

RFCA

Reserve Forces' and
Cadets' Associations



Ministry
of Defence

NEWSLETTER April 2025



Supporting the
generation and
sustainment of
Reserve & Cadet
Forces
now and tomorrow



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Central Defence Update

National Audit Office

On 17 March 2025, the NAO reported on its investigation into the MOD's oversight of the RFCAs.

It examined:

- How the MOD ensures that the structure and functions of the RFCAs are set to deliver their key duties
- How the MOD gains assurance that the RFCAs deliver their key duties
- How the MOD gains assurance that the RFCAs operate in an affordable and cost-efficient way

It identified that risks remain in the organisation and operation of the RFCAs around incomplete compliance with financial reporting requirements and HM Treasury oversight.

The MOD must address the remaining legal and financial risks highlighted in the Sullivan Review, whether by establishing a new NDPB, or by significantly strengthening the existing model, to support the evolving role of the Reserve Forces.

In doing so, MOD will need to retain the benefits of the RFCAs' local identities and regional connections, while ensuring the delivery of cost-effective, high-quality infrastructure and support services.

You can find the full report on the [NAO website](#)

Non-Departmental Public Body

MOD have decided that the solution to the risks highlighted by the NAO report is the creation of the NDPB. However, in conjunction with the MOD, we should decide how to retain the RFCAs' local identities and connection in the new organisation. More to be done in the coming months. As said before, this will not change what the staff of the RFCAs deliver day to day.



Central Defence Update

Strategic Defence Review

Ongoing, with final publication likely to be delayed. Expected to set the strategic posture for UK Defence for the next decade, including decisions on mass, readiness, and Reserve integration.

National Industrial Strategy

The NIS is also being drafted, highlighting that MOD recognises the urgent need for a **more robust and agile relationship with industry**, particularly in defence manufacturing, supply chains, and innovation pipelines.

Defence Reform

A reorganised MOD structure is underway, led by **four senior authorities**:

- **Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS)**
- **National Armaments Director**
- **Director Defence Nuclear**
- **Deputy CDS (Head of Military Strategic HQ)**

This new HQ will hold greater authority over single-Service Chiefs and shape Defence strategy, structure, and delivery.

Mobilisation

With increasing focus on the UK's ability to **generate mass in wartime**, early steps have been taken through the **Strategic Joint Command (SJC)**—the successor to Home Command—to explore whether there is a role for the RFCAs in **mobilisation and force generation**.

This would see the RFCAs contributing to the activation and scaling of the **Strategic Reserve** in a war role.

The Reserve

The Reserve is once again being seen as vital to Defence strategy. A renewed **Ministerial-level Reserve Forces Board** has been set up to focus on **how to simplify structures and generate the scale necessary for warfighting**—with the RFCAs playing a key role in that mission.



Engagement

Lord Mayor's AFC Dinner at Mansion House,
March 2025

As of March, there were 12,796 Armed Forces Covenant signatories, with a number of ERS Gold applications currently being processed in preparation for the next board discussion. The new Defence Relationship Management (DRM) Initial Operating Model, which came into effect on 1 April, places increased emphasis on aligning effort with the Defence demand signal, prioritising key industries and introducing a structured approach to employer engagement.

Employers will now be categorised as:

1. **Managed** – priority accounts aligned with nationally defined workforce categories or sectors
2. **Engaged** – regionally important accounts identified by local need and relevance
3. **Informed** – accounts kept up to date in line with their engagement level

DRM will continue to support **Armed Forces Covenant** and **Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS)** organisations (“accounts”), applying tailored account management principles to **maximise mutual benefit** and ensure alignment with wider Defence objectives.

Reflecting on the transition, Major General Marc Overton expressed his thanks to the RFCA and DRM teams for their professionalism and support, noting:

"To your teams' credit, they have maintained business as usual whilst delivering another superb annual ERS programme and all without dropping a single ball – a tremendous effort."



12,820

*as of 1/04/2025



Cadets & Youth

Cadet Health Check

The Cadet Health Check Team (CHCT) has once again provided a valuable contribution to Defence’s understanding of the Cadet experience on the ground. In a letter to CHCT members, **Vice Admiral Phil Hally CB MBE, Chief of Defence People**, expressed his “heartfelt thanks” for the team’s “dedicated hard work,” noting their efforts in conducting visits, engaging directly with cadets, volunteers, and staff, and producing a “comprehensive and informative” report.

Key takeaways include a continued emphasis on the **central role of CFAVs**, particularly in relation to recruitment, retention, and reward, and the importance of governance, safeguarding, and volunteer status. These insights are being progressed by **Brigadier Anthony Lamb, Head of Cadets**, ahead of a CHCT follow-up session in February. As the Strategic Defence Review unfolds, there is potential for a more unified approach to delivery across the Cadet enterprise—one that continues to prioritise safety, inclusion, and an outstanding youth experience.



Estates

The FDIS contract continues to be bedded in with still unresolved issues in the Central Region. Work continues with VIVO to resolve and, while progress is being made, much more needs to be done. This does have high-level engagement to progress.