

British army:

Harm and abuse of child recruits, a timeline .



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Content Warning

- This report discusses suicide as well as the sexual and physical abuse of children. If you need to talk to someone, please call the Samaritans on 116 123 – any time, any day.

Executive summary.

This report shows that British army trainees aged under 18 have suffered a culture of abuse by instructors over the last decade, as well as endemic bullying among recruits themselves.

Ofsted, tasked with monitoring recruit welfare, has repeatedly overlooked the substantial body of evidence of staff abuse and other harms.

Recruits affected have reported lasting damage to mental health, including suicidality.

This report summarises the evidence.

The Army Foundation College (AFC) in Harrogate is the UK's sole initial training site for army recruits who enlist as adolescent children aged between 16 and 17½ years. Approximately 1,000 such recruits are under training at AFC at any time.

Drawing on official data, national media reports, court judgements, and the testimonies of former recruits and their parents, the harms and abuses of AFC recruits since 2014 may be summarised as follows:

- Court judgements recording sexual abuse and exploitation of female recruits by staff.
- Police records showing multiple further allegations of sexual offences at AFC referred to the service police and civilian police.
- Army records showing 75 allegations, some proven, of violence by staff against recruits, including assault and battery.
- Testimony from former recruits, parents, and a former instructor describing, *inter alia*, routine humiliation and frequent physical abuse by staff, a culture of bullying among recruits, several instances where a recruit's legal right to leave was obstructed by staff, and a culture of fear among recruits leading to a reluctance to raise complaints.

Recruits affected by these harms have reported serious problems with their mental health, including suicidality.

Failures of independent oversight

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) contracts Ofsted to inspect AFC under a limited inspection framework that excludes the educational standards expected of a civilian college, focusing instead on the arrangements and procedures to ensure recruit welfare.¹

Although CRIN has repeatedly shared evidence of abuse with Ofsted and all the sources cited in this document are accessible to inspectors, AFC has been graded 'outstanding' for welfare continuously since 2012.

An Independent Advisory Panel (IAP) of local civilians also monitors recruit welfare as a 'source of assurance' to recruits and their families.² Every year since 2013, the Panel has concluded that AFC meets its duty of care to recruits effectively.

Examples of abuse by instructors

The following examples of abuse by instructors are mentioned in this document, with references provided to court records and the testimonies of former recruits and a former AFC instructor.

Examples of **sexualised abuse** by instructors include the sexual assault of a recruit, disgraceful conduct of an indecent kind (including watching naked female recruits), several instructors starting sexual relationships with recruits, an instructor who stripped naked and climbed on top of male recruits one at a time, an instructor who routinely forced all female recruits to kneel in front of him, and several instances of offensive sexual comments about recruits' partners.

Examples of **physical abuse** by instructors include punching and kicking recruits with full force, dragging recruits across the ground, smearing cattle dung in recruits' faces, holding recruits' heads underwater, holding recruits down and closing the airway while forcing water into their mouths, forcing a recruit to eat dog food, forcing recruits to exercise in dangerous conditions as a punishment, and forcing a recruit to exercise for several hours when in serious pain.

Verbal abuse by instructors is routine, according to the testimonies of former recruits, including racial slurs and such language as 'shite*nt', 'f*cking worm', 'you f*cking little c*nt', and 'I'll f*cking kill you', often shouted into the faces of individuals.

Examples of **social humiliation** by instructors include laughing at recruits in distress and pain, ridiculing recruits' bodies in front of their peers, habitually imitating a certain recruit's stutter in front of his peers, and coining offensive nicknames.

Examples of **other inappropriate behaviour** include exploiting recruits financially by sending them to buy groceries and gifts for instructors at the recruits' expense, encouraging recruits to go to strip clubs in Leeds, and ripping up recruits' formal applications for discharge.

Abuse at the Army Foundation College: 2012–2024 ●

2012

8 November.

Ofsted inspects AFC for welfare and duty of care and awards an 'outstanding' grade: 'The quality, and leadership and management of welfare and duty of care are outstanding and the outcomes for recruits are good. Junior soldiers are well supported at section level.'³

2013–2014

October 2013 to June 2014.

A number of AFC recruits suffer serious abuse by instructors on the barracks at Harrogate, out on exercise in October and November 2013, and at battle camp in Kirkcudbright in June 2014.⁴

Among the allegations are that instructors kicked and punched recruits, held their heads under water, and smeared animal dung in their faces.⁵

Although it is later established that 'a considerable number' of recruits are affected,⁶ none raises a formal complaint.

One of the abused recruits, Joe Turton (who has given us permission to use his real name), later tells CRIN about the serious physical abuse and targeted humiliation of recruits at battle camp in that year:

'It all kicks off about half-way through the week – bayonet training day. The corporals come into the hangar where we sleep and they're wild-eyed, screaming, shoving people out. A massive sergeant lifts a recruit in the air and literally throws him into the wall. A corporal smacks me full-force around the head – I've got my helmet on but he hits me so hard that I'm knocked right over, I mean this man's about 40 and I'm maybe 17 by then. A bit later, we're crawling through mud and a corporal grabs me and drags me along the ground, half-way across a field. When he lets go, I'm in that much pain that I'm whimpering on the ground. When the other corporal, the one who hit me, sees me crying on the ground, he just points at me and laughs.

‘For the bayonet training itself, they tell us, “You’re gonna get f***ing angry – show me your war face!” And they get us screaming: “Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill!” The bombardier, who’s seen pictures of my girlfriend, tells me to imagine that she’s just over there being raped. He goes into intimate details about this rape fantasy, and then, shouting at me, he wants to know whether I’m going to do anything about it. And I’m so angry that there’s no more Joe anymore – I scream and charge and stab my girlfriend’s attacker, this stuffed sack, with the bayonet.

‘When we’re done that day, I see these boys – even the worst of the bullies – sobbing, crying, falling apart all around me. We’re terrified, shot to bits. We’re still children. And the officer in charge, a major, has watched it all, saying nothing.’⁷

► Joe’s full testimony is available [online](#).

September.

After some of the recruits concerned pass out from AFC and join the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick, a member of staff overhears them discussing their abuse experiences at AFC.⁸ The member of staff reports the conversation to the chain of command and an investigation is launched.⁹ The initial investigation identifies 12 recruits willing to make a formal complaint, while several others alleging the same abuse are unwilling.¹⁰

December.

The IAP publishes its annual report for 2014.¹¹ The report does not mention the multiple incidents of abuse during the year. (It is revealed in a later IAP report that AFC had not informed the Panel of the incidents; evidently, no recruits interviewed by the Panel had mentioned them either.) Written reports of panel members’ visits to AFC include:

‘No JS [junior soldier] had ever seen or experienced any form of bullying or inappropriate behaviour from PS [permanent staff].’ (p. 7)

‘There were no complaints at all of unfair or excessive treatment.’ (p. 8)

‘They [recruits] seemed bemused that I should ask about bullying and whether it was something that they had encountered during their time at the AFC.’ (p. 8)

‘[T]hey [recruits] all said that [AFC instructors] they were very supportive, particularly their Section Leaders.’ (p. 9)

2017

13 August.

Three years after the 2014 abuse incidents, the press report them for the first time and reveal that a court martial in the new year will try 17 AFC instructors for 40 counts of maltreatment.¹²

On the same day, Child Soldiers International discovers by FOI request that 50 complaints of violent behaviour by AFC staff, including assault and battery, have been recorded internally on the army's personnel system since 2014.¹³

18 October.

Ofsted inspects AFC for welfare and duty of care, renewing the 'outstanding' grade in a two-page report, which concludes that recruits 'feel safe' and '[s]taff at all levels show a close understanding of their duty of care to junior soldiers'.¹⁴

The inspection has failed to register the following:

- The coming court martial scheduled for March, by now in the public domain, in which 12 recruits have alleged multiple incidents of serious abuse by 17 AFC staff that occurred in the period since the previous inspection.
- At least 50 formal complaints of violent behaviour by AFC staff against recruits recorded on the army's personnel system since the previous inspection (see 13 August, above).

December.

The IAP publishes its annual report for 2017.¹⁵ It notes that the Panel became aware only in 2017 of the 2013/14 allegations of maltreatment by AFC staff three years earlier. Despite the evident severity and scale of the allegations, the Panel characterises the incidents minimally as 'some complaints... about the training experience... of a small number of JS [junior soldiers]'.¹⁶ While noting the incidents as a 'cause for concern', the report concludes: '[T]he IAP is confident that the duty of care to Junior Soldiers is actively embedded throughout the College.'¹⁷

2018

28 February.

The AFC abuse trial collapses after the opening arguments due to mishandling of the investigation by the Royal Military Police (RMP).¹⁸

The judge catalogues a series of major breaches of process, including investigators' 'startling' decision not to interview the accused instructors on the grounds that they were unlikely to tell the truth.¹⁹

Four years later (2 August 2022), CRIN obtains a copy of the internal review of the RMP investigation.²⁰ It notes multiple failures of process and the loss of key evidence, including most of the photographic evidence of the alleged incidents and the records of the recruits' initial testimonies of abuse. It also notes 'a considerable number of JS [junior soldiers] who had been the subject of ill treatment / assaults but did not wish to pursue a formal complaint'.²¹

December.

The IAP annual report for 2018 is published,²² repeating its confidence 'that the Duty of Care to Junior Soldiers is actively embedded throughout the College'.²³

2019

3 December.

The IAP annual report for 2019 is published: '[T]he IAP is confident that the Duty of Care to Junior Soldiers is actively embedded throughout the College.'²⁴

2020

4 November.

A Parliamentary Question (PQ) reveals that, between 13 August 2017 and 30 October 2020, 10 further internal complaints of violent behaviour by AFC staff were recorded on the army's personnel system, bringing the total since 2014 to 60.²⁵

By FOI request (13 December), CRIN establishes that 13 of these complaints have been upheld following investigation.²⁶

26 November.

CRIN writes to Ofsted sharing all the evidence of abuse at AFC collected to date.²⁷ Ofsted's reply (15 December 2020) undertakes to ensure that CRIN's evidence is considered at the next inspection.²⁸

8 December.

The IAP publishes its annual report for 2020, again declaring its confidence 'that the Duty of Care to Junior Soldiers is actively embedded throughout the College'.²⁹

Also in 2020.

An internal survey of girls at AFC finds that 48% have experienced bullying, harassment, or discrimination during training and that only 30% would report such behaviour to the chain of command.³⁰ The MoD later refuses a PQ and an FOI request asking to see the survey results – see Appendix for details.³¹

2021

5 May.

Ofsted inspects AFC for welfare and duty of care, renewing the 'outstanding' grade without mention of the evidence of abuse shared by CRIN in November 2020.³²

Again, the report is short, amounting to approximately two pages. It states that an 'ethos of emotional and psychological safety, inclusion and teamwork is firmly embedded in the work and life of the college'. The recruits interviewed by inspectors 'report that there is no bullying at the college' and 'speak consistently of fair and respectful treatment from all staff'.

The inspection has failed to register the following:

- At the time of the inspection, an AFC instructor, Cpl Bartram, had been serially sexually abusing six female recruits for approximately seven months since October 2020, for which he will later be convicted.³³ (The abuse continues unchecked for a further three months until July 2021.³⁴)
- Another AFC instructor, Cpl Hey, also soon to be convicted (see 11 November on page 11), was found to have been routinely punching recruits during the period since the previous inspection.³⁵
- AFC's own record shows that, between 1 January 2017 and 4 November 2020, complaints of violence against recruits by seven members of staff were upheld following internal investigation.³⁶

By FOI request, CRIN asks Ofsted for the section of the inspection notes that detail the inspectors' discussions of allegations of violence by AFC staff.³⁷ In respect of all the evidence passed to Ofsted by CRIN in November 2020, the notes read in full: 'We have looked at these [concerns] against our evidence and nothing substantiated. No evidence to support claims.' Elsewhere, the notes also state: 'No recent JS [junior soldiers] raising complaints at Phase 1 [i.e. AFC training].'³⁸

- 8 November.** Baroness Massey and colleagues share detailed evidence of maltreatment at AFC in the House of Lords debate on the Armed Forces Bill. Testimonies from mothers of former recruits are read out (reproduced in part below).³⁹
- 11 November.** On the evidence of several recruits, AFC instructor Cpl Hey is demoted at court martial for routinely punching trainees.⁴⁰
- 18 November.** CRIN writes to Ofsted a second time to express concern that none of the evidence we shared previously was mentioned in the recent report for AFC, and to share testimonies of recruit abuse by parents (reproduced in part below).⁴¹
- Ofsted replies on 7 December: ‘We did not report on the concerns you had about AFC(H) because during inspection, inspectors saw no evidence of anything that aligned with your concerns. No recruits made any form of complaint or allegation relating to their treatment by training or other staff.’⁴²
- 13 December.** A PQ reveals that ‘approximately five’ girls training at the AFC have complained of rape or sexual assault since 2015.⁴³
- December.** The IAP publishes its annual report for 2021. ‘We are happy that the discipline procedure at AFC(H) is robust and focussed on always ensuring a duty of care to the JS [junior soldiers],’ it reads, concluding, ‘...the IAP is confident that the duty of care to Junior Soldiers is actively embedded throughout the College.’⁴⁴
- Also in 2021.** The mothers of two recruits tell CRIN separately about the treatment of their sons at AFC, who each joined in 2016. (Both give CRIN permission to use their real names.) Charlotte Poad tells us:
- ‘I overheard several [of my son Marc’s] conversations with his fellow recruits discussing “bathroom beatings” and “things going too far”. Marc also let slip he had been in several pubs, bars and clubs in Leeds, and was actively encouraged to attend strip clubs by the staff members in charge of his group. Marc struggles to talk about what happened at Harrogate, and will not go into detail with me and his father about a lot of the things we witnessed, but we know that staff bullied and abused the young recruits, as well as encouraging fighting amongst peers.... He and his fellow soldiers

often reported feeling very low, but this was ignored by the staff. Marc is a completely different person since his time at Harrogate. He has attempted suicide and his mental health is permanently damaged.¹⁴⁵

Alison Blackwell tells us:

‘[Nathan] was hit, slapped, pushed, kicked and verbally abused by staff. He said he felt humiliated.... He knew the training would be tough but this was abuse and the staff were power crazy. Nathan... did tell me about witnessing abuse of his peers and commented on his dislike and distrust for some of the staff. He did however point out not all staff were abusive but said that none of them could be trusted. After the initial six weeks of training... he started drinking heavily and was very withdrawn. When he returned to Harrogate [after a brief period of leave following the first six weeks] he rang me to tell me he was handing in his letter to leave. He told me his request was ripped up in his face. He was only 17 years old and devastated at not being able to leave.... He was clearly very frightened for his safety and I shared his fears... He didn’t mind the legitimate punishments, it was the abuse he was scared of.’¹⁴⁶

When Alison says she raised these concerns with AFC staff, she adds that Nathan told her that ‘by speaking up I had made things a whole lot worse for him.... He described the staff as animals that got off on hurting and humiliating people and that [AFC] Harrogate should be shut down’.¹⁴⁷

► Alison’s and Charlotte’s testimonies are available in full [online](#).

2022

24 January.

Joe Turton, who joined AFC aged 16 in 2013, tells CRIN about his experiences of routine physical and emotional abuse by staff throughout his training year (and gives us permission to publish his testimony under his real name). Some of his testimony has been quoted above (see years 2013–14 on pages 6 and 7).

Joe says that instructors humiliated recruits throughout his year at AFC. For example:

‘They [corporals] announce a tattoo check. We’re ordered to strip to our underwear and stand on the line, then to pull up our pants so they can see everything but our genitals. The corporal walks

down the line bantering with those he likes and then he comes to me. And he tells me, as I'm almost naked, what he thinks of my body. He starts from my head and he goes down, and he laughs. He just makes fun of my body in front of the entire platoon.'

When Joe's gas training session went wrong, he started choking in pain. The corporal refused to let him out of the gas-filled room. When Joe eventually escaped, the corporal laughed at him while he wept in pain on the ground:

'When I reach for the corporal for help, he shoves me off, and when I feel for the door he drags me back. When I do get out, I'm crawling on the ground, my ears and eyes are still burning, and when I finally manage to rip the mask off, I'm in pieces. I lie on the ground crying.... [H]e [the corporal] can't stop laughing at me.'

When we ask Joe why he thinks Ofsted awards AFC an 'outstanding' grade for welfare and duty of care, he tells us:

'So it breaks my heart that Ofsted has graded the place "outstanding" for welfare. Apparently, Ofsted talk to recruits, but if they'd asked me, I wouldn't have told them the truth – because the people I'd be talking about literally have the power to put me in prison. The truth is that the friends I met in that place were broken by it. It gave them PTSD, and me as well. Harrogate is dangerous but a recruit can't just say that to a visitor – it's too risky.'⁴⁸

► Joe's full testimony is available [online](#).

31 March.

Annual statistics are published on victims and perpetrators of alleged sexual offences handled by the Service Justice System (i.e. excluding those handled by the civilian police). For the first time, the statistics disaggregate data on victims aged under 18, showing that 47 such victims were identified across the armed forces in 2021.⁴⁹

On 26 April, an answer to a PQ reveals that 22 of the 47 alleged victims had been at AFC at the time,⁵⁰ and on 19 May an answer to a follow-up PQ reveals that the suspects included three members of AFC staff.⁵¹ The MoD will later withdraw these answers as clerical errors and refuse to release the correct data, though the department will also acknowledge that the true figure of suspected staff perpetrators is greater than zero – see Appendix for details.

26 May.

CRIN writes to Ofsted. We provide them the following:

- Share former recruit Joe Turton's testimony of widespread, prolonged abuse of recruits at AFC in 2013/14, in which year the institution held an 'outstanding' grade for welfare.
- Provide evidence from the MoD showing that 13 allegations of violence by AFC staff against recruits between 2014 and 2020 were proven following investigation, and that seven of these incidents occurred since 2017.
- Point out that 11 staff were implicated in the proven incidents and this was not mentioned in the Ofsted inspection reports of 2018 and 2021.⁵²

Ofsted replies on 22 June. The letter does not comment on Joe Turton's detailed testimony of serious abuse by staff throughout his training year. It concludes: '[I]nspectors check that any serious complaints raised since the previous inspection, such as those you refer to, have been appropriately investigated by the proper authorities. This was the case during our inspection.'⁵³

From the reply, CRIN understand Ofsted's view to be that, even if multiple complaints of violence by staff are upheld, AFC can still be given an 'outstanding' grade provided that the incidents were investigated – in which case the incidents themselves need not be mentioned in the inspection report. In fact, Ofsted's inspection framework for initial armed forces training establishments makes clear that an institution cannot be graded 'outstanding' unless inspectors first 'ensure that trainees feel safe and are safe from harm, abuse and unfair treatment, including those relating to sexual harassment and violence and online sexual abuse'.⁵⁴

8 November.

Giving evidence to the Defence Committee, the minister Baroness Goldie acknowledges 'some unwelcome behaviour issues' at AFC without elaborating.⁵⁵

14 November.

By FOI request, CRIN learns that more than half (56%) of in-service suicides in the British infantry over the last two decades were of soldiers who had joined up under the age of 18.⁵⁶ Under-18 infantry joiners had slightly more than double the suicide risk compared to adult joiners over the period.⁵⁷

- 19 November.** The armed forces introduce a tri-service ‘zero tolerance’ policy on inappropriate sexual behaviours. It promises prompt investigation of reported wrongdoing, and mandates dismissal when a service person has either been convicted of a sexual offence or has started a sexual relationship with a trainee.⁵⁸
- December.** The IAP publishes its annual report for 2022. Although it states that the panel is ‘regularly briefed by the Adjutant as to any cases of potential misconduct’ by AFC staff,⁵⁹ no such cases have appeared in any of the panel’s annual reports. The panel concludes that it remains ‘confident that the Duty of Care to Junior Soldiers is actively embedded throughout the College’.⁶⁰

2023

- 20 January.** AFC instructor Cpl Bartram is convicted of six sexual offences involving female recruits aged under 18: one count of sexual assault and five counts of disgraceful conduct of an indecent kind.⁶¹
- Bartram had sustained his abuses unchallenged over a ten-month period between October 2020 and July 2021.⁶² No staff reported it, and none of the recruits who were targeted by the abuse or witnessed it raised a complaint until Bartram went on leave.⁶³
- 23 March.** CRIN’s FOI request reveals a further ten internally recorded formal complaints of violent behaviour by staff at AFC since 2020, bringing the total since 2014 to 70.⁶⁴
- 11 May.** In a House of Lords debate, Lord Browne asks defence minister Baroness Goldie whether she is satisfied that AFC is safe, given that multiple allegations of violent behaviour and sexual offences have not appeared in any Ofsted report, and that Cpl Bartram has recently been convicted of multiple counts of the sexual abuse of recruits.⁶⁵ As evidence that conditions at AFC have improved in the two years since 2021, the minister cites the 2021 Ofsted report.⁶⁶
- 8 June.** AFC instructor Cpl Conway is convicted of the rape of an adult colleague in her room at the college while she was asleep.⁶⁷

22 June.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, having reviewed evidence of sexual and physical violence against children during initial training at AFC, recommends that all allegations be promptly investigated.⁶⁸ It makes nine further recommendations to safeguard child recruits from harm and to protect their rights.⁶⁹ When asked by PQ on 27 June whether it intends to accept the UN recommendations, the MoD sidesteps the question and stands by the status quo.⁷⁰

2 September.

CRIN publishes [The pressure cooker: Child recruitment and suicide in the British armed forces](#). The report cites research showing that serving personnel aged 16–19, and particularly former personnel in the same age group, have suffered a suicide rate markedly higher than a) older personnel and veterans, and b) the same age group in the general population (including those from the most economically deprived backgrounds).⁷¹

14 September.

In response to CRIN's FOI request, North Yorkshire Police reveals that 13 sexual offences at AFC have been reported to them over a 13-month period between 22 July 2022 and 17 August 2023: nine cases of rape, two of sexual assault, and two of voyeurism.⁷² The information does not specify whether AFC staff were involved.

4 October.

National media report the findings of a service inquiry that Gunner Jaysley Beck – who trained at AFC aged 16 and died aged 19 at Larkhill – had suffered prolonged, intense sexual harassment by her immediate boss.⁷³ The case is widely reported alongside CRIN's data showing that 13 alleged sexual offences at AFC, including nine of rape, have been reported to local police over a 13-month period (see 14 September, above).

The service inquiry also records that in Gunner Beck's final two-and-a-half months at AFC, one of her instructors started a relationship with her.⁷⁴ Although instructor-trainee relationships are against AFC standing orders (and may also be an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as an abuse of a position of trust), the inquiry report makes no mention of any action taken against the member of staff concerned.

10 October.

CRIN writes again to Ofsted, summarising all the evidence above and asking Ofsted whether they will 'ensure that inspections at military training centres for recruits aged under 18 consider all

evidence of physical abuse and sexual misconduct, especially when perpetrators may be members of staff'.⁷⁵ Ofsted's reply of 26 October states: 'Our inspectors always consider evidence of allegations of physical and sexual abuse and misconduct.'⁷⁶ It also states: 'We can only report on what we find during our inspections.'

14 October.

Liam Weatherhead, who joined AFC in 2013 aged 16, tells CRIN about his experience (with permission for us to use his real name):

'All the time [during Liam's year at AFC] we're getting called – and this is a big favourite of the NCOs – "shitc*nt". Or "maggot", or "f*cking worm". One lad had bad acne and the corporals called him "pizza face".... "You're ours, you belong to us, we can do what we want with you." Some of the NCOs, I'd say they had something wrong with them, they were psychotic. I remember one in particular.... He'd come up to you and say you were expendable... and "I'll f*cking kill you."

'There was a lad that had a stutter, and every time he spoke the NCOs would go up to him and [imitates stuttering] – just childish, absolutely childish behaviour. These are adults that are meant to be guiding children into a career, children that have often come from difficult upbringings. And as for the officers, you could see in their faces that they knew what the NCOs were doing was wrong.... I was hoping they'd say something about it, but no.

'People would get hit, quite frequently, by the NCOs. Including me. You'd get a punch round the face, something like that, and general derogatory comments, which were often about your girlfriend or your family. People used to stick up photos of their girlfriends and families, and the NCOs would come in and say things like, "F*cking hell I'd shag your mum." Or they'd talk about your girlfriend, like, "I bet she's at home now getting railed by three guys, while you're here," and things like that. Things you shouldn't be saying, really, not to kids. Or anyone.

'Some of the lads... left while they could. We probably lost about 10–15% early on. And when they put their notice letters in the NCOs would just say, "Good f*cking riddance, you're f*cking shit anyway,".... But if a lad decided halfway-through to get out then the NCOs would get in his way. They'd even rip up the notice letter sometimes and say, "You belong to us now.".... I remember this lad marching up to the office with his letter... [and the NCOs] told this lad, "Here, pass me the letter... [makes ripping sound] there you go." I saw that myself in my own platoon and I also heard the same thing from other platoons.'

Liam tells us about the following sexualised humiliation by a naked AFC instructor:

'One night we were all asleep and around two, three o'clock in the morning this corporal rolled in to our room pissed with his girlfriend, who he wasn't allowed to have on camp. So I'm lying in bed and he strips naked and climbs on top of me, and he pretends to hump me for a laugh. Then he goes round the room and does the same to the rest of the lads, like fake-molesting them. It wasn't particularly sexual or anything, or traumatic, it was just weird, and no-one should be doing that – not to kids, or to anyone. But his girlfriend thought it was the funniest thing ever.... I remember him coming back in the morning, hung over, and going, "Lads, I would appreciate it if you don't mention anything about last night." And we didn't.'

Liam says that, when he told a sergeant that he'd broken his ribs in an accident at the weekend, the NCO punched him full-force on the fracture site. As Liam crumpled to the ground and began to cry, the sergeant called him 'you little fucking c*nt'. Liam was punched again the next day by another NCO because his injuries had prevented him from tying his shoelaces.

From his own direct experience, Liam also repeats the abuse allegations that led to the collapsed trial in 2018. Regarding battle camp in June 2014, he tells us:

'I remember some recruits had cow excrement pushed all over their faces so that some of it went into their mouths – I saw that myself. We marched up this road, and then out of nowhere, about twenty NCOs came out of the bushes, all camo-ed up, firing flares at us, and they jump in and start punching people, smacking them and that, and then they drag us into the field. I remember seeing them drag recruits along – and because they're farmer's fields, the NCOs would find a cowpat and slap it in some of these lads' faces.... What they'd do – and they did this to me – is take your water canteen and pin you down. They grabbed my nose and poured my water canteen into my mouth so I couldn't breathe....

'And then obviously there's the beating – which is normal by this point. One thing that sticks with me to this day is this lad who got absolutely hammered by the NCOs on battle camp. He was crying, and he was pleading with the NCOs, saying his leg was really hurting and he needed to stop. They just said "shut the f*ck up" and whacked him a bit more. We did an eight-mile tab [an overland march], and this guy was crying the entire way. When he got to the end, they went "What the fuck are you crying about?", and they lifted his trouser leg up, and his whole ankle and calf had gone

black. Turns out they'd broken his f*cking leg and made him march for eight miles on it.'

When we ask Liam why he thinks Ofsted gives AFC an 'outstanding' grade for welfare and duty of care, he tells us:

'[I]f Ofsted had been visiting and asked me how things were, I'd say everything was ok. Because I'd be frightened of telling the truth, I would've genuinely been frightened if word got back to the NCOs, because I know what would've happened. The recruits who did talk to Ofsted probably told them what they wanted to hear, out of fear – I can tell you that now.... Visitors don't see behind the scenes. The NCOs aren't going to act their normal selves when visitors are coming round, auditing them, are they? And the lads aren't gonna speak up about what goes on, because the NCOs would narrow it down and find out who said what. [When AFC had visitors like Ofsted or parents], the NCOs would be polite, they'd act like... well, like normal people. Then as soon as [they're] gone, they're back to how they are.'

► Liam's full testimony is available [online](#).

26 October.

Another former AFC recruit, Jasmine (not their real name), who joined in 2015 as Craig at age 16, tells CRIN about her experience. Jasmine describes similar experiences to those of Joe Turton and Liam Weatherhead quoted above – including rifle recruit-on-recruit bullying, dismissive instructors, visits by (other) recruits to strip clubs in Leeds, and an unsafe environment for female recruits. Jasmine recalls being waterboarded one night by fellow recruits, who pinned her down and stuffed underpants into her mouth, which induced lasting psychosis and PTSD. When we ask Jasmine about Ofsted, she tells us:

'I know they've got independent people like Ofsted overlooking the training of soldiers, and they talk to the recruits, but institutions like Harrogate can influence things – "Oh, speak to this person, not to this person" – and kind of guide things their way. And the army don't really want the bad things going out to the press. So I think people like Ofsted could be misdirected to speak to people who will turn round and say Harrogate's great.

'And that's just what I'd have said if they'd asked me: "Oh it's great, it's fine, it's fantastic." I could say instead, "I'm having a difficult time, I was waterboarded last month,"... but it's like a protective instinct – you know you should say something but you don't really want to talk about it.... And that means people are not really told

the truth of what's happening at Harrogate. Outsiders aren't well informed, they don't have that deep understanding of what's going on there.'

► Jasmine's full testimony is available [online](#).

1 December.

A PQ reveals that no AFC staff have been reprimanded under the 'zero tolerance' policy on unwanted sexual behaviours since it was established on 19 November 2022.⁷⁷

15 December.

A PQ reveals that, since 1 November 2020, 15 internal complaints of violent behaviour by AFC staff have been recorded on the army's personnel system,⁷⁸ bringing the total since 2014 to 75.⁷⁹

2024

January.

The IAP publishes its annual report for 2023, which mentions the media coverage on 4 October 2023 revealing that 13 allegations of sexual abuse at AFC had been reported to local police over a 13-month period.⁸⁰ It says that the allegations relate to a single incident in 2021,⁸¹ about which the Panel appears not to have been informed at the time. The Panel reports 'a robust conversation' with AFC leadership on the matter, but declares again its confidence 'that the Duty of Care to Junior Soldiers is actively embedded throughout the College'.⁸²

The report does not mention the convictions, during the year under review, of Cpl Bartram for multiple sexual offences against female AFC recruits during 2020 and 2021, and Cpl Conway for the rape of a colleague on the base.

17 April.

Media report the conviction of instructor Cpl Irwin, 31, for abusing his position of trust by starting a sexual relationship with a recruit at AFC – which was not reported until after he had left.⁸³ The recruit told the police: 'With him, you never, ever, know of what he's planning. I'm so scared of him because he's so careless of the rules. He doesn't care about the rules.' The court heard that, prior to the relationship, Irwin had asked his Chain of Command for command of 'the female section'.⁸⁴

9 May.

A PQ reveals five convictions for sexual offences by AFC staff in the last 16 months, including the convictions of Cpl Conway for the rape of a female colleague and of Cpl Bartram for sexual offences against female recruits including sexual assault, both in 2023. The PQ also reveals two convictions of AFC staff for unknown sexual offences other than rape between January and May 2024.⁸⁵

The answer to a further PQ on the same day reveals that between five and nine AFC staff are known to have started sexual relationships with recruits since 2014.⁸⁶

14 May.

Lach (not his real name), 16, who joined AFC in September 2023 and left in spring 2024, tells CRIN about his experience there. He describes an initial sense of community that soon degenerated into widespread bullying between recruits, including frequent fights to settle scores which the instructors tended to ignore or encourage.

‘We’d keep the fighting to ourselves but when it got out the corporals didn’t do much. Especially the infantry corporals, who were more or less like, “F*ck it, fight it out, I’m not bothered, do it behind closed doors and I won’t need to know about it.” Because they’re infantry and they’re taught more or less that if you’ve got a problem with somebody you fight it out....’

Lach recalls fearing cold water shock while his group was made to do sit-ups in a polluted river in midwinter as a group punishment. The punishment was called because when one recruit had put down his water bottle it was not in a perfectly straight line with the others. ‘We wouldn’t report something like that,’ Lach says, ‘we were more or less scared of the corporals coming back at us.’

Lach also remembers a weekend culture of drinking trips to Leeds with fake IDs, sex between male and female recruits behind the drill sheds and in the drying rooms, and on one occasion recruits (all aged 16 or 17) snorting cocaine in the corner of his dorm.

Bullying is part of daily life at AFC, Lach tells us, which he noticed led to self-harm and suicidality among the bullied, including his friends. He tells us that one recruit, ‘who was getting bullied – they got name-called a lot’, attempted suicide while on exercise:

‘I didn’t see it myself but it wasn’t just rumours – the lieutenant commanding our section told us what happened and then later one of the education staff filled out more of the details. They had to carry them out on a stretcher.... How didn’t any of the training team see anything disturbed with that recruit? It should have been prevented. Yeah, that was a shock.’

CRIN is currently attempting to verify this incident from the army's record.

When we ask Lach why he thinks Ofsted awards AFC an 'outstanding' grade for welfare, he says:

'I think if you're an Ofsted inspector you'll look at the welfare office, there's the chaplain, the games room and everything, so that ticks boxes. If they went round the college and asked some of the recruits "Do you feel that the support is there?" they'd definitely get some nos. So I think Ofsted's "outstanding" report on the welfare at Harrogate is more or less based around the fact there's not many people willing to report anything, though I would have done if Ofsted had asked me. Personally, if I was from Ofsted I'd give Harrogate a "requires improvement" report – the recruits need to feel supported by the staff and not afraid of them. It's a hostile environment.'

► Lach's full testimony is available [online](#).

20 June.

Former recruit Private McGregor-Freeburn is convicted at court martial after twice sexually assaulting a female recruit by penetration while she was on the medical wing at AFC in 2021. He is handed a suspended sentence and community service order. Since the victim had chosen not to raise the incident with her chain of command, the incident only came to light because a friend reported it on her own initiative.⁸⁷

2 August.

The MoD settles a claim out of court with Cpl Kerry-Ann Knight, who suffered serial racist and sexist harassment as AFC's only Black female instructor from 2021.⁸⁸ She told the tribunal that her boss had encouraged the abuse.⁸⁹

In her detailed witness statement to the court, Knight confirms witnessing the physical abuse of recruits and the sexual exploitation of a female recruit by a male instructor. She describes corporals persuading junior soldiers to turn against each other, a corporal who would frighten recruits by pretending he was going to hit them, several corporals who admired Hitler who would order recruits to count out loud in German, and routine offensive language directed at individual recruits.⁹⁰ Knight had often tried to prevent or stop such abuses but was rarely listened to.

Among the instances of recruit abuse described in the statement are the following:

- A recruit was left a ‘sobbing mess’ while two instructors verbally attacked him, calling him a ‘c*nt’ and a ‘weak little prick’.⁹¹
- An instructor told his colleagues that he had encouraged recruits in his section to beat up a recruit he did not like. He mentioned that he had told them to use a bar of soap in a sock to limit the visible injuries. The recruit in question was hospitalised after the beating.⁹²
- An instructor isolated a female recruit by telling all the other recruits in her section not to look at or talk to her while he arranged to have her dismissed.⁹³
- Contrary to regulations, an instructor kept a group of recruits in the press-up position for 30 minutes while he screamed at them, saying he wanted them ‘annihilated’.⁹⁴

13 September.

Cpl Knight tells CRIN more of her experiences of recruit abuse.

‘In my opinion, some of the instructors were sex predators, plain and simple, who wanted a posting to Harrogate to get first dibs at the girls coming in.... [T]his kind of abuse of power happened far too frequently which made me feel uncomfortable.’

Of some instructors in particular, Kerry-Ann says:

‘These people shouldn’t be working with under-18s at all.... Apart from the predators who want to be among kids, many of the instructors are just dumped at AFC. Typically they’ve been struggling in their regiments or maybe causing problems there, so their CO [commanding officer] wants them out of the way so they send them to a training environment hoping that can be a reset for them.... They don’t want to be at Harrogate necessarily and in my experience, too many get a kick out of abusing the junior soldiers.’

Kerry-Ann recalls many instances of physical abuse and humiliation by instructors. These included a recruit of colour being forced to eat dog food and led around on a leash. The recruit ‘mentioned it to a more senior member of staff who was of colour who had the matter reported up’. Kerry-Ann was then told that ‘the other instructors then tried to intimidate and bully that more senior member of staff, and within the next week the recruit was dismissed as unfit for military service’.

Kerry-Ann tells CRIN that ‘some of the rogue instructors would get hands-on sometimes: grabbing a recruit and shaking them, screaming and shouting, threatening to punch their face in [but] most of the time they’d get the other recruits to deal with it’.

She explains that, commonly, an instructor will ‘[tell] their section that a certain recruit is a problem for some reason, and it’s reflecting badly on the rest of them, and if they want that to change then they have to get that recruit to leave’. This way, ‘[t]he section gets the message, they close the doors and fill that recruit in’.

Kerry-Ann tells us that this happened at least five times under four section commanders. In one instance, after an instructor urged his section to bully a recruit on crutches for a sprained ankle, the section ‘just kept breaking his crutches because the section commander made him out to be weak for it and wanted him gone’. The recruit had to have his crutches replaced twice. She said that she reported it to the CoC, too, but – as far she was aware – ‘nothing was done’.

On the challenges of whistleblowing at AFC (which former recruits have already mentioned to CRIN throughout the report), Kerry-Ann says:

‘You’d think that someone would blow the whistle to the media, but that would absolutely never happen. You’re told not to speak to the media ever because it’s a sackable offence, and that you can be prosecuted for it, so everyone keeps their head down and their mouths shut. It would also mean career suicide for the whistleblower. I did try to raise the alarm internally and believe that’s why they made a big example out of me, isolating me and treating me like a pariah.’

On Ofsted’s role specifically, she adds:

‘You’d think that Ofsted would notice that something’s wrong at AFC Harrogate, but the very great challenge is that when any VIP visitors came onto camp we were always told in advance. The junior soldiers would do fancy drills or you’d just make sure they looked like they were having a good time. The relationship between AFC Harrogate and Ofsted is far too cosy in my view. If they were serious about finding out the truth, they’d come unannounced, but even then, I am concerned that junior soldiers wouldn’t feel safe enough to report their issues to them. I think they would be scared of the repercussions after the visitors had left and they would be right to be scared of that.’

► Kerry-Ann Knight’s full testimony is available [online](#).

24 September.

Ofsted publishes the report of its inspection of AFC in March 2024, renewing the 'outstanding' grade.⁹⁵ It states that bullying and discrimination are 'very rare' at AFC and are investigated as soon as they occur, that female recruits 'rarely' experience sexual harassment, and that staff take recruits' concerns seriously.

The report incorrectly states that recruits who wish to leave are 'not usually subject a notice period', when in fact recruits have no legal right to leave in the first six weeks and a two-week notice period applies thereafter. CRIN has already pointed this out to Ofsted on three separate occasions, citing the legislation and the army's own written communications, and inspectors appear to have ignored the information provided.

Ofsted's report has also failed to register readily available evidence of multiple serious safeguarding issues pertaining to the period since the last inspection in May 2021, as summarised below.

1. The following evidence was available at the time of inspection, either on the public record or on the army's own record to which inspectors had access:
 - The conviction in November 2021 of AFC instructor Cpl Hey for routinely punching recruits.⁹⁶
 - 13 alleged sexual offences at AFC reported to North Yorkshire Police over a 13-month period from 22 July 2022 to 17 August 2023 – being nine cases of rape, two of sexual assault, and two of voyeurism.⁹⁷
 - The conviction in January 2023 of AFC instructor Cpl Bartram for the serial sexual exploitation of six female recruits for ten months to July 2021.⁹⁸ (The 2021 Ofsted inspection took place seven months into the period of Bartram's abuse, which he then continued for three further months until he went on leave, when recruits concerned reported him.)
 - The finding of the service inquiry into the death of Gunner Jaysley Beck, published in June 2023, that in her final two-and-a-half months at AFC, in 2015, one of her instructors started a sexual relationship with her.⁹⁹
 - The court hearing of AFC instructor Cpl Conway in February 2024, covered by national media, for the rape of an adult colleague in her room at AFC while she was asleep.¹⁰⁰ Conway was convicted in June 2024.

- 15 internal complaints of violent behaviour by AFC staff recorded on the army’s personnel system between November 2020 and December 2023.¹⁰¹
2. The following evidence concerns the months either side of the inspection:
 - Two further convictions of AFC staff for unknown sexual offences other than rape between January and May 2024.¹⁰²
 3. The following cases pertain to the period between the inspection date and the publication of the inspection report six months later:
 - The conviction in June 2024 of instructor Cpl Conway for the rape of an adult colleague in her room at AFC while she was asleep.¹⁰³
 - The conviction in June 2024 of former AFC recruit Private McGregor-Freeburn, for twice sexually assaulting a female recruit by penetration while she was on the AFC medical wing in 2021.¹⁰⁴
 - The MoD’s official acknowledgement in July 2024 that Cpl Kerry-Ann Knight experienced prolonged racial and sexual harassment while an instructor at AFC.¹⁰⁵ Knight’s witness statement also includes multiple examples of the serious maltreatment by staff of recruits, including physical and sexual abuse.

By FOI request, CRIN later obtains the inspectors’ notes covering evidence of ill treatment. The notes state that during the period since the last inspection in 2021, 24 formal allegations of ill treatment of recruits by staff were recorded, of which 13 were substantiated. The notes make no mention of instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour by staff (including instructor-recruit relationships), or any of the convictions of staff substantiating violence and sexual exploitation of recruits since the previous inspection. Recruits interviewed by inspectors reported that bullying and harassment between recruits is ‘rare’, and none mentioned any inappropriate behaviour by staff: ‘Trainees... say that training staff treat them fairly and have their best interests at heart.’¹⁰⁶

18 October.

The Times publishes an interview with former recruit Jane Green (not her real name), who joined AFC at age 16 in 2019 – the same year as Jaysley Beck who ended her life while still in the army at the age of 19.

Referring to the prolonged sexual harassment that Beck faced prior to her death, Green comments that 'what happened to Jaysley is not uncommon in the slightest. People don't go to welfare... to report things because they know nothing will happen'.

Of her time at AFC, Green notes that female recruits had to be locked in their corridor for safety.

Appendix: Requests for information refused ●

In 2023 and 2024, the MoD began to refuse PQs and FOI requests for anonymised statistical data on sexual offences against personnel under the age of 18. In most cases, the grounds for refusal were implausible: that publishing the anonymised figures could reveal the identities of victims.

Cross-government guidance on the release of anonymised data states that, where a value lower than five may risk identity disclosure, it should be presented as 'fewer than five' rather than withheld.¹⁰⁷ Values higher than five present no such risk of identity disclosure and should be released as they are. Prior to 2023, this had been the MoD's usual practice when answering PQs.¹⁰⁸

The FOI Act requires authorities to publish anonymised data about groups of individuals, which does not constitute personal data. According to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), there exists 'clear legal authority for the view that where an organisation converts personal data into an anonymised form and discloses it, this will not amount to a disclosure of personal data'.¹⁰⁹ The guidance is supported by case law under the Act.¹¹⁰

The following refusals should be considered with the above observations in mind.

2023

29 May.

By FOI request based on a PQ (see 2021, 19 May, on page 13), CRIN asks to know the outcomes of investigations into three members of AFC staff alleged to have committed sexual offences against recruits in 2021.

The request is initially ignored and, after follow-up, finally refused nearly five months later on 18 October.¹¹¹ As grounds for refusal, the MoD says that in answering the PQ it had given the wrong number of suspected staff perpetrators and, consequently, the premise of the FOI request was false.¹¹² The MoD declines to give the correct number while acknowledging that it is more than zero.¹¹³

11 August.

By FOI request, CRIN asks the MoD how many girls were among the 81 armed forces personnel aged under 18 alleging sexual offences against them in 2021 and 2022 (as recorded in the Service Justice System statistics), and how many were at AFC.¹¹⁴

The request is initially ignored and, after follow-up, finally refused on 8 November, two months later than the statutory deadline for a response. The refusal claims implausibly that publishing the information could lead to the identification of recruits, and incorrectly that the Sexual Offences Amendment Act 1992 requires that the information be withheld.¹¹⁵

- **14 November 2023.** CRIN asks the MoD for an internal review of its response. The request is ignored.
- **13 February 2024.** CRIN appeals to the ICO.
- **23 May 2024.** CRIN receives the outcome of the MoD's internal review, five months later than the statutory deadline. It states that the data on which the original request was made was deleted once it was no longer needed, and thus is no longer held.¹¹⁶
- **5 June 2024.** The ICO tells CRIN that, since the MoD no longer holds the data in question, there has been no breach of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

14 September.

The MoD refuses to answer a PQ asking how many perpetrators of sexual offences against under-18s in 2021 and 2022 were based at AFC and other training centres.¹¹⁷ Again, the given reason for refusal is that releasing the figures could lead to identification of individuals.

26 October.

The MoD refuses to answer a PQ asking how many female personnel aged under 18 were victims of sexual offences in 2021 and 2022.¹¹⁸ It claims once again that publishing the figure could reveal the identities of recruits.

15 December.

The MoD refuses to answer a PQ asking to see the full 2020 survey of female AFC recruits on their experiences of bullying, harassment, and discrimination during training – which was cited in an army report as finding that 48% of respondents had experienced such behaviours.¹¹⁹ The grounds given for refusal were that the survey contains 'sensitive information' and was 'not intended for publication'.¹²⁰

2024

11 January.

The MoD refuses to answer a PQ asking how many army initial training staff were a) investigated for and b) convicted of sexual offences against recruits under the age of 18 in the last three years.¹²¹ The grounds given for refusal are the same as for similar requests: that publishing the numerical information could reveal the identities of perpetrators and victims and deter victims from coming forward.

19 March.

The MoD refuses an FOI request to see the results of the female recruit survey mentioned above.¹²² The grounds given are again implausible: that releasing the survey results 'would seriously damage the trust of those who took part' and 'reduce the likelihood of future surveys being completed in good faith'. The possibility of sending the results in redacted form is not considered. After CRIN's request for an internal review goes unanswered for five months, we refer the matter to the ICO. The outcome is pending at the time of writing.

28 August.

The MoD refuses an FOI request asking how many sexual offence cases handled by the Service Police in 2023 concerned victims aged under 18 serving in the army, and how many of these victims were female.¹²³ The MoD claims again that providing the figures would risk disclosing the identities of victims. At the time of writing, CRIN's request for internal view is pending.

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4. M Guinness, [A review of the Royal Military Police investigations into allegations of the ill treatment of junior soldiers at the Army Foundation College \(Harrogate\) \(AFC\(H\)\) 2014/15](#), 2018.
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21. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
22. British army (Independent Advisory Panel for Army Foundation College, Harrogate), [Annual report 2018](#), 2018.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
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91. *Ibid.*, para 187.
92. *Ibid.*, para 20.
93. *Ibid.*, para 187.
94. *Ibid.*, para 187.
95. Ofsted, [‘Welfare and duty of care in armed forces initial training 2023 to 2024’](#), 2024.
96. B Quinn, [‘Parents call for British army college to be shut down after abuse claims’](#), *Guardian*, 18 November 2021.

97. Freedom of Information request, ref. [494.2023-24](#), 14 September 2023.
98. D Sabbagh, '[Nine rapes at Harrogate military college reported to civilian police in 13 months](#)', *Guardian*, 5 October 2023; *R v Bartram* 2023.
99. The relationship began around 20 March; Gunner Beck left AFC on 5 June. British army, '[Service inquiry into the death of a service person discovered in their single living accommodation at Larkhill on 15 December 2021](#)', 9 June 2023, pp. 9–10.
100. S Carr, '[Army corporal who raped female colleague then told her "You're fine, I was wearing a condom" is jailed for more than seven years](#)', *Daily Mail*, 8 June 2023.
101. L Pollard, '[Army: Crimes of Violence](#)', UK Parliament: Written question, 7 December 2023, HC 5872.
102. S Atherton, '[Army Foundation College: Sexual Offences](#)', UK Parliament: Written question, 2 May 2024, HC 24728.
103. S Carr, '[Army corporal who raped female colleague then told her "You're fine, I was wearing a condom" is jailed for more than seven years](#)', *Daily Mail*, 8 June 2023.
104. *R v McGregor-Freeburn* 2024.
105. J Beale, '[Army racism apology to black "poster girl" soldier](#)', *BBC News*, 2 August 2024.
106. Freedom of Information request, ref. CAS - 503684-MS7JZH, 22 October 2024. Available from CRIN on request.
107. The government's own guidelines on statistical disclosure control state that low numbers, from which identities could reasonably likely be derived, should be disguised by rounding rather than withheld. Government Statistical Service, 'GSS/GSR Disclosure Control Guidance for Tables Produced from Administrative Sources', 2014, <https://analysisfunction.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Guidance-for-tables-produced-from-administrative-sources-4.pdf>.
108. For example, see E Lewell-Buck, '[Army Foundation College: Abuse and Violence](#)', UK Parliament: Written question, 14 October 2020, HC 103539.
109. Information Commissioner's Office, '[Anonymisation: Managing data protection risk, code of practice](#)', 2012, chapter 2: 'Anonymisation and personal data', pp. 11–17.
110. In situations where identification of individuals may theoretically be derived from statistical information, the ICO guidance cites case law (*R v Information Commissioner* 2011) to make clear that, unless the risk of such disclosure is 'reasonably likely', anonymised data should not be considered 'personal data' within the meaning of the Act. *Ibid*.
111. Following our submission of the request, the statutory time limit for answer, at 20 working days, lapsed. A further 20 days went by, and our formal request for an internal review of the request's handling was ignored. In September, the Information Commissioner's Office issued the MoD with a 10-day notice to respond to the FOI, which also lapsed.
112. Freedom of Information request, ref. [ArmySec/C/S/FOI2023/06622](#), 18 October 2023.
113. Letter from P Daly, Head of Information Rights Team, MoD, ref. [FOI2023/06622](#), 20 November 2023.
114. D Gee, '[Sexual offences in the service justice system - personnel under age 18](#)', WhatDoTheyKnow.com, 2023.
115. Freedom of Information request, ref. [FOI2023/09865](#) (original request), 8 November 2023.
116. Freedom of Information request, ref. [FOI2023/09865](#) (internal review), 23 May 2024.
117. D Doogan, '[Armed Forces: Sexual Offences](#)', UK Parliament: Written question, 14 September 2023, HC 199692.
118. A Cunningham, '[Armed Forces: Sexual Offences](#)', UK Parliament: Written question, 17 October 2023, HC 202980.
119. L Pollard, '[Army: Discrimination](#)', UK Parliament: Written question, 7 December 2023, HC 5873.
120. *Ibid*.
121. [Letter from A Murrison MP to E Lewell-Buck MP](#), 11 January 2024.
122. Freedom of Information request, ref. [Army/PolSec/M/M/FOI2024/04900](#), 19 March 2024.
123. Freedom of Information request, ref. [FOI2024/15871](#), 28 August 2024.

