

Stakeholder Consultation Feedback and the Review Outcome of AFCAS 2015

On 16 May 2014, Defence Statistics opened a consultation with stakeholders regarding a number of proposed changes to the content of the current Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey. The new survey is intended to better highlight the factors which influence (directly and indirectly as well as positively or negatively) Service Personnel's levels of morale, motivation and retention, in light of ongoing changes to Terms and Conditions of Service but also aims to reduce the burden on respondents by shortening the survey.

This consultation period ended on 12 June 2014. There were a small number of responses during the consultation period, from both internal and external stakeholders (external stakeholders included health and academia).

AFCAS 2015 Review primarily sought to ensure that the proposed changes were unlikely to have severe or major adverse effects on the related key outputs of External Primary data users. Summary of feedback received from:

1. Professor of Psychology & Programme Lead, Department of Psychology, Social Work & Public Health, Oxford Brookes University
 - a. Fed-back and commented on a vast range of issues mostly, typographical errors and incorrect signposting to filter questions, etc. These have been addressed as normal *Business As Usual* within standard practice
 - b. Provided evidence of requirement for retaining certain items on regular Service Personnel wishing to join the Volunteers Reserves for historical comparison purposes, as the follow-on change initiative had been delivered several years ago. Though trend data showed little or no variation in responses, this item was reinstated back into the survey
 - c. Requested for the questionnaire to delve into far more specific details with Regulars rating different types of experiences of serving alongside Reservists within theatre environment whilst on operation and non-theatre environment (back within the UK). Our response was to suggest a follow-on study to appropriately delve into these areas as they were outside the scope of a general continuous attitudinal survey
2. National Lead Armed Forces Networks and Transition, Armed Forces Commissioning, NHS England
 - a. Requested that the survey was broadened to assess both Service Personnel's experience and access to general medical care facilities (as opposed to Service-Provided medical care) along with their families. As the AFCAS is specifically designed to investigate Service Personnel's use of Service Provided medical care, we responded by reiterating the purpose of the AFCAS for the former and recommended the Families Survey for the latter
3. Reserve Forces and Cadets Division, MOD, Whitehall
 - a. Evidence needs were provided for a more in-dept investigation to illustrate better Return on Investments for ex-cadets who are now Regular Service Personnel and Reservists. We recommended a separate study to best probe the relevant groups, providing better tailored evidence to demonstrate the required level of Return On Investment
4. Development Concepts and Doctrine Centre, MOD, Shrivenham
 - a. Valid suggestion made for in depth set of questions in the areas related to Voluntary Outflow. We have recommended a follow-on study better targeted at individuals who have formally expressed their wish to leave the Service on JPA (our information management database).

All the stakeholders were contacted individually to further discuss their responses. The suggestions and recommendations offered via the consultation process yielded valuable insights; however, quite a few were outside the scope of a standard Continuous Attitudinal survey. As can be seen, the review panel has responded by suggesting other ways to fully address the research parameters highlighted. For those suggestions that were within the scope of the survey, a small number of changes have been made to the survey as a result of the concerns raised particularly from Oxford Brookes.

Results from the revised survey will be available in May 2015.

The next AFCAS review is scheduled for 2019; however, some small scale changes may be made in advance of this review.