
Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Tony O'Connor
Head of Profession for Statistics
Ministry of Defence
(by email)

19 December 2017

Dear Tony

STATISTICS ON UK ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL

Thank you very much for the open and positive engagement of yourself and your team during our short review of these statistics. We reviewed the statistics against the three pillars – trustworthiness, quality and value – that are fundamental to supporting public confidence in statistics and form the basis of National Statistics status. This letter confirms our findings.

We reviewed two sets of statistics – the monthly service personnel statistics and the biannual diversity statistics. We recognise that the statistics are primarily aimed at more-expert users, and it was helpful for us to understand the complexities and history of the topic. We acknowledge also that there are sensitivities around such information which must be borne in mind.

Given these factors, we consider that the statistics are presented well within the bulletins, with a good mix of narrative and charts to bring the statistics to life, including for example time series charts that are annotated with key events that may impact upon the statistics. One area of concern to us that you may wish to review is that some of the charts with a false zero tend to visually overinflate the magnitude of changes over time, for example Figure 1 in the October 2017 Personnel bulletin. Given the prominence of personnel numbers in the light of restricted budgets, and diversity more generally, we encourage you to keep abreast of wider demand for insight into these topics and develop your statistics appropriately.

Thank you for your time and engaging so positively with us during this review. Please let me know if there is any aspect of this letter that you wish to discuss.

Yours sincerely



Mark Pont
Assessment Programme Lead