



Ministry  
of Defence

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Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 27 September 2019 requesting the following information:

*“How many men and women in the armed forces were discharged for mental health reasons per year between Jan 2017- Jan 2019? If you could indicate how many of these were voluntary that would be appreciated”.*

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 information in scope of your request is held. The information you requested is enclosed.

Between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2018, **1,684** UK Regular Armed Forces personnel were medically discharged with a principal or contributory cause of Mental and Behavioral Disorders.

**Table 1: UK Regular Armed Forces Personnel<sup>1</sup> Medically Discharged for Mental and Behavioural Disorders<sup>2</sup>, by Year and Gender, Numbers**

1 January 2017 to 31 December 2018

| Calendar Year | Total | Gender |        |
|---------------|-------|--------|--------|
|               |       | Male   | Female |
| 2017          | 918   | 767    | 151    |
| 2018          | 766   | 619    | 147    |

Source: FMed 23s, DMICP and JPA.

<sup>1</sup> Includes trained and untrained personnel.

<sup>2</sup> Personnel medically discharged with a principal or contributory cause coded as ICD-10 chapter F00 – F99, Mental and Behavioral Disorders.

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

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 burden 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.

Context on voluntary medical discharges of the UK Army and Naval Services:

- Any medical discharge (regardless of what the service personnel concerned wanted or didn't want) comes as a result of a medical boarding process directly related to the service personnel's medical condition, prognosis and, crucially, their employability in the UK Regular Armed Forces. As such, medical discharges (whether related to mental health or any other aspect of health) are part of the 'Involuntary Outflow' (IVO); service personnel cannot refuse to be medically discharged. We, therefore, cannot consider any medical discharge to be voluntary.

Context on voluntary medical discharges of the UK Royal Air Force:

- The RAF Medical Board can award 'P8 - medically unfit for service', which is considered a 'recommendation' for medical discharge. From here, RAF Career Management then decide whether to discharge, and whether an 'invaliding' or 'administrative' discharge is appropriate. Additionally, RAF Career Management may also decide to discharge an individual with a permanently lowered medical employment standard from Service, even if the RAF Medical Board deem them 'fit for limited service'.
- The 'volunteer status' or 'motivation' of the individual is naturally part of every fitness for work assessment and motivation may be the most important determinant of work capacity. Therefore, if the individual does express their opinion in this regard, this is considered at RAF Medical Board assessments. However, ultimately, medical discharges by RAF Career Management are never "voluntary": the individual may accept / want the outcome, but it is imposed upon them regardless.

Medical discharges due to Mental and Behavioural Disorders were identified as personnel who were medically discharged with a principal or contributory cause of discharge coded as F00 – F99 in the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems Tenth Revision (ICD-10). This chapter encompasses all coded Mental and Behavioural Disorders.

The principal condition of discharge is the first principal ICD-10 code on the medical discharge documents. Contributory causes of medical discharge are all other principal conditions and any contributory conditions on the medical discharge documents.

Defence Statistics release annual updates on medical discharges in the UK Armed Forces as an Official Statistic publication. The last statistical release was on 11 July 2019 which presented data up to 31 March 2019. The latest report can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/medical-discharges-among-uk-service-personnel-statistics-index>.

The information on medical discharges was sourced from electronic medical records from the Defence Medical Information Capability Programme (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 are a secondary function.

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, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail [CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk](mailto:CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.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 Statistics Health