



Ministry of Defence

Headquarters Joint Force Development
Defence Academy of the UK
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E-mail: JFD-Secretariat@mod.gov.uk

Ms Poppy Damon
request-586775-d9d3b322@whatdotheyknow.com

30 July 2019

Dear Ms Damon,

Thank you for your email of 3 July 2019 in which you request the following information:

"I'm looking for information regarding the bereavement services which are available in your university or college [Royal College of Defence Studies, Joint Services Command and Staff College and the Defence College of Management and Technology]. Please could you answer the following:

- 1. Do you offer special provisions for counselling services for students specific to bereavement? Y/N*
- 2. Do you offer any support or counselling services for students? Y/N*
- 3. Do you have an institution wide policy/guidance regarding caring for students following a bereavement? Y/N*
- 4. Do your policies or practices exclusively relate to support for students who have lost parents or does your support factor in other forms of bereavement, such as losing a sibling?*
- 5. Can you tell me what special provision you have for offering extensions and academic breaks in study after a bereavement?*
- 6. How much money did you allocate to counselling and support services for bereavement per year (Jan 2016-Jan 2019)?*
- 7. If you feel you would like to offer an opinion, would you say your institution feels you are offered enough from the Government in order to support students who have experienced bereavement while studying?"*

We are treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). We have now completed a search of our records for the information you requested, and we can confirm that information within scope of your request is held.

We should begin by explaining that the Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS), the Joint Services Command and Staff College and the Defence College of Management and Technology (now the Technology and Business School) are all colleges within the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom (DefAc). We are therefore answering in a single response to your three requests.

Because DefAc is a Ministry of Defence establishment you can hopefully appreciate that the bereavement system is somewhat different to that of a civilian university or college in the way it deals with death or bereavement. Firstly, all the students are over the age of 18 and are in full time employment in the Armed Forces or Civil Service. Secondly, the military, by nature of their employment, are routinely exposed to traumatic events on operations, during training and military exercises but it is also recognised that off duty incidents can also be traumatic for individuals, including bereavement. Management of traumatic stress related problems is primarily a chain of command responsibility, with medical and welfare services in support as required.

Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) is a strategy for providing support to Armed Forces personnel involved in a traumatic event; a traumatic incident is any event that can be considered to be outside of an individual's usual experience, and which has the potential to cause physical, emotional or psychological harm. It is a chain-of-command function that depends on good leadership and robust Human Resource management and is supported by specialist medical agencies. It is conducted by members of the individuals' peer group in the first instance, rather than by medical or welfare specialists. The intention is to help individuals use their own coping mechanisms in order to keep them operationally effective, and to identify if further support is needed.

We will now address each of your questions in turn:

1. No. DefAc has adopted the TRiM model in order to support its personnel, both staff and students. Please see the attached leaflet that is handed out to personnel after an incident or a death, that would include family members. It does not employ trained councillors but does have many bereavement aware individuals who can sign post to the right external agency if an issue is identified (ie CRUSE). The Academy does have a dedicated Padre on site who is qualified, and a Welfare Officer, who is a military officer and has a small team in support.
2. As Q1.
3. No, not specific to bereavement and not specific to DefAc. TRiM is Defence wide and covering all traumatic events.
4. We support an individual who has been involved in a traumatic event including parents, siblings, friends etc.
5. If they were removed from a course and signed off work for more than 14 days after a recommendation from the Senior Medical Officer after consultation with a Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN), the chain of command would remain responsible for contacting the individual on a weekly basis and the Medical Officer and CPNs would continue to assess them. This is called the Wounded Injured Sick Management System.
6. Counselling provision for bereavement is generally provided by the third sector.
7. The FOI Act gives a general right to recorded information held by or on behalf of a public authority. It does not oblige us to respond to requests for unrecorded opinions or create new information to fulfil the request.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance. Following this, if you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely,

JFD Secretariat

Encl: Defence Academy of the UK Trauma Risk Management (TRIM) Handout.