

## INITIAL TRAINING GROUP

### SUMMARY JOINT REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT ADVISORY PANELS

#### RESPONSE BY THE COMMANDER

As Commander of the Initial Training Group, I very much welcome the Summary Joint Report of the Independent Advisory Panels (IAPs) of December 2008. Informed by regular and open access to their respective training units, their independent and objective perspective is critical in both resolving issues at the local level in a timely and effective manner and also outlining clear areas for future improvement. While much has been achieved towards delivering progressive, realistic and challenging training on behalf of the Field Army that is safe and based upon the laying of the foundations of military character in our Soldiers under Training (SuTs), there is still much to be done towards achieving this vision. As such, I highly value the Panel's observations and recommendations, positive and critical. They form an integral part of the Assurance process of the Initial Training Group (ITG) alongside Defence's and the Army's internal inspections and the external validation delivered by Ofsted on behalf of the Government.

I was struck by the principal themes of the Summary Joint Report from the IAPs which we are actively seeking to address:

- The Permanent Staff, both military and civilian personnel, form the engine room of the ITG. Their professionalism, commitment, motivation and welfare are critical in shaping the Group's output in terms of both the quality and quantity of future soldiers for the Field Army. Many of the reports pay tribute to their undoubted professionalism and the huge contribution they already make but also note the significant **workload** with which they are faced. I am resolved to alleviating this pressure in all its aspects, including continuing to enhance manning levels amongst the Permanent Staff, optimising their selection and preparatory training, improving their work-life balance and investing in their infrastructure and welfare facilities. While much of the focus for this action may initially lie with the military personnel, I am particularly struck by the requirement to look after and manage our civilian staff at a time when HR resources on site have been significantly reduced. Indeed this is a wider issue for Defence beyond the ITG.
- A consistent theme over the past 18 months in the Army Recruiting and Training Division, of which the ITG is part, has been the intent to enhance our **overall rate of retention** throughout the Division's pipeline from the point of recruiting by the Recruiting Group through to the conduct of Phase 1 Training by the ITG and Special to Arms Training by the Phase 2 Schools. Central to this has been the requirement to reduce the wastage caused by potential SuTs being medically unfit to start their Phase 1 Training by further enhancing the medical assessments they receive at the point of selection for training. This is all being incorporated under the Future Soldier Programme being developed by the Recruiting Group to ensure that potential SuTs are identified in terms of their quality to start training when they are ready and best prepared, mentally, physically and socially.
- The Army has been a leading proponent in the Public Sector on the delivery of Basic Skills to its personnel. Considerable emphasis is placed on this within the ITG, which will be maintained and further strengthened to ensure both that the respective **educational** packages delivered at each training unit are fully integrated into the overall military syllabus and also that they complement the Government's evolving agenda for Further Education. Central to this requirement will be to optimise the Learning Experience for each SuT by

taking account, as far as possible, of his or her individual needs and this very much includes the significant proportion of Foreign and Commonwealth soldiers who we train. At the same time, we are undertaking pro-active measures to review time spent in the classroom, particularly during the early stage of training, in favour of achieving the same training objectives outdoors and in a more practical or 'hands-on' manner.

- Alongside the clear duty of care placed upon the ITG to initiate the process of transition from civilian to soldier in our SuTs so that they are equipped with the skills to take their place in the Field Army, including on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, is the requirement to deliver this training in a safe and empathetic environment. Considerable investment has been made in the spectrum of **welfare** facilities available at each training unit, ranging from WRVS, military welfare personnel, chaplains and faith leaders to leisure facilities including access to the internet. I am resolved to maintain this investment and ensure that these facilities are accessible and 'user-friendly'. I also intend to ensure that our relationship with parents, guardians, families and friends of our SuTs is further enhanced as part of a 2-way process of building a bond of trust on behalf of the Field Army.
- As part of a clear commitment to **Equal Opportunities and Diversity**, I take careful note of the common observation from the respective Panels both to optimise the integration of female SuTs within the overall training environment and also to accommodate the cultural and linguistic requirements of the Foreign and Commonwealth SuTs.

I am very grateful to all the members of the respective Panels for their invaluable time and wise counsel. I welcome, and will act on, their constructive advice and criticism, taking full advantage of the expert scrutiny that they provide.

Looking to the future, we will continue to work together to build on the foundations and key themes they have identified in their 2008 Reports. In addition, I plan to ask them to assess our current measures for enhancing the retention of our SuTs and also to consider how we can improve the way in which we collect, collate, manage and exploit our data.

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Commander  
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