



Royal Air Force  
**Ethos, Core Values  
and Standards**

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# Message from the Chief of the Air Staff



Air Chief Marshal  
**Mike Wigston**  
CBE ADC

## To all Royal Air Force Personnel

The Royal Air Force has a well-earned reputation for excellence in delivering air and space power, and a proud history of success. While capable aircraft, weapons and support elements are fundamental to that reputation and success, it is you - as individuals, leaders, and as part of a team - who ultimately make the difference and give the Royal Air Force its competitive edge. It is only through your endeavours that we can be a truly agile, adaptable and capable Air Force.

Our work is often done in challenging and hazardous circumstances. Success in these circumstances can only be achieved by motivated, capable and self-disciplined individuals driven by exceptional leadership at all levels of the Service. By the very nature of the air and space environment, we must be pioneering in approach, pragmatic in delivery, courageous, fair and just.

This publication sets out the values which everyone in the Royal Air Force is expected to hold dear. It identifies the high moral and professional standards we should expect of ourselves and of each other. These values and standards underpin our ethos and form the foundation of the mutual trust, leadership and teamwork on which our Service depends. In addition to your personal commitment to these standards, I expect leaders at every level to be engaged, authentic and relentless in upholding the exemplary standards of conduct and behaviour that are the foundation of our reputation and our operational success. In return for these exceptional demands, we must continue to improve what we offer to you: continuing to develop your terms of employment to meet your needs, aspirations and expectations; and being truly diverse and inclusive, better reflecting the society we serve.

You should put this publication at the heart of your commitment to the Royal Air Force - it aims to inspire you to set the example and to lead those around you, whatever their rank or position. Your positive example will motivate other members of the Royal Air Force team to uphold the Service's exceptional reputation for which we are justly renowned.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "M Wigston".

# The Ethos, Core Values and Standards of the Royal Air Force

## Introduction

Our purpose is to protect the people of Britain, prevent conflict, and be ready to fight Britain's enemies. We are prepared for the present, fit for the future. Our legitimate use of lethal force in military operations sets us apart from civilian professions, and the challenging demands on our people are unique. We can be called upon at any time to make personal sacrifices in the service of the Nation and the Crown. Our ethos, values and standards are at the core of our commitment.

Working alongside and often within the other Services, we offer political choice and global agility for the UK Government. We have a proud history of success and we continue to lead the development and delivery of air and space power across the full range of global operations. We are inherently 'Joint' and international in our outlook and in the way we operate. Our people are agile, adaptable and capable - across the Whole Force. This makes the Royal Air Force an agile, adaptable and capable organisation.



# Ethos

## The Royal Air Force Ethos

The Royal Air Force Ethos is our distinctive character, spirit and attitude that is necessary to pull together as a team to deliver air and space power, no matter the challenge or the environment. We place Royal Air Force success above self and strive to be courageous in the face of adversity and risk. Sustained by strong leadership at all levels, high professional and personal standards, and a commitment to the

well-being of all our colleagues, we are bound by a strong sense of tradition and belonging to an organisation of which we are immensely proud.

Effective and consistent leadership throughout the Service is crucial to maintaining our ethos. Every member of the Royal Air Force has the duty and ability to lead, no matter what their rank or position, and has a moral responsibility to live by our core values.



# Core Values

## Core Values of the Royal Air Force

The Royal Air Force Core Values are the beliefs and principles that define who we are. Our Core Values are:

- R – Respect**
- I – Integrity**
- S – Service**
- E – Excellence.**

These values help to unify the Royal Air Force and are the bedrock of our Ethos as a warfighting Service.



# Respect

Service in the Royal Air Force is more than just loyalty to the Crown and our comrades - it is also about respect and a sense of pride in belonging to an exceptional team. Service flows from the duty to put others first and it means there is no place for prejudice or discrimination.



# Respect

## Self-Respect

People who encourage an environment of high personal standards, team work and professionalism are key to nurturing self-respect in those around them. People with self-respect have high personal standards and behave in ways that bring credit to themselves, their team and the Royal Air Force.

## Mutual Respect

Respect for others is essential - up and down the chain of command, amongst peers and civilian colleagues, and for the society that we protect. The close-knit Whole Force family is richly diverse, and we must value and respect everyone, regardless of their, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, social background, or any other characteristic. Some of these characteristics are protected by law, but true respect goes beyond legal requirements, and Service personnel must always maintain the highest standards of decency and justice towards people, whatever the circumstances.

## Humility

Irrespective of your position or rank, every person you engage with has the right to be treated as an equal. All Service personnel should aim to be modest, genuine and reasonable with others, respecting their right to hold different views and opinions.

## Inclusion

In the Royal Air Force, total inclusivity is not negotiable; it is critical to team cohesion and operational success. Each one of us has a responsibility to ensure the people around us always feel welcome and included.



# Integrity

Integrity is about being honest and having strong moral principles. It is the basis for the trust that is essential for the Royal Air Force to operate effectively and it reflects the key principles of moral courage, honesty and justice.





# Integrity

## Moral Courage

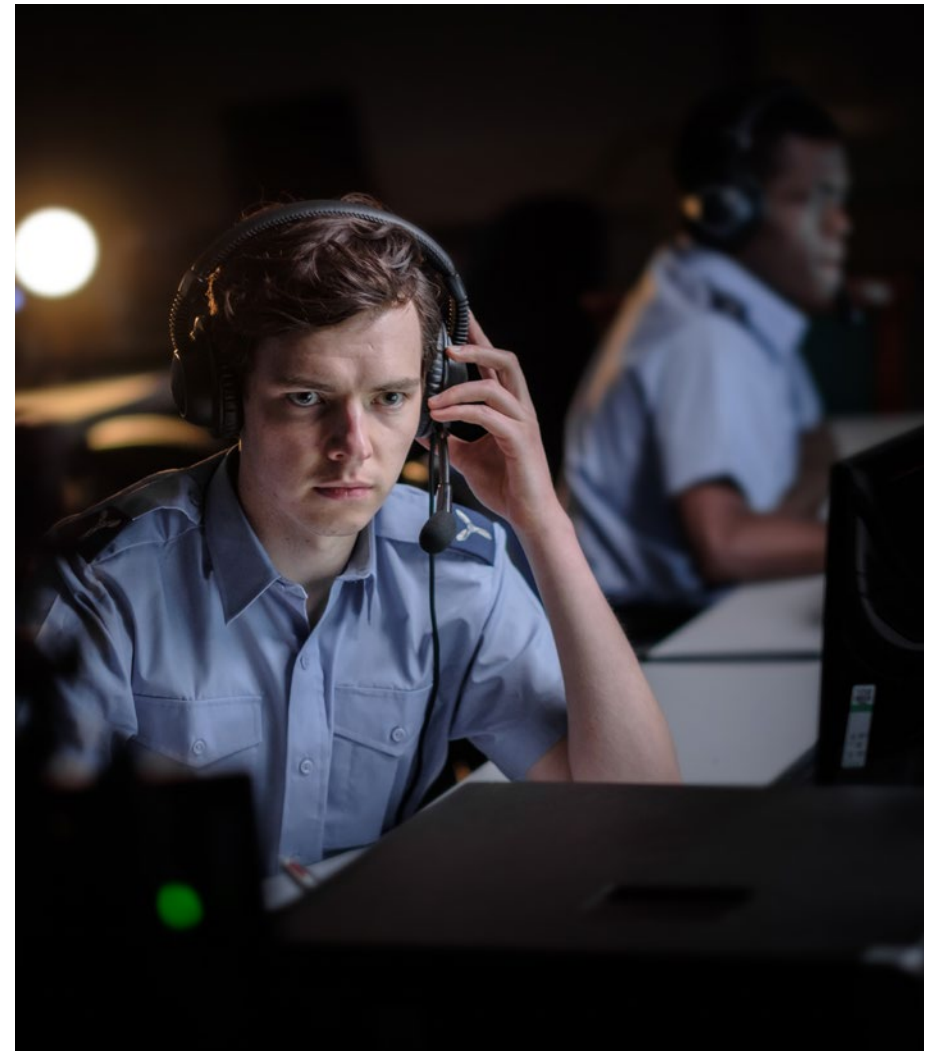
Moral courage is about doing the right thing, even though it might be unpopular or dangerous and the personal cost might be high. Maintaining personal values and the highest standards of decency and behaviour in the face of opposition earns the respect of others and builds trust. Moral courage is also about creating a culture where subordinates are empowered to challenge leaders constructively and leaders are prepared to listen.

## Honesty

Honesty is integral to the Royal Air Force because, as members of the armed forces, our word must never be in doubt. Dishonesty or breaches of trust show a lack of integrity and call into question an individual's reliability. Dishonesty damages trust and team cohesion, and impacts upon operational effectiveness.

## Justice

A person with integrity routinely demonstrates balanced and consistent behaviour and treatment. It is vital that everyone in the Royal Air Force is treated fairly and consistently and that justice is done - and seen to be done - without prejudice or favour.



# Service

Service is the ultimate act of unselfish commitment, and military life is one of selfless service to the Crown and the Nation. Professional duties must take precedence over personal interests, with a willingness to serve others before ourselves. Royal Air Force service epitomises the values of loyalty, commitment, teamwork and courage.



# Service

## Physical and Mental Courage

Courage, both physical and mental, is the cornerstone upon which bravery, fighting spirit and success depend. The delivery of air power is an inherently dangerous business and can involve us in tasks that require deadly force. Military service means that we might have to take the lives of others or knowingly risk our own life, or we may witness the injury or death of our friends and colleagues. Operating in such difficult circumstances requires significant physical and mental courage and the mutual support of courageous colleagues.

## Loyalty

From the moment we are attested or commissioned, we are committed to an unswerving loyalty to defend, uphold and preserve the Crown. Loyalty works at all levels: team members must show professional and social loyalty to each other; leaders must be loyal to their subordinates, representing their interests and dealing with their concerns fairly; and, individuals must be loyal to their leaders, their team and to their duty. While such loyalty is expected, it is best earned through commitment, courage and example.

## Commitment

Commitment works two ways: commitment of the individual to the Service and, in return, commitment from the Service to the individual. For individuals, it means steadfast dedication to serve wherever and whenever required, whatever the discomfort or danger. For those in command or leadership positions, it demands that we meet in full our responsibilities to subordinates. The Royal Air Force is committed to ensuring that personnel are properly prepared for operations, and to managing people's careers and professional and personal development fairly, balancing Service needs with individual aspirations.

## Teamwork

Teamwork means working effectively with every member of our Service, with the Army and the Royal Navy, civil servants, contractors, the public and our allies. It's about creating a Whole Force environment, where all personnel have a voice and feel valued, which is the foundation for genuine inclusion. Teamwork relies on team members treating all others with respect.



# Excellence

The Royal Air Force has a reputation for excellence in all that we do. Professional excellence is more than the trade or skills we develop through training - it is about the way we set the example, tackle tasks, take responsibility, and ensure that a job is done well. Professional excellence requires us to exercise care in leadership and fulfil the welfare responsibilities of command. We must manage risk and understand consequence and effect, having the courage to take calculated risks when required. Excellence also requires us to get the very best from our people, and ensure the most efficient and effective use of our resources.



# Excellence

## Personal Excellence

Every member of the Royal Air Force has a personal responsibility - to themselves and their team - to achieve and maintain the highest professional and personal standards. We must make every effort to stay in good physical, mental and spiritual condition - not just for our own health and well-being, but so that we are ready for more-challenging operational duties.

## Discipline

The most effective discipline - that which we apply to ourselves - comes from within. Good discipline enables us to achieve more than we might normally

expect of ourselves and, because it is vital to success, commanders must be able to enforce it when necessary. This requires clearly understood rules governed by a robust military legal system. Discipline must be rigorously but fairly upheld by everyone in positions of authority, and all Service members must display high levels of self-discipline - both on and off duty.

## Pride

Pride is justifiable confidence in oneself and in the Royal Air Force, based on heritage, achievements and our ethos. Pride breeds excellence.



# Standards

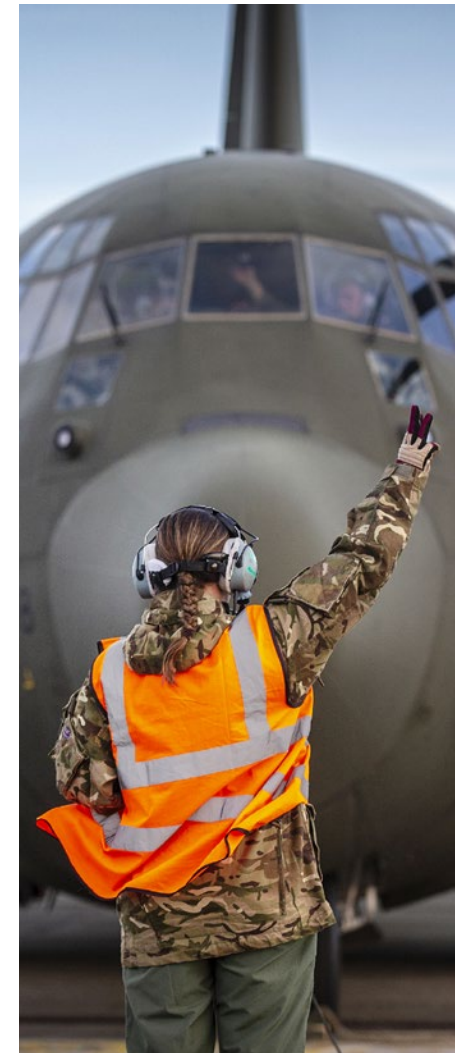
## The Royal Air Force Standards

The nature of the Royal Air Force's role means that we live and operate in close-knit communities where we rely on each other for support - and sometimes for our lives. The Royal Air Force family is rich in diversity and culture, and it is important that we value and respect everyone, regardless of their background. We are held in high regard by the British public and have an enviable reputation worldwide; we should all be justifiably proud of this hard-earned reputation, which we have a duty to sustain. We can do this through individual excellence, great teamwork, continued success and effective leadership - but it can only flourish in an environment of mutual respect and trust. Trust is earned by demonstrating both professional competence and personal integrity. In turn, personal integrity is assured by the self-discipline that comes from doing the right thing in testing circumstances, even when no-one is looking. Positive behaviours engender trust and enhance our reputation, and they create team spirit and underpin our ability to meet our operational objectives.

The Royal Air Force recruits and retains high-calibre people who are expected to uphold our values and standards. We are, however, not immune to instances of negative and inappropriate behaviours, some of which may cause physical and psychological harm. They can impact on trust and operational capability, and can undermine the Royal Air Force's hard-won reputation for courage, determination and professionalism. Such behaviour can also impact on our ability to attract, recruit and retain the talented people we need to sustain our operational output. These are the reasons why we are expected to adhere to higher standards than other parts of society - and this includes having the moral courage to stop, prevent or report poor behaviour by others. All Royal Air Force personnel have the duty to tackle inappropriate behaviour - whether physical, verbal or on social media - and not turn a blind eye. Examples of inappropriate behaviour include, but are not limited to: breaching laws, norms of behaviour, or core values and standards; bullying; harassment; discrimination; unwelcome sexual attention; taking advantage of or

mistreating subordinates; drug or alcohol misuse; and, inappropriate use of social media. Rules and regulations for these behaviours are contained within other Service publications.

Whether on or off duty, members of the Royal Air Force family must not ignore inappropriate behaviours or be a 'passive bystander'. We must instead demonstrate our values and standards out of respect for others and for the good of our reputation, and because our ethos demands it. Every leader across the Whole Force must promote a culture where we drive out inappropriate behaviours - aiming to stop instances of them occurring, but dealing with them effectively if they do. Leaders must set the example and the standards, and ensure that their people meet those standards consistently. But upholding our values and standards is not just the responsibility of leaders - it is the personal responsibility of every member of the Royal Air Force, every day and in every situation.





This publication does not discriminate on grounds of race, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation or social background. Neither does it discriminate on grounds of gender, disability or age, insofar as the legislation applies to the Armed Services.

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