

Army Training Centre (Pirbright)



Independent Advisory Panel Report 2017



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ARMY TRAINING CENTRE (PIRBRIGHT)

INDEPENDENT ADVISORY PANEL REPORT 2017

INTRODUCTION

1. The quality of Training at the Army Training Centre, Pirbright (ATC(P)) is high. A recent course passed out without a single 'Discharge As Of Right' (DAOR) being exercised and such rates generally have more than halved.
2. The Training Centre has had some welcome continuity with all three Commanding Officers remaining in place throughout the year. Last year we were uneasy about the short touring of the Staff Quartermaster (SQM) who should have played a pivotal role in the preparations for Project JUNO. We are pleased to note that his replacement will remain in post for the best part of three years, which will cover the majority of the JUNO work.
3. 2017 has been another interesting year for the ATC(P) Independent Advisory Panel (IAP). Sadly, in September we said farewell to our previous Chairman, Will Smythe, when he resigned as a panel member.
4. Last year we wrote that Standard Entry (SE) recruitment remains below target with under capacity intakes. This year the numbers are down still further but the overall First Time Pass (FTP) rates have nevertheless risen without appearing to have lowered standards – some achievement.
5. We also remarked that Project JUNO, the building project for the rationalisation of two other Army Training Regiments into a restructured ATC(P) outlined in the "Better Defence Estate" report, would be welcome. We now learn that expenditure on this project is likely to be highly constrained and so it seems unlikely there will be funds for the refurbishment of the 'tired' extant estate.
6. We are particularly concerned at the continuing chronic underfunding of routine maintenance. Several roofs leaked badly in the torrential rain in August, including the roof of the newly built Quartermaster's Department. This was largely due to the surprising deletion of gutter cleaning from the maintenance contract [we believe Army wide] as a savings measure. As a result there is no contractual obligation on the FM Contractor, Carillion Amey, to remove leaves that are causing the mainly flat roofs to leak - what might be termed as a save to spend more later measure? In addition, recruit accommodation blocks have suffered from boiler failure due to lack of servicing and preventative maintenance. We understand that the DIO was only persuaded to find extra funds when the ATC(P) threatened to cancel SE Recruit courses.
7. The Medical Centre remains undermanned which results in staff having to be misemployed to cover shortages. This has been highlighted in our three previous Reports.
8. The IAP are delighted that the Unit Welfare Officer has been re-appointed for another three years. She and her strong team of two Warrant Officers will provide welcome continuity. That said Welfare is being impacted by, the lack of a quality Community Development Worker to support wives and families, the state of the Community Centre due to a roof leak, and the churn of some staff.

The Independent Advisory Panel

9. This year has seen more changes to the Panel. Two members, for work related reasons, have remained non effective for much of the report period, although one will now be able to devote more time in future. Three others have resigned – two were long term members who had done their time and one was a new member who found the role too time consuming but has asked to be considered again when she is less busy. We recruited a new member over the summer and so current strength is now seven.

KEY ISSUES

Recruiting and Recruit Training

10. Statistics. First Time Starters (FTS), First Time Pass Rate (FTP) and Discharge As Of Right (DAOR) stats were / are:

- **1 Jan – 31 Dec 14**
 - First Time Starters (FTS) – numbers into training = 2400 (2057 male, 343 female)
 - DAOR = 112 (**4.7%**) (99 male (4.8%), 13 female (3.8%))
- **1 Jan – 31 Dec 15**
 - FTS – numbers into training = 2807 (2351 male, 456 female)
 - First Time Pass (FTP) = 1857 (**66%**) (1558 male (66%), 299 female (66%))
 - DAOR = 212 (**7.6%**) (180 male (7.7%), 32 female (7%))
- **1 Jan – 31 Dec 16**
 - FTS – numbers into training = 2818 (2515 male, 303 female)
 - FTP = 1699 (**68%**) (1548 male (69%), 151 female (59%))
 - DAOR = 251 (**8.9%**) (231 male (9.2%), 20 female (6.6%))
- **1 Jan – 27 Nov 17**
 - FTS – numbers into training = 2637 (2334 male, 303 female)
 - FTP = 1996 (**76%**) (1768 male (76%), 228 female (75%))
 - DAOR = 102 (**3.9%**) (87 male (3.7%), 15 female (5.0%))

11. The number of suitable regular SE recruits arriving for training has declined. However, the pass rate year on year has improved markedly and the female rate now equals that for males. The reasons for this appear to be:

- an increased emphasis on cutting wait times between selection and attendance at ATC(P), thereby avoiding fitness fade;
- the continuation of the periodic Pre-Conditioning Courses (PCCs) that bring on those potential recruits that are designated as marginal for either physical or education standards at Army Development and Selection Centres (ADSCs).

- the introduction of a remedial programme to address initial first week recruit failures in both physical and education entry standards,
- the taking of increased risk with test failures in the early stages of the Common Military Syllabus (CMS) by using extra coaching to bring recruits up the right standard without back squadding.
- the introduction of Training Team (TT) inter section competitions on pass and DAOR rates,
- the tracking of recruits who opt for DAOR, as some may [and indeed some do] opt to return.

12. As a result of these many initiatives it is pleasing to see that the 2017 DAOR figures have come right down and are now lower than even the excellent 2014 figures.

13. Female recruit injury rates remain almost exactly double that of their male counterparts. Anecdotally, girl recruits appear to arrive less robust and fit than their male peers. This, when added to the fact [so we are advised] that physiologically girls generally have to work harder for the same measure of work output, may account for this?

14. Another issue is the number of recruits who pass the physical aspects of the Army Selection Centre but who, due partly to the time between selection and arrival at ATC(P), then fail their Week 1 Representative Military Tasks (RMT) [a 1 1/2 mile run plus 'carry' tasks]. To try to ensure that these recruits do not then DAOR or injure themselves later in their CMS programme, a trial short conditioning course was developed.

15. During the trial, out of 619 [541 males and 78 females] recruits arriving at ATC (P) to start training, 8 personnel who had failed the run were moved to Sword Coy for remedial physical training as well as basic low level military skills training. A bespoke training programme was developed with 2 dedicated Sect Comds, as well as PT staff, to run the course. With the exception of 1 female, and 1 male later given a Medical Discharge (RECU MD), all personnel passed their run within one week of being in Sword Coy and were sent back to Week One training. The 1 female took 3 weeks to pass her RMT in the Career Employment Group (CEG) specific time and had to join a later course.

Weight Management of Potential Recruits

16. In our last report we said that a number of potential recruits arrive at ATC(P) with a Body Mass Index (BMI) that is just outside the range that is accepted for Army training. We reported that a weight management trial had been conducted by placing a number of recruits in Sword Company. This programme at ATC Pirbright has now been approved as a standard response to help recruits, who fail their initial IMA due to weight, BMI or waist circumference, to lose weight and continue with training. The training programme of PT sessions as well as nutritional advice, food diaries and healthy eating programmes have enabled 29 males and 4 females to start Phase 1 Training since Jan 2017. Weight Management also covers those that arrive at ATC(P) underweight – 4 so far this year.

17. Weight Management recruits come from both ATR(Winchester) and ATC(Pirbright). Overall weight loss is an average of some 7% body weight, with the period spent in the programme ranging from 5 to 76 days [mean of about 21]. Over 2 years, 97% of recruits have been returned to training with most successfully completing the whole 14 weeks CMS. This year there has been a marked decrease in recruits entering the programme, probably as a result of the shortening of the time between Selection and course loading at ATC(P)..

Reservist Training

18. ATC(P) delivers reserve recruit training Phase 1A and a Phase 1B courses – Phase 1A is available as a modular or a consolidated course. This year 1,704 reserve recruits were trained which was but 58% of capacity. The success rates for Phase 1A Consolidated and Phase 1B were 86% and 79% respectively, a drop from last year of some 8%.

19. Balancing this, attendance has improved with an average 91% 'booked & appear' rate, 9% up on last year. Some reservist recruits have complained that they received the wrong unit advice on whether to apply for the Phase 1A modular or consolidated course – most felt the modular approach would have been better for them. The standard of training is high, despite D Coy, which trains Phase 1A modular courses, only being 50% manned, but then recruit throughput is low at some 24% of capacity.

20. Finally, the numbers completing a Phase 1A consolidated course on a Friday, and then starting a Phase 1B course on the same day remains steady – this is over 3 weeks of continuous training (4 weekends), so can be physically and mentally demanding. We understand that a gap of a minimum of 3 weeks between courses is recommended by Initial Training Group (ITG).

Pre-Employment Training (PET) for Trainers

21. Last year we commented that a high proportion of all trainers posted into ATC(P) came without the right qualifications. We said that with the lowering of Army operational tempo, we felt that units should be nominating only fully qualified Officers and NCOs.

22. While there is still an on-going issue with Permanent Staff Pre Arrival Training (PET), there has been a modest improvement, see below:

Mandatory PET qualifications:

2016 (01 Dec 15 – 14 Nov 16)	2017 (01 Mar – 11 Oct)	↓	→	↑
Section Commanders (Sect Comds)				
= AASAA, DBS & DTTT. 72 arrivals with 1 complete with all PET.	= AASAA, DBS & DTTT. 57 arrivals with only 3 complete with all PET.			↑
Platoon Sergeants (Pl Sgts)				
= DBS, DTTT & Senior drill. 11 arrivals with 3 complete with all PET.	DBS, DTTT & Senior drill. 16 arrivals with only 4 complete with all PET.			↑
Platoon Commanders (Pl Comds)				
= DBS, DTTT & RMQ. 15 arrivals with 2 complete with all PET.	= DBS, DTTT & RMQ. 10 arrivals with only 2 complete with all PET.		→	

Abbreviations:

DTTT: Defence Train The Trainer Qualification

AASAA: All Arms Skill At Arms

DBS: Disclosure and Barring Service, the old Criminal Record Bureaux (CRB) check

RMQ: Range Management Qualification

23. Last year a high number of TT arrivals were posted in without the 'Defence Train The Trainer' (DTTT) qualification. In addition, there was not enough capacity to meet the demand backlog. This has been rectified as the Army Recruiting & Training Division (ARTD) Staff Leadership School (ASLS) is now able to franchise DTTT course, which has created more training spaces, with ATC(P) being a priority. This year's DTTT PET completion rates have been a big improvement. The 2016 and 2017 comparison is shown below.

DTTT						
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2016		16 Arrivals 0 with DTTT	32 Arrivals 4 with DTTT	16 Arrivals 4 with DTTT	32 Arrivals 7 with DTTT	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
2017		33 Arrivals 11 with DTTT	23 Arrivals 16 with DTTT	31 Arrivals 18 with DTTT	Not available	
↓	→	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑

Medical Reception Centre (MRS)

24. There has been some small improvements in many of the issues besetting the MRS. The current situation is:

a. MRS staff undermanning:

- The MRS has retained two Cpl JNCO Combat Medical Technicians (CMT) posts with the remaining seven being reduced to LCpls, one of which is permanently gapped. Over 50% are medically downgraded with one recent posting in being obese and so temporarily downgraded. The MRS is not a typical 0800 -1600 hours Medical Centre and CMTs play a crucial role in Phase 1 Training by providing 24/7 cover and fulfilling on-call commitments during silent hours. Downgraded CMTs apparently are unable to provide medical support for exercises.
- Civilian Nursing staffs are still undermanned and so the MRS continues to use Temporary Healthcare Workers (THWs) to cover over 30% of the shifts on the Recruits Ward. The THW procurement process is bureaucratic and time consuming, and supply is patchy.
- The Primary Care Rehabilitation Facility (PCRF) has manning issues with three Physiotherapy posts gapped (more than 1/3 of total required hours). A full-time Exercise Remedial Instructor (ERI) is also gapped.
- An E1 critical admin post, responsible for MRS technical administration such as fixing outpatients appointments and the discharge of recruits has been unfunded for over two years. Funding approval at a lower pay band has just been received.

b. The medical boarding system for recruits continues to be frustrated by the late arrival of some medical documents. The average time to summarise medical documents is gradually increasing as potential recruits now seem to have more complex medical histories and too many sets of notes are not arriving within the agreed D-9 (5 working days) cut-off. This can be exacerbated by recruits being loaded late onto courses. Recent, direct liaison with Capita will hopefully solve this issue. There is still a part time nurse summariser job-share post to fill.

c. Traditionally IMA failures have been due to 'failure to declare' conditions at the ADSCs. In some cases, Capita has now started screening GP notes before a candidate attends selection. This allows those with undisclosed conditions to be identified at the beginning of the application pipeline. For those who have had their GP notes scrutinised prior to selection there is now a 98% pass rate at their initial medical examination.

Infrastructure

25. Routine maintenance and repair of the Camp's services and buildings has not been good this year due to a shortage of funding. All repair tasks costing over £2,500 have had to be approved by the DIO. This has historically taken up to 12 weeks to obtain approval. Apparently, as a savings measure the DIO had gutter clearing removed from the ATC(P) hard FM Infrastructure contract. As a result, on 9 August 2017 twelve, mainly flat roofed, buildings in the camp leaked in the torrential downpour. One was the recently completed QM building. In the cookhouse two hotplates had to be disconnected. In the gymnasium there was further damage in one corner to the expensive special sprung gym wood floor. Boiler maintenance is now only on a 'reactive' basis. In consequence, no boiler routine maintenance was performed before the Army 'switch on heating date' of 31 October. A third of all the boilers then failed to work. Blocks 50 and 51 occupied by recruits had no hot water for two weeks. Recruits had to go to other blocks for their showers and ablutions. ATC(P) staff are pleased that as a result of personality changes in both the military G4 chain and the DIO, the DIO process has improved to approximately four weeks! The IAP feels that this is a sad reflection on the service provided by these staffs and the DIO in particular? Bearing in mind that non operational repair tasks can take up to 5 working days to assess under the FM contract, that a 'Statement of Requirement' and a 'Rough Order Costs' estimate then need to be prepared, the IAP believe that approval for repairs from the DIO should be forthcoming within days, not weeks? The system will be changing next financial year with the Army being responsible for maintenance funding.

26. As an example of the state of electrics in some of the recruit accommodation blocks, kettles are not allowed at all and only the limited number of issued low wattage irons [1 per 5 recruits] may be used or the block electrics are likely to trip.

Welfare

27. The succession of Deepcut suicide inquests [past and planned] continues to concentrate the minds of members of the IAP. As a result of our recent initiative for a member of the IAP to brief parents on the role of the IAP after the ATC(P) staff briefing on Day One of the Standard Entry (SE) courses it is clear that many parents are also well aware of Deepcut.

28. As a panel, we continue to analyse how we might detect abuse and how we should be contacted by any abused recruits. As a result of our discussions last year on how recruits could, and reputedly did, report all welfare issues or concerns to one of the Welfare Office staff we got agreement that an IAP post box should be established by the Welfare Office. This has never been used. So we are now looking at other possible solutions. We remain as satisfied as we can be that there is a most robust system in place and that welfare support, be it provided by the

chain of command, the padres, the Welfare Office or the moral support given by the WRVS Centre and Sandes staffs, is entirely fit for purpose.

29. The Welfare organisation generally still has staffing issues:

a. As a result of a recent decision, the Community Development Worker provided by the Army Welfare Service is to be withdrawn. It will therefore be necessary to review the Community Centre services provided. More may have to be done internally or it may be that this is a candidate for local community support. Good support is received from the local borough council through Play Rangers and special holiday events organised such as FISH (Fun in School Holidays) and CHIPS (Children's Holiday Infant Play Scheme). The welfare department run a children's activity week during the summer.

b. The Unit has lacked a clerk since June 2016. An E2 welfare clerk post has been advertised and two applicants are being interviewed soon.

c. The WRVS centre is established for a team of four providing regular pastoral care. In the last six months, nine members of staff have turned over. We understand that two experienced staff members are joining in January.

d. Brookwood Children's Centre is under threat. A case is being made for support from Surrey County Council Children and Family Services team. This unlikely to succeed as Surrey County Council have a budget deficit of over £100 million and are making severe cuts.

30. The Community Centre is in a serious state of disrepair with a hole in the roof which leads to electrical issues in wet weather. Consequently, there are times when the centre cannot be used for health and safety reasons. We are told that HQ 11 Brigade and Regional Command have been informed that the roof repair is a matter of urgency but we also understand that under current guidelines it is a low priority. The centre is pivotal for Community Engagement and is also used by other partner stakeholders such as the Home Start and Sure Start Groups who do a vital job supporting vulnerable and isolated service families: on occasion both charities have had to seek other venues at their own expense. Historically the centre has been let out to other groups and the income used to fund support activities (TV and Performing Rights Society (PRS) licences plus tea and coffee etc.). This is not now possible. That service families with young children who need support should be forced to use such a dank and old building is frankly disgraceful. Bearing in mind how family welfare is intrinsically linked to service morale and as such is key to retention, the IAP are surprised by the lack of action on such a modest roof repair.

Acknowledgments

31. I would like to thank all the IAP members for their hard work in following recruits under training at the Army Training Centre. The IAP continues to appreciate the indulgence of the three Commanding Officers who have to deal with our many varied questions.

Tim Sullivan CB CBE DL

ATC(P) IAP Chairman

IAP 2017 REPORT – COMMANDING OFFICERS RESPONSE

1. The COs' Council once again thanks the IAP for their considerable efforts to provide a level of independent advice and support during 2017 and welcome the new panel members. The Army's largest Training Centre continues to develop and progress due to the close relationship we hold with the IAP in support of the supervisory care of Recruits and the Permanent Staff. Those members of the panel that have retired this year have added so much to The Army Training Centre (Pirbright) and have ensured that the Centre continues to evolve and deliver 'best practice' training and care and the Council wishes to thank them for their selfless commitment, time and expertise.
2. We accept the views of the IAP and the COs' Council will address the issues raised with the IAP throughout the coming year. There are no specific issues that the Council feel should be addressed as part of this report.

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