

Ministry of Justice Permanent Secretary concludes five-year tenure

Sir Richard Heaton will conclude his service at the Ministry of Justice later this summer when his five-year tenure comes to an end.

He will step down as Permanent Secretary, and will leave the Civil Service after nearly 30 years' dedicated public service.

During his time at the MoJ, Sir Richard has steered the department through a number of changes, including projects to improve prison safety and security, modernise courts and tribunals, and bring all offender management under the National Probation Service. This year he worked with ministers to devise an effective coronavirus strategy, which prevented widespread prison outbreaks.

Arrangements to appoint Sir Richard's successor as Permanent Secretary will be announced in due course.

Lord Chancellor, Robert Buckland, said:

Sir Richard is an exceptional civil servant, with the strongest of reputations across Government and the legal sector.

He has carried out many roles in Government with distinction; I am personally grateful to him for welcoming me into the department as Minister of State and then Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State, for helping me deliver the Government's priorities, and also for steering the department through COVID.

It has been a pleasure to work with him and he leaves with my very best wishes for the future.

Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service, Sir Mark Sedwill, said:

Richard has earned the country's appreciation for his three decades of dedicated public service and I would also like to thank him for his friendship and support as a colleague. He leaves the department in good shape for the challenges ahead.

Particular tribute should also go to Richard for the crucial work he has done as Race Champion for the Civil Service. I'm confident the whole Civil Service echoes my gratitude to him for his work to advance the wider equality agenda.

Sir Richard Heaton said:

No department in government has a purpose more important than that of securing justice and the rule of law. It has been a privilege to lead the Ministry of Justice.

These have been challenging years, particularly during the present pandemic. But throughout, we have been able to deliver on the priorities of successive Governments. I'm pleased with our recent record of securing investment in the fabric of our justice system. We have steered the probation service towards a stable and positive future. We have helped our prisons emerge from a difficult period, and we have carefully mitigated the potential impact of Covid-19 on our services and on the men, women and children in our care.

But what I am most proud of is the way in which people from every part of the department and its partner organisations work together to get things done. Our values in the Ministry of Justice shape us, and our brilliant hard-working people do their very best to live by them and to serve Ministers and the public.

Sir Richard's career in government began in 1991, when he joined the Home Office as a legal adviser.

He later spent five years at the Department for Work and Pensions as head of law and governance, and latterly as director general for pensions and ageing society.

In 2012 he was appointed Permanent Secretary of the Cabinet Office and in 2014 became the civil service race champion – leading the drive to improve its ethnic diversity. He joined the MoJ in August 2015.

In recognition of his public service, Sir Richard was appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath in the 2019 New Year Honours list. Sir Richard also chairs the board of a community charity in south London.