Armed Forces Recruitment Programme Evaluation Plan

Evaluation Task Force

August 2025

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Introduction

Overview of Armed Forces Recruitment

The Armed Forces Recruiting Programme (AFRP) and the introduction of a tri-service recruitment approach has been selected as one of the Evaluation Task Force (ETF) demonstrator projects. The Armed Forces Recruiting Programme will establish a world class recruiting experience that places the candidate at the heart of the future operation. It will inspire, motivate and develop candidates, whilst meeting the needs of the single Services and wider Defence. It will recruit 100% of demand and represent Value for Money. Significant lessons have been identified from current recruiting operations and international partners to support delivery of a Chiefs of Staff (COS) directed 'no fail – protect inflow' transition. The Armed Forces Recruiting Service will commence in Jan 2027.

The programme is in the assessment phase, and as a result some of the final outcomes and technical delivery solutions are not yet fully defined.

Drivers for Change

People

The Defence People Strategy states that the world and workplace are changing rapidly, and Defence has to remain flexible, able to adapt to unpredictable events, offer suitable policy options and deploy its capabilities, people and equipment quickly and effectively. Poor experiences with the recruitment processes have added to challenges with converting applications into enlistments.

Single Service (sS) D&I Performance

Competition with industry for women and ethnic minorities is compounded by the increased proportion of this cohort being assessed as ineligible (not meeting physical/health standards). When analysing the Armed Forces cohorts, ethnic minorities are predominantly recruited from the Commonwealth rather than being British citizens. Women are less likely to join as Submariners, or into the Royal Marines or Infantry, or military growth areas such as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), Cyber, Space or Spec Ops.

STEM

The increased demand for STEM and specialist qualifications means lateral entrants and re-joiners will become increasingly attractive to the Armed Forces. *The Times* Top 100 Graduate Employers in 2022[1] ranked The Army 31st, The Royal Navy 64th and the RAF does not feature. Competition for niche skills (digital, cyber, medical, engineering and science) is increasing. The wider technical sector is more attractive to candidates with specialist skills,

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[1] The Times (2022), The Times Graduate Recruitment Awards 2022. Available at:
https://www.highfliers.co.uk/download/2022/awards/The-Times-Graduate-Recruitment-Awards-2022.pdf

and nearly half of those pursuing STEM careers in the UK are currently unaware of STEM roles across the Armed Forces.

Future Workforce

The future candidates will be drawn from a more diverse talent pool, including those from Generation Z, Non-Traditional entry, the Whole Force and Commonwealth. Generation Z are seen as the first truly digital generation having grown up online, living their lives through the lens of social media, with instant access to information and a variety of career opportunities.

Underperformance

There are elements of underperformance across the three sS recruiting operations, resulting in inflow targets not being met across the Armed Forces. As of 2024, the British Army is reported to have failed to meet its recruitment targets each year since 2010. Similar shortfalls in recruitment have been reported for the Royal Navy and RAF. There are ongoing sS efforts to secure improvements, however these are yet to be fully implemented.

Industry Best Practice

The recruitment industry is evolving at a significant pace, moving towards digital and data driven candidate search to attract a new generation. Artificial Intelligence, Big Data and augmented reality are all areas that are significantly developing the candidate journey. The Armed Force have identified recruitment inefficiencies with operating separate recruitment programmes (including different applicant tracking systems) across the single Services. These inefficiencies have included duplication and repetition in areas such as contract management, incoherence in marketing, and inefficient use of the Defence estate.

Treasury Direction

In addition to these challenges, a 2012 Recruiting Partnering Project (RPP) approval was granted on the basis that MoD would consider a tri-service recruiting solution. To secure funding for a new recruiting project, it would therefore need to cover all Armed Forces recruitment.

The Changing Recruitment Environment

The traditional recruiting pool is shrinking, people are living longer and working in different ways. Technology is changing rapidly, especially in robotics, automation and artificial intelligence, and the competition for talent is increasing, particularly in STEM and entrepreneurship. Defence is finding ways of reviewing the demand for scarce skills, taking a holistic view across the organisation.

Intended Outcomes and Impacts

The introduction of a tri-service recruitment approach is expected to lead to the following outcomes and impacts (detailed in the Theory of Change model at Annex A):

- societal outcomes, including increased awareness of Armed Forces careers, and improved reputation of the Armed Forces as an employer and recruiter

- applicant outcomes, including reduced burden on the applicant, increased flexibility, improved preparedness for assessments, change in applicant drop-out rates, and positive experiences of the application process

- recruitment outcomes, including changes in the number of applicants, reduced timelines from application to onboarding, improved pass rates from assessments, reduction in candidate leakage (including candidate recycling across Services), and an increase in offers made to candidates

- efficiency outcomes, including improved planning, reduced duplication of efforts between the three services, providing accessible and attractive estates to improve engagement and reach (which could alter estate costs), improved efficiency in engaging with wider Defence and Government departments, improved cooperation between services and improved data quality and consistency

Longer-term impacts could include: higher quality and more appropriate candidates, reduced skills shortage vacancies, a more diverse workforce, a reduction in training wastage, improvements in retention, operational and performance improvements and economic efficiencies.

Measuring Outcomes and Impacts

The outcomes and impacts described above have been mapped against existing and planned data collection within the Armed Forces and in secondary data sets. This showed that for most of the outcomes and impacts included in the theory of change, the relevant metrics are already being collected or are planned to be collected as part of the tri-service recruitment approach. This means that most of the evidence required for an evaluation is already collected or will be collected, with only a limited amount of additional effort required.

There are two categories where additional effort is required. The first is data which can be collected from candidates using a survey. It is recommended that this data is collected as part of existing plans to undertake a candidate survey, either delivered by the supplier to provide evidence for KPI 3 (Candidate Satisfaction) metrics or the existing recruit survey. Data for these outcomes can be collected through relatively small changes to the existing and planned surveys. A second category which requires more effort is data which is more qualitative in nature and should be collected by the evaluator. This information would need to be collected using depth interviewing of stakeholders and should not be collected as part of ongoing monitoring or benefits realisation work.

Stakeholder Engagement

Alongside the data described above, further information, mainly qualitative information, will need to be collected. This will provide more contextual evidence about the outcomes, identify what is working well and less well, and how and why outcomes are being achieved. Primary research will be needed to collect this type of information. It is recommended that primary research is undertaken within five main groups, which are:

- stakeholders directly involved in the delivery of the AFRP/tri-service recruitment approach
- wider Armed Forces recruitment personnel
- suppliers
- wider Armed Forces and MoD personnel
- applicants and recruits

Note that both the successful supplier and unsuccessful bidders should be consulted. It is acknowledged that it may be challenging to engage with individuals responsible for leading the procurement efforts for unsuccessful suppliers, as the staff may have moved on to other projects and have limited motivation to participate in an evaluation. However, it is recommended that an attempt is made to engage with these stakeholders, as they will potentially have different views about the procurement process to the successful supplier. If the unsuccessful suppliers do not participate, it may lead to biased views of the effectiveness of the procurement process. See Table 1 for details on which individuals fall within each group.

Table 1: Stakeholder groups and individual roles

Stakeholder group	Stakeholder role
Stakeholders directly involved in the delivery of the AFRP / tri-service recruitment approach	- AFRP Sponsor Group members - AFRP Senior Responsible Officer - AFRP programme management team, digital team, transition team, commercial and financial teams and any other workstreams under AFR for earlier evaluations - AFRS Three Star Cabal members, Commander AFR, HQ AFR and any other workstreams under AFR for earlier evaluations
Wider Armed Forces Recruitment Personnel	- at the earlier stages of the evaluation, stakeholders involved in the sS demand planning, and stakeholders involved in the existing sS recruitment processes. - at later stages of the evaluation, further interviews would be needed with stakeholders involved in the sS demand planning

Unsuccessful bidders	For unsuccessful bidders, the early-stage evaluations should consult with the individuals at the organisation responsible for leading their procurement bid.
Successful suppliers	For the successful supplier the early-stage evaluation should consult with those that led the procurement exercise. At later stages of the evaluation, the evaluators should consult with a wide range of stakeholders, particularly those involved in the supplier's delivery of the tri-service recruitment approach, including their digital and data teams, those responsible for the application process and applicant coaching and guidance, and those leading the marketing activities.
Wider AF and MoD Personnel	These would be stakeholders that have interaction with the AFRS and tri-service recruitment approach but are not directly involved in the delivery. These include Defence Digital, the Defence People Team and single Service (including Strategic Command) Principal Personnel Officers and should be consulted in both early and later stages of the evaluation.
Applicants and Recruits	This would involve collecting information from recruits and applicants, exploring their experiences of the recruitment process.

Evaluation Approach

It is recommended that process, impact and economic evaluations are undertaken for the AFRP and AFRS. A series of evaluation questions have been developed to support these evaluations, and these are set out in Annex B of this document.

Process Evaluation

When conducting process evaluations, the evaluators should:

- collect programme documentation (business cases, risk registers, meetings etc.)
- collect programme data (for example number of applicants, number of assessments completed etc.)
- consult with a wide range of stakeholders (those directly and indirectly involved in delivery)
- collect data from applicants / recruits to provide evidence to answer the key process evaluation questions set out in this document

This information should be analysed thematically for qualitative data and descriptively for quantitative data (for example cross-tabulations) to provide assessment and key learnings of how effective the processes used in procurement and delivery have been.

Impact Evaluation

When conducting impact evaluations, the evaluators should utilise the data which is currently planned to be collected by the AFRS team about the performance of the tri-service recruitment approach. In addition, a large volume of information from stakeholders involved in the delivery, wider Armed Forces staff, applicants and recruits should be collected. The potential for a counterfactual group (a group which could be used to estimate what would have happened in the absence of the tri-service recruitment approach) has been explored, but there are no feasible approaches to developing this case. Therefore, it is recommended that a before and after analysis is undertaken for the impact evaluation (comparing the outcomes achieved post implementation to a baseline measure of each outcome). In addition to this, a Contributions Analysis should be used to explore how the tri-service recruitment approach has contributed to these outcomes, and what other factors may have led to changes in the outcome metrics.

Economic Evaluation

The economic evaluation will draw together information from the process and impact evaluation to draw conclusions about the extent to which the intervention offers Value for Money to the Government. The evaluation will utilise the National Audit Office's 4E's framework to generate an assessment of Value for Money of the intervention, as described in Annex C, using qualitative and quantitative data to inform this assessment.

Implementation

This document makes recommendations around how the evaluation should be implemented. The recommended approach is that a minimum of five evaluations of the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach are undertaken (see Table 1 below and Annex D for coverage and timings).

Table 1: Recommended Timings of the Evaluation Activity

Timing	Description	Process	Outcome	Economic
Early process evaluation of the AFRP – taking place after procurement and evaluation is completed and the successful supplier is contracted. This could take place in 2025.	This would cover some elements of programme design, demand planning, alignment, culture change and procurement processes.	Yes	No	No
Process evaluation of procurement and transition – taking place	This would be a process evaluation, focussing on the same topics as	Yes	No	No

Timing	Description	Process	Outcome	Economic
towards the end of the AFRP as the tri-service recruitment approach is implemented (potentially in 2027).	above, but provide final learnings about the transition from multiple recruitment services to a single service, which can be taken for future transition projects across the armed forces and wider government.			
Initial evaluation of the tri-service recruitment approach – taking place one year after the tri-service recruitment approach is put in place.	This would look at the early outcomes achieved, and a process evaluation covering programme design, demand planning, culture change, application and assessment and data and digital topics. This would look to identify key learning opportunities for the future delivery of the tri-service recruitment approach.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interim evaluation of the tri-service recruitment approach – taking place midway through the delivery period (potentially five years after implementation).	This evaluation would include a complete process evaluation, focussing on all relevant process topics, an impact evaluation and economic evaluation, identifying what has been achieved to the date of the evaluation, key lessons for the remaining contract delivery.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Final evaluation of the tri-service recruitment approach – taking place towards the end of the delivery contract. This is potentially during Year 8	This evaluation would include process, outcome, and economic evaluations. The timing of this evaluation would be based on when the	Yes	Yes	Yes

Timing	Description	Process	Outcome	Economic
(FY 34/35) or Year 9 (FY35/36).	armed forces need key lessons to inform the approach to the next revision of recruitment practices, so that lessons on delivery can feed into the design of the new contract/approach.			

It is recommended that the management of the evaluation is undertaken by the same team responsible for the benefits realisation work. This is because this team will have a good level of oversight of the AFR and tri-service recruitment approach, and of the data being used to monitor the benefits of the intervention (which the evaluation will also utilise).

There are several recommendations relating to the structure of the project management and governance of the evaluation. Firstly, the relevant governance board for AFRP (Sponsor Group) and AFRS (3* Cabal) is recommended to provide oversight of the evaluation. The team responsible for the management of the evaluation (detailed below) will report into the relevant governance board about progress. The evaluator should present the key findings from each evaluation and include a questions and answers session for all board members to obtain clarity about the findings. The relevant board will review and comment upon all major outputs.

Also, it is recommended that the Hd PMO and Programme Manager, transitioning into HQ AFR (recommendation is SO1 Strategy and Performance Ld), seeking support across the HQ where required, will:

- develop potential Invitations to Tender (ITTs) for the evaluation, describing the requirements and assessment criteria
- sign off on research tools
- critically assess the evaluation approaches being proposed and used, the findings presented and any changes to the evaluation approach which are required during the delivery

In addition to this, the Evaluation Management Team[2] would ideally have experience in managing previous evaluations. Managing the evaluation would not be a full-time role, potentially an average of 0.2 – 0.4 FTE over the course of the delivery of the AFRP and AFRS. This staff member could be seconded into the team from other areas of the MoD to support the evaluation and continue to work elsewhere in the MoD simultaneously.

The AFRP Benefits Manager, transitioning to HQ AFR's Benefits SO2 Strategy and Performance role, is recommended to be responsible for ongoing desk level management of

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[2] For AFRP; Hd PMO, Programme Manager, Benefits Manager. For AFRS, still to be decided.

the planned evaluation, sharing of information, tracking data collection for the evaluation and supporting the evaluator.

Section 1 Theory of Change

This section presents the Theory of Change for the Armed Forces Recruiting Programme. It discusses the key objectives and challenges that the programme aims to address, the long-term impacts that the programme aims to achieve, the inputs and activities required to achieve these impacts and the intermediate outputs and outcomes required. It also presents the key underpinning assumptions for the Theory of Change.

Rationale

The UK Armed Forces are undergoing a process of substantial transformation in how they recruit their people. The rationale underpinning this transformation is two-fold: firstly, Defence has recognised that existing recruitment approaches are failing to attract and recruit the required quality and quantity of recruits that Defence requires,[3] due to various challenges faced by existing single Service recruitment approaches. Secondly, the Armed Forces are navigating a challenging recruiting environment in which Defence faces an increasingly competitive labour market, reinforcing the need to maximise effectiveness in the Armed Forces recruitment model.

The Current Approach

Currently, Armed Forces recruitment is delivered separately by the single Services through different approaches.

Firstly, the Royal Air Force (RAF) and Royal Navy use a hybrid (in-house and outsourced) model for recruitment, with Regular and Reserve personnel delivering recruitment in combination with outsourced elements (contact centre, physical testing, medical assessment, and marketing). The Army, in contrast, has relied predominantly on external recruitment support delivered by Capita, through the Recruiting Partnering Project (RPP) contract. This contract was due to end in 2022[4], leading to a requirement for a new Army recruitment solution.

Various challenges have been identified in these recruitment approaches in recent years: Firstly, challenges in the recruitment model have manifested chiefly in recurrent failures of the single Services to meet their recruitment targets. As of 2024, the British Army is reported to have failed to meet its recruitment targets each year since 2010.[5] Similar shortfalls in recruitment have been reported for the Royal Navy and RAF.[6] With voluntary outflow increasing and outweighing inflow of new personnel, the Armed Forces face the prospect of

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[3] Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation (2023), Agency and Agility: Incentivising people in a new era - a review of UK Armed Forces incentivisation. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agency-and-agility-incentivising-people-in-a-new-era-a-review-of-uk-armed-forces-incentivisation

[4] The RPP contract has subsequently been extended by two years, with further extensions likely.

[5] UKDJ (2024), Army recruitment goals not met since 2010. Available at: https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/army-recruitment-goals-not-met-since-2010/

[6] UKDJ (2024), Figures show Royal Navy not meeting recruitment targets. Available at: https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/figures-show-royal-navy-not-meeting-recruitment-targets/

decreasing people capability.[7] A particular challenge has been identified as 'wastage' in the recruitment pipeline, whereby a significant number of potentially suitable candidates do not ultimately progress through the full recruitment process, leaving training posts and roles unfilled.[8]

Secondly, from the candidates' perspective, poor experiences with the recruitment processes have added to challenges with converting applications into enlistments. These experiences have included delays throughout the recruitment process and long waiting times for medical checks as well as other elements of the process.[9] This contributes to a large proportion of Army recruits withdrawing from the recruitment processes voluntarily.

Thirdly, the Armed Forces have identified recruitment inefficiencies with operating separate recruitment programmes (including different applicant tracking systems) across the single Services. These inefficiencies have included duplication and repetition in areas such as contract management, incoherence in marketing, and inefficient use of the Defence estate. The distinct delivery of recruitment and applicant tracking by each Service has also resulted in competition for talent between the Services, as candidates sometimes apply and advance through the recruitment process with all three Services. The recruitment industry is also evolving at a significant pace; moving towards digital and data driven candidate search, tracking and assessment solutions to attract new workers. Artificial Intelligence, Big Data and augmented reality are all areas that are significantly developing the candidate journey. As the recruitment industry moves in this direction, inefficiencies from operating three recruitment approaches could be amplified.

Further to these recruitment-specific challenges, the AFRP will provide a better governance framework that will connect recruitment and incentivisation (for example, additional payment to a contractor for specific roles and individuals recruited), as well as improve other elements of personnel policy.

In addition to these challenges, a 2012 RPP approval was granted on the basis that MoD would consider a tri-service recruiting solution. To secure funding for a new recruiting project, MoD therefore needed to cover all Armed Forces recruitment. This meant that without introducing a tri-service recruitment approach, the Army RPP contract could expire and the Army would not have the in-house resources to start a new recruitment programme. Therefore, there was a significant risk that in the absence of AFRP, the Army would be unable to deliver recruitment activities at the required scale to fulfil their recruitment needs.

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[7] Haythornthwaite Review of Armed Forces Incentivisation (2023), Agency and Agility: Incentivising people in a new era - a review of UK Armed Forces incentivisation. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agency-and-agility-incentivising-people-in-a-new-era-a-review-of-uk-armed-forces-incentivisation

[8] Navy Lookout (2023), Royal Navy failing to get enough recruits into basic training. Available at: https://www.navylookout.com/royal-navy-failing-to-get-enough-recruits-into-basic-training/

[9] NAO (2018), Investigation into the British Army's Recruitment Partnering Project. Available at: https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Investigation-into-the-British-Army-Recruiting-Partnering-Project.pdf

The Changing Recruitment Environment

The Defence People Strategy states that the world and workplace are changing rapidly, and Defence has to remain flexible, able to adapt to unpredictable events, offer suitable policy options and deploy its capabilities, people and equipment quickly and effectively. Challenges in the current AF recruitment model are amplified by an increasingly competitive recruitment environment, in which labour market dynamics drive competition between the Armed Forces and other employers for people, skills and talent.

Across the labour market, employers are likely to compete particularly over in-demand skills (e.g. digital and STEM). Moreover as workforce attitudes evolve, the Armed Forces may also increasingly struggle to compete with employers who offer more flexible employment options, opportunities for shorter engagement terms, or have contrasting organisational cultures. Lastly, the Armed Forces are also expected to have to navigate decreasing levels of awareness of Defence as a potential employer.

These challenges are summarised in the mandate for the revised recruitment approach. The mandate states that the traditional recruiting pool is shrinking, people are living longer and working in different ways. Technology is changing rapidly, especially in robotics, automation and artificial intelligence, and the competition for talent is increasing, particularly in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Entrepreneurship. Competition with industry for women and ethnic minorities is compounded by the increased proportion of this cohort assessed as ineligible (not meeting physical/health standards). Women are less likely to join as Submariners, or into the Royal Marines or Infantry, or military growth areas such as STEM or Cyber.

It also states that the increased demand for STEM and specialist qualifications means lateral entrants and re-joiners will become increasingly attractive to the Armed Forces. *The Times* Top 100 Graduate Employers in 2022[10] ranked The Army 31st, The Royal Navy 64th and the RAF does not feature. Competition for niche skills (digital, cyber, medical, engineering and science) is increasing. The wider technical sector is more attractive to candidates with specialist skills, and nearly half of those pursuing STEM careers in the UK are currently unaware of STEM roles across the AF.

Finally, the mandate requires that defence must improve the diversity of its workforce if it is to continue to meet the challenges of the future; and must ensure an inclusive environment in which everyone can bring fresh ideas and insights. Defence needs a more specialist, higher-skilled workforce that draws on the widest cross-section of society reaching out to new sources of talent and open to all forms of diversity. Women are less likely to join as Submariners, or into the Royal Marines or Infantry, or military growth areas such as STEM or Cyber.

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[10] The Times Graduate Recruitment Awards (2022). Available at:
https://www.highfliers.co.uk/download/2022/awards/The-Times-Graduate-Recruitment-Awards-2022.pdf

Inputs

There are four main types of input into the AFRP intervention – financial inputs (money spent on preparing for and delivering the programme), the skills, knowledge and expertise of staff involved in the development and delivery of the programme and more widely, and infrastructure and estate inputs, and single service engagement work. These inputs include:

Financial Inputs

The total financial input into the AFRP is expected to be approximately £3 billion. This includes funding of around £47 million to fund the activities prior to the recruitment solution being implemented, and c£300 million a year, over a ten-year period for the implementation and running of the recruitment solution. This will cover costs of the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach, including staffing coming from the private and public sector.

Skills, Knowledge and Experience Inputs

There are a variety of skills and knowledge inputs from different organisations (for example each Armed Forces service, the MoD, wider sections of the Armed Forces, Defence Digital, the preferred supplier and any additional private sector contractors used) which are crucial to the delivery of the AFRP. These are:

Expertise in Recruitment

Each service within the Armed Forces and the MoD brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise about how to recruit individuals to their service. This includes knowledge of the roles they are recruiting for, the skills and experience they require, the target populations for recruits and how to engage with these groups. In addition, the selected supplier will bring a wealth of recruitment expertise to the delivery of the tri-service recruitment approach. This will include wider recruitment knowledge from other sectors, best practice approaches in terms of recruiting for highly sought after candidates and delivering coaching and recruitment guidance to potential candidates. Finally, Deloitte is providing consultation services to the AFRP, and bringing a skill set of knowledge related to their respective area, including business change, marketing and finance, in order to strengthen Armed Forces recruitment.

Expertise in Transition

Staff within the Armed Forces, and particularly within the Armed Forces Recruitment Programme and future Service (AFRS), have skills and experience in delivering transition projects. This is crucial for the delivery of the AFRP, as it involves moving from three separate recruitment processes to a single, combined process. In addition, the successful supplier will have skills and experience in transition, as it will be required to transition existing recruitment services and data onto the new system.

International Expertise

In addition to the recruitment expertise held within the UK Armed Forces, the programme draws on the knowledge and expertise of Armed Forces recruitment in other allied nations – and can utilise best practice used in other countries to develop a world leading recruitment programme.

Cross-Government Expertise

The programme will also draw on the skills and expertise of other Government departments. This will relate to the potential for data linking with sources of data held by other departments (for example Department for Work and Pensions, Home Office and Department for Education databases).

Digital Expertise

Both the Armed Forces and the selected supplier possess a large amount of digital skills and expertise, including digital security, data storage, data analytics and designing digital interface skills.

Armed Forces Infrastructure

Existing Armed Forces infrastructure which can be used to deliver the AFRP, including estate infrastructure (for example recruitment offices, and some testing facilities) and digital and data infrastructure (for example existing databases and digital recruitment platforms such as Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) and the Training and Finance Management Information System (TAFMIS)).

Single Service Engagement Work

Outside the AFRP, the single services will continue with their engagement work that is currently provided, to raise awareness of AFR. Following the implementation of the tri-service approach, the single services will continue to engage in opportunities to raise awareness of AFR. This may include: school and college outreach work, attendance at fairs or airshows and participation in community events.

Activities

There are multiple activities which need to be delivered in order for the AFRP to function. These have been split by the activity typology and the chronology of the activity. It should be noted that the implementation activities are yet to be confirmed, as the preferred supplier and their recommended approach are yet to be selected. Therefore, the description of the implementation activities highlights what is expected to be delivered. The key activities fall under the following categories:

- mobilisation activities
- programmatic activities

- transition activities
- demand planning activities
- alignment activities
- procurement activities
- data and digital activities
- culture change activities
- risk management activities
- implementation and delivery activities
- marketing activities
- digital interface and applicant tracking activities
- applicant process activities
- applicant centred recruitment activities
- assessment activities
- training activities
- contract management
- MoD alignment activities

The following sections provide more detail on the activities within some of these categories.

Programmatic Activities

Recruitment of AFRS Team

In order to deliver the AFRS, the Armed Forces and Civil Service need to appoint a team with the required skills and experience. Individuals will need to be recruited from each of the single Services along with individuals with the required skills in recruitment, HR, data and contractual arrangements. This activity involves identifying individuals with the required skills, undertaking a recruitment or secondment process where appropriate and ensuring they are assigned to the AFRP for the appropriate period of time. For the implementation and delivery stage, a separate recruitment activity will be required as the team delivering the implementation stage differs from that delivering the mobilisation stage. Similar recruitment activity will be undertaken, to ensure staff with the required skills in contract management are included in the AFRS staff.

Development of a governance approach

The HQ AFR will develop an approach to govern the AFRS, covering responsibilities, oversight of different strands of activity, and sign-off processes.

Development of the business case, assessment of options

The AFRP team will develop a business case for the AFRP. This will involve examining what the challenges are with the current recruitment process and present potential solutions that could address these challenges. For each solution or option presented, the AFRP team will

need to undertake research to provide estimates of how much each will cost, and the potential scale of the benefits that could be realised from the option. This will involve desk research and consultations with relevant individuals within the recruitment process. The business case will be revised at various points throughout the pre-implementation stage, as the proposed solution becomes clearer following market engagement activity.

Transition Activities

The AFRP staff will develop a transition plan to be executed by HQ AFR, which documents how the Armed Forces aim to move from three separate recruitment approaches to adopting a single, tri-service approach. This will include actions, responsibilities, tasks, timelines and risks. The transition plan will be reviewed and approved by senior officers responsible for the Armed Forces recruitment.

The transition plan will also include an assessment of operational readiness, detailing how prepared the Armed Forces are to implement each of the activities that are required to transition to a single recruitment process, and what must happen to ensure the Armed Forces are ready to deliver each activity.

Demand Planning Activities

Amendments to demand planning approaches

The approaches to demand planning across the three services will need to be aligned prior to the introduction of the AFRP. Currently, the Army has a different approach to the Navy and Air Force for demand planning. The Army produces estimates of recruitment demand needed for the coming year in the summer of each year. This covers the recruitment needs by occupation. These plans are finalised and sent to the contractor, so that they can undertake recruitment activity. The approach taken by the Navy and Air Force is to produce estimates for recruitment needs in autumn of each year – however, these figures are not finalised and can be revised throughout the financial year (up to March of the following year) and tend to cover a longer time horizon than the Army estimates. As a first step to align demand planning activities, the demand planning for the Navy and Air Force were moved forward, so that they produced their estimates at the same time as the Army. The estimates are also treated as final and can no longer be altered until the end of the financial year.

Development of tri-service demand planning approach

Following the alignment of demand planning activities, a single approach to demand planning will be introduced. This will involve each of the single services developing their demand plans, and these will be submitted to the HQ AFR team. At this point, the HQ AFR team will bring together the demand plans, and identify commonalities in the types of roles being targeted and prioritise the recruitment across the three services. HQ AFR will co-ordinate the demand process and work to agree priorities with the single Services, with 5 percent of recruitment demand roles categorised as critical (the most important to recruit), 25 percent being priority recruitment, and the remaining roles being categorised as core recruitment.

Wider dependency work

The AFRS team will also undertake wider dependency work for the demand planning, such as liaising with training facilities, HR and other AF teams that the recruitment planning outputs will feed into.

Alignment Activities

There is an intention that the three services will undertake some alignment activities relating to their assessments in order for a tri-service recruitment approach to be feasible. This is expected to include alignment of the assessment criteria. An example of this is that a police officer for the Royal Navy requires a far higher degree of fitness than police officers for the remaining two services – and these differences would need to be aligned to implement the tri-service approach. This activity will involve reviewing the assessment criteria for all Armed Forces careers and adjusting the assessments required to bring each service in line with one another. Following this, new assessments may need to be developed for some Armed Forces careers. This activity will be undertaken by the single Services.

Procurement Activities

Development of programme requirements

The HQ AFR will develop a series of documents which outline the key requirements the Armed Forces expects a supplier to deliver through the tri-service recruitment approach. These documents are developed and approved by senior officers responsible for the AFRP.

Developing procurement approach

The AFRP will also develop a preferred approach to procurement activities. These include the timing of procurement activity, the approach that will be taken (e.g. direct competition, open dialogue), the eligibility criteria for potential suppliers and the level of security needed for potential suppliers.

Market engagement activities

The AFRP will hold market engagement events, to make potential suppliers aware of the opportunity and some of the requirements, to ensure that a number of potential suppliers are interested in tendering for the AFRS.

Development of contractual approach

The AFRP team will develop a contractual approach for the AFRS – particularly the Pricing, Payment and Incentivisation Mechanism (PPIM). The PPIM will cover what fixed pricing will be offered to the preferred supplier, and what payments will be linked to performance metrics (and what these metrics should be). This contractual approach will support the Armed Forces in ensuring the preferred supplier delivers the contract in line with Armed Forces objectives. It is expected that there will be different incentive payments for applicants from

targeted groups and for core, priority and critical roles, and payments linked to the quality of the candidate experience.

Data and Digital Activities

In order to prepare for a new digital interface and applicant tracking system, the Armed Forces need to develop a single platform for data migration to the new system. This will include historical information about previous applicants, and the data for existing applicants going through the recruitment process. Previously, all services had their own approach to data storage and different definitions of data, therefore the AFRP staff will need to bring these systems together and where feasible form common data fields. This work is underway during 2024 and will require the support of Defence Digital.

Following the development of the data platform, a series of testing protocols will need to be run to ensure that the data migration approach is compatible with the new applicant tracking approach and data storage solution.

Culture Change Activities

Consultations and notes for senior staff

In order to support the move to a tri-service solution, an important first step is to ensure that senior decision makers in each of the services understand what the AFRS is, why it is being introduced and the benefits it will bring. Without senior buy-in to the intervention, there is a risk that each service does not fully engage with the programme, which would bring significant challenges during the implementation stage. This activity involves developing notes outlining the programme and its benefits, which would then be followed up with consultations between AFR staff and the single Service senior staff to reinforce the key messages about the AFRS.

Town hall events

Following the engagement with senior staff, AFRP staff will deliver a series of town hall events. These would be targeted at more junior staff involved in the recruitment processes in each service. The town hall events will outline how the tri-service recruitment approach will work, and the number of staff involved in the implementation and delivery of the approach. This is a crucial step to ensure that the key messaging about the tri-service recruitment approach goes to the recruitment staff, as without the involvement of some existing recruitment staff in the three services the AFRS will struggle to be effectively implemented.

Wider consultations

Following the town hall events, there will be a series of wider consultations with single Services and trade unions to evaluate recruitment staff across the three services. These will explore the number of staff that can be transferred from their existing role to work in the AFRS, the roles of these staff, locations etc. This will provide the staff with the information

they need to decide if they would like to apply to work in AFRS, be assigned elsewhere or change their employment status.

Risk Management Activities

The AFRP will undertake risk management activities that will be handed over to HQ AFR at appropriate stages throughout the programme. This involves developing, and keeping live, a risk register, which highlights all risks, potential impacts and how to mitigate the risks.

Marketing Activities

Agreement on marketing approach

The preferred supplier will develop an approach to marketing AF careers, with the aim of making careers in the AF more widely known in society. This will include a strategy to market general careers in the AF to encourage a wide range of individuals to consider joining the AF. The exact specification of marketing is yet to be finalised, however it is understood that alongside the more general marketing, there will be two strands of more targeted marketing for recruitment. These are:

- joint marketing activities
- direct recruitment

Joint marketing activities

Where two or more services require candidates with particular skills, or for a particular occupation (for example cyber type careers), a specific, targeted marketing approach may be agreed covering all three services. Once these candidates are aware of the potential career opportunities, they can select their preferred path during the application process. Previously, services may look to undertake separate marketing campaigns for the same candidates, meaning they were in direct competition with one another.

Direct recruitment

For some highly specialised roles, the supplier may undertake some direct recruitment, whereby they identify individuals or groups of individuals that they think would be suitable for the role and directly market potential opportunities to these individuals.

Digital Interface and Applicant Tracking Activities

Development of single digital interface for applicants

The supplier is required to develop a single digital interface for applications and applicant tracking across all three services. This digital interface will allow applicants to apply for careers across all of the services, and will need to be user friendly and place a minimum burden on the applicant. It will also be required to support the applicant throughout the application process – collecting information from the application process and then

throughout the recruitment process. In addition to supporting the application process, the system will have functionality to collect information from the application process to be used elsewhere by the Armed Forces.

Collection and storage of data

The applicant interface will collect a lot of useful information about the applicant (e.g. socio-demographic, education, reason for applying) which could be used to support future analysis of the recruitment process or other analysis run internally by the Armed Forces. The supplier will develop an approach to collect and store this information in a format and location that is secure, accessible and usable for the Armed Forces.

Quality Assurance

The supplier will be responsible for ensuring the quality of the data that is collected and stored as part of the AFRS. The exact approach to quality assurance is yet to be developed.

Protecting system against cyber-attacks

Both the supplier and the AF will need to ensure that the digital interface and stored data is secure, and protected against cyber-attacks. The records of military personnel are extremely sensitive, therefore the databases will need to be secure (complying with MoD Cyber Security requirements).

Other activities

There are a number of other risk mitigation activities that will be required by the programme team including: working through the 'Prepare' step of Secure by Design (SbD), continuing user research (in preparation for the Service Standard), completion of dependency agreements for other MoD legacy systems that will be required (e.g. TAFMIS and JPA).

Application Process Activities

Development of new application process

The supplier will develop a revised application process, which accommodates the needs of all three services. This will need to collect the required information for an assessment of the suitability of the candidate to be undertaken. The application will need to be flexible – applications will need to be able to be submitted electronically (or on a portal), but alternative application routes must also be supported.

Activities to combine process with other government databases

In order to collect all of the information to assess the suitability of the applicant, information which is currently available in other Government datasets can be used (e.g. health data, criminal data, immigration data, educational data). The revised application process should aim to include a system to draw this existing information in other datasets into the

application, which will minimise the burden on applicants and reduce the need to check the information submitted by the applicant. It should be noted that the preferred supplier will not be able to access all existing Government datasets but will explore which datasets it can access.

The supplier will also need to provide mechanisms for applicants to make contact with them to discuss their application, or to ask questions about the application process.

Applicant-Centred Recruitment Activities

The approach to recruitment has not yet been finalised, however the approach will need to be applicant-centred. In practice, this is likely to mean that each applicant is assigned a named recruitment officer. This recruitment officer will be responsible for communicating with the applicant, providing them with relevant information and guidance about potential careers in the Armed Forces and which careers they may be suitable for, supporting the applicant in booking assessments and offering them advice about the recruitment process and any assessments required.

Alongside advice and guidance, the recruitment officers are likely to provide coaching for any assessments that an applicant will need to undertake. This activity should help to prepare the applicant for all aspects of the assessment they undertake – and the officer will be able to recommend when the applicant is ready to undertake their assessments.

Assessment Activities

Provision of assessment centres

The preferred supplier will provide locations for the majority of recruitment assessments to take place. This activity will include identifying appropriate locations, ensuring that they are fit for purpose for the assessments and making them available for Armed Forces recruitment assessment activity.

In addition to the supplier locations, a small number of more specialist assessments will still need to take place on Armed Forces estates, for example, assessments to become a pilot. Where this is the case the supplier will need to form agreements with the required single Services, provide functionality to allow applicants to book these assessments at their preferred time, and ensure single Service assessment staff can put the results from the assessment on to the applicant tracking system.

Assessment booking infrastructure

The preferred supplier will be required to develop a system which allows applicants flexibility in the booking of their assessments. This means developing a system which details available assessment dates and locations, and provides the applicant with guidance on how to book.

Provision of assessments

The supplier will be responsible for delivering the majority of assessments, providing staff to undertake the assessments and logging the results from the assessments into the applicant tracking system. Recruitment staff will need to receive training about how to deliver assessments (see below).

Where specialist assessment is required, activities will still be undertaken by the single Services and the results of the assessment fed back into the applicant tracking system.

Training activities

Staff that will be providing recruitment services through the AFRS will require training so that they can effectively deliver the recruitment services to the required standard. The supplier will need to develop and deliver training to all recruitment staff working on AFRS. The exact delivery specification of the training is not finalised (in terms of content, timing and mode of training).

Contract management

Alongside the activities delivered by the supplier, the Armed Forces will need to deliver contract management activities. This will include regular meetings with the supplier, monitoring their performance, ensuring they deliver agreed data and reporting, managing the risks associated with the delivery and resolving any issues which develop over the course of the AFRS delivery. The exact contract management activities are yet to be agreed for the AFRS.

MoD alignment activities

Alongside the provision of the AFRS contract, staff at the MoD will be required to undertake activities to ensure that the information being provided by the AFRS can be integrated into existing MoD systems.

Outputs

Pre-Implementation Outputs

The pre-implementation activities are expected to produce a range of outputs. These outputs will then support the delivery of the implementation stage activities. The outputs from the pre-implementation stage are as follows.

Staff, documents and plans

The key pre-implementation outputs regarding staff, documents and planning include:

- Appointing the AFRS workforce

- producing a new governance structure document
- development and approval of business case
- producing a transition plan
- finalising contractual requirements
- developing a risk management approach

MoD will recruit and appoint a team to deliver the AFRP and future AFRS, which has the required skills, knowledge and experience to undertake the pre-implementation activities described above. Following the completion of the pre-implementation stage, an AFRP delivery team will be appointed, which possess the skills, knowledge and experience to actively manage the supplier delivering the AFRS and ensure contractual obligations are met.

Following the development of the new governance structures for the AFRS, the structure is documented and shared with all AFRS staff and wider stakeholders. The AFRP staff produce a business case, demonstrating the strategic, economic and financial case for AFRS. This will include different options for the intervention, and recommendations of which option should be utilised. The business case will be reviewed and approved by senior officers responsible for the AFRP and by relevant assurers and scrutineers.

Following the activities to understand what will be required during the transition phase of the project, a detailed transition plan is produced. The transition plan will be reviewed and approved by senior officers responsible for the AFRP.

The agreed contractual requirements (payment milestones, targets to be achieved, outputs required) are agreed and documented. Contractual requirements approved by senior officers responsible for the AFRP. A detailed and live risk management approach is developed, including documentation mapping risks, likelihood and mitigating actions. AFRP staff members are responsible for keeping the risk management approach up to date.

Demand planning

Pre-implementation, the demand planning timelines for each single Service must be revised to align with one another, and these timelines are communicated to the single Service demand planning leads. The standardised required outputs from the demand planning activities must also be documented and communicated to the single Service demand planning leads.

Assessment

Alignment of assessment criteria and times will be agreed and documented. This will be shared with all single Services and teams involved in delivering assessments.

Procurement

There are four key pre-implementation outputs related to procurement:

- programme requirements published

- number of suppliers attending market engagement events
- number of suppliers participating in procurement activities
- selection of preferred bidder

Specifications of what the supplier of the AFR solution will be required to deliver are developed and published.

Market engagement events/workshops/calls are held, and a number of potential suppliers attend these events to find out more information about the potential opportunity. Following the market engagement activity, a number of suppliers will participate in the procurement activity, which includes a competitive dialogue procurement approach. Potential suppliers will provide the Armed Forces with documentation about how they intend to fulfil the requirements of the AFRS.

At the end of the procurement process, following Government procurement and commercial policies, MoD staff will evaluate the bidder proposals, and this will support the selection of the supplier to deliver AFRS. The decision is communicated to all potential suppliers.

Data migration

The activity to develop a single data migration platform will be tested to ensure it can support the data migration process. The data migration platform will then be available for the supplier to use once appointed.

Culture change

There are three key pre-implementation outputs concerning culture change, which are as follows:

- culture change notes produced and shared
- culture change consultations undertaken
- number of town hall events held and number of attendees:

Documentation outlining approaches to the three services working together, highlighting the benefits of this approach, are developed and shared with senior officials within each service.

In addition, consultations with senior officials in each single Service, building on the information provided in the notes, will be held. These aim to embed messages around culture change and cooperation between the three services.

A number of town hall events are held to disseminate information about the new approach to recruitment across the three services and to describe how recruitment practices and staffing will change. Recruitment staff from all three services attend the town hall events.

Implementation Outputs

The outputs of the implementation stage of the AFRS largely relate to the delivery of the recruitment services by the future supplier. Therefore, some of the outputs are unknown at this stage. The expected outputs are described below.

The main output of the AFRS implementation stage is expected to be the launch of the new, tri-service recruitment approach. This will be delivered by the supplier, and will cover all areas of recruitment after engagement activities through to initial training. The key outputs from the tri-service recruitment approach are described below.

Recruitment materials produced

Documentation demonstrating how the recruitment process will work in practice, guidance documents for recruitment staff, governance structures etc. will be produced by the supplier. These will document exactly how the recruitment process will operate, what is required for the delivery of the recruitment services and what will be provided to the AF.

Training delivered

The supplier will provide training to all staff that will be involved in delivering the recruitment activities. This will demonstrate how and when activities should be delivered, decision points, how systems operate, the data required and communication approaches with applicants.

Digital platform produced

The supplier will develop, test and implement a single digital platform for all Armed Forces recruitment to flow through.

Approach to interact with other government departments introduced

Mechanisms for importing data from other Government departments, such as health data, criminal data, immigration data, educational data, are set up and implemented – although this may be a phased introduction.

Marketing activities delivered

A revised marketing approach, covering careers in all three services, is developed and launched. This will include general marketing, directed at all potential applicants, and targeted marketing / recruitment activities, targeting individuals for specific careers. The marketing activities will reach a target proportion of the population and of those specifically targeted with direct recruitment marketing and make them aware of potential careers in the Armed Forces.

Further implementation outputs

Further implementation outputs include:

- following the set-up of the digital platform and the marketing activities, potential recruits will complete the initial application process
- applicants receive recruitment advice and coaching from their designated recruitment officer
- applicants will complete the assessments required as part of the recruitment process
- applicants that successfully complete the required assessments will be offered a career in the Armed Forces

Outcomes

The outputs produced by the AFRS activities will lead to the following outcomes. These outcomes can be split into four main categories, which are: Societal outcomes, Applicant outcomes, Recruitment outcomes and Efficiency outcomes. It should be noted that as the final activities of the AFRS are not confirmed (in terms of exactly how the programme will be implemented), some of the listed outcomes here may not be realised and may have to be removed from the final ToC for the AFRP. The AFRS outcomes are discussed in more detail below.

Societal Outcomes

The outcomes which have been grouped as societal outcomes are those which are expected to be realised by the population as a whole, or at least large proportions of the UK population. These are expected to be:

- increased awareness of Armed Forces careers
- improved reputation of Armed Forces as an employer and recruiter

Increased awareness of Armed Forces careers

Improvements in marketing, introduced as part of the AFRS, is expected to increase the level of awareness in society of Armed Forces careers. This is expected to be achieved through two routes. Firstly, a general increase in the awareness of the types of careers that are available through the Armed Forces in all areas of society. Many people have a limited understanding of the breadth of careers that are available in the Armed Forces. The lack of understanding of careers available (e.g. digital and computing, science and engineering, catering and logistics) limits the potential applicant pool. The AFRS will increase awareness of less traditional careers, with the aim of attracting candidates that may not be interested in the traditional roles. Secondly, through some of the more targeted recruitment activity, individuals in target groups will become more aware of the breadth of careers available in the Armed Forces.

Improved reputation of Armed Forces as an employer and recruiter

The improved marketing activity, and increased awareness of the breadth of careers available in the Armed Forces may help to contribute towards an improvement in the reputation of the Armed Forces as an employer. This could include improving the awareness of training and career development opportunities and different career paths, which could be used to improve public perceptions of the Armed Forces as an employer. Further, by improving the recruitment process applicants are more likely to communicate the positive experience of their recruitment journey to others.

Applicant Outcomes

This set of outcomes relates to the outcomes for those that apply to the Armed Forces and are clients/beneficiaries of the AFRS. These outcomes are:

- reduced burden
- increased flexibility
- improved preparedness for assessments
- change in applicant drop-out rates
- positive experience of application process

Reduced burden

The processes used for an application for the AFRS should reduce the time and effort required from the applicant to complete the application process. This will come from having to complete a single application process which allows the applicant to access careers in all three services, then selecting the career they are most aligned to (instead of having to complete three separate applications if they wanted to apply to all services); having the option to complete sections of the application online or in person, in line with their preference; reductions in the waiting times for assessments; and reduced requirements for evidence through linking the application process to other government databases.

Increased flexibility

The reduced burden on applicants, and changes to how the recruitment process is run (to be more applicant focussed) will provide more flexibility to applicants. This flexibility relates to: the careers that are open to the applicant following their initial application; the timing and location of any assessments – these can be arranged at a time to suit the applicant or to allow the applicant to receive more coaching and guidance before an assessment; the total duration of application process (how long between first application and starting initial training); and the form of communication and application (e.g. online, in-person).

Improved preparedness for assessments

The coaching and guidance available to applicants through the AFRS, and the flexibility in terms of careers they can apply for and the timing of any assessment means that at the time of an assessment, applicants are more likely to be fully prepared and have a greater propensity to pass the assessment process.

Change in applicant drop-out rates

Depending on the approach taken by the supplier, it is likely that the current drop-out rate from the application process (the number of applicants that do not progress to initial training) will alter. This could be a reduction in the drop-out rate by having fewer initial applicants, which are better matched to the needs of Armed Forces; or an increase in the drop-out rate, by having a much larger initial pool of applicants that are then filtered to provide the most appropriate candidates to initial training.

Positive experience of application process

Through the increased flexibility and reduced burden placed on applicants, and the applicant centred recruitment approach, the AFRS should lead to an improvement in the experiences of applicants of the application and assessment process.

Recruitment Outcomes

This set of outcomes relates to the recruitment process for the Armed Forces, and are:

- change in number of applicants
- reduction in timeline from application to onboarding (where applicant requires this)
- increase in pass rates from assessment process
- reduction in candidate leakage

Change in number of applicants

Depending on the approach taken by the supplier, it is likely that the number of applicants will change in response to marketing activities. This could be a reduction in the applicants through having more targeted marketing, with the applicants being better matched to the needs of a specific role within the Armed Forces; or an increase in the number of applicants to ensure that more applicants progress to initial training.

Reduction in timeline from application to onboarding

These improvements to the recruitment and assessment process should result in a reduced period between the first application and onboarding. This could potentially allow the Armed Forces to fill recruitment needs faster, and allow applicants the flexibility to begin their initial training at a time that suits them.

Increase in pass rates from assessment process

The coaching and guidance available to applicants through the AFRS, and the flexibility in terms of careers they can apply for and the timing of any assessment means that at the time of an assessment, applicants are more likely to be fully prepared and have a greater propensity to pass the assessment process.

Reduction in Candidate Leakage

The improvements in the recruitment process should lead to a reduction in candidate leakage (candidates deciding to leave or disengage the recruitment process voluntarily) via five main routes. This means that a higher number of candidates will progress to appropriate assessments. These routes are:

- increased flexibility in contact
- increased flexibility in how, when and where assessments are undertaken
- increased flexibility in the role to be applied for
- applicant coaching and guidance
- increase in offers made to candidates

Applicants will be able to select how they prefer to remain in contact with the application process – in person, email, telephone etc. By having a communication form which suits the applicant, they are more likely to stay in touch with the recruitment process.

Applicants will have more freedom to select when and where assessments take place under the AFRS. This means that the applicant is less likely to disengage due to inconveniently timed assessments, or having assessments in locations they may struggle to attend.

As the application will be for the Armed Forces and not a specific single service, there are more potential careers open to the applicant. This means that if their application is inappropriate for one service or career, they can potentially access an Armed Forces career that more suits their skills and level of fitness/health (candidate recycling). This means the applicant is less likely to drop out of the recruitment process due to misaligning their initial application to the most appropriate Armed Forces career for them.

The coaching and guidance provided as part of the recruitment process should contribute to applicants feeling less discouraged about the application process, and therefore less likely to disengage from it.

The outcomes listed above should lead to, at the end of the recruitment process, an increase in the number of offers to join initial training being made.

Efficiency Outcomes

Alongside the direct recruitment outcomes for the Armed Forces, there are a series of wider Armed Forces benefits which will contribute to improvements in Armed Forces efficiency. These are:

- improved recruitment planning
- reduced duplication of efforts
- changes to estate costs
- improved efficiency in engaging with other areas of the Armed Forces
- improved data quality and consistency of data

- improved co-operation between services

Improved recruitment planning

Through the changes made in terms of timing of recruitment planning, and formalising a consistent approach to recruitment planning, the AFRS will support a better oversight of the Armed Forces recruitment needs as a whole. A consistent approach will lead to more accurate and efficient data collection and reporting.

Reduced duplication of efforts

By bringing together the recruitment practices of the three single services, it is likely that there will be a reduction in the resources required for recruitment activities in each of the single services. As some of the activities currently undertaken in each of the single services are similar, there will be a reduction in the tasks that are duplicated across the three services. In addition to this, for some roles each of the single Services may be advertising and targeting the same small pool of individuals and competing with one another to secure the candidate – and the recruitment approaches may be duplicated. Combining the recruitment practices to a single approach will reduce the duplicated efforts, reduce competition and ensure the candidate ends up in the most appropriate role for themselves and the Armed Forces.

Changes to estate costs

The recruitment solution has yet to be finalised but could include recommendations and changes to the existing Armed Forces estate. For example, there could be a reduction in the number of Armed Forces recruitment centres, or a change in the use of some existing Armed Forces estates (e.g. assessments). Therefore, the AFRS approach may lead to a reduction in existing estate costs, or changing how some of the estate is used – potentially freeing up Armed Forces estate for other activities.

Improved efficiency in engaging with other areas of the Armed Forces

By having a single team responsible for the recruitment activities of the Armed Forces, there will be efficiency savings for all other areas of the Armed Forces that need to engage with recruitment activities – for example HR and estate managers.

Improved data quality and consistency of data

One of the challenges relating to the current recruitment processes is that there are inconsistencies in the data collected, how data is defined, and challenges accessing the data. The AFRS approach should resolve these difficulties, providing the Armed Forces with consistent, quality-assured and accessible data across all services. This will allow a consistency in data analysis to be applied across all services.

Improved co-operation between services

The three single Services often work separately from one another, which means that ideas and processes may not be shared in the most effective way. The AFRS will bring together staff from all services to promote cooperative working and demonstrate that certain processes can be utilised for a tri-service solution. This could support wider cooperation between the three services.

Impacts

The key longer-term impacts of the AFRS are:

- higher quality and more appropriate candidates
- reduction in skills shortage and hard to fill vacancies
- more diverse workforce
- reduction in training wastage
- improvements in retention
- personnel performance improvements
- higher skilled recruits able to deliver tasks more efficiently
- improved performance by existing Armed Forces personnel
- efficiency-led performance improvements
- operational improvements
- economic impacts

Higher quality and more appropriate candidates

Improving the recruitment system will result in the end point of the recruitment process seeing an increase in the number of candidates that have the required skills, expertise, health and fitness for a role in the Armed Forces. This means there will be an increase in the quantity and quality of candidates that enter basic training following the recruitment process. This will have the following impacts:

Reduction in skills shortage and hard to fill vacancies

The more targeted marketing and improvements in the recruitment process would mean an increase in the supply of successful candidates for roles for which the Armed Forces have struggled to recruit for and those for which applicants with the required skills have not been forthcoming.

More diverse workforce

The improved marketing and improvements to the recruitment process would increase the number of successful candidates from target groups due to the contractual payment mechanisms which reward the preferred supplier for recruiting candidates from target groups.

Reduction in training wastage

By having a supply of higher quality, better prepared successful applicants, which have been assigned to the roles in the Armed Forces that best suit their skills and interests, a higher proportion of applicants should complete their initial Armed Forces training. This reduces inefficiencies caused by applicants not completing training.

Improvements in retention

By having better prepared successful applicants that have been assigned to the roles in the Armed Forces that best suit their skills and interests, a higher proportion of applicants should complete their initial Armed Forces training and subsequently continue in their role for a longer period, ultimately improving the Armed Forces retention rate.

Personnel performance improvements

The improvements in the recruitment process, securing higher quality candidates for roles will likely lead to an improvement in the performance of personnel in the Armed Forces through three main routes.

Higher skilled recruits able to deliver tasks more efficiently

By recruiting higher skilled and better matched staff for roles, and recruiting more personnel into skills shortage vacancies, the new personnel will be able to perform to a higher standard, which will raise the standard of personnel performance over time.

Improved performance by existing Armed Forces personnel

As newer recruits will be more skilled, existing Armed Forces personnel will be able to improve their own performance. This will be due to being able to focus on more appropriate tasks, rather than having to "work down" or "work across" to cover areas where recruits do not have the required skills.

Efficiency-led performance improvements

Some of the efficiency savings which the AFRS could lead to would lead to redeployment of Armed Forces resources (either staff or funding) from existing functions which are no longer required to other areas of the Armed Forces. This could improve staff performance, for example by using freed up resources to invest in equipment or training for existing personnel.

Operational improvements

The performance improvements, and having more personnel with the required skills to fill the Armed Forces recruitment needs, should contribute to an improvement in operational performance.

Economic impacts

The targeted nature of some of the recruitment activity, such as targeting areas with high levels of unemployment and areas where large employers may be about to close could lead to two forms of economic impacts:

- reductions in long-term unemployment
- levelling-up impacts

By targeting areas of high unemployment or areas where large employers close (which could lead to long-term unemployment), the AFRS can contribute to a reduction in long-term unemployment.

Providing employment opportunities and increasing income in areas with high unemployment will enable the AFRS to contribute towards making these areas more affluent and improve their ability to "catch up" economically with other areas of the UK.

Key Risks

The key risks for the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach achieving its long-term outcomes and impacts are set out below. These include:

- lack of supplier interest in delivering AFRP
- lack of personnel or supplier skills and experience
- digital solution incorrectly implemented
- timing of delivery
- wider labour market conditions

Lack of supplier interest in delivering AFRP

The AFRP solution is expected to be largely delivered by an external supplier, with activities aiming to ensure there is sufficient market interest in delivering the AFR contract. One potential risk is that there is insufficient market appetite to deliver the contract as it is specified. This could lead to alterations being made to the specification of the AFR solution meaning that it does not deliver its intended objectives.

Lack of personnel or supplier skills and experience

There is a risk that key personnel or the preferred supplier do not have the required skills or experience. This risk covers both the pre-implementation and implementation stage. If AFRS personnel do not have the required skills to deliver the transition activities and run procurement activities, the AFR solution may be implemented in a sub-optimal manner, and the programme may not achieve its stated objectives. Similarly, if during the implementation stage AFRS personnel do not have the required contract management skills, the supplier may not deliver the AFRS in line with expectations. Finally, if the preferred supplier does not

possess all of the required skills to deliver all aspects of the AFRS intended then the programme is unlikely to achieve its objectives.

Digital solution incorrectly implemented

The digital solution for the AFRS is a crucial element of the person-centred recruitment approach. If the digital solution does not function correctly, or has any issues, this could impact upon the achievement of the intended outcomes in numerous ways – for example if there are security issues this could lead to a pausing of the programme to fix these, or if applicants have a poor experience using the digital interface they may not recommend the Armed Forces to friends and family, damaging the Armed Forces reputation as a recruiter. Additionally, low quality application data could have adverse effects on future demand planning, and result in the Armed Forces not being able to meet its recruitment targets.

Timing of delivery

The Army has a fixed contract with Capita. If the AFR solution is not delivered by the end of this contract, there is a risk that recruitment for Army careers will temporarily pause, or the contract with Capita will need to be extended at significant cost.

Wider labour market conditions

The recruitment objectives for AFR may be affected by wider labour market conditions. For example, if the labour market becomes more competitive, particularly for in-demand skills it will become more difficult for the Armed Forces to recruit to meet its needs, as other employers may be offering the same candidates higher wages and more flexibility.

Figure 1: Logic Model for AFRP Theory of Change

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts

Inputs
- Public sector funding

Knowledge inputs
- Digital expertise
- Recruitment expertise
- Transition expertise
- International expertise
- Cross Government expertise

- Single service engagement work
- Armed forces infrastructure

Activities

Pre-implementation activities
- Programmatic
- Transition
- Demand planning
- Alignment
- Procurement
- Data and digital
- Culture change
- Risk management

Supplier delivered activities
- Marketing
- Digital interface
- Application process
- Applicant centred activities
- Assessment
- Training

- Contract management
- MoD alignment

Outputs

Pre-implementation Outputs
- Staff, documents & plans
- Demand planning aligned
- Assessment aligned
- Requirements published
- Data migrated
- Market engagement & procurement
- Culture change delivered
- Securing preferred bidder

Implementation Outputs
- Documents produced
- Marketing
- Training delivered
- Client coaching etc. delivered
- Interactions with other departments
- Number of applications / assessments
- Digital infrastructure
- Career offers made

Outcomes
- Societal outcomes
- Applicant outcomes
- Recruitment outcomes
- Efficiency outcomes

Impacts

Recruitment and retention
- Improved retention
- Reduced training wastage
- More diverse workforce
- Higher quality applicants
- Reduction in skills shortages

- Performance improvements
- Operational improvements
- Economic impacts

Section 2   Process Evaluation

This section sets out a process evaluation framework for the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach. It identifies key questions to be addressed by an evaluation and describes the types of information required to provide an assessment of the delivery processes.

The process evaluation will require the following sources of evidence and information:

- programme documentation
- programme data and wider defence data
- stakeholder interviews
- applicant/recruit survey

The programme will have a large volume of documentation used in the delivery of the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach. This will provide a large amount of information about the processes used in delivery and the individuals involved in decision making processes.

The AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach will also collect a large amount of objective data to monitor the performance of the programme, collected as part of the benefits realisation work. This data will provide essential information for the process evaluation, providing objective measures of the performance of the processes used to implement the tri-service recruitment approach.

To provide evidence on explanations and views for the patterns observed in the data and to collect more qualitative data, it will be important to engage stakeholders directly involved in the delivery of the AFRP and the tri-service recruitment approach (e.g. staff from the successful supplier, central AFRP and AFRS staff, single service recruitment staff) and wider stakeholders (e.g. Defence Digital, single service operational staff, human resources).

A survey could be used to collect some quantitative and qualitative information from applicants about their experiences of the recruitment process, which could be used to support the process evaluation of the tri-service recruitment approach. This survey could be undertaken by an evaluator, or additional questions could be added to existing recruitment surveys or be collected by the preferred supplier.

Process Evaluation Framework

The table below presents the process evaluation framework. This shows the key evaluation questions, the information sources which will be collected and analysed to assess the process used during delivery, and the timing of when the evaluation questions should be addressed.

Table 2: Process Evaluation Framework

Evaluation Question	Key Metrics	Timing*	Data source required
To what extent were appropriate governance arrangements put in place through the AFRP / S to monitor the implementation of the programme?	N/A	1, 2, 3	• Programme documentation • Preferred bidder • AFRP/AFRS Central Team • Armed Forces recruitment
To what extent were sufficient resources and capabilities put in place to manage the transition to a single Armed Forces recruitment process within the required timescales?	Number of Armed Forces FTE devoted Number of Contracted FTE devoted Number of FTE staff required	1, 2, 3	• Programme documentation • Programme data • Preferred bidder • AFRP/AFRS Central Team • Armed Forces recruitment
Did any unanticipated issues arise and how effectively were they overcome?	N/A	1, 2, 3, 4	• Programme documentation • Preferred bidder • AFRP/AFRS central team • Armed Forces recruitment
How far has the implementation of the AFRS minimised any disruption to recruitment practices within the Armed Forces associated with the transition to a tri-Service approach?	N/A	2, 3, 4, 5	• Programme documentation • AFRP/AFRS Central Team • Armed Forces recruitment
How effectively were processes put in place to support tri-service demand planning?	N/A	2, 3, 4, 5	• AFRP/AFRS Central Team • Armed Forces recruitment
How effectively has the tri-Service approach met the recruitment needs of the Armed Forces and each service?	N/A	2, 3, 4, 5	• Programme documentation • AFRP/AFRS Central Team • Armed Forces recruitment

Evaluation Question	Key Metrics	Timing*	Data source required
How effectively did the AFRS align assessment standards for common roles across the three services?	N/A	2, 3, 4, 5	- Programme documentation - Preferred bidders - Armed Forces recruitment
Did alignment of assessment standards reduce the number of assessments required for applicants?	Number of assessments per applicant	3, 4, 5	- Programme documentation - Programme data - Preferred bidder - Armed Forces recruitment
Was the Authority Data Migration Environment put in place in time to support the transition to a tri-service approach?	Timing of single data platform	1, 2, 3	- Programme documentation - Preferred bidder - AFRP/AFRS Central Team
How effectively did the AFRS programme team engage with senior decision makers and recruitment specialists to build shared understanding of the rationale for the programme and secure buy-in to its implementation?	N/A	1, 2, 3	- Programme documentation - AFRP/AFRS Central Team - Armed Forces recruitment
How effectively did the AFRS leverage internal expertise of recruitment specialists to support the implementation of the programme ?	N/A	1, 2, 3, 4	- Programme documentation - Preferred bidder - AFRP/AFRS Central Team - Armed Forces recruitment
Were target timelines for the launch and conclusion of the procurement process met?	Variation between baseline in-service and actual in-service date	1, 2	- Programme documentation - Preferred bidder - Unsuccessful bidders - AFRP/AFRS Central Team
How effectively did the AFRS engage the private sector in the procurement process?	Number of suppliers targeted	1, 2	- Programme documentation - Programme data

Evaluation Question	Key Metrics	Timing*	Data source required
	Number of suppliers engaged with		• Preferred bidders • Unsuccessful bidders • AFRP/AFRS Central Team
Did participation levels of potential suppliers in the procurement process meet expectations?	Number of suppliers participating in procurement	1, 2	• Programme documentation • Programme data • Preferred bidders • Unsuccessful bidders • AFRP/AFRS Central Team
To what degree the did the programme receive high quality bids that offered value for money?	Scores of supplier bids	1, 2	• Programme documentation • Programme data • Preferred bidders • Unsuccessful bidders • AFRP/AFRS Central Team
How effectively did the contracting mechanism (including the Pricing, Payment and Incentivisation Mechanism) incentivise the selected provider to meet targets and improve performance over time?	Percentage of critical roles filled Percentage of priority roles filled % of recruits from hard-to-reach groups	3, 4, 5	• Programme documentation • Programme data • Preferred bidders • AFRP/AFRS Central Team • AF recruitment
To what extent did the move to a tri-service recruitment approach maximise flexibility for applicants – in terms of the roles or careers open to them, the timing and location of assessments, the timescale to an offer, and the form of communication (online or in-person)?	Timescale from application to offer	3, 4, 5	• Programme data • Wider defence data • Preferred bidders • Armed Forces recruitment
How effectively did the move to a tri-service recruitment approach minimise burdens on applicants (including administrative burdens as well as the time absorbed by	Time taken to complete application Number of assessments completed per applicant	3, 4, 5	• Programme data • Wider defence data • Preferred bidders • Armed Forces recruitment

Evaluation Question	Key Metrics	Timing*	Data source required
participating in associated assessment processes)?	Timescale from application to offer		• Recruits
How effectively was engagement with applicants maintained throughout the application process? Were drop-out rates minimised?	Percentage of applicants dropping out of process	3, 4, 5	• Wider defence data • Preferred bidder • AFRP/AFRS Central Team • Recruits
How effectively were candidates prepared for assessments? To what extent did this increase propensity to pass assessments?	Percentage of assessments passed	3, 4, 5	• Programme data • Preferred bidder • AFRP/AFRS central team • AF recruitment • Recruits

1 = Early process evaluation of the AFRP – taking place after procurement is completed and the successful supplier appointed; 2 = Process evaluation of procurement and transition – taking place towards the end of the AFRP; 3 = Initial evaluation of the tri-service recruitment approach – taking place one year after the tri-service recruitment approach is put in place; 4 = Interim evaluation of the tri-service recruitment approach – taking place midway through the delivery period (potentially five years after implementation); 5 = Final evaluation of the tri-service recruitment approach – taking place towards the end of the delivery contract (potentially eight or nine years following implementation.

Proposed Data Sources

In order to undertake a process evaluation, the sources of information described in detail below will be required to collect evidence to assess the processes used.

Programme Documentation

It is essential that evaluators are provided with access to any relevant programme documentation that outlines important programme information. It is anticipated that the key documentation required for the evaluation can include, but is not limited to:

- programme risk register
- programme schedule
- transition plan documentation
- all business cases
- meeting minutes and records of decisions
- organograms and team structures
- competitive dialogue documents
- demand planning documentation
- benefits documentation

Table 3: Proposed programme documentation

Documentation	Description
Programme Risk Register	The risk register details the risks to the programme, the potential impact should they become an issue, and the mitigations that have been identified to reduce the likelihood of the risk occurring. The Risk and Issue Management Strategy outlines the strategic plan for managing risks and issues within the programme and will be reviewed upon the transition to AFRS.
Programme Schedule	The Programme schedule has been developed to detail the activities that must be delivered in order for the programme to be delivered successfully. It is updated on a monthly drumbeat to analyse progress against planned activities and analyse potential slippage.
Transition Plan Documentation	The AFRP team is producing a transition plan, detailing the effect to be achieved for the single Services move from individual recruitment planning to a tri-service recruitment solution.
All Business Cases	The Initial Gate Business Case (IGBC) was developed in 2019 and outlines the costs of a tri-service AFR approach and the economic and strategic case for the programme. A Full Business Case (FBC) is being drafted in 2024 to provide a more detailed and strategic overview of the programme.
Meeting Minutes and Records of Decisions	The meeting governance for AFRP comprises a drumbeat of regular meetings including Sponsor Groups (SGs), Programme Boards (PBs) and Transition Boards. Terms of Reference (TOR), minutes and Records of Decisions (RoDs) from the meetings will be logged and made available.
Organograms and Team Structures	An organogram of the resources assigned to AFR, their military rank or civilian occupation, and the role they have within AFR.
Competitive Dialogue Documents	All documentation from the competitive dialogue process should be made available to evaluators, to support an assessment of the procurement process. This would include: Documentation provided to potential suppliers about the tri-service recruitment approach requirements (and how these changed over time), materials from supplier engagement events, and any information provided to potential suppliers during the process.
Demand Planning Documentation	Demand planning document will be any document that details the tri-service approach to recruitment decision making, as well as which roles will be assigned to critical and priority categories. Data sets from the Command Recruiting Support Plan (CRSP) and the Demand Information and Priorities Spreadsheet (DIPS) will provide detailed demand information for the three services.

Documentation	Description
Benefits Documentation	The Benefits Management Strategy and Benefits Realisation Plan outline the strategy for realising the programme's benefits and ensuring successful delivery. The Benefits Profiles outline the end benefits and metrics for measuring the performance of the solution.
Dependencies and Assumptions	Assumptions and Dependencies are tracked and regularly reviewed to ensure the programme can assess the likelihood and impact of non-delivery.

Programme Data

The AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach will also collect data relating to the delivery of the programme and the recruitment service, which can be used to assess the effectiveness of the processes used to deliver the programme and tri-service recruitment approach. The key information collected and held is set out in Annex A, and includes financial and resource, market engagement, procurement and output and outcome data.

Wider Defence Data

In addition to the Programme Management Information, there is one existing MoD data source which can be used to support the process evaluation of the AFRP and the tri-service recruitment approach. This is the Recruit Trainee Survey, which is an annual survey of recruits into the Armed Forces. This survey collects information about the views of recruits on the recruitment process, their level of satisfaction with the recruitment process and whether they felt it prepared them for their role in the Armed Forces. This dataset can be used to explore the effectiveness of the recruitment service processes from the point of view of recruits.

Primary Research

It is recommended that primary research is undertaken within five main groups:

- Stakeholders directly involved in the delivery of the AFRP/tri-service recruitment approach
- Wider Armed Forces recruitment personnel
- suppliers
- Wider Armed Forces and MoD personnel
- Applicants and recruits

Note that both the successful supplier and unsuccessful bidders should be consulted. It may be challenging to engage with individuals responsible for leading the procurement efforts for unsuccessful suppliers, as the staff may have moved on to other projects and have limited motivation to participate in an evaluation. However, an attempt should be made to engage with these stakeholders, as they will potentially have different views about the procurement process to the successful supplier. If the unsuccessful suppliers do not participate, reported views of the effectiveness of the procurement process may be biased.

Table 4: Stakeholder groups and roles

Stakeholder group	Stakeholder role
Stakeholders directly involved in the delivery of the AFRP / tri-service recruitment approach	- AFRP Sponsor Group members - AFRP Senior Responsible Officer - AFRP programme management team, digital team, transition team, commercial and financial teams and any other workstreams under AFR for earlier evaluations - AFRS Three Star Cabal members, Commander AFR, HQ AFR and any other workstreams under AFR for earlier evaluations
Wider Armed Forces Recruitment Personnel	- At the earlier stages of the evaluation, stakeholders involved in the sS demand planning, and stakeholders involved in the existing sS recruitment processes. - At later stages of the evaluation, further interviews would be needed with stakeholders involved in the sS demand planning
Unsuccessful bidders	For unsuccessful bidders, the early-stage evaluations should consult with the individuals at the organisation responsible for leading their procurement bid.
Successful suppliers	- For the successful supplier the early-stage evaluation should consult with those that led the procurement exercise. - At later stages of the evaluation, the evaluators should consult with a wide range of stakeholders, particularly those involved in the supplier's delivery of the tri-Service recruitment approach, including their digital and data teams, those responsible for the application process and applicant coaching and guidance, and those leading the marketing activities.
Wider Armed Forces and MoD Personnel	- These would be stakeholders that have interaction with the AFRS and tri-service recruitment approach but are not directly involved in the delivery. - These include Defence Digital, the Defence People Team and single Service (including Strategic Command) Principal Personnel Officers and should be consulted in both early and later stages of the evaluation.
Applicants and Recruits	This would involve collecting information from recruits and applicants, exploring their experiences of the recruitment process.

The aim of the primary research will be to gather wider contextual information about the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach, identify any issues faced in delivery and how these were overcome, and to assess the performance of the programme and how delivery could be improved in the future. The outputs and outcomes of the programme will also be discussed, and how the processes used have supported their achievement.

We recommend that depth interviews are conducted with stakeholders involved in the programme delivery, suppliers, and wider Armed Forces and MoD personnel. The applicant and recruit research should be undertaken via a survey, either as a new survey or rolled into the data collection from the supplier of the tri-service recruitment approach. The key topics to be included in the stakeholder consultations are set out in the table below:

Table 5: Required stakeholder groups and consultation topics

Stakeholder Group	Topics Covered
Delivery Staff	● Key context for the AFRP and rationale ● Processes used in the delivery of the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach and challenges faced (tailored to stakeholders area of expertise)
Wider Armed Forces Recruitment Staff	● Understanding of the AFRP and tri-service recruitment process and comparison to previous approaches ● Engagement with the AFRP and communication about staffing and processes used (for those involved in the delivery of the tri-service recruitment approach) ● Processes used to deliver the tri-service recruitment approach and challenges faced (tailored to stakeholders area of expertise)
Successful Supplier	● Views on the market engagement activities and programme requirements ● Views on the procurement process ● Processes used to deliver the tri-service recruitment approach and challenges faced (tailored to stakeholders area of expertise)
Unsuccessful Suppliers	● Views on the market engagement activities and programme requirements ● Views on the procurement process
Wider Armed Forces Staff	● Awareness of the AFRP and tri-service recruitment programme ● Views on engagement around recruitment ● Views on ability of tri-service recruitment approach to deliver required recruit numbers
Applicants / Recruits	● Views on the application process ● Views on time required to complete applications ● Views on the assessments completed

Analysis of Data

A large volume of data will be collected to support the process evaluation. It is recommended that two main approaches are used to analyse the data:

▪ descriptive quantitative analysis
▪ thematic analysis of qualitative responses

Descriptive Quantitative Analysis

This approach will be undertaken to analyse the quantitative data which will be collected to undertake the process evaluation, such as the number of assessments, number of applications etc. This should include cross tabulations to explore how these metrics evolved over time and across different groups where appropriate (e.g. gender, ethnicity, single Service).

Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Responses

Much of the data collected for the process evaluation will come from the qualitative interviews undertaken. This data will be analysed using a thematic approach. Key areas of interest will be identified throughout the research phase (e.g. identifying key themes coming out of the interviews around the risk management approach), which should align to each of the process evaluation questions. The research team should develop a database for the qualitative interviews based around these key themes coming from the research. The findings from each qualitative interview should then be coded into the framework against these key themes.

Data analysis approach

In practice, this means that the quantitative and qualitative evidence will be synthesised against the process evaluation framework. The approach will have the following steps. Firstly, the quantitative evidence can be used to judge whether the processes are performing as expected in the process evaluation framework – this will include evidence from the impact evaluation. Some qualitative evidence will also be used to identify whether processes are performing as expected where quantitative evidence is unavailable or inappropriate. Then, the qualitative evidence and theory will be used to establish the array of explanations for the patterns observed.

Section 3   Impact Evaluation

This section sets out the approach to an impact evaluation for the AFRP and the tri-service recruitment approach. It identifies the main impact evaluation questions and describes the data requirements.

Impact Evaluation Questions

The table below sets out the key impact evaluation questions relating to the AFRP and the tri-service recruitment approach. Some of the questions overlap with the process evaluation framework (see Enclosure 2). The table also includes recommendations as to the stage at which each evaluation question should be answered.

Table 6: Impact Evaluation Questions and Timing of Assessment

Evaluation Question	Timing of Assessment
To what extent has the implementation of the AFRS minimised any disruption to recruitment practices within the Armed Forces?	1, 2, 3
Has the new approach minimised the prevalence of critical skills shortages?	2, 3, 4, 5
Did alignment of assessment standards reduce the number of assessments required per candidate?	3, 4, 5
To what extent did the single data platform deliver its intended improvements in efficiency (e.g. in terms of candidate tracking or giving candidates greater choice or control)?	3, 4, 5
How effectively did the contracting mechanism (including the Pricing, Payment and Incentivisation Mechanism) incentivise the selected provider to deliver against targets and improve performance over time?	3, 4, 5
How effectively did the AFRS raise awareness of careers in the Armed Forces in the general population and groups of workers with priority skills?	3, 4, 5
How effectively did the AFRS improve the reputation of the Armed Forces as an employer within the general population and groups of workers with priority skills?	3, 4, 5
To what extent did the AFRS increase interest in pursuing a career in the Armed Forces within the general population and groups of workers with priority skills?	3, 4, 5

Evaluation Question	Timing of Assessment
Has the AFRS been successful at attracting sufficient volumes of suitable applicants to meet the demand requirements of the Armed Forces and each service?	3, 4, 5
To what extent has the AFRS maintained the quality of recruits and minimised drop-out rates in the first 6 weeks of Phase 1 training?	4, 5
Has the AFRS closed skills shortages and gaps for key occupations?	4, 5
Have there been any unintended impacts associated with the move to a tri- service approach (e.g. loss of internal recruitment capabilities or expertise, loss of flexibility)?	2,3, 4, 5
To what extent has the move to a tri-service approach improved Armed Forces productivity (e.g. by enabling the redeployment of personnel to operational activity)?	4, 5
Has the move to a tri-service approach reduced the total cost and/or improved the efficiency of recruitment activities within the Armed Forces?	4, 5

1 = Early process evaluation of the AFRP – taking place after procurement is completed and the successful supplier appointed; 2 = Final Process evaluation of procurement and transition – taking place when the AFRP finishes and the tri-service recruitment approach is implemented; 3 = Initial evaluation of the tri-service recruitment approach – taking place one year after the tri-service recruitment approach is put in place; 4 = Interim evaluation of the tri-service recruitment approach – taking place midway through the delivery period (potentially five years after implementation); 5 = Final evaluation of the tri-service recruitment approach – taking place towards the end of the delivery contract (potentially eight or nine years following implementation)

Mapping Outcomes

The section below outlines the potential data sources which can be used to measure the outcomes and impacts of the AFR and tri-service recruitment approach. The outcomes are presented in the Theory of Change. Below, the outcomes are split into two main groups:

- outcomes where data is being collected or planned to be collected
- outcomes where there is no information / data available yet

Programme Data and Existing Data Sources

Annex A presents the outcomes for which data is already collected or is planned to be collected by the Armed Forces. In addition to describing the data sources and how they may be used to evaluate the outcomes achieved by the AFR and tri-service recruitment approach, recommendations have been made around enhancements, or further research which could be undertaken by evaluators to enhance the assessment of how effectively the service has been in

achieving its outcomes. Data collection has been ongoing under AFRP, in order to demonstrate a successful 'as-is' baseline, which has required consistent co-ordination with sS due to variations in data collection. Under HQ AFR data collection will become a more consistent process and will enable clear data sources that will be captured on a regular basis. This will be monitored via the desk-level evaluation representative Benefits Lead, who will ensure alignment with Benefits data capture.

For most of the outcomes and impacts included in the theory of change, data is already being collected or planned to be collected as part of the tri-service recruitment approach. This means that most of the evidence required for an evaluation is already or will be collected. These data sources include:

- MoD and Armed Forces owned data exploring the awareness and reputation of the Armed Forces and careers, the estate costs, diversity statistics, personnel outflow statistics
- sS and provider level data on the number of applications, applicant dropout rates, timelines from application to onboarding, number of offers made, inflow into priority roles, data availability and quality, training wastage, and so forth
- an applicant experience survey, to collect information on the experience of the recruitment service, to be delivered by the Provider
- secondary data sources from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), such as the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings and Annual Population Survey

Outcomes With No Existing Data Source

There are several outcomes in the theory of change for which no existing data source exists and there are no plans to collect the data as part of programme monitoring. These are discussed below, and recommendations made about how information for these outcomes should be collected, and who should be responsible for the data collection.

Table 7: Existing gaps in outcome data and proposed approach to data collection

Outcome	Recommended Data Collection
● Assessment Pass Rates	The pass rate of applicants undertaking assessments during the recruitment process is not currently included in the benefits modelling of the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach. However, the applicant centred approach to recruitment is likely to have an impact on assessment pass rates. This information will be held currently by sS and can be collected by the provider after the introduction of the new service. It is recommended that this data is collected and made available to evaluators, with the responsibility for data collection falling on the sS and provider.
● Burden for Applicant Completing the Application and Recruitment Process	This data would need to be collected from applicants and recruits. The evaluators should be responsible for collecting this data unless the provider collects this as part of their contractual responsibilities.

Outcome	Recommended Data Collection
● Flexibility for Applicant ● Preparedness for Assessments	
● Improved Recruitment Planning ● Reduction in Duplication in Effort ● Higher Quality and More Appropriate Candidates ● Engagement with Other Areas of the Armed Forces ● Cooperation Between Services	To assess this outcome, evaluators should collect qualitative data from a range of stakeholders (see 4Es Analytical Approach). The evaluators should be responsible for collecting this data.
● Personnel Performance ● Operational Improvements	Measuring military effectiveness is notoriously difficult due to the lack of tangible outputs in many of Defence's core objectives (e.g. deterrence) and the complexity of outcomes associated with these objectives. However, measurement of operational improvements could include assessment of Defence outcomes (e.g. using existing frameworks used for measuring Defence productivity) or examining operational-level outcomes that are linked to specific operational campaign settings. Within operational campaign settings, assessment of operational improvements may be linked to specified measures of effect aligned to a campaign's military operational objectives. Operational objectives may be described in operational plans with specific lines of effect, against which metrics can be developed via a four-step process: 1) identifying effects associated with each campaign objective, 2) identifying a wide range of potential metrics, 3) evaluating a candidate list of metrics based on their relevance and measurability, and 4) identifying corresponding data and indicators to enable the campaign to track and assess its performance against each metric.[11] The evaluators should be responsible for collecting this data.

[11] RAND (2019), Measuring the Effectiveness of Special Organisations. Available at: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2504.html

Primary Data Collection

Although the review of programme documentation and benefits mapping has demonstrated that data for most of the key outcomes is already being collected, some primary research and additional data collection is still needed. It will be used to explore how and why outcomes have been achieved and the impact the tri-service AFR approach has had. It is recommended that primary research for the evaluation concentrates on the same groups as outlined for the process evaluation, with the exception of unsuccessful suppliers.

The aim of the primary research will be to gather information about the outcomes that have been achieved by the AFR tri-service solution, and the reasons why these outcomes have or have not met expectations. It is anticipated that the research will be conducted as depth interviews, conducted in person or via phone/video conferencing. Applicant / recruit research would be undertaken via a survey, which could come from an existing Armed Forces survey, or be a newly designed survey to target feedback on the new solution.

Survey of Recruits

A survey of recruits is one potential approach to collecting outcomes data for the tri-service recruitment approach which is not being collected as part of the programme data collection. The survey would have to take place at least twice, once prior to the tri-service recruitment approach being implemented, and once after – although ideally the survey would take place multiple times after implementation so that progress can be observed over time (potentially annually). As a result of the need for multiple observations, it may be beneficial to incorporate some questions into the successful providers data requirements or the existing survey of recruits – or commission a survey independently of the evaluation, to ensure data is collected in a timely manner.

The survey would need to be short, taking no more than 10 minutes to complete to ensure a sufficient response rate. A postal survey is not recommended for this project due to the population targeted (younger individuals) and the cost of administering a postal survey. Therefore, there are two main options for the survey:

- online survey
- telephone survey

Online survey

The survey is administered online with recruits receiving an email informing them of the survey and how to access it. This approach is beneficial in that all explanatory information can be provided to recruit and the survey can be completed in stages. A further advantage is that the display of the survey can be altered to enhance accessibility. Additionally, online surveys are generally cost-effective.

Telephone survey

A team of researchers telephones recruits and completes the survey in the form of a short telephone interview. The strength of this approach is that response rates tend to be greater, and the research team would have more control over the timing of when recruits provide their answers (so questions can be tailored to be more appropriate to the stage of recruitment). However, a telephone survey costs more than an online survey, and although an interview can be completed in

stages it can be more difficult to provide the recruit with all the details and guidance for the interview.

The survey would need to cover, at a minimum, the following topics:

- Reason for application
- Experiences of the recruitment service (experiences of marketing, application process, coaching and guidance, assessments etc.)
- Time required to complete application forms
- Flexibility offered in taking up roles at time convenient for applicant
- How prepared they felt for their assessments

The successful supplier will hold the contact details for all applicants and recruits. If an external supplier is required to undertake the applicant/recruit survey, the successful supplier would need to provide contact details for the survey to be undertaken – which at a minimum would need to include name, email address, demographic information (age, gender, ethnicity, education level, geographic area) and some details of their application (application date, role(s) applied for). However, there may be some challenges associated with the sharing of contact information, which would need to be discussed by evaluators and the successful supplier in the early stages of the evaluation. To generate robust results, **a sample size of 1,000 applicants/recruits per year** would be required, to ensure that there is sufficient coverage of different types of individual, job roles and service applied to.

Depth Interviews

A series of depth interviews should be undertaken with stakeholders. These interviews could be used as the primary source of information for a series of outcomes for which no quantitative data can be collected (for example qualitative outcomes, such as cooperation, personnel and operational performance), or to provide an explanation of how and why outcomes have been achieved. The key areas for exploration are highlighted in the table below.

Table 8: Stakeholders to be Consulted as Part of Impact Evaluation and Topics to be Covered

Stakeholder Group	Topics Covered
Delivery Staff	- Outcomes achieved by the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach (specific recruitment outcomes) - Reasons for changes in these outcomes - Challenges faced in the delivery and whether these are tri-service recruitment approach specific
Wider Armed Forces Recruitment Staff[12]	- Outcomes achieved by the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach (specific recruitment outcomes) - Reasons for changes in these outcomes

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[12] These are stakeholders that are involved in the sS demand planning processes, and stakeholders involved in the sS recruitment activities that are not involved in the delivery of the tri-service recruitment approach.

Stakeholder Group	Topics Covered
	● Challenges faced in the delivery and whether these are tri-service recruitment approach specific
Successful Supplier	● Outcomes achieved by the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach (specific recruitment outcomes) ● Reasons for changes in these outcomes ● Challenges faced in the delivery and whether these are tri-service recruitment approach specific
Wider Armed Forces Staff	● Engagement with recruitment teams ● Culture change outcomes ● Operational and personnel performance ● Reasons for changes in outcomes

Analysis of Data

This section explores potential opportunities to undertake an outcomes evaluation. The aim of the impact evaluation is to explore the causal effects of the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach on the outcomes presented above. There are also several key issues that need to be addressed in the design of the impact evaluation.

Counterfactual

The provision of some form of AFR would continue in the absence of the tri-service recruitment approach. There is a possibility that any changes in key outcome metrics would happen in the absence of the tri-service recruitment approach or happen at a slower pace. A credible evaluation will still need to explore the counterfactual case, and if no counterfactual case can be developed, detailed analysis of the additional outcomes achieved by the intervention will need to be undertaken. This analysis would use quantitative data showing how the outcome metrics have altered over time, an analysis of expert views, collected from primary research, of what would have happened in the absence of the tri-service recruitment approach, and an analysis of wider, contextual data, including factors which may have contributed to the change in outcome metric.

To provide a credible quantitative assessment of what would have been achieved without the programme, it is necessary to compare the outcomes achieved by the tri-Service recruitment approach to those achieved by a comparison group that did not benefit from the service but are otherwise equivalent. The selection of this comparison group involves several complications, mainly around identifying an equivalent group to the Armed Forces or those being recruited into the Armed Forces. For example, other industries or areas of public service may systematically differ from the Armed Forces, for example in terms of the careers offered and applicants targeted or working conditions. This is discussed in more detail below.

Challenges

Key issues that may complicate the selection of a comparison group include:

- differences between af services
- delivery model
- timescales

There are three services included in the tri-service recruitment approach, and the current approaches used for recruitment. Trends in performance in the three services and issues faced by each service differ. These differences may lead to different outcomes being experienced by each service or different reasons or mechanisms for outcomes being achieved.

In addition, the delivery model for the tri-service recruitment approach is yet to be finalised. Therefore, the expected routes to the outcomes and impacts may alter, and some of the outcomes highlighted may not be appropriate to be measured quantitatively.

Finally, some of the key impacts of the tri-service recruitment approach are dependent on recruits completing their initial training and entering Armed Forces, then utilising their skills whilst employed by the Armed Forces. Some of these impacts may develop beyond the timescale for the evaluation or may only be detectable after the evaluation activity and therefore will not be captured by any impact analysis. Therefore, it is important to note that the impacts measured will be the impacts as of the year of the evaluation.

Potential Approaches to Forming a Counterfactual Case

The options available to identify a counterfactual for the evaluation of the impact on tri-service recruitment approach are limited. As the tri-service recruitment approach is being rolled out universally across the Armed Forces, there is no natural comparator group of recruits. Therefore, the only options for a counterfactual case are external to the Armed Forces. Therefore, the remaining options to forming a counterfactual group are:

- other government departments or public services which recruit for a wide range of careers
- large, national employers
- international comparators

Other Government departments or public services which recruit for a wide range of careers: for example the NHS, Civil Service, or emergency services, would share some similarities with the Armed Forces recruitment, in terms of having national coverage, a wide variety of roles available and being publicly funded roles. However, there are significant differences between the roles that are being offered through these public service providers and the Armed Forces (for example risks associated with the roles, locations and tenure of service). There are also significant differences in the way in which these organisations recruit staff – with recruitment often running locally (for example local health services or health boards recruiting independently of one another), and differences in the labour markets the services operate in. Therefore, using these organisations or departments as a comparator group is unlikely to produce credible findings of the impact of the tri-service recruitment approach.

There are numerous large employers within the UK that recruit a large number of staff each year into a variety of careers (for example Capita, Serco, large telecommunications or construction/engineering firms). However, there are challenges with utilising private sector companies as a comparator group for the tri-service recruitment approach. Firstly, private sector

companies can operate in different ways to public sector organisations regarding recruitment, for example offering different compensation packages to address hard to fill vacancies, and they offer different types of roles to the Armed Forces (for example risks associated with the roles, locations and tenure of service). There is also an additional practical factor which presents a significant challenge to using private sector organisations as a comparator group for the tri-service recruitment approach – access to data. Private companies are likely to be unwilling to provide details about their recruitment practices and key employment data for use in an evaluation, due to commercial sensitivities around the data. Therefore, using private sector employers as a comparator group is unlikely to be practical or provide robust results.

A final potential comparator group is international Armed Forces recruitment – for example using the Armed Forces in another country as a comparator group for the tri-service recruitment approach. This would have the benefit of the roles being offered being similar to those offered in the UK AF. However, there are significant challenges with using international Armed Forces as a comparator group for the tri-service recruitment approach. These are that the labour market in other countries differs significantly from the UK market, in terms of the skills and experience available in the labour market, competing industries and general economic conditions. There are also further practical considerations about the availability and collection of data that measures outcomes in the same way as the data collected for the tri-service recruitment approach. Therefore, using international comparators as a comparator group is unlikely to be practical or provide robust results.

This suggests that there are no credible counterfactual cases which can be used practically or that will provide credible and defensible results.

Analytical Approaches

As described above, there is no opportunity to form a counterfactual case for the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach. Therefore, quasi-experimental evaluation approaches will not be feasible and it is recommended that a theory based evaluation, including a before and after analysis is undertaken as part of the impact evaluation.

Theory Based Evaluation Approaches

There are a variety of non-experimental approaches that could potentially be used for an impact evaluation of the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach, and these are presented in Annex B, with an assessment of their feasibility and appropriateness.

It is recommended that a Contributions Analysis (CA) approach is used to evaluate the impact the tri-service recruitment approach has had. The influence of the tri-service recruitment approach within the wider Armed Forces, labour market and economic context is complex, with a myriad of intervening and contextual factors that make isolating the role of the intervention challenging. Therefore, the evaluation will employ a generative approach to causality through assessing the contribution of the tri-service recruitment approach towards the outcomes achieved.

To assess whether, and the extent to which, the tri-service recruitment approach has contributed to change against the theory of change and evaluation framework (and to understand why or why not this has happened), the CA approach will incorporate a broad-angle view of change in outcomes as a whole, as well as focus in on specific changes brought about by the introduction of the tri-service recruitment approach.

By using CA, the evaluation will be able to identify and assess the relative contribution of both internal and external drivers of change whilst providing sufficient flexibility to identify unintended consequences. Finally, by assessing service-induced changes against the context of the prevailing economic and social environment, it is also appropriate to identify early signs of long-term outcomes and impacts, and the likely drivers of continued delivery. For more information about implementing a Contributions Analysis approach, please see Annex C.

Before and After Analysis

Any form of quantitative evaluation of the tri-service recruitment approach will require (at minimum) pre and post measures of the outcomes of interest. As discussed in the preceding sections, this can potentially be achieved through the monitoring data being collected by the programme, with some use of wider defence data sources and recommended additions. At a minimum, this analysis will require one observation point for each outcome before the new tri-service recruitment approach is implemented, and ideally multiple observations prior to implementation (so long as there is consistency in the data collected).

This approach can explore the impact of the tri-service recruitment approach in the following ways. Firstly, where a single data point is available prior to the implementation, the analysis can measure the change in the outcome metric from the baseline point to what has been achieved post-implementation. This approach would not be able to take account for any direction of travel prior to the implementation, as there are insufficient data points to infer this.

Where data exists for multiple time periods prior to the implementation, the analysis can potentially extrapolate a trend, or direction of travel for the outcome metric prior to implementation, and use this to compare the outcomes achieved post implementation. However, this approach comes with some risks – in that the trend observed prior to implementation may not have continued in the same manner in future years (for example it may reach a maximum or minimum level), or the trend may be driven by external factors which have changed post implementation, meaning the trend would not have continued in the same way in the absence of the tri-service recruitment approach. As a result this approach is not recommended.

The main limitation with this approach is that it is not possible to determine that the changes in the outcomes observed are the result of the intervention, or if another contributing factor is driving the changes. Therefore, further evaluation techniques are required to better understand why changes are being observed.

Section 4 Economic Evaluation

This enclosure sets out the approach to an economic evaluation for the AFRP and adoption of a tri-service recruitment approach. This identifies key questions that would need to be addressed by an evaluation and describes the information which could be used and the recommended analytical approach for the evaluation.

The questions below outline the key economic evaluation questions which have been developed for the evaluation of the AFRP and the tri-service recruitment approach. Some of the questions overlap with the process and impact evaluation frameworks. These economic evaluation questions should not be addressed until after the tri-service recruitment approach has been implemented and had time to achieve outcomes.

Economic Evaluation Questions

The table below sets out the key economic evaluation questions, and the sections of the economic evaluation framework each question relates to.

Table 9: Key Economic Evaluation Questions

Evaluation question	Timing	Related aspect of economic evaluation framework
To what extent was the required Authority Data Migration Environment put in place (complying with all security requirements) in time to support the transition to a tri-service approach?	3, 4	Efficiency
To what degree did the single applicant platform deliver its intended improvements in efficiency (e.g. in terms of candidate tracking or giving candidates greater choice or control)?	3, 4, 5	Effectiveness Equity
Were target timelines for the launch and conclusion of the procurement process met?	2, 3	Economy
To what extent did the process of competitive dialogue improve the quality and value for money associated with proposals received?	2, 3, 4	Economy Efficiency
Did the AFRS attract sufficient volumes of suitable applicants to meet the demand requirements of the Armed Forces and each service?	4, 5	Efficiency Effectiveness Equity

Evaluation question	Timing	Related aspect of economic evaluation framework
How effectively did the move to a tri-service recruitment approach minimise burdens on applicants?	3, 4, 5	Efficiency Effectiveness Equity
To what extent has the AFRS minimised and/or reduced defence operational disruption resulting from skills shortages and/or gaps?	4, 5	Effectiveness
Has the AFRS improved Armed Forces productivity (e.g. by enabling the redeployment of personnel to operational activity)?	4, 5	Effectiveness
How has the AFRS reduced the total cost and/or improved the efficiency of recruitment activities within the Armed Forces?	4, 5	Effectiveness

1 = Early process evaluation of the AFRP – taking place after procurement is completed and the successful supplier appointed; 2 = Process evaluation of procurement and transition – taking place when the AFRP finishes and the tri-service recruitment approach is implemented; 3 = Initial evaluation of the tri-service recruitment approach – taking place one year after the tri-service recruitment approach is put in place; 4 = Interim evaluation of the tri-service recruitment approach – taking place midway through the delivery period (potentially five years after implementation); 5 = Final evaluation of the tri-service recruitment approach – taking place towards the end of the delivery contract (potentially eight or nine years following implementation)

Data Requirements

The data required for the economic evaluation will largely come from the process and impact evaluations. This will provide evidence of the outputs and outcomes achieved, and how effective and efficient the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach have been in achieving these outcomes.

In addition to the data from the process and impact evaluation, some extra data will need to be collected to support the economic evaluation, including financial data, qualitative information, and information from the wider literature.

Financial Data

Financial data to collect includes the level of programme and tri-service recruitment approach expenditure which was needed to deliver the intervention. This information would need to be provided by year, and ideally disaggregated by the activity it was used for.

Additional Qualitative Information

This information can be collected using the existing qualitative interviews set out for the process and impact evaluations, and would need to cover:

- how the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach minimised the costs of the intervention (for example through the procurement and contract management approach)
- how the approach maximised the outputs achieved by the programme and how these were converted into outcomes
- factors which either enabled the programme to be delivered at minimum cost or maximised outcomes for the budget available
- challenges which impacted upon the cost of the programme.

Information From the Wider Literature

The evaluators should undertake a literature review of wider policy and evaluation evidence for recruitment programmes. This would include major recruitment programmes for large organisations or other public sector recruitment interventions (for example for the health service, Civil Service, education), as well as international evidence of recruitment programmes for Armed Forces in other allied countries (e.g. USA, France). This information will be used to contextualise the findings from the analysis of quantitative data and qualitative information from the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach.

4Es Analytical Approach

It is recommended that the overarching approach to the economic evaluation is guided by the National Audit Office's (NAO) 4Es framework[13], focusing on the economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity of the programme.

The economy aspect is concerned with minimising the cost of resources used while having regard to quality, while the efficiency principle considers the relationship between outputs and the resources used to produce them. Effectiveness concerns the extent to which objectives are achieved, and the relationship between the intended and actual impacts of the service. Finally, the equity aspect concerns the extent to which outcomes reached all intended people. These are summarised further in Figure 2.

The questions above fit into the 4Es framework and should therefore be used to undertake the economic evaluation.

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[13] NAO (2011), DFID's Approach to Value for Money (VfM). Available at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/49551/DFID-approach-value-money.pdf

Figure 1: NAO 4E's Framework
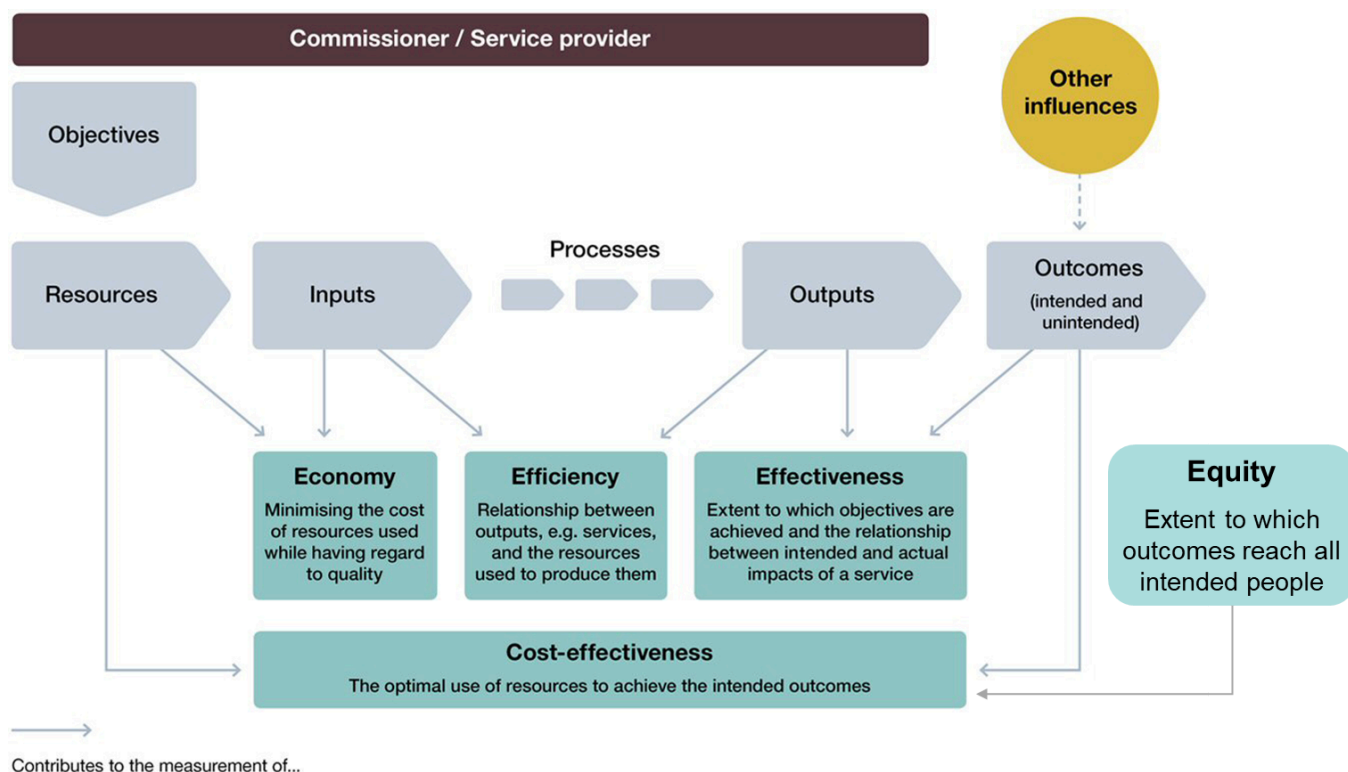
The VfM assessment would be qualitative in nature, utilising the outcome metrics collected in the intervention impact evaluation and data collected in qualitative interviews. In addition to this data, the evaluation team should undertake a review of existing policy and evaluation evidence of recruitment programmes, so that the evidence collected for this evaluation can be compared to other recruitment schemes, to inform the VfM assessment. The scoring criteria for an assessment of VfM is on a scale high-to-low, where:

- High – achieving more than the desired outputs/outcomes given the level of investment
- Adequate – achieving the desired outputs/outcomes given the level of investment
- Low – Not achieving the desired outputs/outcomes given the level of investment

An example of how the evaluation will assess VfM is presented in Table 10. This highlights the evaluation question, the criteria for assessment and key evidence to be included.

Table 10: Example of VfM Assessment

Evaluation Question	Criteria for Assessment	Evidence for Assessment
To what extent did the process of competitive dialogue improve the quality and value for money associated with proposals received?	• Number of bids received (High – more than 3; medium 2-3, low 1) • Quality of bids – scoring and qualitative assessment • Total proposed cost of tri-service approach	• Number of submitted bids • Qualitative interviews with delivery stakeholders and suppliers

	● Outputs to be delivered for price (number and quality) – qualitative assessment	
To what extent has the AFRS addressed skills shortages and gaps for key occupations?	● Change in skills shortages and gaps in the Armed Forces (increase – poor performance, decrease – good performance) ● Change in skills shortages and gaps in the wider economy (contextual information) ● Qualitative information on performance of approach ● Total cost of tri-service approach	● Programme information on skills shortages ● Evidence of skills shortages in the economy (e.g. Employer Skills Survey) ● Qualitative interviews with delivery stakeholders and suppliers
How effectively did the move to a tri-service recruitment approach minimise burdens on applicants (including administrative burdens as well as the time absorbed by participating in associated assessment processes)?	● Change in time required to complete application form (increase – poor performance, decrease – good performance) ● Change in number of assessments to be completed (increase – poor performance, decrease – good performance) ● Change in journey times to assessment centres (increase – poor performance, decrease – good performance) ● Qualitative information about resources required to complete application process	● Applicant survey ● Stakeholder interviews

As a quasi-experimental impact evaluation approach is not feasible for this intervention, the economic evaluation will not be able to utilise a Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) approach to the economic evaluation. A CBA approach utilises the quantitative findings from a quasi-experimental impact evaluation design by converting the quantitative additional impacts an intervention generates into a monetary value and comparing this to the costs associated with delivering the intervention. However, in this case it will not be possible to robustly identify the quantitative additional impact the tri-service recruitment approach has had so no CBA is feasible.

Section 5   Implementation and Management

This section covers the timing of any evaluation activity and the resources required to manage an evaluation.

Timing of Evaluation

The table and figure (overleaf) below present the recommended minimum approach to the timing of evaluations of the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach. These have been designed to take place at opportune times to take key learnings from the delivery of the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach to inform future delivery of the service and lessons for wider Government.

It should be noted that these are the recommended minimum timings for formal evaluations to take place. Alongside the formal evaluations a continuous process of monitoring of performance should be taking place – by analysing the key metrics being collected by the benefits realisation team and reflecting on challenges faced in the delivery of the programme and service.

Table 11: Recommended (Minimum) Timeline for Evaluation

Timing	Description	Process	Outcome	Economic
Early process evaluation of the AFRP – taking place after procurement and evaluation is completed and the successful supplier is contracted. This could take place in 2025.	This would cover some elements of programme design, demand planning, alignment, culture change and procurement processes.	Yes	No	No
Process evaluation of procurement and transition – taking place towards the end of the AFRP as the tri-service recruitment approach is implemented (potentially in 2027).	This would be a process evaluation, focussing on the same topics as above, but provide final learnings about the transition from multiple recruitment services to a single service, which can be taken for future transition projects across the armed forces and wider government.	Yes	No	No
Initial evaluation of the tri-service recruitment approach – taking place one year after the	This would look at the early outcomes achieved, and a process evaluation covering programme design, demand planning,	Yes	Yes	Yes

Timing	Description	Process	Outcome	Economic
tri-service recruitment approach is put in place.	culture change, application and assessment and data and digital topics. This would look to identify key learning opportunities for the future delivery of the tri-service recruitment approach.			
Interim evaluation of the tri-service recruitment approach – taking place midway through the delivery period (potentially five years after implementation).	This evaluation would include a complete process evaluation, focusing on all relevant process topics, an impact evaluation and economic evaluation, identifying what has been achieved to the date of the evaluation, and key lessons for the remaining contract delivery.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Final evaluation of the tri-service recruitment approach – taking place towards the end of the delivery contract. This is potentially during Year 8 (FY 34/35) or Year 9 (FY35/36).	This evaluation would include process, outcome, and economic evaluations. The timing of this evaluation would be based on when the armed forces need key lessons to inform the approach to the next revision of recruitment practices, so that lessons on delivery can feed into the design of the new contract/approach.	Yes	Yes	Yes

Approach Towards Project Management of the Evaluation

It is recommended that the evaluation of the AFRP and AFRS takes place over multiple years. This presents a challenge to the management of the evaluation as the responsibility of managing the intervention will change over time – notably the AFRP is currently being managed by a team

responsible for the transition to the new service, but once the tri-service recruitment approach is implemented responsibility for the service will be handed to HQ AFR. Therefore, it is recommended that a plan for the management of the evaluation is set out, to ensure that the Armed Forces can be an active evaluation partner throughout the lifecycle of the AFRP and AFRS.

The management of the evaluation should be undertaken by the same team responsible for benefits realisation work. This is because this team will have a good level of oversight of the AFRP and AFRS and of the data being used to monitor the benefits of the intervention (which the evaluation will also utilise).

In terms of structure of the project management and governance of the evaluation, there are several recommendations.

Firstly, it is recommended that the relevant governance board for AFRP (Sponsor Group) and AFRS (3* Cabal) provides oversight of the evaluation. The team responsible for the management of the evaluation (detailed below) will report into the relevant governance board about progress. The evaluator should present the key findings from each evaluation to the relevant governance board and include a questions and answers session for all board members to obtain clarity about the findings.

The relevant board will review and comment upon all major outputs. The Hd PMO and Programme Manager, transitioning into HQ AFR (recommendation is SO1 Strategy and Performance Ld), seeking support across the HQ where required, will:

● develop potential Invitations to Tender (ITTs) for the evaluation, describing the requirements and assessment criteria

● sign off on research tools

● critically assess the evaluation approaches being proposed and used, the findings presented and any changes to the evaluation approach which are required during the delivery

In addition to this, the Evaluation Management Team would ideally have experience in managing previous evaluations. Managing the evaluation would not be a full-time role, potentially an average of 0.2 – 0.4 FTE over the course of the delivery of the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach. This staff member could be seconded into the team from other areas of the MoD to support the evaluation and continue to work elsewhere in the MoD simultaneously.

A Benefits Manager, transitioning to HQ's Benefits SO2 Strategy and Performance role will be responsible for ongoing desk level management of the planned evaluation, sharing of information, tracking data collection for the evaluation, and supporting the evaluator.

Annex A   Key Evaluation Questions

Table A: Key Evaluation Questions

Theme	Evaluation questions	Timing of evaluation activity				
		Early process	Final AFRP	Initial tri-service	Interim tr-service	Final tri-service
Programme design and governance	To what extent were appropriate governance arrangements put in place through the AFRP/S to monitor the implementation of the programme?	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A
	To what extent were sufficient resources and capabilities put in place to manage the transition to a single armed forces recruitment process within the required timescales?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
	How effectively were the issues likely to be encountered in the process of transition to a single recruitment service anticipated in the development of the transition plan? Did any unanticipated issues arise and how effectively were they overcome?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
	How far has the implementation of the AFRS minimised any disruption to recruitment practices within the Armed Forces associated with the transition to a tri-service approach?	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demand planning	How effectively were processes put in place to support tri-service demand planning?	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	How effectively has the tri-service approach supported the identification and prioritisation of recruitment needs at both the level of the Armed Forces overall and those for each service?	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Has the approach adopted minimised the prevalance of critical skills shortages or gaps?	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Alignment of assessment standards	How effectively did the AFRS align assessment standards for common roles across the three services?	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Did alignment of assessment standards reduce the number of assessments required (i.e. allow candidates to move between roles and services without the need to retake assessments)?	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Data and digital	Was the required Authority Data Migration Environment put in place (complying with all security requirements) in time to support the transition to a tri-service approach?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
	To what degree did the single applicant platform deliver its intended improvements in efficiency (e.g. in terms of candidate tracking or giving candidates greater choice or control)?	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Culture change	How effectively did the AFRS programme team engage with senior decision makers and recruitment specialists within each Armed Forces to build shared understanding of the rationale for the programme and secure buy-in to its implementation?	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A
	How effectively did the AFRS leverage internal expertise of sS recruitment specialists to support implementation and secure readiness for the tri-Service recruitment approach?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Procurement	Were target timelines for the launch and conclusion the procurement process met?	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
	How effectively did the AFRS engage the private sector in the procurement process?	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Did bidder's participation levels in the procurement process meet expectations?	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A	N/A
	To what extent did the AFRS receive high quality proposals that offered value for money? Did any compromises need to be made? What impact have these compromises	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A

	had on the effectiveness of recruitment practices in the Armed Forces?					
	To what extent did the process of competitive dialogue improve the quality and value for money associated with proposals received?	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A
	How effectively did the contracting mechanism (including the Pricing, Payment, and Incentivisation Mechanism) incentivise the selected provider to deliver against targets and improve performance over time?	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marketing	How effectively did the AFRS raise awareness of careers in the Armed Forces in the general population and/or groups of workers with priority skills and attributes?	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
	How effectively did the AFRS improve the reputation of the Armed Forces as an employer within the general population and/or groups of workers with priority skills and attributes?	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
	To what extent did the AFRS increase interest in pursuing a career in the Armed Forces within the general population and/or groups of workers with priority skills and attributes?	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Did the AFRS attract sufficient volumes of suitable applicants to meet the demand requirements of the Armed Forces and each service?	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Application and assessment process	To what extent did the move to a tri-service recruitment approach maximise flexibility for applicants – in terms of the roles or careers open to them, the timing and location of assessments, the timescale to an offer, and the form of communication (online or in-person)?	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
	How effectively did the move to a tri-service recruitment approach minimise burdens on applicants (including administrative burdens as well as the time absorbed by participating in associated assessment processes)?	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes

	How effectively was engagement with applicants maintained throughout the application process? To what extent were drop-out rates minimised?	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
	How effectively were candidates prepared for assessments? To what extent did this increase likelihood to pass assessments?	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Did the move to a tri-service approach meet candidate timescales from application to onboarding (where appropriate)?	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Did the move to a tri-service approach improve the overall experience for applicants?	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Effects on Armed Forces recruitment	Has the AFRS approach enabled the Armed Forces to meet recruitment demand across the Armed Forces and each service?	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Has the AFRS maintained the quality of recruits and minimised drop-out rates in Phase 1 training?	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes
	Has the AFRS addressed skills shortages and gaps for key occupations?	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes
	To what extent have there been any unintended impacts associated with the move to the AFRS (e.g. loss of internal recruitment capabilities or expertise, loss of flexibility)?	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
	How far has the AFRS maintained an agile and flexible approach for each sS recruitment requirements?	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes	Yes
Impacts on defence capability	To what extent has the AFRS minimised and/or reduced defence operational disruption resulting from skills shortages and/or gaps?	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes
	Has the AFRS improved Armed Forces productivity (e.g. by enabling the redeployment of personnel to operational activity)?	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes

	Has the AFRS reduced the total cost and/or improved the efficiency of recruitment activities within the Armed Forces?	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes	Yes

Annex B   Management Data for Process Evaluation

The table below presents a description of the Management data required for a process evaluation, and a description of how it will be used.

Table B.1: Programme Data Required for Process Evaluation

Data Category	Data Required	Use in Process Evaluation
Financial Data	Public sector expenditure on the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach Expenditure disaggregated by task (for example expenditure on marketing, digital interface, applicant coaching etc.)	This data will be used to support an assessment of the resources directed to different activities provided during the programme and service delivery, supporting an analysis of whether sufficient resources were devoted to the programme.
Resource Data	Data on the number of internal and external roles required to deliver the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach Data on vacancies for these roles	This data will be used to support an assessment of the resources directed to different activities provided during the programme and service delivery, and the skills and experience of individuals used to deliver the programme and the service.
Market Engagement Data	Number of potential suppliers contacted about AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach Number of potential suppliers attending market engagement events	This data will be used to support an assessment of the success of the market engagement activities, whether sufficient potential suppliers were interested in providing the tri-service recruitment approach.
Assessments Data	Number of assessments with revised criteria Number of assessments completed by applicants Number of applicants undertaking multiple assessments Number of assessments passed	This data will be used to assess the effectiveness of the recruitment processes, the coaching and guidance provided to applicants and the alignment of the assessment processes, by exploring the number of assessments with revised criteria, the number of assessments undertaken and the success rate for applicants.
Procurement Data	Number of suppliers engaging in the procurement process Assessment of bids received (scores)	This data will be used to assess the effectiveness of the procurement processes.

Data Category	Data Required	Use in Process Evaluation
Applicant Data	Number of applicants Number of priority/critical roles filled Number of assessments completed per applicant Timescale from application to onboarding Percentage of applicants dropping out of the application process	This data will be used to assess the effectiveness of the tri-service recruitment processes.

Annex C   Key Data Sources for Impact Evaluation with Planned Collection

The table below presents a description of the data sources which are either already being collected or are planned to be collected as part of the tri-service recruitment approach. The table provides a description of the data source and how it will be used in an evaluation.

Table C.1: Existing Data Sources to Measure Outcomes and Use During an Evaluation

Outcome	Data Source and Description	Description of Use for an Evaluation
Awareness of Armed Forces Careers	YouGov public perceptions tracker, owned by MoD Relevant data includes: How well or not do you think you know each of the following organisations? How interested are you in joining either of the following? Armed Forces / reserves / MOD civil service	These are useful indicators of the level of awareness of the armed forces among the general population. However, additional questions could be added to the survey that are more tailored to the outcomes of the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach, for example questions around awareness of different career paths within the armed forces. A further data gap is around the awareness of careers in the armed forces among specific target groups of the population. The survey will pick up views by age, gender and ethnicity, but not by other key target information, such as occupation or educational background. It is recommended that specific, targeted primary research is undertaken with these groups as part of any evaluation.
Reputation of Armed Forces as an Employer	YouGov public perceptions tracker, owned by MoD. Relevant questions include: Thinking now about the UK Armed Forces (Royal Navy, Royal Marines, British Army and the Royal Air Force), could you please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements:	These are useful indicators of the reputation of the armed forces as an employer among the general population. A data gap is around the reputation of the armed forces as an employer among specific target groups of the population. The survey will pick up views by age, gender and ethnicity, but not by other key target

Outcome	Data Source and Description	Description of Use for an Evaluation
	The UK Armed Forces are professional The UK Armed Forces are an equal employer regardless of race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation The UK Armed Forces have modern values and attitudes The UK Armed Forces are open and transparent The UK Armed Forces and Defence looks after its people The UK Armed Forces have appropriate levels of pay, allowances and other benefits The UK Armed Forces are for people like me	information, such as occupation or educational background. It is recommended that specific, targeted primary research is undertaken with these groups as part of any evaluation.
Applicant Drop-out Rates / Candidate Leakage	sS and Provider data. The provider will be expected to collect data from their monitoring of the number of applicants which drop out of the recruitment process – in the benefits modelling document this is titled: "Decreased rate of eligible candidates who drop out of the recruiting pipeline" The provider will collect and report this data annually. The sS will be expected to collect this data point for the year prior to the tri-service model being adopted. To be collected by the sS and the provider. sS may be able to provide applicant dropout rates for prior years – but checks would need to be made on definitions of dropouts and consistency of data across the three services	These are useful indicators of the dropout rate of applicants. Data should be available of the drop-out rate by characteristic (for example gender, ethnicity etc.) and by the service / role they apply for and reason for drop out. This data source will provide all the information required for the evaluation to explore applicant drop-out rates.
Experience of Recruitment Process / Reputation of Armed Forces as a Recruiter	Applicant satisfaction survey – to be developed by the Provider: Aims to collect a Net Promoter Score. To be collected by the sS and Provider for the year prior to implementation, and then annually	The exact indicators to be collected by the supplier is yet to be defined, but aims to include a Net Promoter score. The recruit trainee survey also provides a useful headline indicator

Outcome	Data Source and Description	Description of Use for an Evaluation
	following the adoption of the tri-service recruitment model.

Additionally, the Recruit trainee survey – undertaken with new recruits across the armed forces, with relevant questions on satisfaction with the recruitment process currently undertaken by the Army and collected as a tri-service metric.

This data has been collected annually since 2014/15, with a gap from 2018, but has restarted to inform a baseline from RY 23/24. | of the level of satisfaction with the recruitment process.

It is recommended that either this data collection process, or a separate survey of applicants is used to collect information about several applicant outcomes for the tri-service recruitment approach, including:

Flexibility in the provision of the service, effort required to complete the application process, and the level of preparedness of applicants.

Any research undertaken with applicants would need to be of a large enough scale to allow for subgroup analysis, such as by demographics and the service / role applied for. |
| Number of Applicants | sS and Provider data:

 "Number of applications"

To be collected by the sS and Provider for the year prior to implementation, and then annually following the adoption of the tri-service recruitment model.

sS may be able to provide number of applicants for prior years – but checks would need to be made on definitions of applicants and consistency of data across the three services. | These are useful indicators of the number of applicants. Data on the applications should be available by characteristic (for example gender, ethnicity etc.) and by the service / role they apply for.

This data source will provide all the information required for the evaluation to explore applications. |
| Timeline from Application to Onboarding | sS and Provider data.

"Reduced Recruitment Time Of Flight for Candidates"

To be collected by the sS and Provider for the year prior to implementation, and then annually following the adoption of the tri-service recruitment model.

sS may be able to provide the number of applicants for prior years – but checks would need to be made on definitions of onboarding | These are useful indicators of the timeline for applications. Data on the applications should be available by characteristic (for example gender, ethnicity etc.) and by the service / role they apply for.

This data source will provide all the information required for the evaluation to explore the timeline from application to onboarding. |

Outcome	Data Source and Description	Description of Use for an Evaluation
	and application date and consistency of data across the three services.	
Number of Offers Made to Potential Recruits	sS and Provider data. "Increased inflow" To be collected by the sS and Provider for the year prior to implementation, and then annually following the adoption of the tri-service recruitment model. sS may be able to provide the number of applicants for prior years – but checks would need to be made on definitions of onboarding and application date and consistency of data across the three services.	These are useful indicators of the number of offers made to applicants. Data should be available of the offers made by characteristic (for example gender, ethnicity etc.) and by the service / role they apply for. This data source will provide all the information required for the evaluation to explore the timeline from application to onboarding.
Estate Costs	MoD landholdings - annual data from 2000 The MoD provides data on land holdings in the UK, by top level budget holder, country, type of use and whether owned, leased or with legal rights. This data would include landholdings used for recruitment purposes, and if landholdings are removed from the Armed Forces due to changes in the recruitment approach this could show up in this dataset.	These are useful indicators of the changes in estate costs. However, due to the scale of landholdings by the Armed Forces in the UK, changes made to the estate due to changes in recruitment practices may be marginal, and difficult to detect in the dataset. Additionally, if estate is re-purposed (from recruitment services to another purpose), it will not show up in the dataset. Therefore, although this provides useful headline information, more detail about the estate costs may need to be collected from stakeholder interviews, and programme documentation / data.
Data Quality and Accessibility of Data	KPI sS and Provider data "Increased accessibility and availability of data" To be collected by the sS and Provider for the year prior to implementation, and then annually following the adoption of the tri-service recruitment model.	These are useful indicators of the timeline for applications. This data source will provide good headline indicators of the data quality and availability, but this should be reinforced with qualitative findings.

Outcome	Data Source and Description	Description of Use for an Evaluation
	The exact specification of this indicator is yet to be defined by the AFRP and tri-service recruitment approach.	
Skills Shortage / Hard to Fill Vacancies	sS and Provider data. "Increased inflow for critical and priority roles" To be collected by the sS and Provider for the year prior to implementation, and then annually following the adoption of the tri-service recruitment model. sS may be able to provide information for prior years – however there will be a lack of consistency around the number / types of roles categorised as critical and priority across the three services, therefore historical comparisons are likely to be misleading.	These are useful indicators of the skills shortage / hard to fill vacancies. Data on the applicants should be available by characteristic (for example gender, ethnicity etc.) and by the service / role they apply for. This data source will provide all the information required for the evaluation to explore the skills shortage and hard to fill vacancies.
Diversity of Workforce	UK Armed Forces Biannual Diversity Statistics This data source provides overall statistics of the demographics of the UK Armed Forces, which can be used to change the proportions of the workforce by gender and ethnicity. Data from this source has been available since 2015. sS and Provider data "Increased inflow for all roles" To be collected by the sS and Provider for the year prior to implementation, and then annually following the adoption of the tri-service recruitment model.	The Armed Forces Diversity Statistics will provide useful headline figures of the proportion of the workforce coming from hard-to-reach groups. However, these statistics may not be sensitive to changes made by the tri-service recruitment approach due to the large number of existing personnel. Therefore, this data should be used in conjunction with the provider data on the number of recruits coming from diverse backgrounds each year.
Training Wastage	Drop out from training This information is currently collected by the sS but not in current benefits mapping. However, as the data exists it should be made available to evaluators. Data on training drop-out rates from the sS will be available for years prior to the introduction of the tri-service recruitment approach, and will be available annually after introduction.	These are useful indicators of the number of training drop-outs. Data should be available of the offers made by characteristic (for example gender, ethnicity etc.) and by the service / role they apply for. This data source will provide all the information required for the evaluation to explore the training drop-out rates.

Outcome	Data Source and Description	Description of Use for an Evaluation
Retention	MoD quarterly personnel statistics Indicator - personnel outflow by reason – available since 2018 The MoD currently collects information on outflows, which can be used to explore retention rates within the Armed Forces. This includes data for the reason for individuals leaving the armed forces.	These are useful indicators of the retention of personnel in the armed forces. This data source will provide all the information required for the evaluation to explore the retention rates.
Levelling Up Impacts	There are various datasets available from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) which could support an assessment of Levelling Up impacts as a result of the tri-service recruitment approach. These include: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings: This could be used to explore any changes in earnings in a local area that the recruitment service targets specifically. This data is available annually, and through access agreements in the Secure Research Service, evaluators can access data at a granular geographic level. Annual Population Survey: This could be used to explore any changes in employment or economic activity in a local area that the recruitment service targets specifically. This data is available annually, and through access agreements in the Secure Research Service, evaluators can access data at a granular geographic level. The Department for Work and Pensions also produces DWP data, providing monthly data on benefit claims at a granular geographic level. These data are publicly available.	These data sources are potentially useful to assess the economic impact of the tri-service recruitment approach. However, in order for these datasets to be useful, the recruitment service would need to target specific geographic areas so that the impact can be observed – these indicators will not be useful to assess the impact of the recruitment service at a national level.

Annex D   Non-Experimental Evaluation Approaches

The table below presents a description of theory based evaluation approaches and assessment of their feasibility for this evaluation.

Table D.1: Assessment of Theory-Based Methods

Method Options	Summary and Pros and Cons (Source Magenta Book)	First Cut Assessment and Recommendation
Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA)	Used to compare multiple cases and systematically understand patterns of characteristics associated with desired or undesired outcomes based on qualitative knowledge. Can account for both complex causation (combinations of factors) and 'equifinality' (multiple causes of outcomes). Can identify groups of causal factors in post-hoc evaluation. Systematically analyses case study evidence. Works best with 10-50 cases. Needs consistent data about how those factors affect outcomes and assessment of which are the more successful across case studies	This approach would require a counterfactual group, which as discussed above, is challenging, and is therefore infeasible for this evaluation.
Realist Evaluation	Specific, hypothesised causal 'mechanisms' for an 'outcome' are articulated in 'context' and evidence gathered for each. The 'mechanism' explains why participants may take advantage of an opportunity or not depending on the 'context', and their understanding is key to causal inference. Refined theory of change can identify causal mechanisms. Can inform impact conclusions if a counterfactual is not feasible. However, approaches are time consuming, resource intensive and needs subject-matter expertise. Often difficult to communicate/interpret due to complexity. Does not provide a quantitative effect size.	This approach requires a large volume of qualitative data collection with a wide variety of stakeholders and recruits, to ensure different mechanisms and contexts are fully explored. However, this approach could be useful to explore what aspects of tri-service recruitment approach delivery are successful in achieving outcomes. This approach would not present a quantifiable measure of the impact of the intervention, but could be used either as a complement or in the absence of an approach to identify a quantitative measure.
Process Tracing	A structured method examining a single case of change to test whether a hypothesised causal mechanism, such as that proposed by the Theory of Change, explains the outcome.	This approach could be used taking data collected through qualitative interviews with stakeholders and recruits. This would require detailed data collection from applicants and

Method Options	Summary and Pros and Cons (Source Magenta Book)	First Cut Assessment and Recommendation
	Can test causal hypotheses post-hoc. Must be used with rigour to prevent inferential errors; alternative explanations must be carefully considered. Support for one causal mechanism may not preclude others.	recruits, and would not necessarily identify what mechanisms were driving the achievement of outcomes.
Contribution Analysis	Step-by-step process used to examine if an intervention has contributed to an observed outcome by exploring a range of evidence for the Theory of Change. It gives an evidenced line of reasoning rather than definitive proof. The contribution claim depends on the quality of thinking about the attribution problem and Theory of Change. Works on average effects – not to be used if there is large variability in implementation or outcomes	This approach would combine information collected in the Management Information (and potentially survey) on the achievement of outcomes and qualitative findings from interviews. This would not provide a rigorous estimate of the impact of the tri-service recruitment approach, but would be useful in explaining how the outcomes have been achieved.
Bayesian Updating	Added to other theory-based methods to more rigorously assess whether evidence supports contribution claims. Probabilities of a small number of contribution claims are estimated prior to observation then tested. Requires highly skilled facilitation.	This approach is unlikely to be feasible due to the type of data that would need to be collected.
Contribution Tracing	Participatory mixed method to establish the validity of contribution claims with explicit criteria to guide evaluators in data collection and Bayesian updating to quantify the level of confidence in a claim. Includes a contribution 'trial' with all stakeholders to establish what will prove/disprove the claim. Efficiently focuses on evidence that can increase confidence in a claim. Minimises confirmation bias using 'critical friends' in a testing phase. Intervention needs time to have detectable effects. Must explore other potential causes. Not for comparing interventions.	This approach is unlikely to be feasible due to the type of data that would need to be collected.
Most Significant Change	Participatory method for impact evaluation of complex interventions. Involves collection of significant change stories from the field and systematic selection of the most significant by panels of stakeholders. Interventions are often participatory too. Useful when it is not possible to predict outcomes or when prioritisation of outcomes cannot be agreed.	This approach is not appropriate for the evaluation.

Method Options	Summary and Pros and Cons (Source Magenta Book)	First Cut Assessment and Recommendation
	Builds understanding across stakeholders. Is time consuming and resource intensive and needs robust facilitation	

Annex E   Operationalising a Contribution Analysis Approach

The impact evaluation analysis will follow the six steps of CA. The table below highlights these steps and a brief description of how this will be operationalised. Some of these steps have already been completed as part of the research to develop an evaluation plan but should be revisited by an evaluator to ensure the descriptions and evaluation approach is still appropriate.

Table E.1: Six Steps of Contributions Analysis and Description of Use in Evaluation of the tri-Service Recruitment Approach

Step	Description	Actions in the Evaluation of the tri-Service Recruitment Approach
1	Set out the attribution problem	Review of programme documentation (business case, tender documentation etc.) to establish the reasons for the intervention and the outcomes it aims to achieve, relevant stakeholders and data sources to use as part of the evaluation. This step has already been completed as part of the evaluation scoping study.
2	Develop a theory of change and identify the risks to it	Mapping of activities and outcomes to a theory of change. Identifying key pathways of change for the evaluation. This step has already been completed as part of the evaluation scoping study.
3	Gather existing evidence on the theory of change	Utilise the programme and wider defence data to demonstrate the outcomes that have been achieved by the tri-service recruitment approach. This data is then mapped against the theory of change.
4	Assemble and assess the contribution claim and the challenges to it	Develop a contribution analysis framework (see below) that addresses pathways of change. Assess strength of evidence and gaps to i) amend the contribution claim and pathways of change and ii) support specific design of primary data collection to fill gaps in strength of evidence within the contribution analysis framework.
5	Seek out additional evidence	Designing and carrying out primary data collection with stakeholders and recruits.
6	Revise and strengthen the contribution story	Mapping primary evidence to theory of change and strengthening evidence for/against hypothesised change and contribution to change.

A CA framework will be developed for each case study to support the approach. Below is a simplified example of this framework showing how it will provide a line of sight from the evidence to an assessment of the strength of the causal claim (CC).

Table E.2: Example Contribution Analysis Framework - tri-service Recruitment Approach Provide Coaching and Guidance to Applicants Resulting in Increased Preparedness for Assessments and Increased Pass Rates

Component of CA	Example Breakdown of Contribution Claim to be Tested	Indicator / Evidence that Would Expect to See (as anticipated in the framework at design stage)	Example of Possible Evidence	Strength of Evidence
Plausibility (i.e. evidence that the CC is based on a reasoned ToC)	The successful supplier has been asked (in project documentation) to provide an applicant centred approach.	Evidence from existing literature that guidance and coaching is effective in improving success rates for assessments.	Business case, supplier response, existing evaluation literature for recruitment or training interventions. Primary research	Strong: evidence based on several authoritative sources
Evidence of the expected change occurring	Applicant pass rates increase	Number of assessments undertaken Number of assessments passed	Programme monitoring data	Medium to strong: evidence is observable and verifiable but may not be as a result of the training and guidance.
Evidence that the tri-service recruitment approach contributes to the change occurred as planned	Target population would not have passed the assessment in the absence of the guidance and coaching	Testimony that intervention supported passing the assessment	Recruit research Stakeholder interviews	Medium to strong: Recruits may struggle to consider what would have happened in the absence of the intervention; stakeholders may lack experience of other approaches to preparing for assessment.
Evidence of alternative theories, and other influencing factors	Other factors appear to be influencing observed change	Changes in the requirements for passing assessment	Document review changes to assessment criteria	Medium to strong: evaluation likely to obtain good evidence from a range of

Component of CA	Example Breakdown of Contribution Claim to be Tested	Indicator / Evidence that Would Expect to See (as anticipated in the framework at design stage)	Example of Possible Evidence	Strength of Evidence
		Changes in location / timing of assessments Changes in the starting levels of preparedness of recruits	Primary research with recruits and stakeholders	stakeholders and recruits. Recruits may struggle to identify reasons for passing assessment due to lack of knowledge of previous approaches or of previous cohort ability.
Overarching strength and direction of evidence	N/A	Falling into one of three categories: 1. Evidence is robust and confirms / supports the CC. 2. Evidence is robust and contradicts the CC. 3. Evidence is insufficiently robust to judge the validation of the hypothesised CC.	N/A	N/A
Resulting contribution claim	N/A	Refinement of the hypothesised CC, drawing on the collected evidence of change, influencing factors, and strength of contribution of the tri-service recruitment approach.	At step 4 of contribution analysis, a breakdown of primary evidence required to strengthen claim	N/A

Table E.3: Examples of Factors to Include in Contribution Analysis

External	Armed Forces Recruitment - Internal	Armed Forces – External to Recruitment	Geo-Political
Labour market demand Labour market supply (e.g. reduced supply due to immigration policies) Government policies (e.g. training courses offered, infrastructure projects etc.) Wages offered in competitor markets	Knowledge of Armed Forces careers Desire to work in Armed Forces Ability to recruit trainees with required skills	Armed Forces pay Armed Forces conditions (housing etc.) Locations of base Wider benefits Armed Forces reputation as an employer Technologies required by Armed Forces	Threat of combat Actual combat taking place Threats posed by adversaries