

CAPITA

Meg Hillier MP
Chair of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC)
Houses of Parliament
London.
SW1A 0AA

31 January 2019

Dear Chair,

I write in response to the question regarding Capita's Army recruitment contract with the MoD, as raised by the PAC at the hearing on 14 January 2019. Please note that we have shared this response with the MoD as our partner on Army recruitment.

Referring to Q58 of the full transcript, I was asked why 47% of applicants for the Army voluntarily drop-out. I would like to take this opportunity to reassure the committee our findings show only a very small proportion do so because they believe the process is taking too long, which was, understandably, a concern.

The 47% voluntary outflow figure used in the National Audit Office (NAO) report refers to an Army-commissioned audit in 2017. A further 42% failed against Army policy standards (mainly medical) and 11% successfully entered Basic Training.

The 11% represents what is known as a 'conversion rate' of nine to one; this is better than the conversion rate before the contract started and recent improvements to the contract have seen this bettered by nearly 20% to one in 7.3 applicants entering Basic Training.

Project 200 survey

In late 2017, we undertook a survey of those who voluntarily withdrew from the process, called Project 200. Former candidates were asked to cite one or more reasons as to why they dropped out.

The most common were:

- Personal circumstances have changed – 31%
- Other – variety of personal reasons – 27%
- Didn't think they were fit enough – 23%

Only 6% said they thought 'the process was taking too long', reflecting the fact that such a high proportion are dropping out quickly, before even reaching the Army Career Centre. This was behind, for example, friends or family discouraging them from joining the Army (9%) or the realisation that they were not yet ready (18%).

As well as more thorough monthly monitoring through DRS, we are currently in the field repeating the Project 200 exercise, which should also inform us of the impact the new IT system is having.

Process satisfaction

We also have some additional survey data from September 2018 of candidates who successfully moved from the initial Army brief to the Assessment Centre.

This work found that 87% of candidates were 'inspired' or 'encouraged' by the recruitment process; 96% found communications to be clear and understandable; and 94% found contact with the partnership to be efficient and helpful. More than eight in 10 were also happy with the Defence Recruiting System candidate portal, though we are working hard to greatly improve satisfaction with the system.

For the committee's records, I would also like to point to our repeated commitment to improving the performance of the contract. With this in mind, we are introducing a number of technological and procedural innovations that will help us recruit more quickly and effectively.

For example, we are finalising improvements to an app that assesses how close candidates are to being fit or strong enough to qualify for certain roles in the Army. This can, for example, monitor cardiovascular and muscular tests, such as running or sit-ups, and help the candidate see in which discipline and by how much they need to improve to qualify for the role they seek.

We are also trialling medical screening calls with nurses, which are taking place before the full medical assessment. This sees candidates receive far earlier feedback on their eligibility for the Army. If this trial continues to prove successful, we will look to roll-out this change from April.

Thank you again for inviting me to the hearing and listening to Capita's evidence regarding the contract. If you have any other questions or need us to provide any further written clarifications/evidence, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jon Lewis', with a stylized 'J' and 'L'.

Jon Lewis,
Chief executive, Capita

CC: Stephen Lovegrove, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defence (MoD)