

# Insight and data 2023

# Introduction

For the first time, we are able to combine the annual Women in Defence Charter data report with the Insight generated at the Women in Defence UK Summit – ‘Changing the face of defence – how to attract more women to the sector’.

The two reports complement each other well, one giving the most up-to-date figures on gender balance and the other reporting an event that brought people together to explore and share practical ideas from outside the sector, rather than just talking about the problem.

**We hope you enjoy both reports and, importantly, use some of the insight to help move the dial.**



# Changing the face of defence —

By attracting more women to the enterprise.



Critical Mass

**babcock**<sup>TM</sup>

# Contents \_

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05

Critical Mass  
– a definition  
and an article

---

---

06

Executive  
summary

---

---

07

Signals, signals,  
signals

---

---

09

Emotion is as powerful as  
reason to gain commitment  
from stakeholders

---

---

11

Data is more than  
just numbers

---

---

13

Positive Action  
interventions can  
bring positive results

---

---

14

Changing the  
perception of  
Defence

---

---

16

Full steam  
ahead

---

# Critical Mass – a definition and an article —

## DEFINITION

Noun – the size or number that something needs to reach before a particular change or development can happen.

**CAMBRIDGE BUSINESS ENGLISH DICTIONARY**

## ARTICLE

// When women reached 20% of the US Senate, they went after the Pentagon to reform the military's sexual-assault protocol. When they reached 25% of Hollywood producers, they took down Harvey Weinstein and his casting-couch culture. And when they reached a third of the White House press corps, Fox's Roger Ailes, NPR's Michael Oreskes and other serial harassers in the media began to be called out. Somewhere in that zone, when women comprise 20% to 30% of an institution, things begin to change.

Critical mass has its roots in physics: it's the amount of material needed to sustain a nuclear explosion. Accumulate enough, set it off and there is no other outcome than boom!

**TIME MAGAZINE**

# Executive summary —

In July 2023, Women in Defence UK held its first Critical Mass Summit. Its focus was on how to attract more women into the sector. Bringing together ED&I and HR professionals with decision makers from across the enterprise, the Summit deliberately focused on bringing ideas from outside of defence to the table, rather than replaying known issues. These open, sometimes uncomfortable dialogues, delved into ways of winning over senior stakeholders, the absolute criticality of signalling to women that they are wanted, positive interventions that can be deployed during attraction and recruitment and the importance of allowing new and innovative ideas to flourish. We also heard about the steps taken to help Women's Football blossom in a heavily male dominated sector.

We were joined by Nikki Fox, CHRO of Babcock our Pankhurst Critical Mass Partner; Louise Gear, Head of Development at the Football Association (Grassroots Division); Prof Rosie Campbell, Director at the Global Institute for Women's Leadership, and Daryl Fielding, author of The Brand Book and CEO of The

Marketing Academy Foundation – as well as other partners from across defence, private and public, to explore what the enterprise can do to accelerate gender equity, and get us to that critical mass of women.

Five main themes appeared:

- 1. The criticality of signalling to women that they are wanted**
- 2. Emotion is as powerful as reason to gain commitment from stakeholders**
- 3. Data is more than just numbers**
- 4. How positive action interventions such as changing the offering can bring positive results**
- 5. Changing the perception of defence**



**Critical Mass** **babcock™**

# Signals, signals, signals —

Signals are no joke; they're battlefield lifelines. Communication breakdowns are disastrous. History underscores this importance, with 18th-century flag book losses risking code exposure.

Though not facing the same dire stakes, the enterprise grapples with signalling challenges. Critical Mass Summit speakers echoed one theme: attracting the right talent isn't rocket science. The key? **Explicitly, unmistakably targeting and inviting desired individuals.** Relying solely on 'build it, they will come' won't net the specific workforce excellence we seek.

Signalling organisational policies promoting inclusivity is commendable, but they must be backed up by behaviours visible to all you are trying to attract. Welcoming all requires clear, intentional messages. Gendered language in job

advertisements can send a signal about who belongs and can deter applications, and part-time role salaries need to be proportionate to reflect the value that part-time workers bring.

A striking example is Zurich, a global insurer. To attract more women, they revamped job descriptions, offering part-time, job-share, or flexible options by default. The outcome? A remarkable 16.4% surge in female applications, 19.3% more applying for senior roles, and an 8% boost in part-timers' sense of belonging.

**If you signal to women that they are wanted, they will come.**





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### Insight for ED&I Practitioners

Do all of your signals such as inclusivity policies, job advertisements, recruitment processes or behaviours give the same message, or is the message being diluted by incoherent signals?

### Insight for Board Members

Take a look at your tasks and your organisational design – do all of your jobs really need to be stuck to rigid timetables? Can they be part time, shared, or flexible? Be aware of this when designing your organisation's future.

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# Emotion is as powerful as reason to gain commitment from stakeholders —

Daryl Fielding spoke of how her team used emotion to get buy-in to big changes from senior stakeholders, citing the famous Dove – Real Women – Real Beauty campaign. The Dove campaign was built on the hypothesis that the beauty advertisements in existence twenty years ago made women feel ugly and leveraged feelings of insecurity. The team tested the hypothesis with eminent psychologists who validated their view. The challenge was to get the all-male board to understand their proposal for a completely different type of beauty campaign, and importantly, why they should invest millions in what to the Board seemed an extremely risky approach.

**The marketing team decided to use emotion to win the day.**

They contacted the board members' wives and videoed their daughters talking about how they wanted brown eyes rather than blue, or longer legs, or hated their hair or their nose. The video worked, and the campaign is still in use today, nineteen years later.

An innovative approach coupled with carefully planned and executed use of emotion was a key factor and made senior board members aware of the positive impact they could have, all while being commercially successful.



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### **Insight for ED&I Practitioners**

Big buy in means big commitment, don't be afraid to shoot for that high-level buy in, and don't be afraid to use emotion to get there.

### **Insight for Board Members**

Emotions are human, and they can be used to positively impact your bottom line. Don't be afraid of them.

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# Data is more than just numbers —

Data, undeniable and factual, is the lynchpin. Analysed, corroborated figures drive positive workforce decisions. Yet, data is more than just numbers.

During the summit, Jane McDonald from Babcock led a data-focused workshop, highlighting its undeniable importance for positive business change. Quantitative data often guides decisions in the corporate realm. However, data is just numbers until meaningful interpretation reveals its story. Are the right aspects being reported? Relying solely on historical data might not suffice.

For true progress, qualitative data must complement quantitative insights. The stories and the people behind the data are as important as the data itself. Any decisions made due to data will impact them, so it's necessary to ensure decision makers understand why the people have given the answers they have.

How can you help them in the long run, how will data change dependent on the questions you ask, are you asking the right questions in the first place – these are all questions that will help your organisation design itself better for the future. This is critical in any business planning, as anticipating future workforce needs is challenging; a blend of aptitudes and behaviours, not just skills, is vital. In a rapidly evolving landscape, businesses must prioritise building trust and an inclusive culture. **People-driven decisions, not just screen-based, pave the way for a brighter business future.**





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### **Insight for ED&I Practitioners**

Are you reporting the right information you need to improve gender equity? Why not ask the questions you want to, as well as the ones already designed for you?

### **Insight for Board Members**

Data is important, but the story behind it is more important. Your business runs on people, don't lose sight of that.

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# Positive Action interventions can bring positive results —

The Security Service spoke about the strides they were making in female recruitment, attaining over 50% recruitment.

To achieve this and as permitted by the Equality Act, they make full use of Positive Action, particularly in Attraction and Outreach. Initiatives include inviting females to Register their interests in forthcoming roles, providing insights into the organisation, dialling up engagement in areas such as 'women in tech' and assessing for aptitude and potential, allowing for skills to be developed and acquired when in the role.

Building greater awareness of roles and culture, myth busting and introducing a wide range of internal initiatives to support progression were also cited as key enablers.

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## Insight for ED&I Practitioners

Ask the question – are you helping your recruitment teams to hire the right people that you need to change your workforce? Do you need to change the offer to make it more attractive?

## Insight for Board Members

Take a punt, allow for experimentation, let go of all preconceived notions of what a professional in your space looks like, what their background is, and what people simply must bring. Society greatly differs to even 5 years ago, and in the bubble of the boardroom this may have gone unnoticed – and that is fine!

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# Changing the perception of Defence —

## Why does defence suffer from perception issues?

There's a direct link between outside perception of a sector and its ability to recruit the people it needs. Like the Football Association, Defence must tailor its message and offerings.

Challenges in achieving truly diverse workforces persist for organisations, but the 'no supply' theory falls short in today's diverse reality. Nikki Fox used the example of her morning run through Hyde Park where diversity abounds, to lament the fact that Defence struggles to reflect on that diversity.

However, there is a way to counter this, and sometimes, it is as simple as looking to current events. Within women's football, **perceptions shaped by high-profile events and the elevation of role models have driven change.** The England women's team's success in the Euros, and recently in the World Cup, has significantly increased fan numbers.

Louise Gear highlighted the FA's success story revealing the power of creating safe, welcoming, and female-friendly clubs. Their journey, from 200 fun-focused clubs in 2017 to over 1700 in 2020, illustrates that listening and creating truly work. For the FA, this is the beginning, and a fantastic and evidence-based step towards truly changing policy at the highest levels. This is where effective change can be made. Policy changes bind people to initiatives.

Defence faces a parallel challenge, seen primarily as an industry of arms and of men, its diverse functions and contributions are obscured. To transform, the signal must shift, understanding what prospective talent seeks. Altering the perception of the enterprise is paramount.





Like hiring practices highlighted by colleagues in the Security Service during the summit, defence must adapt the signal. Altering the narrative toward inclusivity and engagement is the first step. **A clear signal speaks louder than simple implemented company policy**, encouraging individuals to envision themselves in the industry and creating a thriving environment. The signal's impact is paramount and must not be underestimated.

De-mystifying defence is a critical area in which you can deploy new approaches and ensure that the next generation of defence professionals are as varied as the society they come from.

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### Insight for ED&I Practitioners

Defence is packed full of incredible role models – draw on the FA's experience and use them to change perceptions.

### Insight for Board Members

Ask around, what would you say about the perception of defence if you weren't in it? Play devil's advocate with each other, or ask your daughters.

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# Full steam ahead

The Women in Defence Charter's ambition of 30% female representation by 2030 presents challenges. Should we collectively focus on one area or spread efforts? Regardless, signalling remains critical. The whole of the defence enterprise must actively pursue diverse talent, signalling a strong 'We want you to work for us' message. The driving force behind this campaign must be strategic.

Whilst in this report, women are highlighted as the catalyst for meaningful change, this shift towards critical mass benefits everyone within the organisation – and it doesn't stop at women, we need a fully inclusive enterprise that properly reflects society. This push aligns with a people-centric world, vital in today's context. Profit remains a key company objective, but not at the cost of its greatest value-add: its people.

Critical mass sparks and accelerates transformative change. It's only when that change starts to snowball that defence can then achieve true diversity of thought and culture, creating a better environment for all who contribute. It's time to speed up and create a dynamic, inclusive defence enterprise.

From the catalyst of the Summit, the Critical Mass Community has committed to meeting monthly to share progress, updates, and knowledge in the areas of gender in business. The Summit is an annual event, but the Community continues, and draws upon its own learned experience to better itself, others, and its own workforce.

**We can go fast if we travel alone, but we can travel far if we go together.**

ON HOW MANY FEMALE SUPREME COURT JUSTICES ARE ENOUGH

// I'm sometimes asked,  
“When will be enough?” and my  
answer is “when there are nine.”  
People are shocked. But there'd  
been nine men and nobody's  
ever raised a question about that.

RUTH BADER GINSBERG  
SUPREME COURT JUSTICE

# Women in Defence Charter Data Report 2023

CHARTER

# Contents

---

20

Executive  
summary

---

22

Highlights

---

23

Female  
Representation

---

25

Senior  
leadership

---

26

Measuring  
progress

---

27

Charter  
Commitments

---

29

Conclusion

# Executive summary

## Encouraging increases in some areas, disappointments in others.

The Women in Defence Charter was launched at DSEi in 2019 to bring together organisations from across the defence sector that are committed to improving gender balance. The launch was enthusiastically received with around thirty organisations, including the MOD and the single Services, signing on the day.

Since then, the most visible Charter activity has been the publication of the annual data report. Reliable data is key to improvement. In 2019, although all public sector data was available, no defence ecosystem gender information existed. This is our third report and contains our most comprehensive data catchment yet.

The data shows promising progress towards our 30% by 2030 ambition with **an increase of nearly 5% on 2022 to an overall average of 24%**.

Encouraging news too is the large increase in the number of signatories that submitted data, a 35% increase from 35 to 54 with the majority of new submissions coming from the private sector. This increase in submissions means that **our data now covers a headcount of over 395,000** compared with 270,000 in 2022, and includes 37 large employers, so is likely to be a better reflection of what is happening on the ground. This is backed up by a 6.4% average increase on the private sector, up to 29%.

The Armed Forces have increased the overall percentage of women from 11% to 12%, although the absolute number of women in the military has decreased marginally. A small decrease in the MOD Civil Service average is due to incorrect categorisation of data in 2022, when Defence Equipment and Support was categorised as private sector.



On the disappointing news front, the number of women at board and executive director level seems to be decreasing. In 2022, we reported that Board level female representation was 30% and 29% for Executive Directors. In 2023, this has reduced to 22% and 25% respectively. Interestingly, **we found a positive correlation between the percentage of women at higher senior executive level, and a higher female workforce overall.**

This report shows that with the concerted efforts of the Charter Signatories, who now number over seventy defence organisations, progress is possible and is happening. As the sector moves towards a critical mass of women, we move a step nearer to achieving our ambition of 30% by 2030.

**Sam des Forges – MOD Charter Co-Chair**

**Katharine Sealy – Northrop Grumman – Industry Charter Co-Chair**

**Angela Owen OBE – Women in Defence UK Charter Co-Chair**



# Highlights

- 54 Signatories completed the exercise vs 35 in 2022
- 37 large employers (250+ employees)
- 11 medium (50-249 employees)
- 6 small (less than 49 employees).
- Gender balance has improved by nearly 5% compared to 2022 data. The average female representation in Signatory organisations is now 24%.
- 63% of Signatories reported an improvement in female representation this year, 18.5% stayed the same and 11% saw a reduction.
- The overall average of women at Board level is now 21% and 25% for Executive Directors for Signatories.
- Only 20% of respondents are meeting all 6 Charter commitments.
- Signatories appear less keen to share their progress publicly.

# Female Representation

63% of signatory organisations who took part in the 2023 data collation reported an improvement in female representation this year with 11% seeing a reduction. In 2022 only 50% of respondents who answered this question saw no change or improvement from the previous year.

In 2022 we reported the overall representation of women in the sector from the 35 signatories that submitted this data was 20%. This year, we are delighted to see that **in 2023 female representation has increased to 24%.**



Representation in 2023						
Total Headcount				Percentage		
Area	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Change
Public	158, 681	39,001	197,682	80%	20%	1.7%
→ Armed Forces	126,100	16,460	142,560	88%	12%	0.3%
→ Civil Service	32,581	22,541	55,122	59%	41%	-1.3%*
Private	140,689	56,944	197,633	71%	29%	6.4%
All	299,370	95,945	395,315	76%	24%	4.9%
54 RESPONSES						

\* IN 2022 DE&S WERE INCORRECTLY CATEGORISED AS PRIVATE SECTOR. THE CORRECTION FOR 2023 ACCOUNTS FOR THE APPARENT REDUCTION IN FEMALE REPRESENTATION. IF WE HAD CORRECTLY CATEGORISED DE&S IN 2022, THE CIVIL SERVICE WOULD HAVE SHOWN A 42% FEMALE REPRESENTATION, WHICH MEANS AN OVERALL REDUCTION OF 1.3% THIS YEAR.

# Senior leadership

Whilst overall representation is increasing and has increased 2% in the general workforce, it appears that female representation is reducing at the senior leadership levels. In 2022, we reported the overall average representation of females at Board level was 30% and 29% for Executive Directors. In 2023, this has reduced to 22% and 25% respectively. Of particular interest, in reviewing the data we found a positive correlation between higher female senior executive representation and a higher female workforce overall.

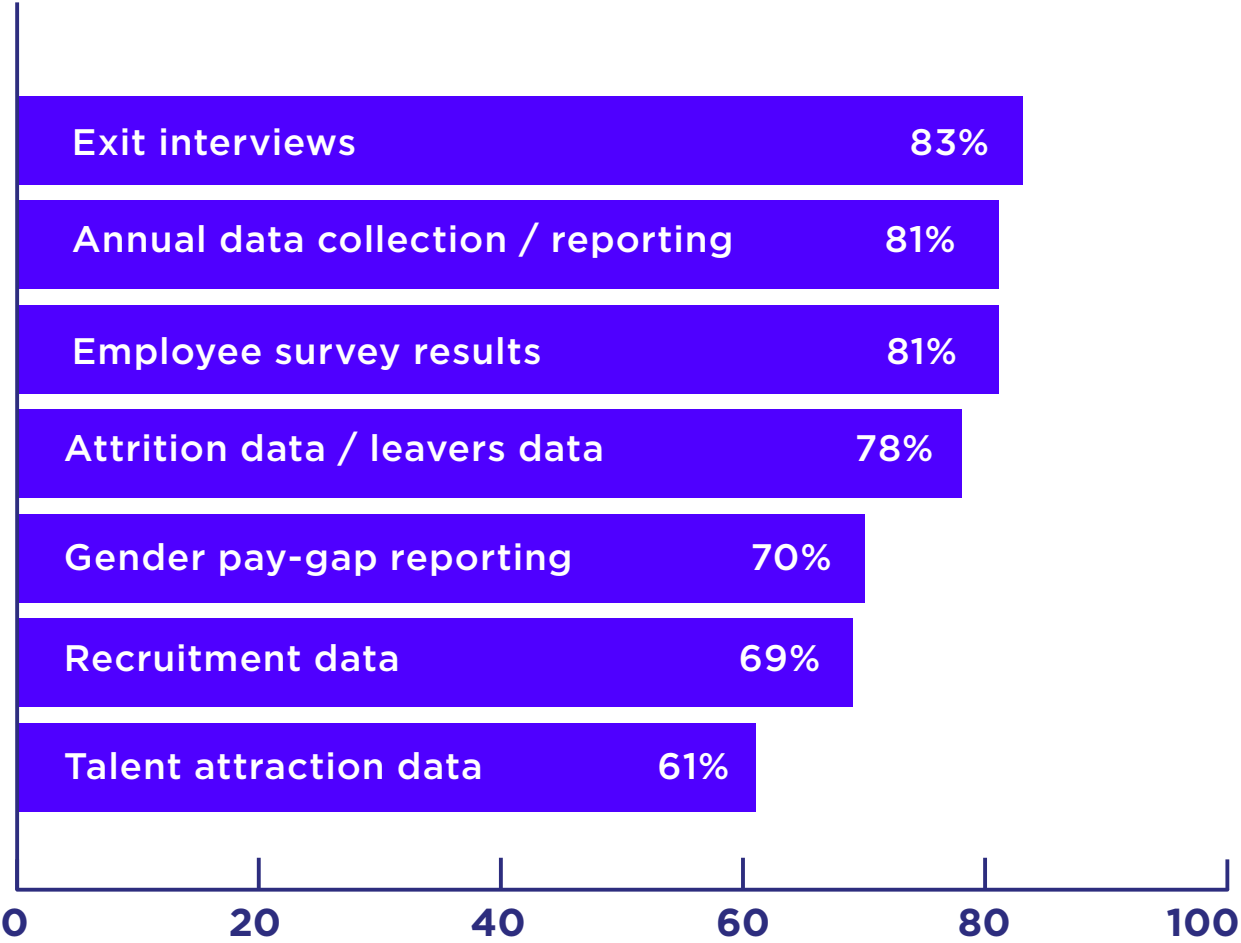
As the sample sizes are small, we know that a single person change can have a marked increase on the female %, however as highlighted in the Critical Mass report by the experience of the FA, attracting, promoting, retaining of female role models is key to driving change.

Average of total % of females at each level 2023					
Sector	Workforce	Manager	Senior Manager	Director	Board
Civil Service	35%	39%	36%	32%	27%
Armed Forces	12%	12%	14%	10%	6%
Private	28%	20%	20%	24%	22%
Overall	28%	20%	20%	25%	22%
AVERAGES EXCLUDE NULL VALUES AND BLANKS BUT INCLUDES ZEROS					



# Measuring progress

The measurement of progress in improving female representation is essential to inform the enterprise. A series of different measurements are used by signatory organisations with the most popular way to measure progress continuing to be exit interviews. 83% of signatory organisations use exit interviews as a measure. At the other end of the HR process more than two thirds, 69% of organisations who responded also use recruitment data to measure progress.





# Charter Commitments

In 2022 we focused our analysis on what activities, programmes and policies Signatory organisations were undertaking. This year we've looked at their progress against the Women in Defence Charter commitments

The Signatories are asked annually to report on their progress against these commitments and share their current female representation.

**In 2023, only 21% are meeting all 6 commitments.**

The most disappointing statistic is that **only 35% of signatories are publishing their targets** on their website. A key piece of insight from the Women in Defence UK Summit is the importance of signalling to women that they are wanted. Publication of targets is a clear signal of intent.

With new signatories taking part in the report and working towards setting targets, we expect there to be a lag in reaching 100% completion. We will be working with Signatories over the coming year to ensure they understand their commitments, how they are performing against them and what we can do to further support them in achieving the goals they signed up to, to increase gender balance in their organisations.

Charter commitments	2023
To nominate one member of their senior executive team to be responsible and accountable for gender diversity and inclusion.	89%
To set a gender balance target for their organisation.	87%
Where appropriate, to set a target for gender diversity in senior management.	70%
To publish their targets on their website.	35%
To have the intention to ensure the pay, or the objectives of the senior executive team, are linked to delivery of any internal targets on gender inclusion and diversity.	61%
To share progress, how it is being measured and whether plans, policies and activities are in place to increase female representation.	46%

# Conclusion

It's encouraging to see the progress made since the 2022 report. It would be premature though, to take our collective feet off the pedals, as numbers can quickly slip, as demonstrated by the decrease in numbers of women at Executive and Board level. Momentum must be maintained.

An area of focus for the Charter in 2023/2024 will be adherence to Charter commitments by Signatories. Some commitments seem harder to achieve, particularly publicity of targets. We will be working with Signatories throughout the year to help them meet all their Charter commitments.

The over-riding piece of insight from the Critical Mass Summit was that signalling intent is critical in attracting women to

a sector. The 'build it, they will come' approach is much less effective. The five key themes from the day were:

- 1. The criticality of signalling to women that they are wanted**
- 2. Emotion is as powerful as reason to gain commitment from stakeholders**
- 3. Data is more than just numbers.**
- 4. How positive action interventions such as changing the offering can bring positive results**
- 5. Changing the perception of defence**

In 2022, we launched the **Most Improved Charter Signatory Award to recognise and celebrate the achievements of our signatories in improving gender balance.** We know that many companies are on a journey to reaching their ambitions, and may feel that they have little to show as yet, but if we don't shout about what we're all doing, arguably we are missing an opportunity to really move the dial on gender. The striking data on sharing targets and progress highlight the need for the award and to further work with our signatories as they work towards 30% representation by 2030.

The Women in Defence Charter will continue to work with our Signatories as they take their individual journeys to 30% by 30. We hope this report will inspire individuals and organisations to take action to enable women to succeed at all levels and drive a critical mass of female representation, so we have a better gender balance across the defence sector.



**Huge thanks go to the following Charter Signatories who submitted data for our annual report.**

Organisations		
Accenture (UK) Limited	Envitia Limited	Northrop Grumman UK
ADS Group Ltd	Fujitsu UK Ltd	PA Consulting
Airbus Defence and Space Ltd	Forces Employment Charity	Pearson Engineering Ltd
Allan Webb Ltd	General Dynamics United Kingdom Limited	Prospect
Army	Harquebus International Ltd	QA
Atkins	Improbable Defence	QinetiQ Group PLC
AWE	Jacobs UK	RAF Regulars
Babcock International Group	JJ Churchill Ltd	Raytheon UK
BAE Systems plc	KBR	Rheinmetall Bae Systems Land (RBSL)
Boeing UK	L3Harris	Rheinmetall Defence UK
BOYDEN Executive Search	Leidos UK	Rheinmetall MAN Military Vehicles
Capgemini Invent	Leonardo UK	Rolls-Royce plc
Cervus Defence and Security Ltd	Lockheed Martin UK	Royal Navy
Cohort Plc	Marshall Holdings Limited	Saab UK Ltd
Costain	MBDA UK	Sharing in Growth
Cranfield University	MOD Civil Service (excluding Agencies)	SMI Ltd
Dassault Systemes UK limited	Mott MacDonald	Vysiion Ltd
Defence Equipment & Support	MRL Public Sector Consultants Ltd	Whitetree Group Ltd

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