

Army Medical Entry Rules Under Review Amid Recruitment Drive

July 10, 2025

— Categories: Defence & Security



The Ministry of Defence is reviewing long-standing medical entry standards for the British Army in a renewed effort to boost recruitment and address growing concerns over force strength. The review forms part of a wider strategy to attract and retain more personnel as the Army faces one of its most significant manning challenges in recent history.

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), the professional head of the UK Armed Forces, recently told Parliament that the Army is losing between 200 and 300 troops each month. He noted that despite strong application numbers, the Army is still struggling to convert interest into enlistment due to strict medical entry rules and bureaucratic delays. According to Radakin, there are approximately 13 applicants for every successful Army recruit, yet many are being turned away for conditions unlikely to impact their ability to serve effectively.

In response, the Ministry has already removed over 100 outdated or unnecessarily prohibitive medical restrictions from its recruitment guidance, known as Joint Service Publication 950 (JSP 950), last autumn. Conditions such as mild asthma, eczema, and acne, which previously disqualified applicants, are now subject to more flexible assessment. The goal is to ensure that capable individuals are not excluded from service due to medical conditions that are manageable or irrelevant over a standard five-year term.

Radakin assured that any changes will not compromise operational capability or troop resilience, emphasising that the Army will remain “tough and competitive” while also being realistic about modern health standards.

The review comes amid broader concerns over defence readiness, particularly as global threats evolve. Critics have noted that an over-reliance on outdated rules may be denying the Armed Forces access to a wider, highly motivated talent pool. Meanwhile, efforts to improve retention are also underway, including increases to starting pay, now around £25,000, as well as commitments to improve accommodation, family support, and long-term career structures.

As the Army adjusts to 21st-century realities, this move signals a more pragmatic approach to recruitment, one focused on potential and fitness for service, rather than rigid adherence to outdated criteria. The Ministry's review marks a strategic pivot towards modernising the Armed Forces without compromising on discipline or operational standards.