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Tony O'Connor
Head of Profession for Statistics
Ministry of Defence
(By email)

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Dear Tony

Murder, manslaughter and sexual offences in the Service Justice System

We recently completed our compliance check of the Ministry of Defence (MOD)'s statistics on [murder, manslaughter and sexual offences in the Service Justice System](#) against the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#). These statistics are currently published as official statistics.

These statistics provide useful insights into the scale of serious and high-impact crimes committed by members of the armed forces. They help inform government policy, enabling the development of targeted interventions to tackle problematic behaviour and safeguard the safety and wellbeing of all service personnel.

We found a range of positive features that demonstrate the value and quality of the statistics:

- The bulletin provides clear guidance to users on how to interpret the statistics. For example, there is a caveat at the beginning of the bulletin that states that the size of the different services should be considered when making comparisons. This helps users understand that there are more personnel in the Army than the other military branches and to take this into account when comparing the numbers of victims or suspects between branches.
- In general, the quality and methods information is clear. The background quality report contains a good summary of the data quality and limitations of the administrative data used to produce the statistics. Changes to data collection methods and their potential impact on the statistics are explained.
- The publication has expanded in recent years, with murder and manslaughter offences being added in March 2022. Additionally, statistics on criminal conduct offences involving domestic abuse were added to the publication in March 2023. These additions provide a wider look at offending in the Service Justice System and add further value to the statistics.

We also identified some ways in which the value and quality of the statistics could be enhanced:

- As with [other MOD statistics that we have reviewed](#), we found that user engagement for these statistics is largely focused on stakeholders within MOD. The team should widen its engagement by reaching out to users beyond MOD, for example across the broader justice area, to enable a wider range of improvements to statistics. The team should proactively engage with external users to maximise the value added from future additions to the statistics, so that users' insight and presentation needs can be accounted for.
- The information on quality assurance processes in the background quality report could be expanded. Publishing more detail about quality assurance arrangements would provide greater assurance to users that the data are of good quality.

Thank you to your team for its positive engagement during this review. We look forward to continuing to engage with your team, and we hope our findings inform the ongoing development of the statistics on murder, manslaughter, and sexual offences in the Service Justice System. Please get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter or if we can offer further assistance as you continue to develop these statistics.

Yours sincerely

Siobhan Tuohy-Smith
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