

6 Jul 20

## **CADET HEALTH CHECK REPORT 2019 – MOD SUMMARY**

### Background

1. The annual Health Check of Cadet Forces is conducted by a small volunteer team appointed by the Council of Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations and led by Baroness Garden of Frognal. Its purpose is to provide MOD with objective and independent observations on the overall health of the cadet forces, their ability to deliver MOD-endorsed outcomes, and risks to their future well-being and sustainability. It is a 'light touch' review and a snapshot of what the team find during their visit programme. It complements the MOD and single Service governance processes and is not statutory. A short report is provided to Chief of Defence People at the end of each calendar year, and this document is MOD's summary of that report and our initial response to observations made within it.

2. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> annual report since the team was formed. For this report they were asked to complete their look at 2 aspects of the cadet forces which they started last year: communications up and down the 'chains of command' and safety. The team's programme of work was reduced this year by changes in team membership, but they were still able to witness the many activities that demonstrate the commitment of the Armed Forces to their sponsored cadet forces.

### Introduction

3. The team reports that, once again, they can confirm their confidence that the MOD-sponsored cadet forces continue to deliver a challenging and stimulating cadet experience within a well-controlled environment, in line with the MOD-endorsed outcomes.

### Communications

4. The report recognises that all cadet forces are taking measures to ensure that both adult volunteers and cadets can more easily access the information they need, and that their voices are heard within decision-making processes. It highlights the benefits which the cadet portals currently being rolled out across the cadet forces will bring both in terms of access to information and engagement with cadets, thus avoiding some of the unnecessary 'filtering' of information that sometimes occurs within the chain of command. We agree with this observation and note that the cadet portals also have the potential to reduce some of the administrative burden on adult volunteers and staff.

5. The report does, however, question why a joint approach to the development of cadet portals has not been taken across the cadet forces, as they all appear to have the same intent. There are valid reasons for this. Whilst the SCC and ACF/CCF portals both use the WESTMINSTER management information system, and have some similar elements, the portals are actually different products serving different core purposes. The RAF Air Cadets portal is a different product as it is built on their BADER system rather than WESTMINSTER. However, the SCC and ACF continue to work closely together in the development of WESTMINSTER to

maximise efficiency, including how elements of the ACF portal can help the SCC develop front end digital tools to support volunteers in the joining process and when claiming Volunteer Allowance.

6. The report points out that, despite making the same observation last year, some of the cadet force websites still did not clearly highlight the primacy given to safeguarding within the cadet forces by including links to safeguarding policies or stating the requirement for criminal record checks on adult volunteers. This is a fair criticism and this issue has now been resolved. We have also asked that the same information be included on the websites of the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations.

7. A further observation is that a recommendation from a previous Serious Case Review of a safeguarding incident, that enrolment forms should capture information about a young person's emotional, social or safeguarding needs to enable a degree of screening to occur before residential camps, has not been implemented. The reason given to the team was that GDPR limited the data that can be requested from cadets. We acknowledge that this must be resolved and that this is not a GDPR issue since GDPR allows appropriate data to be gathered and stored. Subject Matter Experts from each cadet force have recently met to discuss how this should be approached and we anticipate this issue being resolved quickly and sensitively.

8. The report notes that it remains the case that adult volunteers do not have access to some MOD systems they need, such as the Bidding and Allocation Management System (BAMS), as these sit on MODNET which is not accessible to adult volunteers. This affects all cadet forces but has been a particular issue for the SCC due to their lack of MOD employees who can access these systems on behalf of the adult volunteer. The RN has now given each of the SCC's Area Officers a MODNET account to partially ease their problem, but whilst adult volunteers are not permitted to access MODNET (which is unlikely to change) this problem will endure. We will continue to explore options to resolve this issue.

9. A further observation is that the cadet forces should consider the potential benefits of connecting with former cadets through an 'alumni' programme. Both the SCC and RAFAC are pursuing alumni programmes and the ACF may consider this as an option in the future.

10. The final observation in this section relates to the provision of alternative facilities for cadets during HMS BRISTOL's planned refit later this year. However, since the report was written the Royal Navy has announced that HMS BRISTOL's out of service date has been brought forward to 31 Mar 21 and that its provision of training and accommodation facilities will cease at the end of this year. The Royal Navy intends to work together with cadet forces to look at how their outputs might be supported without HMS BRISTOL, and we will stay closely engaged with them as their plans develop.

## Safety

11. The report notes the success of the Safety Day held last year which brought all cadet forces together to share processes, practice and experience. It was agreed at the Safety Day that MOD should re-establish a Safety Working Group to share good practice along similar lines to the Safeguarding Working Group, but the report observes that this group has yet to be formed. The delay is due to resource constraints, but this is a fair criticism. Work is in hand to identify the most suitable construct and representation to ensure effective sharing of good practice, and this will be in place shortly.

12. As last year, the report observes that the safety management systems differ between cadet forces and that, in a Health & Safety context, inconsistencies between cadet forces would be difficult to justify under external scrutiny. However, as last year, we disagree. The safety regimes for each cadet force are not the same because they are dictated by the safety management systems and duty-holding construct of each parent Service (which differ) and, for the Sea Cadets, by their parent charity the Marine Society & Sea Cadets. Notwithstanding this observation, the report acknowledges the continual improvement of the cadet safety management systems and raises no concerns over their robustness.

13. The report observes that the RAF Air Cadets would like their Staff Cadets (aged 18 and 19) to be permitted to undertake the training and qualifications necessary to supervise cadets on a shooting range. Current regulations only allow adult volunteers to do this training. We will include this idea within work we intend to do to consider the level and range of responsibilities which might be held by Staff Cadets in the ACF and ATC.

14. The report applauds the development of mental health initiatives across the cadet forces and the sharing of good practice. It suggests that any work being undertaken by the Armed Forces in this area should also be shared with the cadet forces. The RAF Air Cadets will explore any read across from the RAF 'Thriving at Work' initiative to adult volunteers. But we note that Armed Forces mental health initiatives tend to relate more to operational and employment-related stress, and the cadet forces' audience is very different, so any read across may be limited.

## Additional Points of Note

15. The team noted that all community cadet forces have initiatives in place to further promote Diversity and Inclusion and that cultural change needs to continue for this to become fully part of the fabric of cadet life. It also noted that participation in the cadet forces by 'looked after children' (those in the care of their local authority) is providing them with an alternative learning pathway and positive role models which can have a life-changing effect on their development. This demonstrates one of the significant wider benefits which the cadet experience brings to society.

16. The team noted the impact that the reclassification of the Drill Purpose weapon as a Section 5 firearm is having on the delivery of skill at arms and shooting across the cadet forces. The report comments that it would be beneficial if there was greater collaboration to find a solution. In fact, a collaborative approach is being

taken with Army Regional Command (Cadets Branch), the lead for skill at arms across the cadet forces, leading on work to find a solution. All cadet forces were engaged initially so that their requirements were understood, and once Regional Command has developed a way ahead it will be offered to the other cadet forces.

17. The report makes 2 observations about regulations which prevent the use of school minibuses for normal CCF activity. Firstly, it questions why school minibuses cannot be used to transport Section 5 firearms whereas an identical vehicle hired through the 'White Fleet' contract can be as it is then classified as a military vehicle. We agree that this should be investigated. We have raised it with the MOD's Directorate of Security and Resilience and are working with them to see whether there is a pragmatic solution. Secondly, the report describes as a 'self-imposed nonsense' that a school minibus can transport cadets to a Defence training area but cannot then be used to transport cadets within the training area, thus requiring additional vehicles to be hired for that purpose. We agree that this should be challenged and will raise this with the Defence Training Estate (DTE) organisation.

18. The report makes several observations about the Combined Cadet Force (CCF). Firstly, it notes that, despite the success of the Cadet Expansion Programme, the overall numbers of CCF cadets and adult volunteers has reduced. It is true that there was a decrease in the number of cadets and adult volunteers reported by CCF (Army) in the annual statistics at 1 Apr 19. Regional Command had just improved their approach to accounting for cadet and adult volunteer numbers which may have over-estimated the number of cadets previously reported in 2018, resulting in some of this decrease. We will continue to refine the system for capturing cadet and adult volunteer numbers with each annual iteration. The Cadet Expansion Programme (CEP) is now focussed on the sustainment and growth of cadet units in schools, particularly in newly established units where current cadet numbers are small.

19. Secondly, it observes that there is a reduction in available places at CCF(Army) camps, particularly for established CCF contingents. We acknowledge that CEP has increased the demand for camp places without a commensurate increase in DTE capacity. Where necessary, priority has been given to new cadet units to help them get established, which has resulted in less availability for others. Regional Command is conducting a review of camp allocation policy and camp timings for 2021 in order to optimise the utilisation of the places available but the constraint of DTE capacity will remain an issue.

20. Thirdly it comments on the difficulty caused to school cadet forces when bookings on training areas are not confirmed until just 6 weeks before an event. We acknowledge this difficulty and, whilst recognising the relative priority given to cadet force and Regular/Reserve Forces' bookings, will explore with DTE whether this situation can be improved.

21. A fourth observation about the CCF concerns the pivotal role which the School Staff Instructor (SSI) plays in the success of a CCF in a school, and whether the Department for Education (DfE) might provide greater financial support to state schools for the provision of this post. This has been raised with DfE and, at the CCF

Headteachers' Conference in February this year, the Education Secretary made a commitment to explore how DfE support for the SSI could be achieved in the future. We will continue to work with DfE to deliver this.

22. Finally in this section, the report observes that consideration should be given to the introduction of a medal for adult volunteers to reward exemplary and meritorious service. We agree that it is important that adult volunteers get the credit they deserve for their selfless commitment, and Regional Command will therefore lead a review of how adult volunteers are recognised and rewarded for their service to the cadet forces.

#### Areas of Focus for Cadet Health Check Report 2020

23. In line with the direction from the 3-star Youth and Cadet Steering Group that our policy focus should be on attracting and retaining the adult volunteers who form the lifeblood of the cadet forces, the next report is intended to focus on:

- Assessing the level of support provided to adult volunteers (including support for administrative tasks), the potential for improvement and a comparison with best practice across cadet forces and other youth organisations;
- The recruitment and retention of adult volunteers; and
- Reviewing observations made since the first annual report and what has changed as a result.

However, it is recognised that the work of the team is likely to be impacted this year by the restrictions and changes to the delivery of cadet activity resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic. We will maintain a dialogue with the team during the year to assist them with the focus and progress of their work.

#### Summary

24. The annual Cadet Health Check Report is an important element of the governance of the cadet forces which ensures that we continue to deliver a challenging and stimulating contemporary cadet experience, that both develops and inspires young people within a safe environment and achieves the outcomes which MOD has endorsed. The 2019 report again provides valuable independent observations of the health of the cadet forces which help shape our delivery of the Cadet Force 2025 Strategy and associated policy. The team aims to deliver its next report to the Chief of Defence People in December 2020.

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