

2025

# Social Value Impact Report —

January – December 2025

Accelerating gender equity in defence.

# A message from Angela —

## Deeds not words

At Women in Defence UK, we try very hard to focus on activities and interventions that will have the biggest impact in the gender equity space in defence. This report highlights our initiatives as we work with our Partners to accelerate change. Read about the Awards over the last ten years and their impact on the Women of the Year, why our Partners support us, our strategic sector influence, the glorious event that was the Lady Mayor's Show and the importance of showcasing 'the women who defend us' to a much wider audience.

Thank you for everything you do and enjoy the report!

Angela Owen OBE  
Founder Women in Defence UK



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# Introduction —

## Women in Defence UK – Accelerating Gender Equity

Women in Defence UK is an independent organisation operating on a 'not for profit' basis founded in 2011. With a robust network of over 20,000 individuals and 37 Partners spanning every level of the defence sector, we are uniquely positioned to stimulate substantial change. Our purpose of accelerating gender equity in the defence sector, is guided by Emmeline Pankhurst's principle of 'Deeds not Words'. Working as one of the three legs of the Women in Defence Charter, we strive to support the Charter ambition of 30% of all roles to be filled by women by 2030.

By achieving this critical mass, we will speed-up the transition towards a more balanced, inclusive and equitable defence enterprise. Our influential network enables the sharing of best practices and the sparking of innovative thinking. Our unwavering commitment to the betterment of the defence ecosystem has sparked progress; from influencing policy changes to fostering inclusivity in defence organisations. The scale of the change we effect, however, is linked to the active participation of our Partners and wider community.

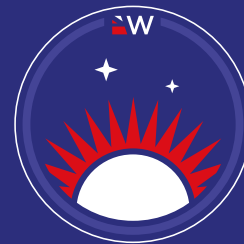
# Working in partnership to accelerate gender equity in defence —



## Critical Mass

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We are uniquely positioned across the breadth of the defence enterprise and up and down organisational structures. We are committed to achieving a **critical mass** of women.



## Inspire

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We **inspire** through our annual Awards which recognise and celebrate exceptional people in defence, and through our cross sector mentoring programme.



## Challenge

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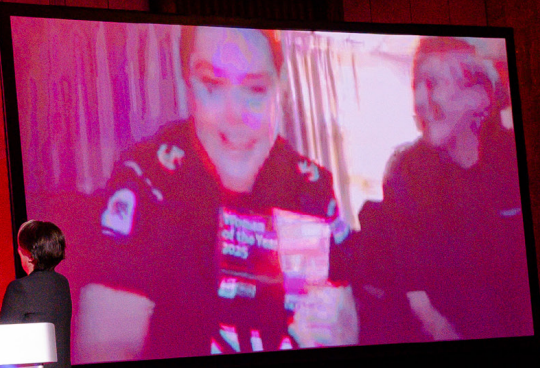
We **challenge** the norms and prompt progressive thinking through in-depth discussions with Senior Officers and Officials and our Whiskey Victor podcast of inspiring women from inside and outside of defence.



WOMEN IN<sup>®</sup>  
DEFENCE

# AWARDS

10<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY



# A decade of progress —



Over ten years, the Women in Defence UK Awards have grown into a sector-wide platform recognising excellence across the Armed Forces, MOD Civil Service, industry and internationally. The Awards chart a decade-long journey of progress — celebrating individual contribution while reflecting the evolving role of inclusion in strengthening defence culture and capability.

## 2016

### First Woman of the Year

I'm genuinely very humbled and privileged because there are so many people who've been nominated for this and also who were finalists and shortlisted for the event. So, to be in that ballpark has been amazing and to actually win it has been awesome.

Colonel Lucy Giles CBE,  
British Army

## 2018

There's been a lot of people who've helped me to get to where I am today and I wouldn't be stood up here now without many other people that have helped me recover because I hit rock bottom and I'd given up.

Michelle Partington,  
Former Royal Air Force

## 2020

We have so much to offer in terms of bringing balance to the way that we work, to the way decisions are made, to the impact that we can have on the sector.

Beth-Marie Norbury,  
Babcock



## 2017

I'm extremely honoured to receive this. It feels really good to have won the Inspirational category award tonight and the overall Women's Defence winner. It's a really fantastic honour.

Squadron Leader Alison McLean,  
Royal Air Force

## 2019

10 years ago, an event like this didn't exist. And there should be more of these kinds of constructs to encourage women into our defence enterprise because we do great things.

Phillippa Payne OBE, DSTL

## Read what our Women of the Year have to say about it:



### 2022

It's an absolute privilege and honour to receive the Woman of the Year award. There are so many women that have helped me, you know, every step of the way, especially when it got tough. Nothing is impossible. Wherever we're from, whatever we look like, whatever our experience is, I do believe that we can achieve anything.

Captain Preet Chandi, Army

### 2024

Probably the word I'd use at the moment is completely overwhelming. When I was nominated, I was so honoured and then to even be invited tonight as a finalist was, I just couldn't believe it. And then when I won, I was completely blown away.

Captain Victoria Kinkaid, Army



### 2021

It was an amazing honour just to be nominated and recognised as just one of so many amazing women doing fantastic things in defence.

Caitlin Percy, BAE Systems

### 2023

Being in a room amongst so many inspirational women and to then be declared Woman of the Year is phenomenal and completely unexpected, but I feel immensely proud to have been a part of the whole evening.

Chief Technician Emma Morgan, Royal Air Force

### 2025

I wasn't prepared for the first one, I'm definitely not prepared for this one, but thank you so much, honestly. This is madness.

LNN Abigail Wright, Royal Navy

# Women in Defence UK Awards 2025 —



This year marked a real milestone for the Women in Defence UK Awards — our 10th anniversary.

With a bigger audience than ever before, the Awards Dinner brought together 540 leaders from across defence, industry, government and the Armed Forces. The finalists represented extraordinary breadth across roles and career stages, with achievements that would stand alone in any environment. For the second time, we recognised international finalists, this year from Brunei, Sweden and Georgia — reinforcing that progress in defence is truly global.

**// For over a decade PA has supported Women in Defence UK as its founding partner and I am personally hugely proud to continue that support as our Global Head of Defence and Security. Every year it is a real honour for us to present the Woman of the Year Award and hear the inspirational stories of the women shortlisted who keep our nation safe and secure.**

**PETER LOVELL**  
GLOBAL HEAD OF DEFENCE AND SECURITY,  
PA CONSULTING



**// It's important for Airbus to partner with Women in Defence because we are a strong believer in the vision of the organisation... We are all part of a much wider community and it's important for us to come together and realise how we can team to support the wider ecosystem and support diversity throughout the UK.**

**ANITA BERNIE**  
AIRBUS,  
PANKHURST PARTNER



**// At Babcock, we're so proud to be a sponsor and partner of Women in Defence UK, and particularly the Women in Defence UK Awards. It's a fantastic moment to celebrate what we've achieved so far and to think about everything that we've got to do in this sector to protect the people that we serve and to support our Armed Forces.**

**LOUISE ATKINSON**  
BABCOCK,  
PANKHURST PARTNER



**// Our commitment to women in defence is a long-term commitment, as are all our commitments to inclusivity. This is about consistency and the consistency of support for women and all underrepresented communities in the Defence enterprise.**

**ALEXANDRA BAILEY**  
FUJITSU,  
PANKHURST PARTNER





**// The Royal Air Force is a team, and a team is defined by its inclusion. And so we are really proud to be sponsoring this particular award tonight. I've been fortunate to be on the panel that's looked at and considered some of the other awards too. Every person I read about was truly inspiring, and it is humbling to know that they are here amongst us this evening.**

**AVM SIMON EDWARDS CB**  
ROYAL AIR FORCE,  
INCLUSIVE TEAMWORK AWARD PARTNER



**// It's really important for BAE Systems to be the partner for the International Category because as a global business, we recognise that there is so much work going on around the world for gender equity, particularly levelling up for women in the defence sector.**

**AMANDA WOOD**  
BAE SYSTEMS,  
INTERNATIONAL AWARD PARTNER



**// It was really important for Leidos to be the sponsor for the Outstanding Contribution category and to be here to celebrate with those who get up every day and go above and beyond for their work in defence... It's great to bring everyone together for the collaboration that you get across the industry and our customer base in defence.**

**JO ETHERIDGE**  
LEIDOS,  
OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION AWARD PARTNER



# Critical Mass Summit

## Changing the face of defence



The Women in Defence UK Critical Mass Summit 2025, hosted at DSEI 2025, brought together senior leaders from defence, industry and government to explore the thorny issue of 'how do we improve the image of defence?'

### The key takeaways were:

- Diverse teams are needed for the future of Defence: new challenges demand diverse skills beyond those traditionally associated with the sector. This means changing our image to showcase an environment where everyone can belong.
- Reputation has real-life impacts: it can affect an organisation's ability to both attract talent and weather storms. Although Defence ranks highly in reputation for both men and women, less than 1 in 4 women want to work within this sector; understanding what people value is key to getting it right.
- Brand and reputation are intrinsically linked: once you understand your reputation, it's essential to take action at the brand level to present as you wish to be seen. You must also make sure to bring key stakeholders on the journey.
- To prepare for the future, we need to change our leadership style: female engagement can help us to better understand the perspectives and approaches of others to lead diverse teams effectively.
- Changing perception requires action at multiple touchpoints: from graduate recruitment and career entry, through to talent nurturing, mentoring, leadership and the celebration of successes.

Read more in our 2025  
Insight and Data Report →



# Critical Mass Community —



Partners host and attend regular Critical Mass Community networking events.

## The Community meetings have covered:

- 'Bring your Challenges to the table' — new legislation on harassment presented by Serco
- 'Strengthening the defence workforce — accelerating action on gender equality' hosted by Accenture
- 'Allyship in action — building safer, stronger teams' hosted by PA Consulting
- 'SDR perspectives on technology, skill and workforce transformation' hosted by PWC
- 'Breaking the barriers — a smoother transition into industry' hosted by Costain
- 'Removing structural barriers to inclusion — family and carers leave policies' hosted by BT



# Challenge

# Whiskey Victor podcast —

Whiskey Victor is Women in Defence UK's flagship interview podcast hosted by Angela Owen, designed to amplify women's voices in the defence sector and share insights into leadership, career journeys and the future of defence.

In 2025, Whiskey Victor invited influential women from inside and outside of defence — to share the moments that defined their journeys, the lessons they've learned, and the changes they hope to see, anchored around the question:

**"Which three words would best define you?"**

**Across these episodes, the podcast explored several recurring social value and leadership themes:**

- **Leadership and resilience:** Guests shared how they navigated high- pressured environments, made strategic decisions and sustained long-term careers
- **Diversity and inclusion:** Each interview reflected on the importance of gender equity and inclusion – both in operational roles and in strategic leadership – as essential to effective defence capability
- **Future of defence:** Discussions looked forward to how defence organisations can evolve with changing geopolitical pressures, technological shifts and workforce expectations
- **Mentorship and culture:** Speakers emphasised the value of mentoring, building supportive cultures and enabling environments where diverse talent can thrive



- A senior political leader reflecting on lessons from public service and defence policymaking.
  - She highlights inclusive leadership, integrity, and the importance of diverse voices shaping national security.
- 

## // Questioner, challenger, changer.

BARONESS GOLDIE DL



- A seasoned strategic leader sharing perspectives on organisational transformation and defence workforce evolution.
  - She emphasises collaboration, clarity of purpose, and preparing the sector for future challenges.
- 

## // Detective, navigator and driver.

DAME RUTH CAIRNIE DBE



- The UK's Vice Chief of the Defence Staff offering rare insight into leadership at the highest military levels.
- She discusses culture change, resilience, and empowering women across the Armed Forces.

## // Authentic, outdoorsy and adoptive parent.

GENERAL DAME SHARON NESMITH DCB ADC

# Mentoring Programme



The Women in Defence UK Mentoring scheme, delivered by Moving Ahead, was created over five years ago as a unique cross sector opportunity.

During the scheme mentors and mentees from the defence public sector are matched with mentors and mentees from the defence private sector and vice versa. To date, the programme has welcomed **over 1,500 participants**. On the programme this year, we have welcomed **319 participants** from **19 unique organisations**.

**// I have found the mentoring programme to be very valuable in building my confidence and giving me another perspective on situations and ideas.**

MENTEE

The mentoring scheme is a development programme providing a safe space to navigate career decisions and planning whilst also providing external perspectives from across the defence industry.

**// I continue to value the opportunity to be a mentor and can recognise the benefits to my own development. I am still in contact with my mentee from 2020.**

MENTOR

## We are advancing the careers and representation of mentees by tackling personal barriers:

50%

of mentees have expanded their responsibility in their current role, moved role, or received a promotion just nine months from the programme launch

50% → 73%

baseline

feel comfortable networking and building relationships

39% → 68%

baseline

feel they communicate clearly and explicitly

32% → 62%

baseline

feel they have the skills to move to other roles

29% → 57%

baseline

feel confident making decisions

## And unlocked diversity of thought by challenging systemic biases:

51%

of mentors believe the mentoring experience heightened their awareness of barriers for others in the workplace

47%

of mentees

say the experience helped them see the workplace differently

35%

of mentors

// Made me realise quite how isolating it can be for women in the defence industry and how as women we need to champion each other. The unconscious bias in this male dominated industry needs to change and has made me reflect how what actions I need to put in place in my organisation to do just that.

MENTOR

// Being part of this mentoring scheme has been an incredibly valuable experience for me. My conversations with my mentor have created a space where I've felt safe to be honest and vulnerable — something that has been both empowering and transformative.

MENTEE



# Lady Mayor's Show

## The women who defend us —



It was an incredible honour this year to be invited to take part in the Lady Mayor's parade on Saturday 8th November.

Women in Defence UK featured in the BBC commentary where they highlighted our Deeds not Words motto and described Women in Defence UK as **'an amazing organisation'**.

The Lady Mayor's parade was watched by a crowd of around **350,000 people**, and the BBC coverage was **viewed by over a million people**, enabling us to showcase the women who serve and support the UK defence sector to a much wider audience.

**// As a US veteran working in European defence, the opportunity to join the ranks with these women served as a poignant reminder of the common ground we share as Allies and of the shared experience we have as women who served in uniform.**

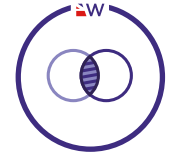
VICTORIA GURTNER  
HELSING

**// It was an unforgettable experience, especially standing beside so many inspiring women from across defence! Feeling so proud to have been part of it.**

SUMMER RYAN  
QINETIQ

# Women in Defence UK

## Our voice



Across 2025, Women in Defence UK were invited onto panels and leadership events tackling a wide spectrum of challenges facing the defence sector.

Events ranged from culture change, inclusive leadership and workforce transformation to transition pathways, lived-experience insights and the evolving demands of modern defence. By convening diverse voices and perspectives, these events broadened the sector's understanding of the issues shaping defence today and strengthened collective commitment to meaningful, sustained change.

- DPRTE the UK's leading defence procurement and supply chain event. Natalie Desty — STEM Returners and Equity of Opportunity winner 2024 Chaired the Keynote Arena
- SDR perspectives on technology, skill and workforce transformation' hosted by PWC
- Women in Defence UK stand at Defence Information 2025
- Women in Complex Programmes hosted by PA Consulting — Shaping the Future of Defence marking the 10th anniversary of the awards. Keynote speakers General Dame Sharon Nesmith and 2020 Woman of the Year Beth-Marie Norbury joined Angela Owen on a panel exploring the Future of Women in Defence UK: Challenges, Progress and Opportunities.
- Women in Defence UK and Femme Defence Sweden joint lunchtime panel discussion. Making the most of mentorship: insights from mentors and mentees in the defence sector
- Women in Security Network — in conversation with Angela Owen
- Skilfully Speaking Podcast: Women in Defence UK: Leadership, Motherhood and Breaking Barriers with Angela Owen



© Emma Hudson, PA Consulting

# AWARDS

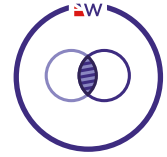
2025



# What impact did we make? —

A large, stylized blue 'W' graphic that spans the width of the page, positioned below the main text. The 'W' is composed of several thick, dark blue strokes that create a sense of depth and movement. The background of the entire page is a dark blue color.

# Measurable Progress —



Our work this year demonstrates measurable progress in how Defence engages with, recognises and amplifies women — evidenced through expanded reach, stronger leadership participation and increased national visibility.

- **Engagement across Women in Defence UK platforms expanded** in both scale and depth with a growing digital and community footprint including 20000+ followers, 245k+ impressions, 14.5k+ website visits and 1000+ Whiskey Victor podcast views. This was alongside sustained Critical Mass participation.
- **Senior leader participation and cross-sector confidence strengthened** with continued engagement with senior leaders through DSEI Critical Mass Summit sessions, sector panels, Cabinet Office roundtables and parliamentary forums — reinforcing Women in Defence UK's role as a trusted convener and catalyst for dialogue.
- **Public visibility and recognition of Women in Defence UK increased significantly** — with national exposure through the Lord Mayor's Show (350,000 live audience and over 1 million via BBC coverage) and a 10-year Awards milestone of 4,100 nominations — signalling stronger recognition, accountability and sector commitment to inclusive leadership.

### Engagement across Women in Defence UK platforms:

impressions on social channels	website visits
245k+	14.5k+

followers on social channels	Whiskey Victor podcast views
20,000+	1000+

nominations over 10 years

4,100



through our international award and international partnership on events

Global reach

# Strategic Sector Influence —



This year, Women in Defence UK has not only convened the leading voices of the defence sector but positioned inclusion and representation firmly on the agenda of those with the greatest authority to influence lasting change.

- **Evidence and data-led influence** strengthened in 2025 through the publication of the Changing the Face of Defence report, combining Charter data on progress with insight from the Critical Mass Summit on how to recraft the narrative of defence.
- **Cross-sector dialogue and engagement expanded** via external panels, summits and insight programmes, enabling practical collaboration with employers, partners and defence bodies on shared workforce and capability challenges.
- **Recognition and cultural visibility** were amplified through far reaching Awards nominations, partner storytelling and external communications, reinforcing Women in Defence UK's role in promoting equitable practice and celebrating contribution across the defence ecosystem.

Chair of Women in Defence APPG, Sarah Dyke MP,  
mentioned Women in Defence UK in Parliament

Input into the Defence Industrial Strategy

Trade and Gender Equality Policy Insights Forum

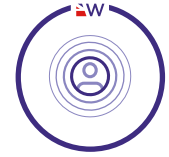
International Links with Femme Defence Sweden

Cabinet Office Equality Action Plan Roundtable

SONAC Recruitment Deep Dive



# Engagement, Recognition and Community Building —



Through flagship awards, sector engagement forums and major public events, Women in Defence UK has advanced recognition, strengthened engagement and built a more connected Defence Community.

- **Engagement** — Through Critical Mass events, DSEI summit activity, partner-hosted panels and cross-sector leadership forums, WiD UK convened defence, industry and government leaders to share evidence, lived experience and practical approaches to inclusive workforce and culture transformation.
- **Recognition** — The 10th Anniversary Women in Defence UK Awards recognised outstanding women, teams and organisations across Defence, amplifying role models, strengthening sector reputation and driving high audience reach through digital platforms, podcast content and awards-related media engagement.
- **Community** — Through nationwide event participation, partner collaborations and high-profile public showcases — including the Lord Mayor’s Show and multi-organisation Critical Mass sessions — Women in Defence UK strengthened cross-sector networks, expanded community participation and increased public awareness of women’s roles in Defence.

# Lady Mayor Show

in-person audience who attended the event  
  
350,000

tv audience who watched from home  
  
1+ million

# 6 Panel Events

audiences reached in total  
  
3000+



of the Whiskey Victor podcast  
  
~1000 views

# Our Partnership Packages —



## Franklin – our entry level

Our Franklin partnership offer is named after Rosalind Franklin, a British chemist whose pioneering work was central to the understanding of the molecular structures of DNA, RNA, viruses, coal, and graphite.

Franklin focuses on our Critical Mass work. This work brings together our Partners into a Critical Mass Community to share gender equity challenges and how they are over-coming those challenges. The output is shared leading practice and knowledge to help move the dial towards achieving a critical mass of women in the sector.



## Fawcett

Our Fawcett partnership offer is named after Millicent Fawcett, a famous suffragette who was the head of the National Union for Women's Suffrage Societies and whose aim was to win women's suffrage through debate and peaceful marches.

Whilst all our partnerships are underpinned by the same common purpose and Critical Mass goal, our Fawcett partnerships also include a table at the Awards Dinner.



## Lovelace

Our Lovelace partnership offer is named after Ada Lovelace, mathematician, who is regarded as being the world's first computer programmer.

Our Lovelace partnerships include our Critical Mass work and have a particular focus on the Women in Defence UK Awards.



## Pankhurst

Our Pankhurst partnership offer is named after Emmeline Pankhurst, the famous suffragette who started the movement and fought hard for equal voting rights for women. We use her famous 'Deeds not Words' as our slogan.

Each of the Pankhurst partnerships is aligned with one of our purposes – Critical Mass, Challenge and Inspire.

# We couldn't do any of this without our Partners —

## Pankhurst Partners



## Lovelace Partners



### Fawcett Partners



### Franklin Partners



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**Visit us at:**

[www.womenindefenceuk.com](http://www.womenindefenceuk.com)

**Contact us at:**

[Info@womenindefenceuk.co.uk](mailto:Info@womenindefenceuk.co.uk)

The logo for Women in Defence features a stylized red and white flag icon to the left of the text. The text is arranged in two lines: "WOMEN<sup>IN</sup>" on the top line and "DEFENCE" on the bottom line. The "IN" in "WOMEN<sup>IN</sup>" is smaller and positioned between two horizontal lines, one above and one below it. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located to the upper right of the "N" in "WOMEN<sup>IN</sup>".  
**WOMEN<sup>IN</sup>**  
**DEFENCE**