



MILITARY COURT SERVICE
STRATEGIC PLAN – 2026-2030

FOREWARD

The Strategic Plan, owned by the Director of the Military Court Service (MCS), sets the direction for MCS personnel and partners in delivering Military Court business.

The Service Justice System is a vital public service relied upon by hundreds of victims, witnesses, families, and defendants across the UK and overseas to deliver justice outcomes that matter.

Building on the achievements of the past four years, this plan provides a clear roadmap for delivering an operating model centred on timely, impartial, and efficient administration of Service court proceedings. It aims to strengthen confidence in a justice system that is fair, effective, and accessible to all who depend upon it.

The strategy drives a culture of continuous improvement and ongoing modernisation of our court processes. It recognises the value of embracing technology-based systems that enhance efficiency, reduce duplication and bureaucracy, and improve integration with our partners and stakeholders. These reforms lay the groundwork for MCS to deliver a new fully integrated Military Court Listing System (MCLS), with its incumbent in-court digital case management system, Case Center.

Following significant investment in recent years, the MCS is now well placed to consolidate progress, continue to adopt innovative technologies and ensure that the Services have a modern, effective court system that works in the interests of all Service personnel and their families. Looking ahead to 2030, the strategy identifies the areas in which the MCS will continue to modernise and transform, ensuring best value for money and delivering an increasingly efficient and effective criminal court service for the Royal Navy, the Army, and the Royal Air Force.

Through this modernisation, we aim to build greater confidence in and respect for the Service Justice System. We are committed to continue our work in building a leading-edge service that is open, inclusive, and innovative. Success will be delivered through the professionalism, dedication, and integrity of our people, who work every day to uphold the principles of justice.

Cleaven Faulkner
Director Military Court Service
Court Administration officer

Introduction

The Military Court Service operates two permanent Military Court Centres (MCCs) in the UK, located at Bulford and Catterick, with additional court capability in Germany and Cyprus. The Court Martial is fully portable, enabling trials to be held outside these centres where required. Recent examples include Cyprus, Germany, and Gibraltar. All courts are supported by highly trained civil servants employed by the Ministry of Defence.

The principal tasks of the MCS are to:

- Coordinate, administer and support all Service court proceedings both in the UK and overseas.
- Specify Board members as required by law.
- Maintain secure statistical, budgetary, and documentary records of all relevant activities.
- Support the Service Justice Board and the Service Justice Executive Group in developing and implementing policy, shaping the future direction of Service Justice.
- Promote awareness of, and confidence in, the Service Justice System across Defence and to the wider public.
- Contribute to training for Service and civilian personnel involved in the Service Justice System.

Delivering an effective system of Service Justice carries significant reputational importance. As with the civil courts, the MCS must reassure the public that it conducts Service court proceedings with professionalism, impartiality, and integrity.

Scope

This Strategic Plan sets out the key objectives, goals, challenges, and programmes that will drive continuous improvement across the Military Court Service. It outlines how we will strengthen our organisational structure, enhance core processes, improve our culture, and invest in the capabilities required to deliver a modern and resilient court service.

The strategy brings together the integrated elements that will enable the MCS to achieve its core business improvement aims, develop its people, modernise systems and infrastructure, and provide a clear vision for how we will operate in the years ahead.

Background

Managing court business effectively, demonstrating continuous improvement (CI) and maintaining robust standard operating procedures are core requirements for the Military Court Service.

The decision to maintain and enhance a tri-Service court service supported by enduring cross-Service structures reinforces the need for a coherent, integrated

strategy that aligns people, processes, and technology. This ensures that the MCS can continue to deliver its mandated outputs, operate collaboratively and modernise in response to emerging challenges. MCS recognise the need to continue to innovate and seek to cut costs and improve how we operate. Our remarkably successful delivery of tri-service Court Martial Boards is our flag ship of best practise.

The MCS must also maintain close alignment with all areas of the Service Justice System. This is particularly important in relation to information technology, where interoperability and shared standards are essential to delivering a seamless, joined-up systems for the administration of justice.

Vision and Mission

Our Role

The Military Court Service delivers a criminal court service for the Royal Navy, Army, and Royal Air Force, working to protect and uphold the principles of justice. People's needs, expectations, and experiences remain at the heart of how we design, administer, and deliver court services.

Our Vision

To provide high-quality, professional and independent services that support the journey of victims, witnesses, defendants, and families through the Service Justice System.

Our Commitments

- Deliver a Professional, Independent, and Impartial service.
- Invest in smarter, more streamlined processes to deliver better justice for all.
- Maximise listing certainty so that most trials are heard on the day they are scheduled, providing clarity for witnesses, defendants, and legal teams.
- Build a modern, digital court service, aligned with wider Defence and Justice sector reforms.

Our Operating Environment

The MCS continues to evolve rapidly in response to operational demands, financial pressures, infrastructure needs, and the pace of technological change. Entering FY 26/27, our organisation now matches the Ministry of Justice in case management standards, performance reporting and is leading the way in adopting digital tools that improve accuracy, timeliness, and effective case progression.

Recent modernisation has placed the MCS at the forefront of digital justice delivery. MCS have adopted a more proactive rather than reactive approach in addressing IT challenges. This has been demonstrated in the way the digital court has and continues to be adopted. Measures such as Board members and defendant having live access to in court technology with evidence being pushed digitally in the court

room demonstrates why continued investment is critical to ensure resilience, improve efficiency and enhance service delivery.

Strategic Enablers

To deliver our priority outcomes and realise long-term ambitions, our strategy focuses on three key enablers:

1. Workforce, Skills, and Location

We will continue to improve the MCS employee experience. This includes expanding development opportunities, equipping staff with professional and digital skills, and ensuring safe, modern, and well-maintained working environments.

2. Innovation, Technology and Data

We will accelerate digital transformation, deploying innovative technologies that support audio recording of hearings, enhanced evidence presentation, and special measures for adult complainants in sexual offence trials. AI-driven court applications and performance tools will provide real-time management information and deliver tangible benefits for all parties to proceedings.

3. Delivery, Evaluation and Collaboration

Striving for excellence and fostering cross-Service collaboration will remain central to our approach. Continuous improvement, informed by effective evaluation and judicial alignment, will underpin high-quality and timely delivery of court business.

Our Strategy

Our core purpose is to deliver an efficient, fair, and effective criminal court service for the Royal Navy, Army, and Royal Air Force. Continuously evaluating our performance and understanding the needs of our users will remain central to how we operate, innovate, and improve.

Key Strategic Objectives

The MCS will:

- Deliver modern, fair, efficient, and effective administration of the Service Justice System.
- Build confidence in and respect for the Service Justice System.
- Secure best value for money through targeted investment and lifecycle refresh.
- Achieve digital excellence, including AI-enabled transcription and a bespoke Military Court Listing system.
- Strengthen collaboration with Service Justice partners.
- Be an excellent employer, developing a skilled, agile, and resilient workforce.

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- Be subject of a formal inspection by HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate during Q4 2026.

From these objectives, the MCS will continue to:

- Coordinate and support Service court proceedings in the UK and overseas.
- Specify Board members as required by law.
- Maintain secure statistical, budgetary, and documentary records.
- Support the Service Justice Board and Executive Group.
- Promote awareness and confidence in the Service Justice System.
- Contribute to training for Service and civilian personnel supporting Service Justice.
- Maintain our journey of continual improvement as a service.

Our strategy can be expressed by mapping three areas of focus (**people, systems and processes, and buildings**) against those things that we know people want and need when they come into contact with the Service courts. We can also distinguish between things that you would expect to see in any well-functioning system, and those that give us wholly new capabilities – the ‘fundamentals’ as opposed to the ‘cutting edge.’ Both are important: the former is essential for us to meet if we are genuinely to provide the service people rightly expect from us.

1. “The right number of trained people, properly invested in and valued.”

Key Priorities

- Retain, develop, and deploy talent effectively to deliver a high-performing service and drive transformational change.
- Recruitment and retention have historically been challenging. Increasing continuity, experience and capability require a more flexible and responsive recruitment model, combined with targeted development and skills investment.

To deliver this priority, the MCS must:

- Provide high-quality training for new systems and processes.
- Strengthen digital skills across the workforce.
- Foster an inclusive, empowered culture where staff are empowered, have autonomy and trust.
- Support career progression and enable staff to build long-term careers within Defence.

We will:

Develop and implement a strategic workforce plan, building a rounded, multi-skilled, and resilient workforce across all areas of the organisation.

2. “Modern, efficient, digitally enabled processes that enhance performance and user experience.”

Key Priorities

- Manage performance across both court centres and respond rapidly to any performance dips.
- Refresh and modernise technology services and ways of working across the MCS.
- Increase capacity and capability while improving user experience.

Digital transformation is central to achieving these ambitions. The MCS requires a modern, secure, and fully integrated information management system to replace the existing Service Court Information Management System (SCIM) and associated manual processes.

This new system will provide authoritative capability for:

- Court listings and scheduling
- Case progression
- Performance monitoring
- Management information and analytics
- Compliance with statutory timelines

The MCS has already adopted best practice from the Ministry of Justice, reducing dependence on resource-intensive business processes and improving timeliness and accuracy. To succeed, we must ensure interoperability with wider Service Justice IT strategies and continue modernisation at pace.

We will:

- Fully deploy a digital core technology environment and become standard in court operations.
- Prepare for AI-enabled transcription, representing a major advance in accuracy and speed.
- Deliver an integrated Military Court Listing System fully integrated with Case Center.
- Deliver a contractual capability to meet MOD Secure by Design mandatory protocols for the accreditation and assurance of IT applications and software.
- Embed digital recording and evidence presentation systems aligned with Service and civilian justice partners.
- Refresh and renew our Section 28, Case Center (in-court case management system) and our Evidential Presentation System, including Microsoft Teams and Medio integration.
- Enhance Special Measures equipment for vulnerable witnesses.
- Explore real-time translation capability for remote observers.
- Install upgraded CCTV and Tannoy systems at both court centres.

3. “Modern, secure, user-centred facilities that support new ways of working.”

Key Priorities

- Deliver tangible improvements in court buildings, strengthen security, and ensure facilities support modern IT applications.

MCS facilities must reflect the seriousness and professionalism of Service Justice.

Located on the perimeter of military establishments, they must balance:

- Public access rights under Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights with
- Defence security obligations.

Given regular public and media attendance and the potential for security risks enhanced physical, procedural and information security is essential.

We will:

- Strengthen physical and procedural security measures, including access control, screening, and CCTV.
- Restructure the court team office space at Bulford with direct support from Army Infrastructure services.
- Maintain a positive security culture across all staff.
- Improve day-to-day maintenance and facilities management.
- Expand business continuity options and explore revenue opportunities with partners.
- Ensure courtrooms are available in the right place, at the right time, and in the right condition.
- Working with defence partners with a programme to invest in our Court Centre infrastructure and service to maintain current high standards of maintenance.

Cleaven Faulkner
Director MCS