

New boost to defence victim support and prevention to raise standards across the Armed Forces

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More than half a million pounds is being committed to expand the Victim Witness Care Unit to support around 100 additional cases each year and specialist Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) teams set to be deployed to Catterick Garrison and HM Naval Base Devonport.

Specialist teams are being established to prevent unacceptable behaviour and sexual violence in the Armed Forces, alongside a significant uplift to victim support.

An investment of more than £500,000 will create five permanent new posts within the Victim Witness Care Unit (VWCU) at the Ministry of Defence, increasing its capacity to support around 100 additional cases each year.

The VWCU provides independent, trauma-informed support to victims and witnesses of serious crime, operating independently from military chains of command.

The new roles - including victim liaison officers - will enable the unit to provide sustained support for complex cases, and enhanced coordination with investigators and prosecutors throughout the Service Justice System.

This expansion also ensures the unit can continue to deliver dedicated support to victim-survivors of serious crime as wider work aims to increase awareness of the support available and strengthen confidence in accessing it.

Specialist VAWG Taskforce teams are deploying to Catterick Garrison and HM Naval Base Devonport, embedding expertise directly within military settings to identify and address the cultural and behavioural drivers of sexual violence at source.

With reach also across Yorkshire and the Humber and the South West respectively, these 12-month deployments will see civilian experts working alongside service personnel, assessing root causes and organisational factors contributing to sexual violence.

The teams will design targeted, evidence-led interventions - from training and scenario-based workshops to bystander-focused activity and unit-specific tools. This approach reflects a deliberate shift from reacting to incidents after they occur towards preventing harm before it starts. Expansion to further sites - including RAF Halton and the UK's sovereign bases in Cyprus - is planned subject to evidence of impact.

Minister for Veterans and People, Louise Sandher-Jones MP said:

Those who serve deserve to work in an environment where they are safe, supported and valued. This investment strengthens the support available to victim-survivors of serious crime and puts specialist prevention teams in place to tackle unacceptable behaviour before it causes harm.

With awareness increasing, more people having boosted confidence in reporting mechanisms, we're taking practical, targeted action to ensure Defence is a place where people are proud to serve.

The VWCU expansion and Taskforce deployments are the latest in Defence's Raising our Standards interventions to embed consistently high standards, build trust in leadership and create a culture where personnel thrive, unacceptable behaviour is challenged, and every case is acted upon.

This includes the forthcoming Independent Legal Advocacy pilot, which will provide free, independent legal advice to complainants of sexual offences within the Service Justice System.

This complements newly-introduced measures in the Armed Forces Bill to deliver stronger support to victims of serious and sexual offences within the Service Justice System, from new protective orders to take action against those responsible for sexual harm and strengthened guidance to inform victims' views to prosecutors on whether they want their case tried in civilian courts or the military system.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-boost-to-defence-victim-support-and-prevention-to-raise-standards-across-the-armed-forces>