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Policy

Zero Tolerance to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse V3.0

1 What You Need to Know

This policy is based on current legislation and reputable sources such as GOV.UK and Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS).

Defence enforces zero tolerance for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), which violates our values, undermines credibility, and threatens operational success. Defence personnel must not harm populations encountered during their duties. This document defines SEA behaviours, outlines prevention, reporting, and response measures, and serves as the authoritative policy for all Defence staff, to ensure Defence personnel act lawfully, professionally and ethically. In line with other Defence zero-tolerance policies, zero tolerance means that every report of SEA will be acted on through a prompt and efficient investigation. There is a presumption of discharge/ dismissal for those who breach this policy.

Preventing and reporting actual or suspected SEA is everyone's responsibility. This policy sets the minimum standards and required actions.

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 SEA refers to sexual activity involving a power imbalance and is widespread, especially in areas affected by conflict and displacement. A full definition can be found at para 4.1. The [House of Commons International Development Committee](#) 2019 report documents such cases among aid workers and peacekeepers over the past twenty years worldwide. SEA is defined by the offender's status and the organisation to which they belong or are serving when they engaged in the criminal activity, exploitation or abuse ([Conflict-related sexual violence and sexual exploitation and abuse - Independent Commission for Aid Impact](#)). The international community has acknowledged its serious impact and taken steps to address it, requiring organisations to uphold human rights and protect all individuals from sexual and gender-based violence, including SEA.
- 1.1.2 SEA often stems from gender inequality, discrimination, and violence. Significant power imbalances between Defence personnel and those they serve can lead to exploitation for sexual gain. Strong systems are needed to uphold organisational integrity. SEA may contribute to modern slavery and human trafficking by driving demand for sex workers, further destabilising communities and increasing conflict. Defence personnel must act responsibly to prevent SEA.

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2 Applicability

2.1 Applicability of the Policy

- 2.1.1 This policy applies to all Defence personnel working or carrying out Defence activity overseas, including regular and reserve forces (when subject to service law as per s367 Armed Forces Act 2006 (AFA 06)), as well as Defence-employed civilians working or acting on Defence's behalf (including CONDOs (Contractors on Deployed Operations) when Civilians Subject to Service Discipline (CSSD) as defined in s.370 AFA 06).
- 2.1.2 Defence personnel represent the UK, the Ministry of Defence (MOD), and their Service. They must follow this policy at all times when outside of the UK for work or Defence activities, including evenings, weekends, and leave taken in the host country. For the purposes of this policy, the UK includes British Overseas Territories (BOT), the Isle of Man, and Crown dependencies (Guernsey and Jersey). This policy is applicable as soon as personnel cross a BOT border into another country.
- 2.1.3 This policy does not apply to:
- a. Behaviours more appropriately covered by other policies, for example 'Zero Tolerance to Sexual Offences and Sexual Relationships between Instructors and Trainees'. Legal advice can be sought for guidance on the appropriate policy.
 - b. Activities in the UK, where law and Chain of Command oversight are considered adequate.
 - c. Family members and dependants of Defence personnel. However, if they are designated as CSSD (s.370 AFA 06) and commit a criminal/ non-criminal conduct offence, they may be dealt with through the Service Justice System.
 - d. SEA committed by other forces or nations (should be reported via the appropriate Chain of Command).
 - e. Sub-contractors and local staff, though measures should ensure awareness and consequences for misconduct.
- 2.1.4 The policy doesn't cover the UK or personal leave abroad, with the exception of leave taken in the country in which the staff member is stationed or undertaking work as per para 2.1.2. Any Defence personnel who use their position within Defence to undertake activity defined as SEA, or cause reputational harm to

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Defence will be dealt with under existing policies, for example breach of the Service Test.

2.2 Rationale

- 2.2.1 Defence personnel play a vital role both at home and abroad, supporting national security and promoting UK interests. They are deployed and stationed globally performing essential tasks such as preventing terrorism, ensuring open sea lanes, and providing humanitarian aid, often operating in situations where power dynamics are unequal between themselves and those they assist.
- 2.2.2 This policy applies to any country where Defence members are based or deployed, due to risks to vulnerable populations. Defence personnel often operate in high-risk, hostile environments, increasing power imbalances with those they assist. Even in safer areas, Defence people may come into contact with persons who have been coerced or trafficked and are therefore subject to an imbalance of power which may undermine Defence and UK Government goals and negatively affect operational effectiveness and influence.

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3 Defence Legal and Policy Framework

3.1 Defence Legal and Policy Framework. Certain SEA activities are already considered criminal or Service offences. Defence personnel should note:

- a. **Service Justice System (SJS):** Under the AFA 06, the SJS has jurisdiction to consider offences committed by Persons Subject to Service Law and Civilians Subject to Service Discipline. This includes criminal and non-criminal conduct (see [JSP 830: Manual of Service Law](#)). Sexual offences can be prosecuted within the SJS with punishments equivalent to UK civilian courts.
- b. Cases of SEA could also be dealt with through relevant Service disciplinary offences under AFA 06 (non-criminal conduct offences) including disobedience to a lawful command (s12); contravention of standing orders (s13); conduct prejudicial to good order and discipline (s19) and disgraceful conduct of a cruel or indecent kind (s23).
- c. For Service personnel, SEA behaviours may breach the Service Test or other Zero Tolerance policies and result in administrative action, up to and including discharge. For civilian staff (MOD Main), misconduct policies apply, and criminal SEA leads to procedures under the *Handling Arrests, Charges, Police Cautions and Criminal Convictions* policy; for non-criminal cases, refer to the *Misconduct and Discipline Policy and Process*.
- d. **UK Criminal Justice System (CJS).** SEA activity can constitute a criminal offence under UK law, including offences committed abroad covered by the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (SOA 03) under section 72. Some overseas sexual offences are prosecutable in both UK civilian courts and the SJS, and may be investigated by UK civilian police.
- e. **Local law.** SEA can be a criminal offence in the country where it occurs, leading to concurrent jurisdiction between the CJS, SJS, and local authorities. Which body investigates or prosecutes may depend on international agreements (such as a Status of Forces Agreement), a non-legally binding Memorandum of Understanding or Protocol. Defence personnel engaging in SEA may commit a Service offence anywhere in the world, even if the conduct is lawful locally.
- f. **Safeguarding obligation.** Safeguarding obligations for Defence people in the UK and overseas are laid out in JSP 834.

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4 Definitions and Behaviours

4.1 Acts that constitute SEA

4.1.1 As defined in the [UK Strategy: Safeguarding Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment within the Aid Sector](#), in this policy, SEA refers to both criminal and other exploitative or abusive behaviours, defined as:

- a. **Sexual exploitation.** Any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the exploitation of another¹. Acts that constitute sexual exploitation include, but are not limited to, the exchange of money, goods or other commodities and or services, employment or any exchange of assistance that is due to the local population in exchange for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour. All such transactional sex is a form of sexual exploitation. Sexual relationships based on inherently unequal power imbalances are a form of sexual exploitation.
- b. **Sexual abuse.** Any actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. Acts which constitute sexual abuse include but are not limited to any action or behaviour of a sexual nature that coerces, threatens or forces a person to engage in sexual activity.

4.1.2 Prohibited conduct may amount to a criminal offence, a Service offence or misconduct which justifies disciplinary procedures or administrative action being taken. The following is not exhaustive but provides a guide to the nature of behaviours which offend against this policy.

- a. **Sexual offences.** This definition of SEA refers to acts that are sexual offences under England and Wales law (or would be, if committed there), mainly as listed in SOA 03 and include:
 - (1) rape and other forms of sexual assault.
 - (2) child sex offences (including sexual activity with a person under 16).
 - (3) abuse of a position of trust.

¹ Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, 9 Oct 2003; International Development Select Committee Announcement No 45 - Report Publication: Progress on tackling sexual exploitations and abuse of aid beneficiaries, 14 Jan 21.

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- (4) soliciting in a street or public place.
- (5) inciting prostitution.
- (6) paying for the sexual services of a sex-worker who has been coerced using force or other exploitative conduct.

b. Transactional sex refers to exchanging sex or sexual acts for payment, goods, services, employment, or any form of assistance, including aid (food, clothing, or shelter). It also covers threats to withhold help in return for sexual favours, procuring transactional sex for others, and includes but is not limited to sexual intercourse, sexual penetration, or sexual touching.

4.2 Other potentially harmful behaviour

- 4.2.1 **Sexual activity with a person under 18.** The SOA 03 states that any sexual activity with someone below the UK age of consent is a crime regardless of a lower local age of consent abroad. In the UK, consent is normally legal at 16 but rises to 18 when one party holds a position of trust. The UN defines anyone under 18 as a child for its missions. Defence personnel must know both local and UK laws for age of consent. UK law on age of consent will continue to apply, and the local law on age will apply if higher than UK law. Mistaken belief of a child's age or in their consent may not constitute a viable defence ([Secretary-General's Bulletin: Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.](#)). For more details, refer to the Statutory guidance: [Working together to safeguard children.](#)
- 4.2.2 **Gateway behaviours.** Caution is advised regarding 'gateway behaviours' such as visiting strip clubs, brothels, or red-light districts; these locations are linked to transactional sex and potential SEA. Such venues may involve trafficked or coerced individuals and connections to organised crime, posing security risks for Defence personnel. Defence members must recognise these dangers, actively avoid contributing to unlawful or harmful activities, and ensure their actions do not appear to endorse policy breaches.

4.3 Behaviours this policy does not apply to

- 4.3.1 The policy excludes lawful relationships between individuals over the UK age of consent, unless they are transactional, exploitative, or abusive.

4.4 Rationale

- 4.4.1 Defence personnel must comply with UK and local laws, maintain professionalism, and represent Defence and the UK appropriately. They should not misuse their position for personal gain. The behaviours described above are prohibited as they

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may be harmful, unlawful, expose personnel to risks, or damage the reputation of Defence and the UK.

- 4.4.2 Transactional sex is addressed in this policy due to its frequent links to exploitation and potential harm to relations with host states, local communities, and the UK's reputation. In operational settings, such activities may provoke hostility from locals and compromise the safety and effectiveness of UK forces. Sex workers are often trafficked, coerced, underage, or connected to organised crime, even in places where sex work is regulated. Engaging with sex workers, particularly in illegal establishments, can expose Service personnel to blackmail and criminal activity. Buying or selling sexual services may be unlawful depending on the territory, and related offences—such as kerb crawling or paying for services from trafficked or underage individuals—are prosecutable worldwide under Service law.

4.5 Guiding questions

- 4.5.1 The policy applies if the reported behaviour:

- a. occurred outside the UK in a country where Defence personnel were present for Defence-related activities; and
- b. is sexual in nature; and
- c. is criminal or exploitative or abusive or transactional (see para 4.1.2 b).

- 4.5.2 Where the victim was over the age of 16 but under the age of 18 at the time of the offence and the person subject to complaint was in a position of trust, legal advice should be sought to confirm whether the behaviour is criminal.

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5 Consequences of SEA

5.1 Consequences of SEA for victims

5.1.1 SEA can cause immediate and long-term harm to victims' physical, emotional, and mental health, including but not limited to:

- a. Post-traumatic stress disorder, especially to those who may have already experienced Conflict Related Sexual Violence.
- b. Depression, anxiety and physical injury.
- c. Unplanned pregnancy.
- d. Sexual health concerns and transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, especially among those without treatment access.
- e. Stigmatising victims within their community and placing them at risk of ostracization, loss of employment, isolation and increased vulnerability.
- f. Reinforcing harmful economies based on 'survival-sex' and contributing to Human Trafficking and Organised Crime.

5.2 Consequences of SEA for the subject of complaint

5.2.1 If found guilty of SEA, a person may face severe consequences, including the following:

- a. **Criminal record.** Investigation will follow any report of SEA, which may result in criminal proceedings and a criminal record and appropriate sentence.
- b. **Career implications.** Investigations may lead to disciplinary or administrative action that could impact the subject's security or employment status.
- c. **Child support.** Should paternity be proven, the parent may be held to account for child support.
- d. **Security.** This may pose risks such as physical or identity theft, blackmail, or espionage. See [JSP 440: The Defence Manual of Security](#) for more details.

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- e. **Health.** Certain behaviours can lead to sexually transmitted diseases, regardless of guilt.

Note: Anyone who has had unprotected sex outside of a long-term relationship may risk HIV or STDs. Seeking medical advice is strongly recommended, and their report will be treated confidentially by medical staff.

5.3 Consequences of SEA for Defence

5.3.1 The actions of an individual who commits SEA have significant consequences for Defence.

- a. **Operational effectiveness:** SEA harms those Defence is responsible for. Protection of civilians is a specified task in certain mandates, and an implied task in others. SEA incidents can lead to staff repatriation, strains local relations, risks peace and security, hinders reconstruction, and endangers personnel.
- b. **Reputation:** Any instance of SEA damages the reputation of Defence and the UK, potentially affecting international partnerships as per [UNSC S/RES/2272 on UN Peacekeeping Operations](#)
- c. **International law violations:** SEA may violate [International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law](#).
- d. **Victim support:** SEA often requires ongoing victim assistance, resulting in additional costs to Defence and HMG.

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6 Organisational Governance and Responsibilities

6.1 Responsibilities. The following have specific responsibilities under this policy:

6.1.1 sS or Joint Force Generating Authorities, Personnel Centres and Career Managers. This is defined as those organisations who have responsibility either for the deployment of or posting of people on all Defence activity. These include:

- a. **Cyber and Space Operations Command (CSOC)** manages overseas joint operations and has responsibility for UK Special Forces.
- b. **PJHQ.** Permanent Joint Headquarters has responsibility for the deployment of Defence people on:
 - (1) UN deployments.
 - (2) standing operations.
 - (3) DE&S Contracts / ES / Project Teams.
- c. **Single Service Operational Commands.** These are:
 - (1) Land Operations Command (LOC).
 - (2) Maritime Operations Command (MOC).
 - (3) Air Operations Command (AOC).
- d. **Standing Joint Command (SJC).** This includes Standing Joint Force elements deployed through SJC.
- e. **Personnel Centres and Career Managers.** For all sS.
- f. **sS or Joint Force Generating Authorities, Personnel Centres and Career Managers** are to:
 - (1) include SEA training in pre-deployment and deployment routines (see Annex A).
 - (2) add SEA provisions to all relevant orders, guidelines, and policies for deployed personnel.

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(3) appoint a qualified Focal Point for all formed Unit deployments. This is a trained and empowered person (in rank, appointment and authority) to meaningfully ensure adherence to the policy.

(4) Convene a Standing Focal Point Committee as required.

6.1.2 **Command / Line Management (inc DE&S equivalent)** must ensure their personnel understand this policy and expected conduct standards, and know they will be accountable for violations. Commanders are to:

- a. Recognise that SEA can be a war crime; commanders must actively prevent it as outlined in International Humanitarian Law and [Joint Service Publication 383, The Joint Service Manual of the Law of Armed Conflict](#).
- b. Promote a culture that deters and prevents SEA. They must conduct risk assessments at the start of assignments or deployments for their HA (see Annex B and E).
- c. Designate a qualified and empowered SEA Focal Point within HQ.
- d. Clearly state in orders that SEA is prohibited (see Annex C for a template and consult legal advisers as needed).
- e. Make personnel aware of the local age of consent.
- f. Identify establishments in their area that may enable harmful or criminal activity, and act through education or restrictions.
- g. Encourage reporting and proactively communicate complaints and reporting mechanisms and processes in line with Defence and/or international partners.
- h. Report all suspected SEA cases involving Defence personnel immediately to Service Police. COs must report any sexual offending to the Service Police in line with [JSP 830: Manual of Service Law](#).
- i. Ensure civilian staff understand this policy.

6.1.3 **Standing Focal Point Committee** will be formed to support SEA allegation response and coordination. The committee will include representatives from:

- a. relevant sS or Joint Force Generating Authority.

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- b. sS CoC if a Service person is suspected.
- c. Civ HR if a civilian employee is suspected.
- d. the relevant in-theatre commander.
- e. sS Legal Advisers.
- f. AFFS Global Safeguarding Team.
- g. Service Police.
- h. MOD Human Security (if required).
- i. the Joint UN PK Policy Lead (if it is a UN operation).
- j. Directorate of Defence Communications (DDC).

This Committee will support the CoC and enable:

- a. the in-theatre commander to make informed decisions.
- b. a coordinated, coherent and timely communications strategy.
- c. Reporting actions to be completed and appropriate investigations considered/initiated.
- d. lessons Identified to be captured and centrally held.

This committee will initially be convened through the sS or Joint Force Generating Authority, but any ongoing actions will be coordinated by the CoC / LM of the subject of complaint.

6.1.4 **sS** are to nominate SEA leads who are to:

- a. implement the SEA policy.
- b. ensure that appropriate training on SEA is undertaken and records kept. Guidance is at Annex A.
- c. ensure wider sS policy includes references to SEA where applicable.

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- d. ensure that provisions on SEA are included in relevant orders, guidelines and policy.
- e. Ensure that all reports of SEA incidents within their Units under their authority are centrally recorded detailing investigation conducted and outcome as per para 8.2.
- f. provide input to internal and external reporting and Freedom of Information requests relating to incidents occurring in their Units under their authority.

6.1.5 **Service Police forces** are to:

- a. appoint a Focal Point for SEA.
- b. ensure that their personnel are suitably qualified and experienced (SQEP) to understand the implications and responses required when investigating SEA.

6.1.6 **Mobilisation Centres.** sS mobilisation centres (including MTMC for the Army and HMS Nelson for the Navy) are to deliver training on SEA to all Individual Augmentees.

6.1.7 **Defence Liaison Staffs and Foreign Service Attaches.** Staff must complete mandatory training and ensure all activities in their Area of Responsibility (AOR) comply with this JSP. They should also promote understanding of SEA to help prevent harmful behaviours.

6.1.8 **Directorate of Defence Communications (DDC)** are to support ongoing internal SEA communications and be ready to respond to reports of SEA in the media.

6.1.9 **Individual Responsibility.** All Defence personnel must promptly report any SEA allegations to the CoC or Service Police and fully cooperate with investigations. Everyone is responsible for preventing and reporting SEA within their authority.

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7 Prevention of SEA

7.1 Screening. Screening and risk assessing is required to ensure individuals with a history of sexual offending/ currently under investigation do not pose a risk during Defence activities. Screening will take place for:

- a. Defence personnel on the Violent and Sex Offenders Register
- b. Ongoing investigations into sexual offences or inappropriate sexual behaviour

7.1.1 Responsibilities:

- a. sS must use existing procedures to identify and risk assess relevant individuals before deployments or postings.
- b. Civ HR, DBS, DE&S Casework Team, and Support to Operations Team (PJHQ) will implement processes for managing and sharing information on MOD civilian employees.

7.1.2 Exemptions. Contractors are currently not subject to screening.

7.1.3 Implications. If risk information is identified, a risk assessment must be completed using the Annex D template. The Force Generating Authority reviews the assessment and may issue a waiver if risks are low and operational needs are high. If uncertain, consult Safeguarding leads, formation J1, or CivHR/DE&S.

7.2 Internal Training. SEA training must be conducted by:

- a. All Defence people, every three years.
- b. Defence people deploying on any Defence task outside of the UK, within the past 12 months.

7.3 Internal Training and Defence Engagement provides opportunities to raise awareness and prevent SEA in the following areas:

- a. train, advise and assist capacity building campaigns.
- b. as part of Short-Term Training Teams' (STTTs) delivery to other nations.
- c. when working with or supporting partner militaries.

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- 7.3.1 Under the Zero Tolerance to Sexual Offences and Sexual Relationships between Instructors and Trainees, any authority figure who has a sexual relationship with a trainee or recruit will be discharged.

7.4 Wider Mitigation Measures

- a. **Risk assessments.** All approved Defence activities must include a pre-deployment risk assessment for SEA covering force protection policies such as curfews, non-fraternisation, alcohol rules, uniform protocols, and off-limits areas. See Annex B for guidance.
- b. **Welfare facilities.** Providing deployed personnel with [welfare and recreational facilities](#), including regular access to families and support networks is strongly encouraged.
- c. **Communications.** Internal and, when possible, external messaging to increase SEA awareness among both personnel and local populations should be utilised.

7.5 Audit of Preventative Mechanisms:

- a. **Commanders' Self-Assessment:** Conduct on handover/takeover and annually, then submit to Higher Authority using the template in Annex E.
- b. **Administration Inspections:** Ensure routine checks include SEA mitigation by verifying:
 - (1) A Focal Point is appointed.
 - (2) Risk assessments are current.
 - (3) Complaints/reporting mechanisms are in place.
 - (4) Good practices and lessons learned are documented.
- c. **Annual Assurance Exercise:** The policy owner must annually confirm measures are in place, offer support, and share best practices.

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8 Lessons and Repository

8.1 Lessons Identified

8.1.1 Lessons should be captured via:

- a. **Investigations.** Lessons highlighted to the policy owner.
- b. **J1 Audits.** Lessons identified and good practices highlighted to the policy owner.
- c. **Formal Lessons.** Lessons captured through existing processes.

8.2 Central Repository. The Service Police (through CONNECT), relevant sS Personnel Casework/ Discipline teams, DBS and the DE&S Casework Teams shall maintain a record of all cases under this policy including their disposal.

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9 Legal and Strategic Frameworks

9.1 International Frameworks

9.1.1 **United Nations (UN).** The United Nations Security Council Resolutions related to SEA, for example, [General Assembly Resolution A/Res/78/331](#), require UN member states to report criminal conduct, to investigate wrongdoing, to deliver training, to protect the rights of victims and enforce command led accountability. SEA is prohibited by the UN Staff Regulations and Rules pursuant to the [UN Secretary General Bulletin ST/SGB/2003/13](#). UN member states commit to holding personnel and leadership accountable for proper conduct through [supporting the UN zero-tolerance policy](#) on all forms of SEA, and have a particular duty of care towards women and children. More recently the UN's [Circle of Leadership](#), of which the British Prime Minister is a Member, has signed up to the UN's [Voluntary Compact](#) on SEA. The UN voluntary compact is a demonstration of political will and intended to send a signal to the world of a joint commitment and mutual accountability on the part of the United Nations and Member States on preventing and addressing SEA. In practice, this means that an effective response must be undertaken following a report of possible misconduct and that appropriate disciplinary action must be taken against perpetrators. The UK is aligned with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's [Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#) and leads the negotiation and drafting of resolutions on Women, Peace and Security within the UN Security Council.

9.1.2 **NATO** upholds individual liberty, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. Under the [Code of Conduct](#), staff are expected to act with integrity, loyalty, accountability, and professionalism, reflecting NATO's principles of integration, inclusiveness, and integrity in accordance with the Action Plan for the Implementation of the NATO/EAPC Policy on Women, Peace and Security 2021-2025. The alliance has a zero-tolerance policy toward SEA, as such actions violate its core values and threaten mission success. The UK, as a NATO member, is committed to following and implementing [The NATO Policy on Preventing and Responding to SEA](#).

9.2 National Frameworks

9.2.1 The [UK Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan](#) guides military, political, and humanitarian work, with a focus on building international partnerships². Through

² Due to be updated 2026



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efforts like the [Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative](#)³ and the [cross-government strategy on Violence Against Women and Girls \(VAWG\)](#), the UK prioritises ending gender-based violence. The UK is committed to improved SEA prevention training and ensuring appropriate action is taken against perpetrators. Defence also supports [Safeguarding Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment within the Aid Sector](#) and [protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict](#).

³ Due to be updated 2026.

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10 Document Information

10.1 Document Coverage

This Policy supersedes all previous MOD Policy on Zero Tolerance to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. The totality of documents included in this Policy Suite are listed in the Policy and Guidance Portal.

10.2 Document Information

Filename:	Zero Tolerance to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy
Document ID:	JSP 769 V3.0 May 2026
Owning Function / Team:	Conduct and Justice Directorate
Service Owner (1*):	Head, Service Justice Discipline and Conduct Team
Approving Authority:	Director General, People and Standards

10.3 Document Versions

Version	Pub. Date	Revision History	Revised Pages
2	Feb 2025	Policy Simplification Revamp	N/A
3	May 2026	Policy Simplification	N/A

MOD will review this Policy in two years, or when changes to legislation or best practice dictates.

10.4 Linked Policies

JSP Number	JSP Name
JSP 383	Joint Service Manual of the Law of Armed Conflict
JSP 753	Employment and Mobilisation of UK Reserve Forces
JSP 763	Behaviours and Informal Complaints Resolution
JSP 770	Armed Forces Welfare Support Policy
JSP 830	Manual of Service Law
JSP 834	Safeguarding
JSP 839	Service Justice System – Services for Witnesses and Victims of Crime
JSP 893	Safer Recruitment and Employment
JSP 985	Human Security in Defence

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DINs	Zero Tolerance to Sexual Offences and Sexual Relationships between Instructors and Trainees, Zero Tolerance to Unacceptable Sexual Behaviour
MOD Main	Misconduct and Discipline Policy and Procedures: <u>Conduct and Discipline</u>
MOD Main	Handling Arrests, Charges, Police Cautions & Convictions: <u>Conduct and Discipline</u>
DE&S	Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Policy
DE&S	Standards, Conduct and Discipline Policy

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11 Diversity and Inclusion

MOD respects and values people of all backgrounds. This policy is designed to ensure all employees are treated in a fair, transparent and consistent manner. All those involved in the management of MOD employees must abide by legislation and should adhere to MOD policy.

For more information on diversity and inclusion, please see the [MOD Diversity & Inclusion Pages](#) on MODnet.

This policy has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EA).

Document	Date	Owner
Saved on SJDC Sharepoint	12 May 2026	SO2 Service Police Policy

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12 FAQs

• What is sexual exploitation?

Sexual exploitation is defined as any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the exploitation of another.

• What constitutes sexual exploitation?

Acts that constitute sexual exploitation include the exchange of money, goods or other commodities or services, employment or any exchange of assistance that is due to the local population in exchange for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour. All such transactional sex is a form of sexual exploitation.

• What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse is defined as any actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

• What constitutes sexual abuse?

Acts which constitute sexual abuse include any action or behaviour of a sexual nature that coerces, threatens or forces a person to engage in sexual activity.

• Why can't you purchase sex in countries where it is otherwise legal?

It is not always easy to know when it is lawful to purchase sex, just because it happens does not mean it is lawful. In some countries where we serve it is wholly unlawful, but Service persons who do not know this could face criminal prosecution. In some countries the law differs between territories, again adding to the difficulty of knowing when it is lawful and when it is not. Some countries have a 'buyers' law' which means it is lawful to sell sex, but not lawful to buy it. Finally, there are very high levels of trafficked and coerced persons who are sex workers, sexual activity with such persons is unlawful under British law. This policy stems from the harms that could be caused to those working as sex workers, as well as the risk that Service persons could commit criminal offences.

• Why is buying sex such a big deal? Surely it is contributing money to people who need it.

The buying of sex from people who are vulnerable contributes to harmful economies and exploits people who are mostly in need of protection. Those who feel strongly about supporting people who are in need of money can do so in ways other than through purchasing sex.

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13 Abbreviation Table

Abbreviation	Meaning
AFA 06	Armed Forces Act 2006
AOC	Air Operations Command
AOR	Area of Responsibility
CoC	Chain of Command
CONDO	Contractors on Deployed Operations
CRSV	Conflict Related Sexual Violence
CSSD	Civilians Subject to Service Discipline
DDC	Directorate of Defence Communications
EAPC	Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HMG	His Majesty's Government
LOC	Land Operations Command
LM	Line Manager
MOC	Maritime Operations Command
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
PJHQ	Permanent Joint Headquarters
PSVI	Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
sS	Single Service
SJC	Standing Joint Command
SJS	Service Justice System
SOA 2003	Sexual Offences Act 2003
SPA	Service Prosecuting Authority
SQEP	Suitably Qualified, Experienced and Trained Personnel
STTT	Short Term Training Team
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls

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14 Glossary

Accountability	Refers to measures taken to acknowledge, assume responsibility for, and remedy violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, policies, rules and regulations, mission-specific regulations.
Civilian employees	Individuals directly employed by Defence who do not form a part of the Service component.
Complainant	A person who makes an report of misconduct committed by a member of Defence but whose claims have not yet been established. A complainant may be a victim, witness or any other person who is aware of the misconduct.
CONDOS	Contractors Deployed on Operations are civilian personnel supporting the force (primarily employees of UK MOD Contractors) and comprise of UK nationals, third country nationals and locally recruited workers from the country in which the MOD is operating: JSP 567: Contractor Support to Operations (CSO)
Defence people	Service personnel or any other person employed by or acting on behalf of Defence.
Local civilians	Staff employed locally to support Defence activity but who are not directly working for or contracted to Defence.
Perpetrator	A person who commits an act of SEA.
Safeguarding	Protecting adults' rights to live in safety free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the adults' wellbeing is promoted, including, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action. The MOD has adopted the definition of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as laid out in <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)</i> as protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of children's health or development; ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; taking action to ensure all children have the best outcomes.
Service personnel	Members of the regular and reserve forces.

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Sexual violence	Acts of a sexual nature against one or more persons or that cause such person or persons to engage in an act of a sexual nature by force, or by threat of force or coercion, such as that caused by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression or abuse of power, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment or such person's or persons' incapacity to give genuine consent.
Unequal power dynamics	A power imbalance which exists between those who are vulnerable, disempowered and voiceless, and those who have power over them and may act as gatekeepers to money, food, shelter and security. Where unequal power dynamics exist, victims may feel obliged and under pressure to carry out sexual.
Victim-Centred Approach	An approach in which the survivor ⁴ 's dignity, experiences, considerations, needs, and resiliencies are placed at the centre of the process, from the initial program design to investigating and responding to potential incidents.
Victim of SEA	For the purposes of this JSP, a victim is a person who is, or has been, sexually exploited or abused by Defence people to whom this JSP is applicable.

⁴ 'Victim' is a term often used in the legal and medical sectors, while the term 'survivor' is generally preferred in the psychological and social support sector to a person who has experienced sexual or gender-based violence because it implies resilience. The term victim will be used throughout this JSP for consistency.