

ITV News has published a substantial investigation into the experiences of women in the Armed Forces, including allegations of sexual assault, harassment and failures in the way complaints have been handled.

The investigation, **Her Fight: Are Women in the Armed Forces Safe?**, is available to watch on ITVX, accompanied by a detailed series of reports on the ITV News website.

Some of the individual accounts are extremely disturbing. Former servicewomen describe sexual assault and harassment and, in some cases, feeling that they were ignored, belittled or disadvantaged after reporting what had happened. ITV also revisits the case of Gunner Jaysley Beck, whose inquest identified systemic failures in the Army's handling of her complaint.

Importantly, however, the coverage does more than recount those experiences. ITV was given access to the **Defence Serious Crime Command (DSCC)** and to the military court at Bulford, and examines some of the changes which Defence has introduced in recent years.

The DSCC, established in 2022, investigates serious crime independently of the individual Service chains of command. The **Victim Witness Care Unit**, established the following year, provides specialist support through the investigation and justice process. ITV also speaks to a serving soldier whose case resulted in her assailant being imprisoned and discharged from the Service, and whose experience of the more recent system was positive.

There remains considerable disagreement about whether reform has gone far enough. Emma Norton of the Centre for Military Justice argues that the present arrangements still lack sufficient independence. Defence, on the other hand, points to changes already made, action taken against personnel for unacceptable behaviour, improved support for victims and the relative speed with which cases can be heard in the Service Justice System.

There are also difficult questions about the Court Martial system itself. ITV considers the use of boards of serving personnel rather than civilian juries and hears the case made by the **Military Court Service** for the fairness and independence of the present arrangements.

These are subjects on which BAFF should probably have had more to say in the past. They concern not only women in the Armed Forces but confidence in the complaints and justice systems, Service culture, leadership and the willingness of personnel to report unacceptable behaviour.

There are strongly held views about what has gone wrong and about what further reform is needed. We do not need to reach conclusions on all of those questions before acknowledging the seriousness of the evidence or recognising improvements where they have been made.

The interests of justice apply equally to accused persons and to victims.

The ITV investigation provides a useful opportunity to hear different sides of that debate and, above all, to hear directly from some of the women affected.

Further information

[ITV News – Is the UK military's justice system protecting women?](#)

The ITV article includes a link to **Her Fight: Are Women in the Armed Forces Safe?** on ITVX.