



Ethos, Core Values and Standards of the Royal Air Force

THE ETHOS OF THE RAF

“The distinctive character, spirit and attitude of the RAF which together inspire our people to face challenge, and, on occasion, danger. It is underpinned by tradition, esprit de corps and a sense of belonging. It encompasses the will to contribute to the delivery of effective air power that arises from confidence in the chain of command, trust in colleagues and equipment, respect for individuality, sustainment of high professional standards and the courage to subordinate personal needs for the greater good.”

THE CORE VALUES OF THE RAF

- **Respect:** Mutual and Self Respect
- **Integrity:** Integrity Always
- **Service:** Service Before Self
- **Excellence:** Striving for Excellence

FOREWORD by the Chief of the Air Staff

As Chief of the Air Staff, I have the honour and responsibility of leading our Service, which is trained and equipped to generate air power as a vital contribution to the security of the United Kingdom. The RAF has a proud tradition and a reputation for excellence which is second to none. As members of the RAF, we are all required to make a level of personal commitment to the Service which is not asked of those in other walks of life. We may well be asked to fight on behalf of the Nation as a force for the good in the world.

To have the will and confidence to do our job, we must have complete trust in our colleagues and they must have total confidence in us. We must respect and properly recognise the value of men and women, at all ranks, who serve in, or who support the RAF. We must all share confidence in the operational effectiveness of the RAF and above all demonstrate integrity both as individuals and as a Service.

This pamphlet sets out the values which should govern our daily life and our approach to others. These values underpin our ethos and form the basis of a covenant between the RAF and its personnel. While they are the foundation of mutual trust and respect within the RAF, they are also central to our ability to work together with our sister Services and with everyone who supports us.

Please read this pamphlet carefully. If in doubt, always remember that your values and behaviour reflect not only your own personal approach to life but also how our Service is seen by others.

THE ETHOS AND CORE VALUES OF THE RAF

Introduction

The Armed Services exist to conduct military operations on behalf of the Nation, if necessary by going to war. It is that function which distinguishes them from all other professions, for the consequences of succeeding or failing are profound, both to the Nation and to the individual. Our task is unparalleled in civilian life. The difficulties and risks, taken together, are unique.

The outstanding reputation of the RAF reflects the high professional standards of the Service, our flexibility and ability to react rapidly. We are very likely to be in the first wave of British military operations and we may also be required to sustain our operations in difficult or hostile circumstances for long periods. Often, we are involved in joint missions with our sister Services and with other nations in support of multi-national operations under the auspices of the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. To meet the many challenges which we face - be they in training or during operations - we have to work closely together and have confidence and trust in each other; in the final analysis, our success and our lives may depend on our comrades. The RAF needs people who will respond to a demanding way of life, who aspire to the required standards of excellence, who share a sense of duty and commitment and who understand our values. We want men and women who are proud to serve their country and whose personal qualities reflect the core values of the RAF.

The success of the RAF in any military endeavour is dependent upon the willingness of its uniformed cadre to fight and to support the fight. This, the moral component of air power, depends upon effective leadership, a shared set of core values and the total commitment that arises from a strong and binding military ethos.

The ethos of the RAF is:

"The distinctive character, spirit and attitude of the RAF which together inspire our people to face challenge, and, on occasion, danger. It is underpinned by tradition, esprit de corps and a sense of belonging. It encompasses the will to contribute to the delivery of effective air power that arises from confidence in the chain of command, trust in colleagues and equipment, respect for individuality, sustainment of high professional standards and the courage to subordinate personal needs for the greater good."

The need to maintain common values across the Service presents a greater challenge now than was the case in the past. The RAF recruits from a society in which there is less deference to authority and a greater awareness of individual rights than in the past. Society is also less cohesive than it used to be; traditional, shared values are less effectively transmitted, and concepts such as honour and loyalty are less well understood. The RAF is not immune from changes in society that are inevitably reflected in the attitudes and behaviour of those who enter the Service. Therefore, the Armed Services seek to reflect the positive values of the society it serves, varying from these only where it is necessary to do so by virtue of function and responsibility: that is, conducting military operations on behalf of the Nation. It is this requirement which leads the RAF to place a particular emphasis on the values that are laid down in this pamphlet. Because of what the RAF does, our standards must in some ways be higher than those of society at large. The RAF must be able to explain why those values need sometimes to be more demanding of the individual and why such demands are equally necessary during peacetime and on operations. It is, therefore, essential that those entering the Service and, indeed, those who are already serving, fully understand and embrace the values set out below. It is important also that those who work to support us understand our ethos and values.

THE CORE VALUES OF THE RAF

Respect, Integrity, Service and Excellence.

These are the four RAF Core Values:

Respect - Mutual and Self Respect

Service in the RAF is more than loyalty to the Crown, military superiors, subordinates and comrades. It also involves the respect for others which must be a hallmark of the RAF. It flows from the duty to put others first and means there is no place for prejudice or unlawful discrimination. This principle is the foundation of the RAF's Equality and Diversity Policy. Respect for others is based on self-respect and operational need.

Self-Respect. To have a proper sense of one's own dignity and integrity. To have self-respect is to value oneself as a professional and as a human being; as such the concept underpins our attitudes to sexual behaviour, drugs and alcohol. People with self-respect do not behave in ways that would bring discredit upon themselves or their Service. They have high personal standards of social behaviour. The standards of social conduct expected of RAF personnel are outlined at Annex A at the back of this pamphlet.

Mutual Respect. Respect for others travels up and down the chain of command as well as sideways among peers. Genuine respect involves viewing another person as an individual of fundamental worth regardless of their race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation or social background. Sometimes, respect for human beings is actually required by law; for example in relation to an armed conflict we are required by the Geneva Conventions to respect the dead, the wounded, civilians, prisoners of war and refugees. Service personnel must act in accordance with the law and maintain the highest of standards of decency and a

sense of justice at all times, and to all people, even in the most difficult conditions. The need for decency, compassion and respect for others is increased by the conditions in which personnel may have to live and operate. They will often have no choice about the company they are required to keep, they may have no relief from it for extended periods and the conditions in which they have to co-exist may be cramped, uncomfortable and stressful. In such circumstances respect for others is doubly important.

Integrity - Always

Integrity is the conviction to do what is right even when no one is looking. It is the basis for the trust imperative in today's Service. Integrity is vital in establishing mutual trust and confidence between individuals who may face hardship and danger and is based on several other moral principles:

Courage. Integrity requires moral courage; that is the courage to do what an individual believes to be right, even though it may be unpopular or dangerous and the personal cost may be high. Courage to refuse to compromise personal values in face of opposition, and to sustain the highest standards of decency and behaviour, will earn the respect of others and will build trust. Courage, both physical and moral, forms the bedrock upon which bravery, fighting spirit and success depend.

Honesty. Honesty is inherent in the Service professional because in the Armed Forces our word must be our bond. All forms of deceit, dishonesty or breaches of trust or confidence constitute a lack of integrity, and therefore call into question whether an individual can be relied upon. Such activity covers a wide spectrum, and includes the perpetration of any criminal offence or any behaviour which raises doubts about an individual's character. For example, if an individual is known to be selfish or dishonest, trust between comrades will be damaged and tensions created within the team will reduce its effectiveness.

Responsibility. Being accountable for one's actions and decisions, a truly responsible person acknowledges his or her duty and acts accordingly. Equally, responsibility demands that those who are in positions of authority, at whatever level, are fair and consistent at all times. Only then will they earn the respect and loyalty that are essential to good leadership. Good leadership inspires, underpins and enables all the other qualities, values and capabilities of the RAF. It can transform limited resources and overcome the greatest difficulties. It is not the preserve of rank: every member of the RAF has the capacity for leadership. It is an innate quality, honed and developed by training, experience and hard work. The best leadership is leadership by example.

Justice. A person of integrity practices just behaviour and treatment. Those who do similar things must get similar rewards or similar punishments.

Service - Service before Self

Service is an act of assistance. The military life is one of service to the security and defence imperatives of the Nation. It is about professional duties taking precedence over personal interests, the willingness to serve other people before ourselves - "Service before Self" - and is a move away from the self-centred attitude often prevalent in our consumer society. Service incorporates the values of loyalty, commitment and teamwork, focusing them on military life. Service may ultimately be about laying down one's life for others; consequently it takes considerable courage.

Loyalty. Our first loyalty is always, through the Service, to the Crown. From the moment we are attested or commissioned, we are each committed to an unswerving loyalty to defend, uphold and preserve the Crown. Colleagues must be loyal to each other, socially and professionally. Those who are placed in positions of authority must be loyal to their subordinates, representing their interests faithfully and dealing with complaints thoroughly and fairly. Subordinates must be loyal to their

leaders, their team and their duty. Such loyalty is necessary, but it must also be earned through commitment, self-sacrifice, example and courage.

Commitment. Commitment works in 2 ways. For the individual, it means a wholehearted dedication to serve wherever and whenever required, whatever the discomfort or dangers, and to do their best at all times. This commitment is reflected in the wording of the Loyal Oath taken on attestation or commissioning and in which an individual agrees to subordinate their own interests to those of the unit, RAF and Nation, as represented by the Crown. It imposes certain limitations on individual freedom and requires a certain degree of self-sacrifice. For those in authority, it requires them to discharge in full their responsibilities to subordinates, whether in peacetime or on operations. This 2-way obligation forms a covenant between the RAF and its personnel. Both share a common bond of identity, loyalty and responsibility for each other which is unwritten and must be unbreakable. Servicemen and women volunteering for the RAF accept that the needs of the Service are put before their own. In return, the Service shows its commitment to those who serve within the RAF and to their families by meeting, to the greatest extent possible, their personal and career aspirations and caring for their welfare.

Teamwork. Teamwork is essential to the achievement of the RAF's role in peace, on operations, in crisis and war. It is about working together in harmony with every member of our Service, with the other Services, reservists, civil servants and contractor staff in an increasingly multinational environment.

Excellence - Striving for Excellence

The RAF Vision is:

***"AN AIR FORCE THAT STRIVES TO BE FIRST AND
PERSON FOR PERSON, REMAINS SECOND TO NONE"***

By striving for excellence we demonstrate a sustained desire for continuous improvement and innovation that will ensure the RAF remains second to

none. The RAF fosters professionalism and team spirit founded on good leadership, commitment and self-discipline. We are all professionals, but professionalism is more than the trade or operational skills that we develop through training and during our Service lives. It is about the way in which tasks are undertaken; it is about excellence; and it is about taking responsibility and ensuring a job is well done no matter how difficult the circumstances. Key qualities include:

Self-Discipline and Control. Professionals cannot indulge themselves in self-pity, discouragement, defeatism or uncontrolled emotion. They have a fundamental moral obligation to the individuals they lead or support to instil a tone of confidence and optimism.

Personal Excellence. Every member of the RAF must strive to achieve and maintain the highest professional and personal standards, thereby enhancing both the competence and cohesion of the RAF. Service Personnel must seek out and complete professional military training, stay in good physical and mental condition, and continue to refresh their general educational backgrounds.

Excellence in the use of Resources. The resources available to the Service, both human and materiel, are limited. All Service men and women have an obligation to ensure that all of our equipment and property is put to most efficient use. Excellence in personnel management offers opportunity to all, a rewarding and enjoyable career, and skills for life. It ensures we recruit, train, sustain and retain those who can do the best job for us.

Pride. Pride is a justifiable confidence in ourselves and our Service based on our heritage of success, attitudes to life and team spirit. We must be able to compare ourselves favourably with the other Services and with the Air Forces of other nations, confident in our own expertise and excellence, in the knowledge that we are *"second to none"*.

THE RAF

The success of a modern and flexible RAF, be it in peacetime or on operations, must continue to be founded on a binding ethos underpinned by the Core Values of **Respect, Integrity, Service and Excellence**. The ethos of the RAF is sustained by all Service personnel doing their duty with an implacable will to succeed. In accepting their grave responsibility and legal right to fight and kill according to their orders, and their unlimited liability to give their lives for others, they must be confident, that, in return, the RAF will endeavour to place its personnel and their families at the centre of its plans.

Teamwork, success and effective leadership flourish in an environment of mutual trust and respect. In this context, we all have a responsibility to our colleagues, be they subordinates or superiors, to do our best to uphold our ethos and embrace the Core Values of **Respect, Integrity, Service and Excellence** set out in this pamphlet. Behaviour or conduct which undermines trust, creates division, or which draws into question the good name of the Service, damages our ability to meet our operational objectives. As RAF personnel, we take pride in our Service traditions and we must do all we can to sustain the values which characterise Service life and which, in some respects, are more demanding than those found in civilian life. This is a reflection of our unique role in society and one of which we can be justifiably proud and which allows us to continue our constant endeavour to be:

***"AN AIR FORCE THAT STRIVES TO BE FIRST AND
PERSON FOR PERSON, REMAINS SECOND TO NONE"***

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

The Core Values of **Respect, Integrity, Service and Excellence** are the foundation of a working environment which enables the RAF to meet its tasks to the very highest standards. These Core Values must be reflected in our standards of conduct, which must be maintained rigorously, if the excellent reputation of the RAF is to be sustained.

RAF PERSONNEL AND THE LAW

RAF personnel are subject to civil and air force law, and we all have a duty to uphold it. In respect of civil law, we are no different from other citizens, and civil offences such as assault or of dishonesty are incorporated into Service law. In addition, when deployed on operations, RAF personnel are subject to the laws of armed conflict and to the domestic laws applicable wherever they are serving. The special requirements of the Service to maintain discipline and operational effectiveness have led to the development of a range of disciplinary measures and punishments that are unique to the Armed Forces.

ARMED FORCES CODE OF SOCIAL CONDUCT

The RAF also has the power to take administrative action in relation to individuals who have brought the Service into disrepute. The Service will not interfere in the private lives of its personnel unless it is necessary to do so in order to maintain Service discipline, team cohesion and operational effectiveness. When considering whether the Service has a right to intervene, the following test will be applied:

"Have the actions or behaviour of an individual adversely impacted or are they likely to impact on the efficiency or operational effectiveness of the RAF?"

This Service Test lies at the heart of the Armed Forces Code of Social Conduct, it is equally applicable to all forms of conduct, including

behaviour while not on duty. The key standards that are expected of you are set out below.

RAF KEY STANDARDS

Equality and Diversity. The RAF Equality and Diversity Policy is to treat all personnel fairly irrespective of race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation or social background. The Policy goes further than the mere elimination of unlawful discrimination. It recognises and values individuals from diverse backgrounds who bring fresh ideas, perceptions, skills and attributes. All personnel have a right to live and work in a environment free from harassment, intimidation and unlawful discrimination in which all have equal opportunity and encouragement to realise their full potential. The abuse of authority by intimidation or victimisation is disgraceful behaviour that undermines trust and respect. Harassment, bullying and unlawful discrimination at any level undermine confidence, erode morale, destroy cohesion and, as a direct consequence, damage operational effectiveness. The RAF will not tolerate behaviour of this kind. Furthermore, initiation ceremonies, which may cause injury, pain, humiliation or embarrassment to those involved, or in any way bring the good name of the Service into disrepute, are forbidden.

Social Conduct. In the area of personal relationships, the overriding operational imperative to sustain team cohesion and to maintain trust and loyalty between commanders and those they command imposes a need for standards of social behaviour which are more demanding than those required by society at large. Such demands are equally necessary during peacetime and on operations. Examples of behaviour which can undermine such trust and cohesion, and therefore damage the morale or discipline of a unit (and hence operational effectiveness) include: unwelcome sexual attention in the form of physical or verbal conduct; over-familiarity with the spouses or partners of other Service personnel; displays of affection which might cause offence to others; behaviour which damages or hazards the marriage or personal relationships of

Service personnel or civilian colleagues within the wider defence community; and taking sexual advantage of subordinates. Each case will be judged on an individual basis, however, misconduct involving abuse of position, trust or rank, or taking advantage of an individuals' separation, will be viewed as being particularly serious.

Drug Misuse. For all the Services the implications of drug misuse are particularly damaging and the illegal possession and use of controlled drugs is an offence under both Service and civil law. Similarly, the misuse of solvents and certain other substances may constitute an offence under the Air Force Act. Drugs and solvents impair judgement and reliability, reduce fitness, damage health and degrade performance. Thus, drug misuse will be regarded as particularly serious because those who are involved in drug misuse are a liability to themselves and the team. Such behaviour is totally incompatible with service in the RAF. In recognition of the significant threat drug misuse poses to operational effectiveness, the RAF has introduced a policy of random Compulsory Drug Testing to deter such activity. Our policy for those who commit drugs related offences is based on dismissal from the Service, unless there are significant extenuating or mitigating circumstances.

Alcohol. The operational role of the RAF demands the highest standards of technical and administrative efficiency from its personnel. We are required to perform exacting duties which often directly affect the lives of our colleagues. We are liable to be called for duty at any time. Therefore, the excessive consumption of alcohol and, in some situations, any alcoholic consumption, adversely affects our capability to perform our duties safely and accurately. Personnel under the influence of alcohol cannot be relied upon to perform their duties competently; they can put their own lives and those of their colleagues at risk. For these reasons, the RAF does not tolerate alcohol abuse. Help will be offered to those genuinely willing to reform, and rehabilitation with appropriate medical and welfare support will be offered. However, individuals who cannot or

will not reform drinking habits, which undermine their ability to perform their duties to the standards required, will be deemed unsuitable for employment in the Service.

Indebtedness. All Service personnel are expected to manage their own financial affairs responsibly. Such matters are usually regarded as private and personal. However, exceptionally, where the RAF becomes directly involved, for example, through Service funds, or by complaint, administrative or disciplinary action may be taken. Unmanageable or otherwise irresponsible indebtedness displays a lack of judgement and self-discipline. It may also create an administrative burden, and could lead to an individual becoming a security risk. Such cases are particularly serious when involving those in a position of responsibility. While the RAF will advise personnel who are in debt, irresponsible indebtedness is likely to affect an individual's employment and career.

Contact with the Media. Our responsibility to the Crown, through Parliament, means that the Service must be apolitical, and be seen to be apolitical. RAF personnel are not permitted to disclose Service information, or express views on official matters, or experiences, to television or radio companies, newspapers, members of the press or publishers without prior approval from the Ministry of Defence. If in doubt, personnel should seek advice from their Unit Corporate Communication Officer. The leaking of official information, besides being contrary to regulations, is unprofessional and can seriously damage the reputation and interests of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces.

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