

## [News story: New study into Iraq and Afghanistan veterans launched](#)

The new study, which follows on from similar reports conducted after the Falklands War and the First Gulf War, will investigate cause of death, including rates of suicide, for all personnel who deployed to conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan between 2001 and 2014. This will cover personnel who are still in service, and those who have now transitioned into civilian life.

While rates of mental disorder are lower in the military (3.1%) than the general population (4.5%), the MOD routinely carries out research into those who have served on large scale combat operations, in order to more accurately assess the effects of deployment.

Previous studies into mortality rates of those who served during the 1982 Falklands and 1990/91 Gulf conflicts found that they were no more likely to take their lives than the wider population, while rates of suicide within the military remain low.

This latest research will be conducted in collaboration with NHS Digital, and will match the MOD's service database with corresponding NHS records in order to track causes of death. It will compare findings with the general population, as well as all personnel who served during the same period outside Iraq or Afghanistan.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

Our Armed Forces do a magnificent job, and we owe a huge debt of gratitude to each man and woman who has laid their life on the line to keep our country safe.

Most transition successfully into civilian life once they have put away their uniforms, but we cannot afford to be complacent. Mental health problems can affect us all, and the wellbeing of our people remains a top priority.

By conducting this vital new study, we are furthering our understanding of the wellbeing of our people so we can continue to provide the best possible care to all who have served.

The study will work alongside the ongoing research by King's Centre for Military Health Research and Imperial College in order build as detailed a profile as possible of those who served on these operations.

The MOD's Defence People Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy is working to challenge the stigma surrounding mental health issues, to ensure that all who serve, and have served, can enjoy a state of positive physical and mental health. It aims to offer the tools and support necessary for each of the

Armed Forces' men and women to lead a long and healthy life, during their service, and following their transition back into the civilian community.

The MOD has committed to spending £22 million a year on mental health, and has set up two 24/7 helplines for serving personnel and veterans, so that there is always somewhere to turn in times of crisis. This year, the MOD will launch the new Defence Transition Service, a specialist support system that will provide an additional layer of care for those preparing to leave service, who are most likely to face difficulties once they leave the Armed Forces.

The majority of veterans go on to lead successful and healthy lives once they have left the Armed Forces. They leave with strong values and transferrable skills, demonstrating qualities such as leadership, resourcefulness, adaptability, and the ability to work under pressure.

Of the veterans who use the MOD's Career Transition Partnership upon leaving the Armed Forces, 86% are in education, training, volunteering or in a job within six months. The MOD continues to run the largest apprenticeship scheme in the country.