

Ofsted has issued its eighteenth annual report on the effectiveness of care and welfare arrangements for recruits, trainees and officer cadets in **Armed Forces initial training**.

The overall assessment is strongly positive:

- All 10 Regular training establishments inspected were rated good or outstanding.
- Four were rated outstanding: Army Foundation College Harrogate, Commando Training Centre Royal Marines, the Defence Fire Training Unit, and the combined Royal Marines and Royal Military Schools of Music.
- Six establishments were graded good for overall effectiveness and for most key judgements, including Defence Medical Academy, which had made suitable improvements since being graded as "requires improvement" at their previous inspection.
- The only "requires improvement" grading was for training at the University Royal Naval Units (URNUs); 6 university units and headquarters staff at BRNC Dartmouth were visited as part of a single, graded inspection.
- Ofsted reports strong welfare networks, effective safeguarding and generally positive, respectful cultures. Trainees said that they felt safe and confident that concerns would be taken seriously.
- **AFC Harrogate receives particularly strong praise:** junior soldiers described a transformational experience, under-18 welfare arrangements were effective, and female trainees reported fair and respectful treatment.

There are nevertheless several important qualifications:

- **For the fifth consecutive year**, some female and smaller trainees lacked correctly fitting clothing and equipment and were having to "make do". At CTCRM, smaller kit was available, but trainees reportedly did not feel "welcome enough" to exchange badly fitting items.
- Accommodation, slow repairs and deteriorating infrastructure remain recurring problems.
- Some trainees spend excessive periods in holdover or unprogrammed time; at the Defence School of Logistics and Administration, some Army trainees waited three months or more for courses.
- Catering provision, particularly evening and weekend food, remains "inconsistent".
- The inspectors considered that establishments are not analysing outcomes sufficiently by gender, ethnicity, age, learning needs and other characteristics.
- The "requires improvement" rating for University Royal Naval Units involved, among other factors, lengthy medical-clearance delays.
- At the military music schools, trainees could wait as long as six months for a mental-health follow-up appointment, although local staff provided interim support.

A notable limitation is that Ofsted conducted **no** inspections of Reserve training during 2025/26, at the MOD's request. The report gives no explanation.

Source: [Welfare and duty of care in Armed Forces initial training 2025 to 2026](#) – published 22 September 2026.

Encouraging Ofsted inspection report for 2025-26 – but some problems persist

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