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Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 1 August 2017 requesting the following information:

The number of UK Armed Forces personnel who have been medical discharged in 2016/17 for psychoactive substance abuse, of which disorders due to alcohol if requested.

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

A search for the information has now been completed within the Ministry of Defence, and I can confirm that the information in scope of your request is held.

Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, fewer than five Regular Armed Forces personnel were medically discharged with a principal or contributory condition of Psychoactive Substance Abuse that was not due to the use of alcohol.

Between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, 17 Regular Armed Forces personnel were medically discharged with a principal or contributory condition of Psychoactive Substance Abuse that was due to the use of alcohol.

Under section 16 of the Act (Advice and Assistance) you may find it useful to note:

For Service Personnel Defence Medical Services provide a comprehensive alcohol misuse assessment and treatment programme at one of the 11 Departments of Community Mental Health or 4 smaller Mental Health Units with in-patient care if needed, provided under contract by a consortium of eight NHS Trusts.

Each Service has a clear substance misuse education and training policy. We believe personnel have the necessary information to allow them to make informed decisions, but the focus of all activities is to encourage a sensible social approach to alcohol consumption. The Department has also established a working group to look at the research outcomes and identify key policy or behavioural changes to support the reduction in alcohol misuse in Service Personnel and in veterans following their transition to civilian life.

Medical Discharge

Medical discharges due to Psychoactive Substance Abuse use were identified as personnel who were medically discharged with a principal or contributory cause of discharge coded as

F10 - F19 to the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems Tenth Revision (ICD-10). The codes F10 – F19 relate to the different substances:

- F10. – Mental and behavioural disorders due to the use of alcohol.
- F11. – Mental and behavioural disorders due to the use of opioids.
- F12. – Mental and behavioural disorders due to the use of cannabinoids.
- F13. – Mental and behavioural disorders due to the use of sedatives or hypnotics.
- F14. – Mental and behavioural disorders due to the use of cocaine.
- F15. – Mental and behavioural disorders due to the use of other stimulants, including caffeine.
- F16. – Mental and behavioural disorders due to the use of hallucinogens.
- F17. – Mental and behavioural disorders due to the use of tobacco.
- F18. – Mental and behavioural disorders due to the use of volatile solvents.
- F19. – Mental and behavioural disorders due to multiple drug use and use of other psychoactive substances

Medical discharges are the result of a number of specialists (medical, occupational, psychological, personnel, etc.) coming to the conclusion that an individual is suffering from a medical condition that pre-empts their continued service in the Armed Forces. Statistics based on these discharges do not represent measures of true morbidity or pathology. At best they indicate a minimum of ill-health in the Armed Forces. Furthermore, the number and diversity of processes involved with administering a medical discharge introduce a series of time lags, as well as impact on the quality of data recorded.

The information on cases was sourced from electronic personnel records from DMICP and manually entered paper documents from medical boards. The primary purpose of these medical documents is to ensure the appropriate administration of each individual patient's discharge. Statistical analysis and reporting is a secondary function.

Defence Statistics release annual updates on medical discharges in the UK Armed Forces as an Official Statistic publication. The last statistical release was on 13 July 2017 which presented data up to 31 March 2017. The latest report can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/medical-discharges-among-uk-service-personnel-statistics-index>

Would you like to be added to our contact list, so that we can inform you about updates to our statistical publications covering the UK Armed Forces and consult you if we are thinking of making changes? You can subscribe to updates by emailing: DefStrat-Stat-Health-PQ-FOI@mod.uk

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the

Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Defence Statistics (Health) Head (B1)