Background Quality Report for the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS)

April 2014

1 Introduction

1.1 Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey ([AFCAS](#)[1])
The annual Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey was first conducted in 2007. The Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) is one of the main ways the Department gathers information on the views and experiences of our Armed Forces personnel. The information from this survey helps shape policies for training, support, and the terms and conditions of service.

1.2 Brief History
Prior to the introduction of AFCAS in 2007, the Naval Services (Royal Navy and Royal Marines), Army and Royal Air Force (RAF) had been conducting individual Continuous Attitude Surveys (CASs) for many years. These informed single Service Personnel policy development. However, the individual nature of each made it difficult to obtain a picture of Armed Forces wide issues and compare data across the Services and meant that each was published at different times. Following direction from the Under Secretary of State for Defence the requirement for a single attitude survey across the Armed Forces was defined. The Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Personnel & Training), now known as Chief of Defence Personnel (Personnel & Training) was tasked with delivering this. The remit was to draw upon the expertise gathered in the single Services, but produce a single product. This was named the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS).

AFCAS is designed and delivered, through the collaboration of MOD occupational psychologists, researchers and statisticians, to reflect policy user requirements from across the department. Defence Statistics (formerly known as Defence Analytical Services and Advice prior to April 2013) administer the AFCAS survey, collate responses and then produce analysis and tabulations, and write and publish the tri-Service AFCAS report. The single Service occupational psychologists and occupational psychologists in Head Office and Corporate Support (HOCS) are responsible for consulting with their policy stakeholders and for deciding on the content of the AFCAS questionnaires to meet their policy user requirements.

The aim of the AFCAS is to assess and monitor the attitudes of Service Personnel across the Royal Navy (RN), Royal Marines (RM), Army and RAF on a variety of topics including pay, morale and organisational engagement (see Section 2 for a list of the topic areas). The data are used to identify where measures are needed to influence motivation and retention in the Armed Forces and to inform policy development and assessment. The continuous nature of the survey allows for attitudes to be tracked over time. The Service Chiefs and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) place a high value on the attitude data gathered from Service Personnel. They are a vital means of understanding how our Armed Forces personnel feel about key issues. The information is used to inform the Defence Board and the Armed Forces Pay Review Body (AFPRB), as well as many other individual policy areas. In 2009 AFCAS was given Official Statistics publication status, and following assessment by the UK Statistics Authority, was made a National Statistic in May 2013.

For the 2014 survey, fieldwork was conducted between November 2013 and 17th February 2014, in order to allow the results to be published in time to inform the AFPRB's work.

1.3 Documentation
The report format has evolved since 2007 with an aim to improve the clarity and timeliness of results. In 2008 and 2009 a headline report was published on 15 AFCAS questions. In 2010 the steering and working groups agreed to stop producing the headline report in the interest of improving the timeliness of the full tables of results.

The AFCAS 2014 report contains the following sections:
- Key findings – a summary of the main AFCAS findings
- Context – an outline of the background to the survey
- Methodology – details of the survey and analysis methodology
- Annexes – the questionnaires and tables of results for each tri-Service question

Excel versions of the tables of results are also available on the Defence Statistics website to aid re-use of the results

Fig 1: Example of table of results (from AFCAS 2012)
Table B1.2 How satisfied are you with the following? My rate of basic pay (basic pay includes X-factor, but excludes Specialist Pay and any allowances).
[A001]

		Officers (%)						Other Ranks (%)						Total (%)					
		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	**2012**	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	**2012**	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	**2012**
Tri-Service	Satisfied	58	59	68	71	59	**53**	36	37	46	49	40	**38**	40	41	50	52	43	**40**
	Neutral	22	21	17	15	19	**21**	26	24	23	25	25	**25**	25	24	22	23	24	**24**
	Dissatisfied	21	20	15	14	23	**26**	38	39	31	26	34	**38**	35	36	28	24	32	**36**
	Total unweighted count (n)						3 687						9 126						12 813
Royal Navy	Satisfied	61	65	70	73	58	**54**	36	41	45	51	39	**35**	41	46	51	55	43	**39**
	Neutral	20	19	17	15	21	**21**	26	23	26	23	25	**25**	25	22	24	22	24	**24**
	Dissatisfied	19	16	13	12	21	**25**	38	35	28	26	36	**40**	34	31	25	23	33	**37**
	Total unweighted count (n)						1 125						2 262						3 387
Royal Marines	Satisfied	50	55	62	66	54	**50**	21	24	30	28	22	**22**	24	27	34	32	25	**25**
	Neutral	17	20	19	17	16	**18**	22	15	21	22	20	**21**	21	16	21	21	19	**21**
	Dissatisfied	33	25	20	17	30	**32**	57	61	48	51	59	**57**	55	57	45	47	55	**54**
	Total unweighted count (n)						341						2 169						2 510
Army	Satisfied	55	56	67	69	58	**51**	35	35	46	50	40	**38**	38	38	49	53	43	**40**
	Neutral	22	22	17	15	17	**20**	28	26	24	27	27	**26**	27	25	23	25	26	**25**
	Dissatisfied	22	22	16	16	24	**29**	38	40	30	23	32	**36**	36	37	28	22	31	**35**
	Total unweighted count (n)						1 133						2 109						3 242
RAF	Satisfied	59	60	68	71	60	**55**	44	42	49	48	45	**41**	47	46	53	53	48	**44**
	Neutral	22	20	17	16	20	**22**	23	23	21	22	22	**22**	23	22	20	21	21	**22**
	Dissatisfied	19	20	15	13	20	**22**	33	35	30	30	33	**37**	30	32	27	26	30	**34**
	Total unweighted count (n)						1 088						2 586						3 674

The tabulated results, as shown in the example in Fig 1, provide the proportion per response option each year. Any statistically significant differences to previous AFCAS results are underlined. Results are reported separately for Officers & Other Ranks within each Service to reflect the often considerable differences between their roles, experiences and Terms & Conditions of Service.

1.4 Summary Production Process
There are nine stages in the AFCAS process. Each of these stages is briefly described below.

Stage 1: Questionnaire design
Steering and working groups, comprised of staff from Head Office and Corporate Support and each of the single Services, meet with Defence Statistics staff to agree the questionnaire. There are four separate questionnaires, one for each Service in both paper and electronic format. About 80% of the content is tri-Service with the remainder focusing on single Service issues. (See Section 2 for further detail on this part of the process).

Stage 2: Sample design, selection and cleaning
A stratified random sample of approximately 28,000 trained Regular Service personnel are selected for the AFCAS. Defence Statistics designs and selects the sample with support from single Service Psychologists on sample cleaning. (See Section 3 for further detail on this part of the process).

Stage 3: Survey distribution and communications
A bi-modal approach has been used for AFCAS 2014. Personnel in the sample were all sent a personalised email which contained their unique weblink and invited them to complete the survey online. They were also sent a postcard invitation through the post that contained a generic web link. Paper questionnaires were also sent out to personnel in the sample to help maximise participation and response rates. Paper questionnaires also gave the generic web link and encouraged personnel to complete the electronic questionnaire over the paper questionnaire. Paper questionnaires are printed, packed and distributed by an external contractor. Online questionnaires are produced and administered internally by Defence Statistics. HOCS and single Service Psychologists support on communications through the chain of command.

Stage 4: Data input
Online survey responses are held securely on Defence Statistics servers. These responses can be downloaded at any time in the process. Paper survey responses are inputted by the external contractors using a 100% verification technique.

Stage 5: Data cleaning
Two weeks after the survey closing date Defence Statistics receive four separate single Service Excel data sets from the external contractor. These are then combined with the electronic responses to the online survey. All four Services are then combined into a single data set. Any invalid responses (e.g. those without any identifier or complete blank responses) are removed.

Each respondent is identifiable by their Service number and this is used to link respondents with demographic data held on the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system. Many questions are then recoded to simplify the output. For example, all 5 point Likert scale responses are recoded into a 3 point positive, neutral, negative scale. Responses are weighted by NATO rank and Service. This accounts for bias caused by disproportionate stratified sampling and differing levels of response. The Service number is also used to identify duplicate responses (where, for example a person started but did not complete the online survey, then filled in the paper survey. In these instances, the record with the greatest number of questions filled in is retained.) Finally the data is transferred into SPSS.

Stage 6: Production of tables of results
Tables of results are produced in SPSS using Complex Samples to ensure estimates and their corresponding standard errors are correctly weighted. Where year on year comparisons are possible, 1% level Z-tests are carried out.

Stage 7: Production of key findings
The tables of results for each section are analysed and summaries of the key points and figures are collated into the Main Report.

Stage 8: Checking
There are several stages of both automated and manual validation built into the data cleaning process. A copy of the single Service SPSS data set is provided to each of the single Service psychologists for checking and to allow them to conduct their own ad-hoc analysis for release after the publication of the AFCAS report.
Each section of tables undergoes several layers of scrutiny. These include cross checking by at least two other Defence Statistics staff as well as checking carried out by HOCS and single Service psychologists.

Stage 9: Publication
AFCAS is a National Statistic and is produced and published in line with the Official Statistics Code of Practice[2]. The publication date is pre-announced on the UK Statistics Authority official statistics release calendar[3]. 24hr pre-release access is given to those listed on the published AFCAS pre-release access list[4]. AFCAS is published on The Ministry of Defence external webpage (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-defence/about/statistics).

2 Relevance

2.1 The principal users of the AFCAS publication are Pers Trg CDP-Strategy, and Centre and single Service policy makers. The statistical information is used to inform and measure Service personnel strategy and policy so it is important that stakeholder requirements are represented.

The AFCAS steering group sets out the broad research aims for AFCAS. This is then further developed by the AFCAS working group. The working group is led by Pers Trg CDP and is attended by Defence Statistics statisticians and single Service psychologists. This group works closely with policy staff to ensure the AFCAS questionnaire continues to meet their requirements. For example this process led to the addition of new questions in 2012 on awareness of the Armed Forces covenant, and compensation scheme and perceptions of Defence Transformation.

AFCAS 2014 captures information on the following topic areas:

- Pay, allowances and JPA
- Aspects of working in the Service – including job satisfaction, morale and perceptions of workload and equipment.
- Deployments and separation
- Fairness and leadership
- Career and development
- Accommodation
- Personal and family life
- Leave
- Health, wellbeing and fitness
- Welfare
- Working with Reserves

With a sample size of approximately 28,000, AFCAS is the largest regular survey of UK Armed Forces personnel. AFCAS attracts a relatively high response rate (48% in 2014) compared to other MoD surveys. The range of topics covered by the AFCAS mean that it is one of the most comprehensive attitudinal surveys of Service Personnel within the MoD. The information is used to inform the Defence Board and the Armed Forces Pay Review Body, as well as many other individual policy areas such as the Future Accommodation Project (FAP) team, the New Employment Model (NEM) team and the diversity team. The information can also be used to answer parliamentary questions and Freedom of Information requests. See section 8 for further information about the uses and users of the AFCAS statistics.

The survey is confidential rather than anonymous so survey responses can be linked to data held on the Joint Personnel Administration system. This means that the data contains a wealth of demographic data without the need to place that burden on respondents. The AFCAS statistics published in the tri-Service report are shown by Service and rank, with time series comparisons where available. The large number of AFCAS items makes it impractical to break the results down by other demographic variables in the AFCAS report at this time. Requests for additional breakdowns of the AFCAS data would currently be considered on an ad-hoc basis by Defence Statistics.

The AFCAS has been running since 2007 and for some questions time series data is available from 2007. However, during this time there have been many adjustments to questions in efforts to improve understanding, reliability, and to maintain relevance. As such not all questions will have such a long time series.

The data collection is mixed mode with an intranet questionnaire and a paper version available. The paper version is required due to the limited IT access available for some Service Personnel. Due to the need for a paper survey, coupled with some of the hard to reach locations of Service

Personnel the survey is in field for a relatively long period of time. There remains quite a time lag of about 6 months between the survey first going into field and the publication of the tri-Service AFCAS report.

3 Accuracy & Reliability

3.1 AFCAS collects mainly attitudinal data from a stratified random sample of approximately 28,000 trained Regular Armed Forces personnel. The sample is stratified by Service (RN, RM, Army & RAF) and Rank group:

Rank group	NATO Rank[5]
Senior Officers	OF7-OF10
Officers	OF1-OF6
Senior Ranks	OR6-OR9
Junior Ranks	OR1-OR4

Survey estimates are published by Officers & Other Ranks for each of the four Services. The survey is designed to achieve a margin of error of within 3 percentage points for each of these estimates.

In some cases due to small population sizes this is not possible. For this reason a census is taken of RM personnel. In addition several questions are only asked of a subset of respondents. For example satisfaction of Service Accommodation is only asked of those living in Service Accommodation. Such questions may have a larger margin of error.

The AFCAS raw data is passed through a range of automatic and manual validation and editing routines. The data sets from each of the four paper and electronic surveys are combined into a single data set. AFCAS respondent data is linked to demographic information held on JPA using Service number. This reduces the amount of demographic information asked directly of the respondent and therefore reduces the respondent burden. To ensure results are representative of the Armed Forces, Defence Statistics weight responses to correct for any bias introduced by the stratified sample design and differing levels of response. The responses are weighted broadly by NATO rank & Service. Full details are provided in the methodology section of each report.

Defence Statistics analyse the data using SPSS Complex Samples. This software produces weighted estimates and corresponding standard errors. Many aspects of the AFCAS data analysis has been automated, and where possible existing source code is used, this helps to minimise the risk of error and improves timeliness. Where year on year comparisons are possible, 1% level Z-tests are carried out. This level is used to minimise the possibility of finding false positive differences that can be expected when performing a large number of significance tests.

As the AFCAS does not achieve 100% response rates (the overall response rate achieved in AFCAS 2014 was 48%) there is always the risk that those who returned questionnaires have differing views from those who did not. We assume that all non-response is Missing At Random (MAR). This means we have assumed that those people who did not return their questionnaires have (on average) the same perceptions and attitudes as those who did respond.

The AFCAS data has been weighted by Service and Rank to compensate for:
1. the design of the survey, which disproportionately samples personnel by Service and Rank; and
2. variations in response rates between the different Services and Ranks.

Weighting helps to make the AFCAS percentages as representative as possible of the Armed Forces population. The Services/Ranks which are under-represented in the dataset are given more weight so that they represent more of the people in their group who were not sampled or did not respond. Conversely, groups that are over-represented in the dataset are given less

weight. Weighting assumes that all non-response is Missing At Random (MAR). This means we have assumed that all those people who did not respond within their Service/Rank strata have (on average) the same perceptions and attitudes as those who did respond. If those who did not respond have different attitudes to those who did respond then the observations in this report will be biased and will not represent the attitudes of all Trained Armed Forces personnel; rather, our observations would only represent the views of the *responding* population.

The AFCAS is designed to give an up to date snap shot of the attitudes and perceptions of our Armed Forces. While the AFCAS is reported on an annual basis it should be remembered that these attitudes and perceptions are liable to change within the calendar year, for example, as a result of events or even due to the time of the year that the responses were collected (a seasonality affect). The AFCAS timeline is driven by user reporting requirements such as Armed Forces Pay Review Body (AFPRB) reporting dates.

The AFCAS excludes deployed personnel from the RAF and Naval Service samples because of the low response rates typically achieved from these personnel. The Army continue to include deployed personnel in their sample but it should be noted that the response rates from this group are relatively low – typically around 10% of deployed personnel that are sampled actually return a completed questionnaire.

From AFCAS 2007 to AFCAS 2009 Gurkhas were not included in the AFCAS sample. From AFCAS 2010 this changed so that Gurkhas were included in the AFCAS sample.

All statistical tables are checked by at least two Defence Statistics staff following a clear checking process. Each section is further checked by one of the psychologists on the working group. Defence Statistics do not show any statistics where the responding group size is less than 30. This is to prevent the publication of unreliable statistical information and to prevent disclosure of information about individuals.

3.2 Data Revisions
Revisions were made to the AFCAS 2009, 2010 and 2011 publications. The affected statistical tables and the reasons for the revisions are provided in the relevant AFCAS publications found here AFCAS on the Defence Statistics website.

4 Timeliness and Punctuality

4.1 Timeline
The AFCAS takes approximately 8-9 months from agreeing the questionnaires to publishing the AFCAS report.
This includes approximately:
4 weeks to print paper questionnaires
4 weeks to pack and distribute paper questionnaires
10-13 weeks infield
1 week to obtain data sets from contractor
3 weeks data preparation
5 weeks analysis and producing statistical tables
2 weeks report writing incl key points section
4-5 weeks checking datasets, statistical tables, key points and written report

4.2 Punctuality
All publication deadlines have been met.

5 Accessibility and Clarity

5.1 Access to publications

All AFCAS publications dating back to 2010 are available free of charge in pdf format and, from AFCAS 2012, copies of the statistical tables in Excel format from the MOD website (https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-defence/about/statistics), and are located by:

   a) A search of "AFCAS" on the MOD web site will bring up links to all publications from 2010 onwards.
   b) For users of the UK National Statistics Publication Hub[6] an appropriate search of Defence will bring up a link to all AFCAS reports dating back to 2007.

AFCAS is published in the Official Statistics section of the Defence Statistics web site.

The number of web hits for accessing the AFCAS 2010 report during the first quarter since publication (31st March 2011 to 30th June 2011) is given in Fig 2 below. The high number of web hits indicates that the publications are accessible both internally and externally. It also indicates that there are many users of the AFCAS report.

Fig 2: Web hits for AFCAS 2010 between 31 March 2010 and 30 June 2010

	Number of Web hits[1] within one quarter of publication	Number of unique (IP address[2]) hits within one quarter of publication
AFCAS		
Internal to MoD	1036	344
External to MoD	138	107
Total	1174	451

[1] The number of hits are based on people accessing the AFCAS report webpage.
[2] The number of unique (IP address) hits external to the MoD may understate the number of unique individuals accessing the publication. For instance, business offices often share an IP address and so multiple individuals accessing the statistic within the same business will count as just one unique hit.

5.2 Clarity

In addition to this Quality Report, the AFCAS report contains a key points section that summarises the main AFCAS findings, an introduction section that provides a brief background to AFCAS and definitions of terms used in the report, a methodology section that provides users with details of the methodology including target population, information on the sample, respondents, weighting, statistical tests used, and notations and definitions used.

An example table is shown at Fig 1 on page 2 of this document. Relevant foot notes are shown below tables to indicate any filters that have been applied to the data or any issues with the data or time series comparisons.

6 Coherence and Comparability

6.1 Coherence

AFCAS is the definitive source of attitudinal data about Service personnel's own experiences and perceptions of working and living in the Armed Forces. There are no other tri-Service data sources that collect the same attitudinal information with which to ensure coherence.

Each of the single Services has recently commissioned its own pulse survey of their military personnel. Although these do each contain some AFCAS questions, neither the content nor the methodology is harmonised. As such tri-Service results will not be possible and direct comparisons with AFCAS results, even at the single Service level are not advisable.

6.2 Comparability over Time
AFCAS surveys are considered to be broadly comparable over time. However there have been several changes to the content of the questionnaires since 2007 to reflect changing policy user requirements and to refine the questions to increase validity, reliability or readability. This can impact on the comparability of results to particular questions over time. Where the comparability of responses over time may be impacted significance tests are not carried out. A footnote explaining the issue(s) is included beneath the relevant statistical tables in the published report.

Methodological changes may also impact on comparability. For example, in AFCAS 2011 an electronic questionnaire was introduced in addition to the paper questionnaire. Defence Statistics tested results from paper and online respondents and in most cases there were no significant differences. However there were differences between results for a small number of questions relating to access to Information Technology, JPA or communications. For these questions time series comparisons are not made.

From AFCAS 2011 the survey moved from being issued in two annual waves to being issued in a single annual wave. The original rationale for distributing questionnaires in two waves during the year was in the hope of obtaining survey estimates that might be more representative of the entire year period and less influenced by seasonal variations (or events/announcements etc). The move from two waves to one was to allow for final AFCAS results to be published sooner after data collection and within the same calendar year. The move to one wave was in response to requests from users. It's possible that responses vary systematically through out the year (seasonality effect). We have assumed that there is little or no seasonality effect when comparing the results of AFCAS surveys based on one wave and earlier AFCAS results that are based on two waves. It was not possible to statistically test for seasonality prior to moving to one wave as there were an insufficient number of data points to draw any conclusions. The reader should be aware that if responses do vary systematically depending on the period of data collection then the moving to one wave may impact on the comparability of responses between the two wave and one wave surveys. AFCAS users said that on balance it was worth moving to one wave.

7 Trade-offs between Output Quality Components

7.1 Timeliness and costs versus Quality
The main trade-off is between timeliness and quality. The AFCAS report consists mainly of statistical tables as shown in Fig 1. While the report has a key points section, there is little contextual/or explanatory text to accompany the statistical tables. The tables do not provide any other demographic breakdowns of questions (such as by male or female or age groups etc) or cross-tabulations of AFCAS questions by each other. This is so that the basic statistical information can be made available to policy users and the public as soon as possible in a clear accessible format. Additional analysis for policy users is available on request and external requests for further information would be considered under the usual FOI rules. From AFCAS 2011 the survey moved from being issued in two annual waves to being issued in a single annual wave. The move from two waves to one was to allow for final AFCAS results to be published sooner after data collection and within the same calendar year. The move to one wave was in response to requests from users. Moving to one wave also resulted in lower administration costs. The lower administration costs of moving to one wave were used to offset the costs of administering an intranet version of the questionnaire in 2011. A general limitation of the AFCAS is that it is a snap shot of attitudes and perceptions at the time respondents answer the questionnaire. People's attitudes and perceptions may systematically change throughout the year in response to events or because of some seasonality affect. For the 2014 report, data collection took place from November 2013 to 17 February 2014. The timing of data collection was driven by AFPRB reporting requirements and this timing has had the presentational benefit of allowing results to be published within the same calendar year as the data was collected.

8 Assessment of User Needs and Perceptions

8.1 Description and Classification of Users
Defence Statistics work closely with the main customer and survey sponsor, Pers Trg CDP-Strategy, and other occupational psychologists and researchers from across the department so that the AFCAS reflects policy user requirements. Pers Trg CDP-Strategy lead steering and working groups to agree their policy user requirements and questionnaire content. A large internal review of the 2011 questionnaire involved many single Service and Centre policy users and resulted in some substantial changes to the questionnaire.

8.2 AFCAS Users/Uses

Internal uses of AFCAS for *decision making about policies, programmes and projects*:

Defence Transformation and Strategic Defence and Security Review

Programmes
Naval Service: Maritime change programme, Fleet Air Arm Review
Army: Army 2020 Review
RAF: RAF Strategy for People and the People Campaign Plan

The main aim of each of the services is to establish their own force fully capable of meeting the demands of Future Force 2020 (FF20).

AFCAS measures
To help achieve FF20, AFCAS provides the following performance indicators:
a) To meet the requirements of resilience, those AFCAS questions relating to: ***Morale, Fairness, Welfare and Health, and Reserve Forces***. The RAF identify '*Sense of feeling valued*' as an important resource. Under this heading, they intend to consult and implement the Armed Forces Covenant and also achieve this objective through: ***Leadership, Training, Educational Opportunities, Professional Development, Sport, Adventure Training***, all of these areas are covered by AFCAS questions which provide intelligence on the current state of affairs.
b) Recruitment and retention: AFCAS has an extensive list of questions gauging attitudes towards all terms and conditions of service as retention factors which provide vital intelligence to identify problem areas in retention and to formulate recruitment strategies.
c) New ways of working: AFCAS has a large bank of questions relating to agreement/satisfaction regarding: ***training undertaken (both ops pre-deployment and non-ops), job suitability (i.e. the right people for the right jobs), development opportunities, educational attainment, equipment/systems availability and suitability,*** which identify areas where training policy needs to be revised/implemented.

Future Reserves 2020 (FR20)

Programme
FR20 aims to increase the number of reservist personnel in order to meet the future structure as set out by Future Force 2020.

AFCAS measures
AFCAS includes a section on Working with the Reserves to measure awareness of the reserves, and also perceptions of the reserves, for personnel who have working contact with them.

Armed Forces Covenant

Programme
It exists to redress the disadvantages that the armed forces community faces in comparison to other citizens, and to recognise sacrifices made.

AFCAS measures
AFCAS provides the MOD covenant team with performance indicators relating to the covenant themes including the provision of **healthcare, education, and housing**.

Moral Component of Operational Capability (MCofOC)

Programme
The Army identifies the need for personnel to be mentally fit and ready to meet the demands of operational deployment. The MCofOC is to be sustained through coherence between New Employment Model (NEM) and the infrastructure elements of Army 2020 Review.

AFCAS measures
AFCAS provides three performance indicators: **1) questions relating to feeling valued; 2) questions relating to job satisfaction; 3) questions relating to satisfaction with accommodation.**

Career Management Review

Programme
The Army aims to achieve Career Management in accordance with Service Policy in a way that meets the needs of the Army and the individual as far as possible.

AFCAS measures
AFCAS performance indicators relating to **satisfaction with the Army Career Service.**

Future Accommodation Project (FAP)

Programme
In order to meet the changing needs of the Armed Forces with particular reference to the implementation of FF20, a full review of Service Accommodation is being undertaken.

AFCAS measures
NEM will be the main instrument used to establish Service Accommodation requirement and provision. To support NEM formulation in this respect, AFCAS is providing measures on: **1) current levels of Service Accommodation usage; 2) current levels of satisfaction with Service Accommodation.**

MOD Business Plan

Programme
The MOD Business Plan is published as part of the Governments Transparency Agenda, providing information to help people hold the Department to account.

AFCAS measures

The MOD Business Plan includes the performance indicator: *percentage of Service personnel (split by Officers and Other Ranks) who are satisfied with [Service] life in general.*

Squad Manning Review

Programme
The Royal Navy needs to identify problem areas in manning priority postings.

AFCAS measures
Two areas identified for which AFCAS provides intelligence: *1) questions relating to training and 2) questions relating to accommodation.*

Evaluating Personnel Functional Standards

Programme
In the Royal Navy, Warrant Officers, Chief Petty Officers and Petty Officers are responsible for: discipline, training, welfare and recreation for their Divisions and units. They themselves are trained to undertake these duties by the RN Leadership Academy Divisional Training organisation.

AFCAS measures
To support RN policy in this area, AFCAS provides a large bank of questions on: *discipline, training, welfare and recreational use and opportunities.*

Review of Leave Taken

Programme
The Royal Navy has established a requirement that all sectors of the RN must ensure that leave balances are correct to assist in planning for manning requirements and sea deployment.

AFCAS measures
Leave for the Armed Forces is recorded via the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system. In addition, AFCAS provides useful intelligence on *1) the current usage of leave entitlements and 2) reasons for not taking leave.*

External users that use AFCAS as a part of their regular business include:

Resource allocation:
Armed Forces Pay Review Body (AFPRB)
AFPRB uses AFCAS statistics to inform their recommendations for remuneration and charges for Service personnel. In recommending levels of pay and charges the AFPRB seeks to enhance the recruitment, retention and motivation of Service personnel, and AFCAS statistics provide members a broad view of Service life in general to help inform their deliberations. AFCAS statistics used in AFPRB reports include those on *pay, allowances and pension benefits, the push and pull factors associated with serving in the Armed Forces, meals, value of accommodation and efforts to improve and maintain, morale and satisfaction with Service life in general.*

Supporting third sector activity:
Service Complaints Commissioner (SSC)
AFCAS includes a section on fairness and diversity, asking questions about experience of discrimination and harassment and bullying, knowledge of how to get information about how to complain and, since 2008, understanding of the SCC role. The SCC's Annual Reports have provided information from the AFCAS surveys as a baseline on which to measure trends in relation

to incidence of discrimination, harassment and bullying, and use of the Service complaints system to resolve such problems.

National Audit Office (NAO)
The National Audit Office (NAO) scrutinises public spending on behalf of Parliament. NAO have used AFCAS statistics in reporting on MOD **capability and leadership**, **Service families accommodation, and recruitment and retention in the Armed Forces.**

Service Families Federations
Service Families Federations exist to give Service families an independent voice and work with Senior Officials, including the Minister and Service Heads, to help improve the lives of Service families. The Service Families Federations use AFCAS statistics as a source of evidence when voicing the situation for serving personnel and their families. A range of AFCAS statistics have been reported on Service Families Federation websites often accompanied by a link to the full AFCAS report.

Media
The media typically report AFCAS statistics on Service morale and in 2013, on integration with the reserves.

Facilitating academic research:
Students

8.3 Obtaining Information on User Needs
There have been a number of ad-hoc enquires relating to AFCAS by internal policy staff. These enquires have related to more detailed breakdowns of the statistics on such things as accommodation, personal status, retention factors and areas relating to equality and diversity. None of the enquiries have led to a change in the way in which AFCAS is produced and presented but they have helped inform the content of the questionnaire. The AFCAS research team continues to work with policy users to identify their ongoing information requirements.

9 Performance, Cost and Respondent Burden

9.1 Performance and Cost Effectiveness
The estimated cost of producing the AFCAS 2014 report was approximately £197K. This comprises both Defence Statistics staff costs and external contractor costs. The Defence Statistics staff costs include the production and running of an online survey, the production of a paper questionnaire, data cleaning and analysis and the production of the report. External contractor costs include printing, packing, distributing, postage and data processing the paper AFCAS questionnaires. Costs are closely monitored and Defence Statistics and the working group strive to balance quality and timeliness against costs. The sample size is calculated to be the most efficient in order to meet the levels of precision outlined in Section 3. The survey questions are scrutinised each year to make sure that they remain relevant to policy users whilst ensuring year on year costs do not escalate. AFCAS 2011 and AFCAS 2012 included several additional questions that led to an increase in costs such as printing. This was offset against savings made through the online survey. About half of responses were made via the online survey, these did not require any manual data input and hence led to a considerable saving.

9.2 Burdens
Response to AFCAS is voluntary. Participant information is provided within the questionnaire to encourage informed consent. The AFCAS questionnaire is currently estimated to take about 30 minutes for respondents to complete. For AFCAS 2014 we received just under 13,500 valid responses.

Respondent burden is minimised by obtaining demographic information about respondents from the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) database rather than asking respondents these questions in the questionnaire. This also helps to minimise costs.

10 Confidentiality, Transparency and Security

10.1 Security
All staff involved in the AFCAS production process adhere to the MOD and Civil Service data protection regulations. In addition all members of the working group have to follow the relevant codes of practice for their professional groups; the Government Statistical Service (GSS) and the Government Social Research (GSR) Service. All data is stored, accessed and analysed using the MOD's restricted network and IT system.

10.2 Confidentiality
The Defence Statistics Disclosure and Confidentiality Policy[7] is followed. AFCAS is a confidential survey rather than anonymous. The paper survey contains a unique barcode that can only be linked to Service number by the Defence Statistics(WDS) AFCAS team and the external contractor responsible for data input. The online survey is run on internal MoD servers and all responses are held on secure Defence Statistics systems. The online survey is accessed by a unique link e-mailed to the respondent or by respondents inputting their Service number on an internal web site. In this way only those included in the survey sample can respond to the survey.

Service number is used to link responses to JPA data. Single Service psychologists receive a copy of the SPSS data for their Service to allow them to carry out their own further analysis. Data access agreements are in place with each of the single Service research areas. These explicitly state exactly which researchers can have access to the data for statistical purposes only. This ensures that no person from any respondents' chain of command is able to access individual level data. Only aggregated results are provided to anyone not directly involved with the analysis. These results are only presented for groups containing at least 30 respondents.

10.3 Transparency
The production process is considered to be transparent. Each questionnaire is distributed with a participant information sheet to ensure that respondents make an informed decision before completing. The AFCAS report is published with details of the methodology and footnotes beneath statistical tables alerting readers to potential issues. This quality report informs users of the method, production process and quality of the output. Any significant errors identified after publication will result in revisions along with explanations as to the cause of the revisions.

11 References

	Title of Reference	Website Location
1	AFCAS	https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-index
2	Official Statistics Code of Practice	http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/code-of-practice-for-official-statistics.pdf
3	UK Statistics Authority Release Calendar	http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/release-calendar/index.html?newquery=*&lday=&lmonth=&lyear=&uday=&umonth=&uyear=&theme=&source-agency=Defence&pagetype=calendar-entry
4	AFCAS pre-release access list	http://www.dasa.mod.uk/applications/newWeb/www/index.php?page=48&pubType=4&thiscontent=810&PublishTime=09:30:00&date=2011-07-14&disText=14%20July%202011&from=listing&topDate=2011-07-14
5	NATO Rank codes and UK Service ranks	http://www.dasa.mod.uk/modintranet/UKDS/UKDS2010/c2/table224.php
6	UK National Statistics Publication Hub	http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/index.html
7	Defence Statistics Disclosure and Confidentiality Policy - Identifiable Survey Data	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-statistics-policies

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