

News story: New Director Defence Innovation appointed at Ministry of Defence

Congratulations to Clare Cameron, our newly appointed Director Defence Innovation. We caught up with her to find out a little more about what she is hoping to achieve in her new post.

What is the Director Defence Innovation responsible for?

I am responsible for enabling and embedding innovation across Defence. The job is fundamentally a Business Change role; changing current cultural behaviours across the MOD and enabling everyone to engage in innovation and to be open to great ideas and to follow through on them. As well as technological innovation, I will be looking at innovation in the way we manage and train our people and retain the right skill sets, and I will be working to break down the barriers to innovation. I have also been asked to collaborate across sectors, in particular Security, as there are many cross overs in the way technology can be exploited, and potential which we need to make the most of across government.

How do you think your background sets you up for this role?

My background working across Defence and in Cabinet Office gives me a good understanding for how to make things happen in MOD and across National Security. I have experience of business transformation in government – but not quite on this scale, so I will be learning fast. I deployed with the Armed Forces to Afghanistan so I have seen how important innovating the way we do things and the technology we have can be; we need to inject some of that urgency into the way we operate today.

Why is innovation in Defence so important?

Technology is moving at an exceptional pace and our adversaries are taking advantage of these opportunities at an alarming rate and often in an unpredictable manner. We need to move quicker to anticipate such technological advances and their potential uses, to stay one step ahead of those who threaten our safety. It's also about being a responsible organisation, providing our Armed Forces with the best kit and processes we can. And, we want to be an agile department, one that is efficient and effective in government – being innovative is key to this too.

Who do you have helping you to assist Defence to become 'innovative by instinct'?

There is a huge amount of excellent work going on across the Armed Forces to bring new technology into military capability. The teams that work for me are the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) and the Defence Innovation Unit

(DIU). DASA helps find and fund new technology and develop it so it can be taken on by the Armed Forces. It is the kind of organisation we need at the forefront of innovation, providing a central service to government departments across the defence and security sectors, ensuring clarity of requirement and defined routes to the end user. The Outreach team, who are embedded experts in regional innovation ecosystems, are critical to providing reach back into the latest thinking and gauging the market potential.

DIU is the team in MOD Head Office that is developing the strategy, managing the Defence Innovation Fund (£800m over the next 10 years) and championing innovation. DIU, as well as providing funding, is working on spreading innovation into the way the MOD makes decisions about the future of the Armed Forces and into the work to transform the systems that support the Armed Forces. DIU is also looking at breaking down the barriers to innovation, particularly in our commercial processes and in acquisition so that we can be as accessible and as flexible as possible and so Defence can be an attractive organisation to work with.

Defence is a large organisation. How can you help to encourage the various innovation bodies in Defence to work together, avoiding duplication of effort?

I see the various innovation hubs and accelerators across Defence and other government departments as a real opportunity. It means that innovation is alive and moving to the forefront of our people's thinking. What I want to do is create awareness of the different organisations, create links and identify opportunities for working together. We have a real opportunity to establish a vibrant, collaborative team that can maximise the potential of each innovation for both Defence and Security.

What impact have you seen from government engaging with industry in innovation?

The UK produces the most fascinating innovators, who are coming up with brilliant ideas from their garden shed. I have already come across such people in my new role and I am encouraged that Defence is making working together easier and that we have initiatives in place to proactively attract our nation's SMEs and innovators. UK Primes are continuing to work at pace, engaging with Defence and accelerating our understanding of the latest technological advances, but we could still work closer. Working together with Primes, SMEs and Academia to build an even stronger innovation ecosystem is key to our future success.