe that an Armed Forces and Veterans Day on a set Friday or Monday at the end of June would be the right solution. We believe our proposal has merit on either basis. The aim of British Armed Forces and Veterans Day should be to provide a focus for media-directed initiatives on Defence and Service issues, and an occasion for scheduling public events involving the Forces, including Open Days and 'freedom' parades (see Recommendations 12 and 18 below) and especially events that can involve the Reserves, Veterans and Cadets. We also believe, and this has been confirmed by representatives of sports organisations to whom we have spoken, that sporting events on such a Day could acquire a military flavour.

5. Government Response: The Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Defence have already given their support to the idea of an Armed Forces Day. We intend to hold the first British Armed Forces and Veterans' Day on 27 June next year, building on the lessons learned from this year's successful Veterans' Day events. We are currently investigating the options for the day and the scope to include sporting and other organisations in the arrangements. We wish to ensure that the day is in tune with the national sentiment and to ensure that the scale and nature of the event does not unduly burden the Armed Forces. The creation of an additional public holiday would obviously have much wider implications and the Government is currently conducting a wide-ranging consultation on the nature of our citizenship and our constitution,

including how best we celebrate our national identity. As part of this process, we have received a number of suggestions for new or replacement Bank Holidays, designed to celebrate or commemorate aspects of British life or history. At present, we have no plans to change the current pattern of Bank Holidays, but we are nevertheless considering all these suggestions carefully. Instituting additional or replacement Bank Holidays is a devolved responsibility in Scotland and Scottish Ministers would need to consider this issue as it affects their responsibilities.

Recommendation 6: Award Ceremonies for Campaign Medals and Veterans' Badges. Servicemen and servicewomen should always be given the opportunity to receive Campaign Medals personally, where possible at the hands of a Member of the Royal Family or the Lord Lieutenant, at public ceremonies, rather than such Medals being simply distributed through their unit's internal mail system or by post. Those entitled to wear Veterans Badges should also have an opportunity to receive them personally. Despite several recent initiatives, of the 5 million Veterans who are currently entitled to badges, only some 500,000 have received them. Badges might be presented by Ministers, senior officers, the local MP, lord mayor, or mayor at an event at local Regular or Reserve Military establishments.

6. Government Response: It is already the case that many Service personnel and veterans receive their awards and badges from the Royal Family, their representatives or appropriate public figures. There have been a number of ceremonies recently, at which veterans have been awarded their badges, including: a reception hosted by the Prime Minister at No 10 on 26 June; the Presiding Officer awarding badges to veterans at a ceremony held at the Scottish Parliament on 26 June; the Greater London Authority (GLA) Veterans' Day event in Trafalgar Square on 27 June; and the National Veterans' Day event in Blackpool, also on 27 June. The MOD, in consultation with the Devolved Administrations, will aim to ensure that Service personnel and veterans continue to receive their awards and badges in this way whenever practicable, but this needs to be balanced with the need to ensure that medals are presented in a timely fashion.

Recommendation 7: Royal Tournament. The Royal Tournament provided a very special opportunity for promoting the Armed Forces to the general public. Many people we have spoken to, both civilian and military, spontaneously said how much they regretted its demise. We share this sentiment but recognise that in view of the current pressure on our Armed Forces it would not be practicable to revive it at the present time. We have spoken to television journalists and impresarios with an interest in this area, including Ross Kemp and Jeremy Clarkson, about the prospects for launching a modern equivalent, and believe that the MOD should re-examine this possibility every year in light of pressure from overseas deployments.

7. Government Response: While the Royal Tournament as previously configured ended for good reasons – the unsustainable demand on manpower and unrepresentative picture of the Services it painted – we support the idea of launching a modern showcase for our Forces that reaches out to younger, more

diverse audiences across the country. The Services already participate in a number of such events throughout the year including, for example, the inaugural and successful Windsor Castle Royal Tattoo in May 2008, Meet Your Navy events and the Royal International Air Tattoo. We are also considering what events might be feasible in conjunction with the British Armed Forces and Veterans' Day (Recommendation 5 above). We shall keep the situation under review, although given current operational commitments we do not envisage an event on the scale of the Royal Tournament in the foreseeable future.

Recommendation 8: Military Aid to the Community. Military aid to the civil authorities and to the civil community is an immensely appreciated and highly visible role of the Armed Forces. We think it desirable not only that those involved wear uniform – generally combats in this context – but also that some publicity is given to the Services and to the units concerned (it is otherwise difficult or impossible for the media or the public to know which of the Services, and which unit, is involved). We are aware of the plans to contract-out elements of the helicopter provision for Search and Rescue, and we do not wish to dispute the economic logic of this. But since RN and RAF crews will continue to be involved, we urge the Government to ensure, in their contractual negotiations, that these crews continue to wear their own uniforms and that the helicopters involved continue to be in military livery.

8. Government Response: We shall continue to publicise the hugely positive contribution that our Forces make around the UK in support of the community, for example, through search and rescue, fishery protection and explosive ordnance disposal and to ensure that military personnel engaged in such activities not only wear uniform whenever appropriate, but also that the attention of the media is drawn to the Service and units involved. Similarly, military search and rescue aircrew will continue to wear their own uniform in the future joint Ministry of Defence and Maritime and Coastguard Agency UK search and rescue helicopter service. No decision has yet been made regarding the livery of the aircraft, but we are aware of the recommendation and will consider it alongside other factors when making the decision.

Improving Contact

Recommendation 9: Rationalising Structures. Each of the Services has developed strategies and structures for public outreach, but these are not always coordinated between the Services, and regional structures are not aligned. To ensure better coordination, we recommend that the MOD reviews the regional structures responsible for outreach with a view to aligning them.

9. Government Response: The Services are reviewing the way in which they coordinate their activities at the local and regional level to ensure that they are more joined-up in their approach to public outreach. As an example, under the RN's Regional Coherence Initiative, Flag Officer Scotland, Northern England and Northern Ireland (as the Maritime equivalent of the Army's Commander Regional Forces), will take forward the issue of more coherent and effective engagement across the UK, with his single

service counterparts. The Army and RAF are likewise working together to ensure that their engagement activities are better coordinated.

Recommendation 10: Annual Public Outreach Programmes. Commanding Officers (COs) of all Regular and Reserve Military establishments, should prepare an annual public outreach programme aiming to maximise local familiarity with his or her unit and its activities at minimum cost and diversion of resources. It should be the responsibility of the regional chains of command to ensure coherence and, to the greatest extent possible, regional coverage of these programmes and to take any necessary initiatives for these purposes. In areas where there is no Regular unit, a Reserve unit's public outreach programme should form the basis of activities.

10. Government Response: We welcome and accept this recommendation. Responsibility for outreach extends to all levels of command and not just commanding officers. Many units already prepare a public outreach programme but where they do not, and operational circumstances allow, they will be instructed to do so through the appropriate chain of command. All commanding officers will be reminded through the chain of command of the requirement to conduct outreach activity where possible. This will include Reserve units.

Recommendation 11: Public Outreach Obligation for the Reserve Forces. We believe that commanders of Reserve Forces should be asked to devote at least one day a year to public outreach activity. This means that each individual in their unit will be allocating one of his or her 'mandatory training days' (usually a minimum of 27 days) to that purpose. The Government has recently announced a Review of the Reserve Forces and we hope this Review will take account of this Recommendation.

11. Government Response: The principles of this recommendation are being addressed in the Review of Reserve Forces and will be revisited following publication of the report. Most reserve units already devote at least one day per year to engaging directly with the public, such as on Remembrance Day and unit open days.

Recommendation 12: Open Days. Wherever practicable, outreach programmes should provide for a public Open Day. Where that is not possible, the reasons for this should be explicitly set out in the public outreach programme itself. Where, currently, demonstrations of equipment and capabilities are laid on for families on a Families' Day, consideration should be given to opening the display to the general public. If this is impracticable then targeted invitations should be sent to specific groups (local government, teachers, chambers of commerce, police, fire, ambulance and other services etc) and of course to the local media. None of this detracts from the importance of preserving purely family events such as pre-deployment briefings and Christmas parties.

12. Government Response: We shall investigate how to make better use of open days, families' days and other events to engage with the general public. The Services' chains of command will ensure that these events are woven into a coherent outreach

programme (as outlined in the response to Recommendation 10), co-ordinated by the chain of command and taking account of all activities going on in the geographical area. We shall also seek to capitalise on opportunities, such as county shows and other public events, while ensuring that the use of display teams is more closely synchronised. The Services will ensure that the scale and nature of the events do not place an undue burden on Service personnel, nor will they be allowed to detract from the important task of showing appreciation for the support and commitment of Service families.

Recommendation 13: Relaxation of Local Media Contact Rules for COs. Local media are a great communications asset. COs of the rank of Lieutenant Colonel (and equivalents) and above should henceforth, without prior consent be able to speak to such media on matters relating to their own responsibilities, using their own judgement as to whether to report on anything significant to the Regional Press Officer or national MOD Directorate General of Media and Communications (DGMC).

13. Government Response: We are issuing revised instructions on contact with the media to bring the intent behind this recommendation into effect. Many commanding officers already have delegated authority in this area and we encourage them to talk to local media about the role of their establishments.

Recommendation 14: Relaxation of Media Contact Rules for Senior Officers. At the moment, all contacts with the media require prior consent. Officers of 1* rank (brigadier and equivalents) and above in command positions should be encouraged to develop relations with the media, seeking assistance from the DGMC where required in making contact, and guidance from the DGMC before undertaking interviews with the national media.

14. Government Response: We wish to encourage a greater and more productive relationship between the military and the media and are issuing a revised Defence Information Note setting out the new rules. We will ensure that senior officers receive the necessary assistance, guidance and training.

Recommendation 15: New Rules for Public Outreach use of Military Assets. We believe the rules should be simplified and reformulated to make clear that COs, where they determine that there is potential benefit to their unit or Service (including benefit to Reserve and Cadet Forces), should on their own authority be able to make available such assets provided only that no variable (incremental) cost arises and no opportunity cost is suffered. Where there is a variable or opportunity cost this should of course be recovered. The 'competing with the private sector' rule should not, by definition, apply where a Military benefit, including an outreach benefit, has been determined to exist.

15. Government Response: Abating charges has long been a feature of our policy where there are clear benefits to Defence. Authority to abate charges has been delegated to front line commands and, in many cases, there has been further local delegation. This has helped decisions to reduce charges for events which clearly promote the Armed Forces to be made by those best placed to judge their relative merits. The MOD will now consider whether there is scope, within the Government-wide framework for charging, to set a financial threshold below which no charges would be levied. Such events would need to be low in marginal cost and risk, but provide a clear and significant benefit.

Recommendation 16: New Rules for COs Accepting Certain Hospitality. The present rule preventing serving officers from accepting personal invitations to cultural or sporting events should be modified to allow COs (or their representatives) to accept such invitations from the organisers or sponsors of such events or from local authorities in their areas when invited in their official capacity. They should always wear uniform on such occasions.

16. Government Response: We accept this recommendation and will revise our procedures accordingly without undermining the MOD's approach to the acceptance of hospitality to cultural and sporting events. Such attendance would be in a representational capacity and limited to commanding officers and their representatives. The MOD's revised procedures will exclude invitations from sponsors when they are, or are materially connected with, suppliers to Defence as to do otherwise risks undermining the Department's efforts to reduce the use of hospitality by its suppliers – an initiative of which the Department has made industry well aware.

Recommendation 17: Introduction of the '3+2+1' Principle. We were impressed by the success of the US Army's '3+2+1' Rule and we consider that an equivalent scheme should be adopted by the UK Armed Forces. This would entail every 1-Star officer and above in a command position being normally expected in any 3 month period to have at least 3 public engagements, or meetings with civilian organisations (such as local authorities, trades unions, business, charitable, church, faith or educational groups or other Not for Profit Organisations); 2 contacts with national, local or specialist media; and to make at least one internal presentation to subordinates.

17. Government Response: We agree the principles of this recommendation but note that the American model may not be entirely appropriate for the UK. New instructions have been issued stating that, when operational commitments allow, 1-star officers and above in command positions should be encouraged to act in the spirit of this recommendation, and there has already been substantial progress in this area within the Front Line Commands. Contact with the national media will be in accordance with the Government response to Recommendation 14 above.

Recommendation 18: Affiliations with Local Government, Civic Bodies and Livery Companies. The Air Force Board Standing Committee should consider whether there would be merit in spreading the practice more widely among RAF squadrons. Likewise, the adoption of units by City of London Livery Companies

has worked very well. It would be worthwhile to designate senior Military officers in the regional structure (ideally the same officers who are charged with overseeing public outreach) to act as a point of contact for civic bodies, including local authorities and Livery Companies, for example, to help effect introductions for such bodies seeking a Military unit to adopt.

18. Government Response: Many Service establishments are already engaged with livery companies, civic bodies and local government. We accept that these arrangements would benefit from some rationalisation and greater coordination and the arrangements set out in response to Recommendation 9 (above) are intended to bring this into effect.

Recommendation 19: New Rules on Dealings with Local Members of Parliament (MPs). The present rule requiring prior consent from the MOD before MPs are allowed on Military establishments should be abolished as far as the local MP and MPs in adjoining constituencies are concerned. COs should be encouraged to develop constructive relationships with such MPs if they judge these relationships to be helpful to their unit, and to their Service. Some units have offered MPs and other prominent local figures honorary positions (eg Honorary Colonels), and we agree that, where the individual concerned can demonstrate sufficient commitment, this can be a very useful practice.

19. Government Response: We support closer linkages and understanding between constituency MPs and local units and the MOD has issued a new Defence Information Note to facilitate this more easily. The revised instructions also cover relations with peers, members of the Devolved Administrations and members of the European Parliament. It is very pleasing to note that most MPs take a close interest in local Defence establishments and we are keen that this should be built on wherever possible. Three MPs already hold appointments as honorary colonels.

Building Understanding

Recommendation 20: MP Visits to Combat Zones. When a unit is deployed to a combat zone the MOD should give consideration to inviting the MP representing the area where that unit's base or depot is located to visit it in the field.

20. Government Response: We already encourage MPs to visit local units deployed on operations, noting that for such visits to be most effective this should be done on a non-VIP basis. Operational demands will always take priority for transport and other assets, and we intend that the current regulations on MP visits to theatres (in groups rather than as a constant stream) will remain extant. Any visit will be conditional on the proposed visitor having had the appropriate medical checks and conducted the necessary training.

Recommendation 21: Secondment of an Officer to the House of Commons. We recommend that the MOD offer to second a middle-ranking officer (say major or equivalent) to the House of Commons Library on a rolling (say annual) basis. He or she should sit in the Old Library and wear uniform so as to be

easily available and identifiable. His or her main task (as with other Librarians) would be to advise Members who are preparing speeches, questions or articles or responding to constituents' queries on (in this case) Military and Defence matters, and to produce background papers. He or she might also have a role in relation to enquiries about the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme, and requests to visit Military establishments, other than as a member of the Defence Select Committee or as a local MP.

21. Government Response: We support greater engagement between Parliament and the military. However, the MOD does not consider that this is best achieved through a single officer in the House of Commons library. It is unlikely that any single individual at the rank proposed could have the breadth or depth of knowledge required to fulfil this role effectively; as such, he or she might be placed in a position of difficulty. The MOD already has a number of other means of achieving close linkages between the House of Commons and the Armed Forces, for example, the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme and visits by the Service presentation teams.

Recommendation 22: Parliamentary Orientation Course for Officers of the Armed Forces. There should be regular opportunities for selected serving officers to spend a few days in Parliament for an orientation on the workings and procedures of Parliament, and to be able to discuss Defence matters with interested MPs and peers. We recommend that the Industry and Parliament Trust be asked to design and arrange an annual or perhaps 6-monthly or 3-monthly event of this kind, along the lines of the weeklong courses they currently arrange (separately) for business executives and for civil servants. We have, again, explored the potential reaction to such a proposal before suggesting it.

22. Government Response: We welcome this recommendation. The Industry and Parliament Trust currently provides training opportunities for members of the Civil Service and they have confirmed that these are open to officers serving in appropriate appointments. These include generic training on parliamentary processes, a one day visit to the Palace of Westminster with a full programme of interaction with MPs and peers for those officers working in nominated posts with direct interest in the parliamentary process, and a more specialised course for designated posts at senior levels. We have started discussions with the Defence Academy on how best to administer such training. The Trust has also indicated its willingness to support bespoke training for military personnel and we are now examining, with the Academy, how this might be incorporated into command and staff training syllabuses for officers and senior non-commissioned officers.

Recommendation 23: Business Breakfasts for Chiefs of Staff. The Lord Mayor of London, in his discussions with us, generously offered to arrange a series of business breakfasts to introduce the Chiefs of Staff to City and other business leaders. This offer should be accepted.

23. Government Response: The Chiefs of Staff already undertake similar engagements with business leaders, and they were grateful for the generous offer from the Lord Mayor. In July the Chief of Defence Staff attended a business breakfast hosted by the Lord Mayor which involved several senior business leaders from the City. Meetings with business leaders will continue to be an important part of MOD's stakeholder engagement activities.

Recommendation 24: Defence Seminars for Chief Executives. We recommend that the Secretary of State, together with one or more of the Chiefs of Staff, hold half-day Defence seminars twice a year to which they invite a small number, say 30, chief executives of major private sector corporations and Not for Profit Organisations. The rest of the day might be taken up by a visit to a naval vessel, a Military establishment, or an airbase.

24. Government Response: The MOD already undertakes this activity. We agree that close contacts between Ministers, Chiefs of Staff and the business community are beneficial and we are investigating how we might do more. This work is underpinned by the regular series of presentations delivered by the Service presentation teams.

Recommendation 25: NEAB to have Expanded Role in Business/Armed Forces Relations. In addition to encouraging Military establishments to develop good relations with their local business community, we believe that a permanent effort should be made at national level to promote and optimise contact and understanding between the Military and the business worlds. We believe that the National Employer Advisory Board (NEAB), which currently advises the Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of State on issues related to the climate for Reserve recruitment, would be well placed to have this wider responsibility explicitly placed upon it. Support for Britain's Reservists and Employers (SaBRE), which is advised by the NEAB and works closely with it in its programme of activities directed at actual and potential employers of Reservists, has developed a number of instruments (conferences, awards, visits to Military establishments etc) which we think would be very relevant to this wider role. We also consider that the organisational and reporting structure covering NEAB, SaBRE and the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA) needs to be reviewed with a view to achieving greater clarity.

25. Government Response: We recognise the need to promote and optimise contact and understanding between Defence and the business community and NEAB has indicated its willingness to become a key enabler in articulating the Defence case. We recognise that it will be able to make critical observations as to how the Defence message is being communicated, facilitate engagement within the corporate and other sectors, and contribute to improved communications.

Recommendation 26: Increase in Combined Cadet Forces in Comprehensive Schools. The social value of our Cadet Forces, both the community-based Cadet Forces (the Sea Cadets, the Army Cadet Force and the Air Training Corps) and the school-based Combined Cadet Forces (CCFs), which give children experience of

team effort, purposeful endeavour and meeting physical challenges, goes far beyond their Military training value. We believe, therefore, that there needs to be a cross-Government consensus to ensure that as many children as possible can benefit from these opportunities. There are 6,400 secondary schools in the United Kingdom, of which only 260 have CCF units. This latter figure includes 6 new CCFs created last year because of a very welcome initiative. All but 60 of the 260 CCFs are in Grammar and Independent Schools. This imbalance was never, of course, deliberately intended, but it should be a priority to do everything possible to encourage more Comprehensive Schools and City Academies to apply for their own CCF. It goes without saying that there should be no dilution of the degree of commitment that has always rightly been required from schools before CCFs can be initiated.

26. Government Response: We are very proud of our Cadet Forces and believe that as an important youth organisation they have an enormous amount to offer to the development of young people. Accordingly, we have been investigating the possibility of expanding the CCF footprint in comprehensive schools since 2006. These pilot studies are progressing well and we expect to have evaluated them by the end of 2009. This work will be taken forward in England as part of a wide range of options in consultation with the Department for Children, Schools and Families and with individual schools. It will also be consistent with the Government's wider agenda for 14-19 year olds. Education policy is a devolved matter and issues relating to individual schools are matters for local authorities and individual head teachers. The MOD will therefore consult with the Devolved Administrations and local authorities in relation to this recommendation as it affects schools in their areas.

Recommendation 27: Measures to Strengthen Cadet Forces. We think the way forward is via the appointment, already agreed on, in principle, between the MOD and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), of a Cadet Ambassador in London. This appointment should be made as soon as possible. The Cadet Ambassador should be even-handed in proposing to schools either greater participation by their pupils in the community-based Cadet Forces or the establishment of a CCF, depending on the circumstances and aspirations of a school. Once this initiative has been rolled-out in London we hope that the results of the exercise will justify its extension elsewhere. All of this will clearly need new money. We therefore urge the MOD to concert with the DCSF, and with local government, with a view to ensuring that, if the Cadet Ambassador's mission is a success, the resources will be available to deliver a programme commensurate with the expectations which will have been aroused. Full consideration should also be given to inviting the private sector to contribute to this programme. The Sea Cadets, who raise approximately half their budget from private donors and sponsors, have shown how this can successfully be done.

27. Government Response: We would very much like to expand the community cadet forces and welcome this further recognition of the value and objectives of the Cadet Forces. The MOD is working with the Department for Children Schools and Families to take forward the establishment of a properly resourced Cadet Ambassador in London, with a view to extending the initiative across the country if successful.

Education policy is a devolved matter and issues relating to individual schools are matters for local authorities and individual head teachers. The MOD will therefore consult with the Devolved Administrations and local authorities in relation to this recommendation as it affects schools in their areas.

Recommendation 28: National Curriculum. We believe that gaining some understanding of the Armed Forces, as part of education on our national institutions, should be an essential element of the Citizenship Agenda and civic education in schools. We would urge those responsible for the National Curriculum to consider specifying a module on the subject.

28. Government Response: The national curriculum does not apply in Scotland, and Wales and Northern Ireland have their own curriculum. The MOD will therefore consult with the Devolved Administrations in relation to this recommendation as it affects schools in their areas. In England the Department for Children Schools and Families, along with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority has recently reviewed the secondary national curriculum. The new curriculum is being rolled out from September 2008. The role of the DCSF and the QCA is limited to setting the broad themes of what should be taught in schools and the revised programmes of study contain no specific reference to work with the Armed Forces or to veterans. However, there is scope within the revised citizenship programme of study for pupils to learn about and discuss the role of the Armed Forces in society and the contribution of veterans. The Government will consider, in discussions with schools and others, how awareness of the work of the Armed Forces and the contribution of veterans might be increased among young people.

Recommendation 29: 'Return to School' Programme. We recommend, that as a general rule serving sailors, soldiers, and airmen, at the convenience of their units, should be allowed a day on duty and a travel warrant, to revisit their old school for the purpose of meeting with teachers and current pupils.

29. Government Response: MOD return to School activity is already encouraged across all three Services, but the MOD acknowledges that there may be scope to place this on a more systematic footing, while also taking account of operational demands. Appropriate instructions have been issued down the chain of command. The Services will seek to formalise current ad hoc activities, subject to resource constraints.

Recommendation 30: Civic Education in Secondary Schools. We believe that even more than this needs to be done on the educational front. We believe that every secondary school should be circularised by the senior Military chain of command with the offer of an hour or so's presentation in any one year by a Regular or Reserve officer or Senior Non-commissioned Officer (NCO) on their professional life and experiences. This offer would be irrespective of any visits made under Recommendation 29 above, and should be entirely unrelated to the Armed Forces' recruitment effort or structures. Our conversations with local units have confirmed our belief that the manpower cost of this could be borne without excessive difficulty if spread across units and Services, given plausible rates of take-up by schools.

30. Government Response: We agree that more presentations by military personnel in secondary schools would be a good way of building understanding about the Armed Forces and should be pursued wherever possible. Appropriate instructions have been issued down the chain of command to ensure this activity is undertaken when other commitments allow. The Services will seek to formalise current ad hoc activities where possible.

Recommendation 31: Military Museums. We believe that the equivalent of at least 2% and not more than 5% of the budget for Military museums (which totals around £15M) should be devoted to transport subsidies for school parties thus addressing what we have identified as the greatest obstacle in this context. Here again, we believe the MOD should concert with the DCSF and should consider to the full, the possibility of mobilising private sector and local government support so as not to impinge unduly on the budget for renewing exhibitions and displays.

31. Government Response: We welcome the proposal to boost the number of school children visiting military museums. We also agree that military museums are an excellent resource and have an important role to play in raising awareness of the contribution the Services make to the UK – both in the past and present. The MOD will work with the Department of Children, Schools and Families and the Devolved Administrations to establish the possibility of leveraging more private sector funding into schools visits. It is neither feasible nor practicable to divert any of the limited existing museum funding.

Recommendation 32: New Approaches to the Media. We recommend that the Secretary of State, Defence Ministers, and the Chiefs of Staff (on occasion perhaps a Minister and a Chief together) should more frequently, indeed regularly, hold small background briefings for selected journalists at the MOD's own initiative, especially when there is dramatic or positive news (for example a successful engagement in Afghanistan, a Russian incursion into our airspace, an act of outstanding courage by a sailor, soldier or airman, the introduction of new or much improved equipment). We think that there is merit in occasionally inviting leading columnists and leader writers as well as established Defence correspondents. We believe it would be very useful if the Secretary of State and one or more of the Chiefs of Staff together were on occasion to invite a group of editors to a general discussion, both on operations and policy, and on relations between the media and the MOD. We further recommend that when worthwhile news stories can be anticipated (the Musa Qaleh offensive in Afghanistan is a good example) selected journalists with experience of military operations should be invited, if necessary at 24 hours' notice, to be embedded in the front line. We would like to see a greater capacity for embeds. When a journalist has earned the trust of Military commanders and of the DGMC, it should no longer be necessary for him or her to be accompanied at all times by a media operations officer. We feel that the DGMC should build upon the recently adopted practice of a greater use of military personnel within the Press Office for media briefings.

32. Government Response: As the Report acknowledges, the MOD has already taken steps to be more proactive in its media effort in recent months and is keen to do more - although to do so will require parts of the national media to look at their own approach. The MOD is committed to more background briefings across a broader range of issues giving greater media access to key decision makers. It would also like to expand its programme of embedded media and is investigating what can be done in this regard. The MOD wishes to establish a more regular dialogue with the media both on specific issues and on its more general working relationship. The MOD has no plans to return to the previous corporate communications structure and wishes to focus on making the current arrangements work as effectively as possible - to the benefit of both the media and Defence. This has included placing more military personnel in the Press Office and giving the single-Service assistant directors of public relations and the Director of Defence Public Relations a role in news issues, working to the Director of News.

Recommendation 33: Handling Errors of Fact and Complaints to the Press Complaints Commission. We think where there are serious distortions or misrepresentations, and no correction is made, the DGMC should in egregious cases withhold contact from the journalist concerned and/or complain to the Press Complaints Commission. The important thing is that the generality of journalists should not be penalised, valuable initiatives suspended or a policy of greater openness sacrificed because of the behaviour of an individual journalist.

33. Government Response: The MOD seeks to correct factual errors in the media as a matter of course, but this is not always reported. The Department is active in rebutting errors of fact, including through on-line media, and when appropriate, will take its case to the Press Complaints Commission.

Recommendation 34: Armed Forces Scheme for Journalists. There is universal recognition of the great value of the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme (AFPS) for MPs. We recommend that this Scheme is extended or a parallel scheme is set up for a small number (say up to 6) media journalists or editors each year. We suggest that Sir Neil Thorne, the architect of the AFPS, be asked to advise on this and we have ourselves consulted with him. We think it is not unreasonable to ask newspaper publishers and television networks to meet the external costs of this.

34. Government Response: The MOD has engaged with Sir Neil Thorne on this issue and his firm view is that an extension of the Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme to encompass journalists would be inappropriate, but that it might be possible to establish a parallel scheme. Work is underway to establish the practicalities of this recommendation and a scheme is being drawn up to develop the means of delivering this for some senior journalists, incorporating some existing activity.

Encouraging Support

Recommendation 35: Military ID Cards. We believe that the Military ID card should be enhanced to make it useful for general self-identification purposes. This, we are advised, would require the addition of a central address including a post code and a Proof of Age Standard Scheme (PASS) hologram. All 3 Services should have an ID card in the same, easily recognisable format.

35. Government Response: We accept that enhancing the ID card as proposed could extend its utility for use by Armed Forces personnel in society more generally, but this has to be set against the requirements of its primary purpose, which is to provide a means of identity for military purposes. The MOD is in the process of developing a replacement for the current military ID card that will have a common format across the three Services, but having evaluated the costs and benefits of adding an address and Proof of Age Standard Scheme (PASS) logo, it has been decided not to include them, principally for data protection and security reasons. Nonetheless, we believe that the new military ID card will still provide the necessary level of proof of identity to qualify for discounts offered by commercial firms. The Department is also looking at the feasibility of introducing a dependants' ID card to reinforce the concept of being a member of the wider Armed Forces constituency. The MOD is also engaged in discussions with the Identity and Passport Service on the relationship of the National Identity Scheme to Armed Forces recruitment and the military ID card.

Recommendation 36: Veterans' Cards. We believe that Veterans, on the day they leave Service, should be issued with a Veterans' version of the Military ID card (perhaps a similar card marked with 'V'). This would be available for use as general purpose identification, and could also be used for accessing any Veterans' benefits offered by commercial, sporting or other organisations.

36. Government Response: We support fully the provision of benefits for veterans by commercial, sporting and other organisations and consider that a veterans' ID would help access these and other entitlements. It would also help acknowledge the nation's gratitude for their Service. We are scoping the costs and likely delivery timescales with the intent of introducing this as soon as practicable.

Recommendation 37: Military Discounts. Military discounts will of course be the consequence and not the cause of enhanced national recognition of the Armed Forces. The Defence Discounts Directory booklet sets out a number of discount opportunities available for servicemen and servicewomen. The Directory and the associated website contain many hundreds of discount opportunities. We greatly welcome this scheme while recognising that many of the offers are not specifically military discounts but would be available to other groups of customers in comparable numbers. We have secured an undertaking from British Airways to offer a genuine military discount. This will be included in the Directory and website. We received evidence that knowledge of the Directory and the website was patchy and we recommend that the MOD actively advertises their existence.

37. Government Response: As the Report acknowledges, many discounts are already available and the MOD is pleased that new companies are now joining the scheme in greater numbers since the Report was published. Nonetheless, the Department's aim is to continue to raise awareness of the scheme and work to encourage more. The MOD is investigating how it can better publicise military discounts in the Defence Discounts Directory booklet and will encourage a range of organisations to offer concessions to Service personnel, their families, veterans and widows.

Recommendation 38: National Sports Events and the Military. There is great support for our Armed Forces in the nation's leading sports organisations. The Lawn Tennis Association regularly invites military personnel to act as stewards at Wimbledon. The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) and The Premier League, with both of whom we have met, have made generous suggestions to us, which would involve both visibility and opportunities for contact between the public and the Military, and benefits for those who have served in combat zones. Good relationships with sports organisations are very important, and we believe that a senior officer in the MOD should be given the responsibility for liaising with them. We have also interviewed London 2012. In our view, it would be most regrettable if the Armed Forces played no part at all in the events surrounding the London 2012 Games. We understand that the Red Arrows have already been booked but we hope there may be other opportunities also. We consider, however, that it would be quite wrong for the Armed Forces to be asked to provide assistance to the Olympics (leaving aside individuals volunteering in their own time) dressed in anything other than in their own uniforms.

38. Government Response: We shall follow up with the key sports bodies the generous suggestions they have made. In particular, the MOD was very grateful for the offer, among others, for 200 places for Service personnel to attend the Premier League playoffs at Wembley in May 2008, at which personnel from all 3 Services, including patients from Headley Court and Selly Oak, were treated to generous hospitality and shown evident appreciation. We support the wearing of uniform in public for these events whenever it is considered appropriate. We encourage the strengthening of links between leading sportsmen and women and the military (including veterans), which will reinforce the shared values of team/personal fitness, courage, endeavour and the willingness to win. Better liaison with civilian sports organisations will be taken forward through the existing Combined Services Sports Board. Finally, the Armed Forces look forward to playing their part in supporting the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. For example, the MOD will be providing the shooting venue for the Games at the Royal Artillery Barracks at Woolwich. More recently, barracks around the country supported other public buildings when over 700 handover flags were raised on 24 August to celebrate the passing of the Olympic flag from Beijing to London. The Armed Forces look forward to any opportunities that might be presented by the Commonwealth Games due to be held in Glasgow in 2014.

Recommendation 39: Benefits. We entirely understand the need to avoid any conflict of interest or appearance of undue influence when benefits are offered to the Military, but the present situation is one in which opportunities for fruitful and appreciated contact are being missed. Organisers and sponsors of sporting or cultural events who wish to give a limited number of tickets to

the Military, or a particular category of the Military, should be unreservedly encouraged to do so.

39. Government Response: We have reviewed existing guidance so that these offers can be handled sensibly, while still ensuring that the necessary standards for public servants are not compromised. Updated guidance will be published soon, which will allow those who receive offers to take into account the recognition benefits which acceptance would bring when reaching judgement on the right response. The MOD will use the chain of command to ensure, not only that organisers' and sponsors' wishes are met whenever possible, but also that benefits are shared equitably across the Services.

Recommendation 40: Parcels to Personnel Serving in Combat Zones.

Thousands of our fellow citizens wish to send presents, especially though not exclusively at Christmas time, to our servicemen and servicewomen serving in the field, and we are aware of excellent initiatives such as that run by the 'UK4U Thanks' charity, which provides Christmas boxes to Service personnel on operational duties overseas. Most deployments to combat zones are for 6 months and accordingly, if our proposal to institute a British Armed Forces and Veterans' Day at the end of June were accepted, this would provide a good second opportunity in the year for the British public to show its appreciation. We have heard that spontaneous parcels of this kind are greatly appreciated by those who receive them, and of course this generosity is entirely admirable and should be applauded. But here again there is an informational gap. Such gifts should not be solicited by the MOD, but an effort should be made to persuade one or more Military charities, with the resources to play this role, to work with the MOD, to provide some publicity and a standard form of guidance (types of gifts most appreciated, maximum weight, possible ways of addressing parcels, names of units deployed in each combat zone, BFPO numbers etc and taking account of operational realities). The Royal British Legion has told us that they would be happy to do this, and we hope that this offer or similar ones from other charities can be accepted.

40. Government Response: We are most grateful for the generosity of the British public and businesses in providing such gifts and to the Royal Mail for delivering them. The MOD acknowledges, however, that current arrangements would benefit from better guidance and co-ordination. We know already that the extended free mail service has stretched our logistics, particularly at Christmas, and having examined the options in detail, it is clear that opening the system to unsolicited parcels would present substantial additional strain on the military logistic chain, both to and within operational theatres. We have concluded that, when set alongside competing priorities for movement, such as food, fuel, ammunition and parcels from families, the additional resources required to transport potentially very large volumes of unsolicited parcels to and within operational theatres, together with the exposure to additional risk for personnel involved, could not be justified. We have therefore initiated a plan to inform our own people, the wider Service community and the general public about the MOD's policy towards unsolicited mail to operational theatres. Our intention is to communicate our gratitude for the support shown to Service personnel on operations

and to publicise alternative mechanisms for the public to show their support for deployed forces. This includes encouraging donations to Service charities, such as 'UK4U Thanks' with whom the MOD is working closely, to provide parcels to all of our personnel who are deployed over Christmas. We also continue to develop other means by which public support can be shown.



