



# Ministry of Defence

Ref: FOI2021/15671

Ministry of Defence  
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Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 26 December 2021 requesting the following information:

*“Could you provide details of the number of military personnel who are currently serving with an eating disorder, such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia, compulsive eating, eating addiction etc. I would like the details broken down by disorder, sex and military service.*

*If possible I would also like the figures for the last three years.”*

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. However, I must advise you that we will not be able to answer your request without exceeding the appropriate cost limit. As no Read code exists that identifies recovery from an eating disorder, this would require a clinician to read each of the medical records of Service personnel with a historical record of an eating disorder to determine if they still have an eating disorder. This would take in excess of **one week** of effort.

Section 12 of the Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit, which for central government is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it.

The MOD may be able to provide some information in scope of your request if you reduce or refine your request to bring the cost of compliance under the limit.

Under Section 16 (Advice and Assistance) you may find it helpful to note MOD may consider providing the following information which is in scope:

The number of UK armed forces personnel who had a diagnostic read code for an eating disorder entered into their electronic health record between 2019 and 2021, broken down by calendar year, disorder, gender, and military service.

Please note that it is not possible from centrally held coded data to identify whether or not the condition is still ongoing.

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

Would you like to be added to our contact list, so that we can inform you about updates to our statistical publications covering primary care in the UK Armed Forces and consult you if we are thinking of making changes? You can subscribe to updates by emailing: [Analysis-Health-PQ-FOI@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Analysis-Health-PQ-FOI@mod.gov.uk)

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](mailto: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/>.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Defence Statistics Health