

Welfare and duty of care in Armed Forces initial training

Ofsted's third annual report on the effectiveness of welfare and duty of care for recruits and trainees in Armed Forces initial training draws on evidence from the inspection of 11 training establishments between June 2010 and February 2011.

Of the nine establishments previously inspected under this framework, four had improved their overall effectiveness of welfare and duty of care. None had declined in the 2010-11 inspection year. For the first time since the inspection of welfare and duty of care began in 2004, one establishment was judged to be outstanding for its overall effectiveness in this area. Four were good and six were satisfactory. No training establishment was judged to be inadequate. Recruits and trainees interviewed by inspectors reported that they felt safe and that their welfare needs were met effectively. They were motivated by the training and were well-supported by instructors and staff both within and outside the chain of command.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Miriam Rosen, said: 'I would like to thank the Ministry of Defence, Training Headquarters and the training establishments inspected for their cooperation during this inspection cycle. There is much good practice in welfare and duty of care that we have highlighted which could be used by establishments finding it difficult to move from satisfactory to good or from good to outstanding.'

'The challenge for Armed Forces training establishments, as they help prepare their recruits and trainees to meet the challenges and demands they will face as highly professional, skilled and well-motivated individuals, is increasing the number judged good or outstanding for the welfare and duty of care provided.'

Inspectors used Ofsted's four-point scale of outstanding, good, satisfactory and inadequate to judge the overall effectiveness of welfare and duty of care, the establishment's capacity to improve welfare and duty of care and their progress in self-assessment. Six of the nine establishments were judged to have a better capacity to improve than at the time of their previous inspection.

All the establishments inspected had clear systems for recording the welfare concerns of individual recruits and trainees. Not all the establishments were using their systems consistently. The report also shows that a well-planned professional development programme for staff involved in training is an important driver in sustaining improvement and promoting effectiveness. The report found that the Armed Forces are increasingly selecting and retaining recruits who have the potential to complete the training. Drop out rates during training in most establishments have fallen and overall pass rates are high.

The report recommends that where drop out rates remain high the reasons should be fully investigated and measures introduced to reduce them. The report calls for the Armed Forces to ensure that information on recruits and trainees whose circumstances make them vulnerable is easily accessible to those authorised to access it. All trainees needing support for literacy and numeracy should also receive additional tuition in basic skills early in their training to improve their performance.

The report contains detailed findings about the progress made by each establishment since its previous inspection. It can be found online on the Ofsted website at:www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications