

*Fighting for our rights, fighting for our future*

# Armed forces committee report

## Pay

Early in the session, we issued a joint statement with the BDA (British Dental Association) condemning the 2021 armed forces 'pay pause', which failed to recognise the efforts of uniformed doctors and dentists, even as many of their civilian colleagues (including those employed by the Ministry of Defence) received a 3% salary raise.

We expressed our concerns with both the real terms pay cut and the processes that led to it in our written evidence to the AFPRB (armed forces pay review body), where we called for a pay award that recognised both inflation *and* long-term erosion of pay. In addition to this submission, AFC representatives provided oral evidence to the AFPRB in March 2022. At the time of writing await publication of the pay review body's report, however we were happy to hear their representatives acknowledge our concerns around remuneration and doctors' armed forces pension.

The committee continues to explore issues surrounding reserve pay. Following engagement with the OME, the committee also awaits a report on MODO pay comparability.

At present we are also seeking engagement with the Haythornthwaite review, an independent review exploring the total offer made to all military personnel.

## Pensions

Pensions and pension taxation remain major areas of concern, especially for uniformed doctors. AFC has now been properly engaged as a stakeholder by the MOD (Ministry of Defence) in the implementation of the McCloud remedy, and in this process we have made clear the importance of a fair settlement for those MOs (medical officers) who have entitlement to MODO (medical officers and dental officers) bonuses under AFPS05.

We are engaging with MOD about the use of the “HMRC countermeasure”, which affects those with legacy rights in AFPS75 and will become a bigger issue now inflation is higher. We continue to support individual members with casework that may be of very wide significance and are awaiting the outcome of internal processes.

Separately, deputy chair **Dr Grant Dex** has begun a new work-strand to ensure that AFC has a proper understanding of issues arising for civilian medical practitioners (CMPs) in the Civil Service Pension Scheme.

## Legal cases

We celebrated a [legal victory in January 2022](#), in the case of Evans vs Secretary of State for Defence. It was decided that MOD’s media policy contravened the European Convention on Human Rights (specifically the right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and association), and so must be replaced so that BMA armed forces representatives are not unlawfully restricted from speaking to the media on behalf of the association’s members.

We were unfortunately not successful in our most recent judicial review relating to unfair dismissal rights. We continue, however, to consider means of urging the secretary of state to implement section 192 and, in doing so, grant these rights to the entire military workforce. We will keep members updated on developments.

## Engagement

The committee are currently working on a survey of armed forces doctors, which will be launched in the summer. This will be open to all medical officers (uniformed and civilian; BMA members and non-members), with the aim of better understanding the key concerns of this workforce, and what the BMA can do to address these.

The AFC are considering other means of engaging those we represent, including in person events and means of making a more accessible armed forces doctors conference.

## Working with the MOD

We continue to hold regular meetings between representatives from the BMA, the BDA and the Defences Medical Services (DMS), including the DMS Director General. These discussions allow us a space to raise concerns on the issues facing armed forces doctors and to seek opportunities for collaboration between the employer and the trade unions.

Our deputy chair Dr Grant Dex regularly represents civilian doctors at MOD meetings and consultations, providing the BMA perspective to a range of issues, including the impact of DMS transformation. In addition to this, the deputy chair and AFC co-optee **Dr Katrina Ingram** are collaborating on a piece of work concerning occupational health medicine CMPs’ job descriptions.

We are also close to finalising the collective bargaining agreement between MOD and BMA, a formal recognition of the association’s position as a trade union representing the department’s civilian doctors.

## **Armed forces covenant**

The BMA has now officially signed the armed forces covenant, building on the association's commitment to supporting its military members.

Then BMA chief executive Tom Grinyer signed the covenant at BMA House in London on 11 April, witnessed by Surgeon General and head of the Defence Medical Services, Major General Tim Hodgetts. AFC deputy chair Dr Grant Dex and AFC member Major Toby Pring also attended the signing.

Lt Col Mark Weir

[Armed forces committee](#)