



Ministry of Defence

Ministry of Defence
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E-mail: [REDACTED]

Ref: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

July 2014

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 17th June 2014 requesting the following information.

"How many prospective servicemen and women have had their applications rejected because of unsuitable tattoos be it offensive or inappropriately placed. Please list the figures per year for the last five financial years"

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that the MOD does hold some of the information within the scope of your request. The tables below show the information requested in respect of the Royal Navy and the Army.

Naval Service (Regular Royal Navy and Royal Marines)

Application Rejection Reason	Year				
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Tattoo/Piercings	170	160	110	117	96

Rejections due to Tattoos only are not recorded separately.

ARMY

Application Rejection Reason	Year				
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Tattoo/Piercings	3	25	24	25	336

Army data shows a significant increase in 2013/14 from previous years, this could potentially be attributed to 1) a new and more detailed reporting system, and 2) prior to the online application process it is possible that potential candidates with tattoos were given a visual assessment by the recruiters in the Armed Forces Career Office and may therefore not have reached the initial application stage.

RAF

Information is not recorded

Queens Regulations state Regular and Reserve personnel are not permitted to have any permanent or temporary tattoos, whether ordinarily visible or not, which are obscene, offensive or contrary to the Service policy on equality and diversity. Examples of unacceptable tattoos are, inter alia, those that are: racist; anti-religion or belief; crude; overtly sexist; homophobic; drugs related or of an extreme political nature. Any tattoos that are above the neck collar, below the sleeve or trouser cuff, are not permitted, irrespective of their nature.

Please be advised that the Ministry of Defence is about to undertake a review of tattoo and piercing policy.

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact me in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, 1st Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

Defence Personnel Secretariat