



Ministry of Defence

Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2HB
United Kingdom

Our Reference: FOI2018/04854

Email: [REDACTED]

3 May 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email dated 9 April 2018 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) in which you requested the following information:

- 1 The amount of armed forces personnel who have been signed off sick or had prolonged absence due to stress, depression or other mental health issues across each branch of the armed forces and the MOD civilian staff over the past twelve months. I am happy to receive data which is any twelve month period within the last twelve months. Please also provide the total amount of staff employed during that same period.
- 2 In broad terms the average (typical or model) amount of days per annum MOD personnel take off due to stress, depression and mental health issues, split across each branch of the armed forces and the MOD Civilian staff.
- 3 The amount of armed forces personnel who have had heart attacks or stroke across each branch of the armed forces and the MOD civilian staff over the past twelve months. I am happy to receive data which is any twelve month period within the last twelve months. Please also provide the total amount of staff employed during that same period.
- 4 How many wellbeing champions (or other personnel who are charged with actively providing support for those under stress or those wishing to improve their overall mental and physical health) are there in each armed force and in the civilian staff? and how are they trained?

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). I can advise that following a search of our records, I have established that the MOD does hold information within the scope of your request.

I must inform you, however, that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is unable to comply with your request. Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act relieves public

authorities of the duty to comply with a request for information if the cost of dealing with it would exceed the appropriate limit. The appropriate limit has been specified in regulations and for central Government this is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3 ½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it.

To produce the information required on the number of UK Armed Forces personnel who have had a period of sickness absence due to stress, depression or other mental health issues, would involve a search of individual medical records. This would take over 6 months' effort and is therefore exempt under Section 12 of the FOI Act.

Under Section 16, Advice and Assistance, you may find it helpful to note that the following information is available:

- The number of UK Regular Armed Forces personnel medically downgraded due to a specified cause as at the latest available date. This differs from the number of personnel who have had a prolonged sickness absence as some downgraded personnel will be considered medically fit for duty but with minor employment limitations.
- Average length of medical downgrading for specified causes.
- The number of Civilian Staff with a recorded sickness absence.
- The average number of working days lost due to sickness absence for Civilian Staff.
- The number of UK Armed Forces personnel who have suffered a heart attack or stroke.

If you would like any of this information, please submit a new FOI request to the following email address:

cio-foi@mod.uk

Information on the number of Civilian staff who have had a heart attack or stroke is not currently held.

You may wish to note Defence Statistics release annual updates on Mental Health in the UK Armed Forces as an Official Statistic publication. The last statistical release was on 15 June 2017 and presented data up to 31 March 2017. The latest report can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-armed-forces-mental-healthannual-statistics-financial-year-201617>

With regards to **question four** of your request, you may wish to note that the health (physical and mental) and wider wellbeing of our people contributes directly to our operational capability. Improving both is, therefore, a high priority.

The Defence People Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy 2017-2022 was launched on 20 July 2017.. One of its key strategic tasks is to 'Optimise the health, well-being and where appropriate, the fitness of Defence People to develop resilience and improve the health of the Whole Force'. The strategy is split into four pillars: Lifestyles, Mental Health, Injury Prevention and Preventive Health. These pillars provide the framework to optimise the health, wellbeing and (where appropriate) fitness of Defence People to develop resilience and deliver and support military effect. The strategy is available at this link

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-people-mental-health-andwellbeing-strategy>

All three Services have a myriad of welfare and wellbeing champions (or other personnel who are charged with actively providing support for those under stress or those wishing to improve their overall mental and physical health) who enable a holistic, integrated and effective specialist welfare support network which operate in support of all personnel and their entitled family members

The Department has two Wellbeing Champions for civilian staff. No formal training is required because the role is largely to raise awareness and provide senior visibility and direction. The Department also has a number of civilian Mental Health First Aiders, each of whom has completed a two-day course delivered in accordance with the requirements of Mental Health First Aid England (or regional equivalent).

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.gov.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/>.

Yours sincerely,

(Original Signed)
Defence People Secretariat