

# PM creates new Office for Veterans' Affairs to provide lifelong support to military personnel

Boris Johnson will announce that he has appointed Oliver Dowden as Minister representing veterans in Cabinet during a visit to a military base in Scotland today.

Oliver Dowden will work closely with Johnny Mercer who has been appointed Minister for Defence People and Veterans. That role will now be a joint Ministry of Defence and Cabinet Office position, in order to allow the Minister to direct the work of the new Office for Veterans' Affairs. The two ministers will share responsibility for veterans' affairs.

This is the first time that veterans' affairs will be overseen by dedicated ministers in the Cabinet Office to ensure the whole of government pulls together to deliver the life-long support our veterans deserve.

The newly created Office for Veterans' Affairs inside the Cabinet Office will be staffed by officials from the Cabinet Office and Ministry of Defence (and others as necessary). The best experts from across Whitehall will now be working together in the Cabinet Office hub on an holistic approach to veterans' affairs.

The Office will work with departments to coordinate and drive government policy on veterans' welfare, spanning mental and physical health, education and employment. The head of the Office for Veterans' Affairs will report jointly to both Ministers.

Oliver Dowden and Johnny Mercer will immediately begin work to establish the structure of the new Office, reporting progress to the Prime Minister by 30th September.

In addition, Oliver Dowden will jointly chair the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board with the Defence Secretary, to ensure no veteran is disadvantaged because of their service.

Speaking ahead of today's visit, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

The brave men and women who serve in our military truly represent the pinnacle of British character. We are rightly admired throughout the world for our Armed Forces, and it is a stain on our national conscience that any veteran who has served should be abandoned by the country they have fought so courageously to protect.

It is absolutely right that the government should do all it can to support our armed forces from the day they enlist and for the rest

of their lives. Veterans have given so much to the UK. They have so much to offer our workplaces and wider society and it would be a dereliction of duty not to harness that potential.

By taking responsibility for the full gamut of veterans' civilian lives – from ensuring they get the medical treatment they require, to further training and skills after they have transitioned from service to keep them in good jobs, to targeted interventions to prevent the scourge of veteran homelessness – Oliver Dowden, Johnny Mercer and our brand new Office for Veterans' Affairs will do just that.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

People join our armed forces prepared to give their lives in defence of their country. In return, government and society owe them a debt long after their service is finished. As a veteran myself, I know the struggles that some people face. The Ministry of Defence welcomes the new Prime Minister's appointment of the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Minister for Defence People and Veterans to ensure the needs of veterans are addressed right across government.

Minister for the Cabinet Office Oliver Dowden said:

Our veterans have made extraordinary sacrifices for this country and it's only right that we repay their commitment with the right support and care when they leave service. I'm honoured to take on this role as a champion for veterans across government and will be a voice for their interests at the Cabinet table.

The new Office for Veterans' Affairs will coordinate essential work being carried out across Departments to ensure our servicemen and servicewomen receive unparalleled support across all areas of life. From mental health to employment, this government will deliver the care our veterans deserve.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Johnny Mercer said:

For the first time in its history, the UK Government will have an Office for Veterans' Affairs to pull together all functions of government to ensure that when our Armed Forces personnel leave service, they are looked after in the manner that they deserve.

I am delighted with this role, and am resolutely determined to reset this country's relationship with her veterans. I entered parliament to do precisely this; I am grateful for the opportunity

this Prime Minister has given me to do this, and I look forward to getting on with the task at hand.