



The Independent Advisory Panel (IAP) Army Foundation College, Harrogate

ANNUAL REPORT 2013



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2. Foreword by the Chairman

I am very pleased to introduce the 2013 Annual Report of the Independent Advisory Panel (IAP) at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate. During the year we said farewell to the College's previous Commanding Officer, Lt Col KD Sharifi, and welcomed Lt Col S Lane of the Rifles as his successor. We worked closely with Lt Col Sharifi, and I am delighted that in our dealings with Lt Col Lane we have been able to both continue and extend that successful relationship still further.

As the Report explains, the key role of the IAP and its members is to provide an independent source of assurance to parents, the College leadership and the young people themselves that every Junior Soldier (JS) has the most positive experience possible whilst undergoing their Phase 1 training at the College. However more grown up and mature each JS will become during their time at Harrogate, carrying lethal weapons and learning how to use them, we are all aware that they are at the same time legally minors to whom a duty of care is owed which must be delivered by the College and its staff.

We operate independently of the military chain of command and we are able to access the College at any time to observe the activities undertaken by JS. IAP members are widely drawn from the local community. Membership is voluntary and unpaid. IAP members freely give of their time and energy to the work and I would like to thank them all for their commitment and active support to the IAP during 2013.

Kevin McAleese CBE, December 2013

3. The Role of the Independent Advisory Panel (IAP)

The College is inevitably the subject of a wide range of inspections and audits, including The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) and the Army's own internal procedures. Such regulatory visits will result in reports and possibly recommendations for improvement, and often will involve direct contact with the JS in training. However, IAP members are not part of the range of regulators who visit, because their brief is different. The role of the IAP is to focus on the duty of care and check whether it is being delivered in the daily life of the Junior Soldiers (JS), whether in training in the classroom, on the parade ground, in the gym or out on military exercise. The IAP provide an independent and non-statutory source of advice, challenge, encouragement and support to the College, by exchanging information, identifying good practice, providing feedback, asking questions and assisting in identifying possible areas to address.

The independence of IAP members from the College is vital. They are recruited for the range of their expertise and experience in the commercial and industrial world, the public services, education and the military. The majority are parents themselves. IAP members are unpaid volunteers, who serve for a maximum of six years. Two IAP members are assigned to each of the five Companies at the College, so that they can understand and explore all aspects of the training and care of the Junior Soldiers and the work of the permanent staff.

Members of the IAP have access at any time to the Army Foundation College site or wider afield and provide a written report on any activities they undertake. Those activities can include dropping into Company lines, visiting education classes, observing military training and attending exercises in the field. On every visit a key part of any activity will be talking directly with the JS about their

experiences to date. IAP reports always acknowledge positive work which is observed, as well as recording any issues relating to the welfare or the duty of care to JS. They may also make recommendations for action where applicable.

IAP members meet at the College as a group up to six times a year with the Commanding Officer and all the Company Commanders, where specific themes and issues arising from the written IAP reports are explored in greater depth. An Annual IAP Report is published on the College website.

4. Current IAP Members

<i>Alamein Company:</i> Kevin McAleese CBE is Chairman of the IAP. He was Head of Harrogate Grammar School for ten years before becoming Chair of NHS North Yorkshire and York. He lives in Burn Bridge. Appointed July 2011.
<i>Alamein Company:</i> Lorna Snowden is the newest member of the IAP this year. She is a very experienced local government officer and is currently Secretary to the Mayor of the Borough of Harrogate. Appointed September 2013.
<i>Burma Company:</i> Ciaran McGuigan OBE is an Occupational Psychologist and is currently the Head of Centre at the College of Policing based in Harrogate. He lives in Scotton village. Appointed November 2010.
<i>Burma Company:</i> Michelle Woolley is a local businesswoman who lives with her teenage son in Hampsthwaite. Appointed January 2012.
<i>Cambrai Company:</i> Gary Dale is a businessman based in Bradford. He previously served in the Armed Forces and he and his wife are also foster carers. His son graduated from the Army Foundation College in 2010. Appointed January 2012.
<i>Cambrai Company:</i> Beverley Twizell is a retired teacher who worked at a local Young Offenders' Institute. She lives in Spofforth and was appointed in September 2008.
<i>Peninsula Company:</i> Peter Chambers is one of two new members this year. He was a boy soldier before being commissioned into the Royal Engineers. He then became Head of Strategic Development for BT and now runs a coaching and mentoring business. Appointed July 2013.
<i>Peninsula Company:</i> Paul Nee was Associate Director, Procter & Gamble UK until his retirement. He is a dad and a resident of Harrogate. Appointed January 2007.
<i>Waterloo Company:</i> Angela Monaghan is a Registered Nurse and the Chief Nurse at Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust. She is the mother of two young adults. Appointed January 2012.
<i>Waterloo Company:</i> Sue Symington is Vice-Chair of the IAP. She has worked at Director levels across public, private and third sector organizations. Sue is a Non Executive Director at Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust and The Beverley Building Society, and runs her own business in Knaresborough. Appointed May 2009.

Thanks are due to three IAP members who gave valuable service during their appointments, which ended this year:

- Robert McKenzie Johnson, the longest serving IAP member, who was a former Army Officer and the retired Head of an Independent School near Thirsk.
- Guy Dickie, a former Army Officer and senior consultant for PriceWaterhouseCoopers

- Roy Mackay, a senior teacher at Harrogate Grammar School

The IAP was also very appreciative of the secretarial support received from the Adjutant at AFC (H), Captain Ed Lyons, until he deployed to Afghanistan earlier this year. We were then well supported by the Validation Officer, Captain Alistair Bexon, until he too was posted on.

5. IAP meetings this year

The IAP has scheduled six meetings this year with the Commanding Officer and his senior leadership team, plus the Officers Commanding the five College Companies. The meeting dates were:

12 February, 15 April, 4 June, 6 August, 8 October, 10 December

In addition, there was an IAP induction afternoon on 6 August when IAP members visited the welfare facilities for JS and met staff, experienced shooting SA80 rifles on the indoor electronic range, undertook some Command Tasks and then participated in a wide ranging discussion with Company senior officers about best practice in delivering the duty of care. In addition, the IAP Chairman had at least one meeting with the Commanding Officer between each full IAP meeting.

6. IAP reports submitted this year and issues discussed

By the end of 2013 nearly 40 written reports had been submitted by IAP members following visits to JS activities. An "Action Matrix" is maintained by the College, onto which all report recommendations are entered, responded to and discussed then either closed or left for further review. Issues arising from the reports at IAP meetings this year which have been closed off to the satisfaction of the panel or are under continuing review include:

- Creating more time for PT on the Short Course
- Consider the use of testimonials from JS or their parents on the website
- Support for JS worried about the end of course PT challenge
- Anti-smoking programmes and initiatives at the College
- Relative retention rates on Short and Long courses
- Inclusion of the Unit Welfare Officer in IAP meetings
- The quality of the Laundry service
- Duke of Edinburgh Scheme arrangements
- The quality of the food in the Cookhouse, opportunities to promote more healthy eating and time allowed to eat
- Access to sports facilities "out of hours"

- Damage costs charged to JS
- Learning from civilian good management practice about handling difficult disciplinary matters and creating a culture which as far as possible limits their occurrence
- The accuracy of the equipment requirements on the kit list
- Making best use of “downtime” after the daily programme
- The quality of the Sports and Skills programme

In each case, an issue is only removed from the Action Matrix when the College has responded and the IAP is content that the matter has been acted upon as appropriate. There are often no simple solutions to the matters raised, which may involve contracted services and have cost implications, but it is the IAP’s role to ask such questions.

7. Aspects of Junior Soldiers’ life at the College as reported by IAP members in extracts from their individual reports. (Note: JS= Junior Soldiers, PS = Permanent Staff, names of individuals have been removed)

28.1.13 Waterloo Company. Earlier in the year, S and I had agreed with the OC, key points at which to visit the company as the new short course progressed. This visit was towards the end of phase 1 training and just prior to the 2 week exercise in Scotland. The course graduates on 28 February.

On the day I visited, cap badges had been awarded and the junior soldiers had met and received presentations from representatives of the regiments they would be joining for phase 2 training. The mood was buoyant. I had the opportunity to meet with about 35 junior soldiers from 3 and 4 platoons in 4 groups: 2 groups of males and 2 groups of females. The feedback from all groups was strongly positive. It was recognised that there were differences in training approach between the long course and the short course and on the whole, the junior soldiers felt they were treated as adults.

Supervision had been more intensive in the first 6 weeks especially in the evenings and at night, which had reduced as the course went on. A few of the females remarked that waiting for a room check at 10pm from a member of the PS was too late in the evening as some JS wished to go to sleep before this. The Realities of War course was identified as a highlight of the course to date .

It was also clear that strong friendships had been formed in a short space of time , the JS did say that there were tensions and bickering at times but felt this to be normal in the circumstances of communal living. Most of the junior soldiers I spoke to said they were glad to be doing the short course though a couple said they did not feel ready yet to enter phase 2 training and felt the course was a bit too rushed.

1.3.13 Cambrai Families Day. This was a planned visit co-ordinated with Maj. O. I arrived at the AFC around

09.15hrs. Many parents and JS had gathered in the gymnasium so I used the opportunity to have a chat and hand out the IAP flyers. All parents were then directed to the Robertson lecture theatre where Maj. O. gave his presentation to the families in two groups, the first being 10.00am. This was a very informing presentation and I was introduced as the IAP member.

Following the OC, seven JS gave their own individual interpretation of the past six months. One JS had been injured and transferred to Imjin platoon. He spoke openly about his rehabilitation programme and how it enabled him to continue with the course. He praised the support offered to him during this time and acknowledged that without it he would not be stood on the stage sharing his experience. He was very pleased to state that he is now back on full duties. I listened to all 7 JS delivering their speeches with confidence. They all spoke from the heart and many parents commented throughout the day, that they were amazed that their sons/daughter were able to get up and speak at all.

I spoke with many JS during the day and the general consensus was that things were going well but they were all looking forward to the approaching weeks leave. The only gripe was the odd negative comment regarding a platoon having to return a day early to assist with a new intake arriving. Although some had volunteered, many were delegated. Here I reminded them that when they arrived six months prior, JS were here to meet and assist them and pointed out it was time to return the favour.

Later in the day I had the privilege to observe the DTS firing range, the assault course and the JS marching on the drill square. I was extremely impressed, not only with the camaraderie between the JS but also with the guidance and welfare the PS expressed whilst the activities took place. The parents like me were absolutely blown away with the marching on the drill square to the beat of a drum, this was pure precision and delivered to perfection. It was blatantly obvious that the JS had worked immensely hard to get to this stage. I could feel the pride glowing from parents watching the activities and demonstrations during the day and feel this is an excellent platform for the JS to show off to their families. The constant smiles and laughter told the story of a very successful day that ran with "military precision".

11.4.13 General. The Medical Centre is the registered primary care provider (ie GP equivalent) for all JS and also PS at the College, but not the latter's family members. It provides the usual range of health screening services, including vaccinations, smoking cessation and family planning, but not minor surgery. There is a daily sick parade triaged by nurses, who pass cases on to the RMO or the second GP. The low dependency unit can take JS with coughs and colds or infectious cases like chicken pox, and JS can remain on the ward overnight if necessary. Out of hours services operate (ie dialling the local OOH Centre) when the Medical Centre is closed, like GP practices elsewhere. JS can be fast tracked privately for diagnostics when needed, but most use is made of Harrogate District Hospital. If there was an accident on site or a sudden serious illness the JS or PS would be blue lighted to Harrogate by an ambulance being called. The decision to treat can result in a JS being effectively discharged from the College, so the RMO is always involved once a consultant has diagnosed what medical intervention is recommended.

Postural problems are the main primary care need, which can be exacerbated by physical activities because many JS are still not fully physically developed, or have had pre-existing injuries which are not always declared. Flat footedness is an issue for some. A key challenge is rehabilitation for musculo-skeletal problems, within the maximum allowed time period of 84 days or 12 weeks. This is a particular challenge

for the Short Courses, where the duration is only some 20 weeks in total. Referral in for physiotherapy is the same day or the next, so there is effectively no waiting list.

Obesity is a minor issue, and the Army permits a BMI range of 17-30. Some JS will have adjustment disorders as an extreme form of homesickness, which has the potential to develop into depressive illness. They can be referred to Catterick for specialist support from a community psychiatric nurse. Generally, most adjustment disorders do not persist. There is also counselling support for bereavement. The on-site pharmacy dispenses all prescribed medication needed. I was struck by the comprehensive range of services available to JS, the immediacy of treatment and the care taken on arrival to ensure that JS have sufficient physical capacity to meet the demands of the course.

1.5.13 Waterloo. I met with JS during education. This is an education- heavy period for the JS- but surprisingly there were no complaints about this. In fact some JS enjoyed the classroom elements of the training. I was briefed on the military studies curriculum for the programme- and was impressed at the commitment to making this interesting and relevant for the JS. I understand that there is a possibility that this intake of JS will be able to go on the Realities of War Tour to France... I really hope this is possible.

I met with 4 groups of JS. I sense that they had "post- leave blues"- so were a little subdued...but actually all had a very positive view of their return to college. Most said they were really pleased to be back at college. Being at home had been "quite boring" in comparison to college life and of course they had missed their mates! All the JS were looking forward to beginning their skills and sports choices- and I was amazed at the wide range of activities available to them.

We covered plenty of ground in our discussions- from laundry, to phone usage, from food to physical exercise. My sense was that the JS are satisfied with the pace and content of the programme. A minority felt they are less fit now than when they entered the college- but seemed to appreciate that developing fitness was a process.

The group of JS I had met previously were scattered through the JS groups I met. They seemed much more settled. I was assured by this (Ironically the JS who had previously had so much to say about not being able to smoke- had now stopped!). There were some grumbles about food. Some JS spoke positively about the food on offer. When I returned to Major J. after the JS meetings, we went ourselves down to the cook house for an informal investigation! It was just before lunch- so we were able to see the menu for lunch that day. There was a wide selection of hot dishes available for lunch. I must say the cold buffet was incredibly impressive- sliced beef and ham, bowls of prawns, trays of mozzarella and tomatoes, bowls of grated cheese, quiche, a wide selection of salad items including pasta salad and rice salad. These items could be used to either make up a salad plate or could be used with rolls to make sandwiches. I

was impressed.

24.5.13, Peninsula. Time was spent with 2i/c Cpt H and CSM G before meeting with 6 JS, each chosen to represent their respective platoon. I found the PS satisfied with the progress being made by the Company overall at this stage in the programme (week 31/44) and determined to continue to raise standards still further in the time remaining. The 6 JS gave a mainly positive view of their collective and individual experience to date.

There are 237 JS still on course to complete the training, which at 83% of the initial intake is significantly above average at this stage. In considering the JS, there was a fair degree of confidence that the quality of performance would remain high and that the vast majority would complete graduation and progress to stage 2. There had been some poor performers along the way including JS who had been guilty of aggressive behaviour and a couple of PS whose actions were below the expected standard – these were all dealt with at the time. They had just returned from TAC EX 2. Despite very poor weather (rain and wind) it had gone well and the objectives of the exercise had been successfully completed – apparently this intake had suffered inclement weather on every camp to date and is well practised at dealing with poor conditions.

The PS left and I was joined by the 6 JS who were in good spirits, interested to hear about the IAP and its purpose and talked readily about their experience at the AFC which in the main had been in line with what they had expected and positive overall. They were all keen to finish the course and move on to their next phase of development – in general, they found the programme somewhat long. Talking about improvements, they were united in the view the initial 6 weeks could be improved with more opportunity for PTI rather than being left “hanging around”. These particular JS had prepared for their arrival by improving their fitness before joining and felt that they actually lost condition during their early weeks at the AFC?

We talked about how JS treated one another and how they had been treated by PS. Whereas there had been some difficulties earlier in the course these had all been dealt with and there was a strong sense that bullying does not occur in this company, would not be tolerated by PS or JS and that individuals would feel able to report any concerns without fear.

30.5.13, Burma Company

Advice post Woolwich incident I enquired about how the JS had been briefed regarding the Woolwich attack. The JS had been given advice about travelling home and information cards/leaflets too. They are no longer going to the museum in Woolwich on Realities of War trip next week and going in plain clothes. The JS said they had felt secure and reassured by the advice.

Lack of Sports The JS commented that there were not enough sports opportunities, especially in the evenings during downtime. Can they organise it themselves, I enquired. They said they can book a pitch but needs a PTI present to supervise and they go home at 5ish. In reality, they only require a PTI for an organised tournament; otherwise they

could just play a game amongst themselves. They requested just one night a week having an organised sporting event. Major K and I discussed this and he agreed it was a short-coming on the short course and mentioned that this was being reviewed with a new focus on select team sports with the OC to foster 'Esprit de Corps.'

Discussion with Major K So far, 3 DAOR in Term 1 due to homesickness and another 4 in Term 2. This is better than expected. Major K also commented that so far no Commanding Officer discipline has been necessary; any issues had been dealt with at Plt Co level. There were 2 relatively minor issues of bullying, one was an Equality & Diversity issue and E&D were involved and conducted interviews. The other was verbal harrasment reported by a parent, the culprit had been moved to another Plt. It's good that Major K sends out anon questionnaires to the JS and invites comments to highlight areas for improvement. Another will be sent out at end of this term. Next week, it's the formative testing on the Moondance Exercise, where all field skills learnt so far will be assessed. Approx 7 on 'company at risk' register for not completing the course. 5 due to medical reasons, 2 based on skills issues. This will be closely monitored in the 3rd term. Major K remains optimistic about remainder of term; he doesn't expect any more drop outs as the JS will be kept very focused and busy till end of term, then 2 weeks leave then final term before graduation. According to Major K, verbal exchanges between the PS and JS are calm, this has been a focus for him and his staff.

3.7.13, Cambrai. Some of the JS expressed a preference (or rather a wish) for platoons to be organised on a regimental basis with PS from their own regiments. However, they did understand the difficulties involved in this. They also admitted that although they are encouraged to be proactive if they want more PT by going to the gym or on runs, they find it more difficult to self- motivate and prefer to be accompanied and encouraged (shouted at!) by the PT staff.

Several of the JS suggested that when a JS had achieved level two in his academic qualifications he/she should be offered the chance to leave education and spend the time on "army activities and skills". They also discussed the process of being charged for damages on the lines. They fully accept the responsibility for paying for damage they have caused and at the time the damage is done, but they suggested leaving the repairs until the end of their course. The reason being that if the item is damaged again they would have to pay again whereas if the repairs are left until the end of the course they face only the one bill! Perfect teenage logic!

On the positive side they thoroughly enjoyed the Realities of War experience. They loved Battlecamp. They had nothing but praise for their PS with their Lance Sergeant and Captain Hunt praised for their approachability and banter which never went too far. They also

appreciated the fact that their PS had made time to fit in extra training for skills in which the JS were unsure. They are looking forward to graduation and moving on to Phase Two of their training. 4.7.13

15.9.13, Peninsula New Intake Day. JS Reception was administered in the gymnasium which was laid out in three broad areas, (1) arrival and platoon 'login' / (2) display stands around the hall showing a variety of JS life activities and support functions such as WRVS, Padre, military banking / (3) waiting area with seating and tables and access to light refreshment. The reception hall was well staffed at all levels with both JS and PS and the procedure flowed well. I took the opportunity to informally chat with many of them, and with the arriving JS and parents, until the first CO's presentation.

On four adhoc occasions throughout the day all parents and new JS were escorted through to the Robinson Theatre for an initial welcome from Lt Col. During this briefing, the role of the IAP was well explained, all IAP Members were formally introduced on screen and both Gary and I were identified as being present throughout the day for questions. Then the separation commenced!

New JS were escorted from the theatre, leaving behind their families (some very upset). Lt Col Lane did an excellent job of comforting the families and made a promise that all that their sons and daughters will develop into something special over the next 40 weeks. The family members were then taken to the education wing to listen to a brief from the Company Commanders who would have direct responsibility for their sons and daughters.

Capt H's presentation was warm, supportive and full of useful tips for parents and families about what to expect over the next 40 days. He introduced his CSM and 2IC and reinforced the COs earlier comments on the IAP role and introduced me. He gave clear instructions on the chain of command should anyone have any issues whilst their sons / daughters were in training. Parents and families would have left feeling reassured that their sons and daughters were in capable, professional hands.

17.9.13 Exercise Moondance, Waterloo Company. The company had recently returned from three weeks leave and Major J. particularly asked me to look out for those who perhaps still felt unsettled after leave. In the morning I accompanied Major J. as he visited some of the sections and talked to groups of JS as they waited to undertake particular exercises at the stands! He and his team were working hard to disguise as well as possible that the JS were being 'rested' as it is the strong view at Company and College level that an over emphasis on "tests" is counterproductive for the JS. I also met Captain E. who had only joined the company 3 days earlier but appeared to have made a good rapport already with the JS in her charge.

The weather was very good and the JS were in good humour. In the afternoon (after a sausage sandwich lunch – thanks Q!). I was taken by Warrant Officer J. to visit another platoon. He has a very obvious interest in training which is clearly a benefit to the company. I spoke on my own to a number of JS who were a mixture of boys and girls. The girls overall were not enjoying the exercise as much as the boys I

spoke to but I did not think any were seriously unhappy. One girl had determined that she will leave the course at some point and this was associated with a pre-existing physical problem which has unfortunately been exacerbated by army training to date. She said however to me that she had found the time spent as a JS "life changing". Other comments from the girls were that there was too much waiting around and on the exercise they felt that the exercise could be condensed into a shorter time. All seemed to have adjusted well though following their period of leave.

The boys I spoke to were positive and were looking forward to getting their Cap badges in due course. A couple of the Waterloo platoons were scheduled to assist on the intake day on Sunday 15th September. All those JS involved who I spoke to were happy to do this and were looking forward to more junior JS being in camp as a reminder of how far they have progressed on their training. Overall, I thought the morale of the JS was good recognising that going on exercise almost immediately after a long leave must be difficult. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit. The weather on the day probably helped too.

24.10.13, Exercise Orion Venture, Alamein Company. JS who joined Alamein at the outset undertook a First Flight Exercise on camp instead of further afield. JS who came in under Op Rocket have had no field experience yet. On Tuesday this week the whole Company went up to Wathgill Camp near Catterick with their PS, for the three day Exercise Orion Venture. I joined them this morning at 0800, on the final day.

The weather was bright but cold, and I was informed that it had rained very heavily on the first day. I went first to 24 Platoon, who were in their defensive harbour inside a wooded area in Section pairs. They were up and completing washing, cleaning weapons, packing up and preparing for the day. I learned that they wash in the hot water they use to cook their rations in. I also discovered (by tripping over it!) that wires are laid at waist height to guide them in the darkness back to their two man shell scrapes when they have been on sentry duty. I had the chance for conversation with many pairs of JS. Despite the discomfort of the first day, they were without exception enthusiastic about the experience, fired up to be at last on the full programme and grateful for the active support of the PS. Several used the phrase that their Section staff were "firm but fair" and no-one had any concerns about their treatment even though several said that they couldn't wait to get back to AFC for a hot shower, "proper" meal and a good night's sleep in their own beds. It was fascinating to remember that just four or so weeks ago these were new arrivals and here they were looking fully like soldiers and behaving like them, down to the intricacies of keeping their socks dry and pacing out their rations. Several JS had just had porridge for breakfast but one had had beef stew. I then talked to Captain Arthur about the impact of the three days on the PS before moving on to 25 Platoon, who were undertaking a fieldcraft exercise.

When I arrived the Platoon had left their harbour area and the Platoon Sergeant was going around collecting the small items of equipment which had been left by the JS, which consisted mostly of field of fire markers, some strapping and a watch. When we found the Platoon they were being instructed by the Platoon Commander on a concealment exercise, which was then carried out. Very impressively, through the use of grasses to break up their outlines, several of the JS managed to get almost within touching distance of the Platoon Commander before they were spotted. I was told that on the Long Course, success in such exercises motivates some JS to think of becoming snipers in the Infantry. There was then a recap with all the JS about what had led to some of them being spotted earlier than others, and they then had a short break. They were told they could smoke at this point, and encouragingly I counted only some seven who did so out of a Platoon of some 35, which is a better ratio than I've seen previously.

8. Commanding Officer's Response

Having reviewed past reports I note that this report is the most comprehensive and detailed to date. Even in my short time I have been impressed by how the IAP continues to adapt its processes to harness best practice. I hugely value what they bring not only to the AFC but also to the wide variety of stakeholders who have a say in what we do.

The inclusion of a summary of the main themes is to me a welcome addition; I feel it gives a fair indication of where the AFC is situated as a whole. All of it is of value. I don't sense this is the place to respond on all of the issues but what is reassuring is that all of the issues are ones we have discussed and are engaging on.

The last few months have not been easy for the AFC. The changes in Recruiting Group, and the resultant impact on the recruiting process of JS, have been a challenge for the unit. I have valued the support the IAP has given in both helping us understand the problems and mitigate the risks. Whilst not ideal, I do think there have been some longer term benefits which the Unit must now exploit for long term benefit. This has somewhat reduced our capacity to deal with the less critical issues that the IAP have identified.

Looking forward to next year. The ground where the AFC is continuing to struggle is 'duty of care'. I do not sense that we are any worse than any other Training Establishment, and in many ways I feel we are better, but it is an area where we must improve. Therefore, I will ask the IAP to focus their efforts on understanding the issues, and on providing tangible recommendations on how we could do better.

I have often been told by others that the AFC IAP is the most energetic and committed within the Division, whilst I don't have exposure to all, this report goes some way to reinforcing that belief. I feel extremely fortunate to have a Chair in whom I can confide, and from whom I can seek advice. My OCs say the same for those who assist them. For our IAP members to do what they do, and that they sacrifice a substantial amount of their time to do it, all without financial compensation says much about them; they are completely selfless. I sense that it also says something about their belief in what we do at the AFC. They are a vital component of the team and are delivering on their task of providing a continuous unbiased assurance of how we deliver our mission at the AFC.

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