

24 May 2024

# PCS calls for comprehensive independent inquiry into sexual harassment in defence

PCS General Secretary Fran Heathcote has signed a joint open letter to the Ministry of Defence, calling the revelations of widespread sexual harassment in the department appalling, depressing and a “stain on the reputation of the government.”

The letter, also signed by other unions, academics and campaigners, calls for a “comprehensive and independent inquiry into sexual harassment in defence.”

The letter comes after more than 60 women went public about sexual harassment and sexism within the MOD last November.

Yesterday, PCS conference carried motion A102 calling for [increased action on sexual harassment](#) and the elimination of toxic workplace cultures.

[Read the letter](#)

The revelations in recent months about sexual harassment in the Ministry of Defence are both appalling and depressing. That so many victims, the vast majority of whom are women, have faced this behaviour is a stain on the reputation of the government.

Unfortunately, whilst they are shocking they are not surprising. For too long this type of behaviour has been excused as harmless ‘banter’ rather than recognised as representative of a toxic culture and exploitative power dynamics. There have been reports of this type of harassment for over 20 years, but still it has not been comprehensively addressed.

While there are clearly many victims of this kind of abuse in the armed services, this issue clearly goes much wider. Civil servants in the Ministry of Defence have too often been victims, and it also affects those working for defence contractors sharing these workspaces too.

It is high time that there is a comprehensive and independent inquiry into sexual harassment in defence that listens to victims and makes binding recommendations for action by the MoD.

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**Signed:**

Fran Heathcote - General Secretary, PCS

Sue Ferns - Senior Deputy General Secretary, Prospect

Paul Nowak - General Secretary, Trades Union Congress

Dave Penman - General Secretary, FDA

Jemima Olchawski - CEO, Fawcett Society

Deeba Syed - Senior Legal Officer, Rights of Women

Dr Harriet Gray - Senior Lecturer, University of York

Professor Victoria Basham - Head of Department, Cardiff University

Nicola Lester - Psychological Trauma Consultant

Dr Lauren Godier-McBard - Co-Director Centre for Women's Military Research

Emma Norton - Director, Centre for Military Justice

Lucy Baston - Solicitor, Centre for Military Justice

Zelda Perkins - Can't buy my Silence

Rebecca Ladbury - Times Up UK