

News story: Ministry of Defence and Royal Foundation launch new partnership to improve mental health

The joint initiative between the MOD and the Royal Foundation of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry builds on the MOD's recently launched mental health and wellbeing strategy, which outlines how the department will improve the mental health of its serving military and civilian personnel, their families, and veterans.

It will see the Royal Foundation provide advice and resources to the MOD to improve training, education and information sharing for the entire Armed Forces. The work will include annual briefings, websites and specialist support to raise awareness of the importance of good mental health.

HRH Prince Harry speaks at the launch of today's partnership between the MOD and the Royal Foundation.

Defence Personnel will be encouraged to use psychology and well-being in the same way as athletes do to maximise performance, emphasising the idea that mental fitness is as important as physical fitness when working as part of the Armed Forces.

The resources will be integrated into staff training courses and briefing processes across the Armed Forces from the middle of 2018, and will be widely available online, to strengthen the mental health support and services already available to Defence personnel.

Announcing the partnership, Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

By looking after our mental health we are building a more effective armed forces that helps keep this country safe. Our soldiers, sailors and airmen are the best in the world but we will only maintain that if we are as serious about improving mental health as we are our combat skills and cutting-edge technology. So partnering with key groups like the Royal Foundation is an important part of our strategy to improve the wellbeing of our serving Armed Forces and veterans.

Sir Keith Mills, Chairman of the Royal Foundation said:

Through our work with the Invictus Games, the Endeavour Fund, and most recently the Contact coalition through Heads Together, the Royal Foundation has had the privilege of convening some of the best expertise in the field of military mental health. We are delighted that this new partnership with the Ministry of Defence

will see the UK leading the way internationally in prioritising the mental fitness of its entire defence community.

While rates of mental disorder are slightly lower in the Armed Forces (3.2%) than in the general population (3.5%), improving the mental health of the MOD's entire workforce is a key priority.

Sir Michael Fallon and Sir Keith Mills, Chairman of the Royal Foundation, sign the partnership agreement.

The Defence People Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2022, launched in July, builds on five years of research and aims to develop a coordinated approach to prevent, detect, and treat mental health and wellbeing issues, as well as introduce measures to promote the importance of mental health.

As part of that strategy, the MOD committed to collaborate with the Royal Foundation to produce Mental Health training to embed within compulsory courses and work with them on communications material. Today's announcement delivers on that promise.

The wider Strategy includes plans to:

- Encompass all Defence People – serving Armed Forces members (Regulars and Reserves), military families, veterans, and MOD civil servants;
- Introduce standardised mental health and wellbeing education and training for all those working in Defence;
- Invest in research on resilience training to ensure that individuals are as mentally fit as they can be to prevent depression and anxiety and monitoring of groups who are more likely to suffer from mental health issues, such as combat troops and medical personnel in support of them;
- Improve access to clinical assessment (such as through digital delivery) and prioritisation for treatment;
- Develop partnerships with key service charities in order to continue anti-stigma campaigning initiatives and share best practice;
- Improve communication to the workforce about what help is on offer.

The Royal Foundation of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry has made mental health one of its key priorities. The Foundation operates by bringing together people and organisations with passion and expertise to tackle issues that are close to the heart of Their Royal Highnesses.

As part of its work with the Invictus Games, Endeavour Fund, and most recently Heads Together the Foundation has partnered with veterans charities and experts to lead awareness raising activity and to provide support for veterans and serving military personnel as they recover from both physical and emotional challenges.

The Foundation is delighted to have the opportunity to make the most of its expertise and partnerships in this area for the benefit of the Armed Forces.

Press release: Institute for Apprenticeships launches new website

The Institute for Apprenticeships has launched its new website. Content created by the Institute and its publications have been historically hosted on GOV.UK – the move to an independent domain reflects the evolution of the Institute and its independent, employer-led approach.

The new website can be found at www.ifapprenticeships.org

Since its establishment in April 2017, the Institute has published almost 200 apprenticeship standards and is working with employers to develop more. Well over 2000 employers are involved in developing apprenticeships through the Institute.

As apprenticeship standards are being developed they are currently published on GOV.UK. The Institute for Apprenticeships has transitioned to the new website all existing standards approved for delivery. A period of further transition will see all standards, including those in development, published to the new website.

Antony Jenkins, Chair of the Institute for Apprenticeships said:

This new website marks an important step forward for the Institute – I'm proud of the progress we're making.

It is vitally important for our work that we take a digitally-enabled approach. This is just the first stage for this website, and in time it will form the basis of the way we manage our processes, allowing us to provide a more efficient, more comprehensive and more responsive service to all those involved in our work.

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[Press release: PM call with President Netanyahu: 9 October 2017](#)

The Prime Minister spoke to the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier today.

They agreed that security cooperation between the UK and Israel was very strong and would continue, particularly on counter-terrorism where we faced shared challenges.

They also agreed our bilateral trade relationship would continue to go from strength to strength, noting the UK-Israel trade working group had already met and discussions on how to ensure the freest possible post-Brexit trading relationship had been constructive.

They discussed Iran, with the Prime Minister noting the importance of the nuclear deal with Iran which has neutralised the possibility of the Iranians acquiring nuclear weapons for more than a decade. The Prime Minister said the UK remains firmly committed to the deal and that we believe it is vitally important for regional security. The Prime Minister said it was important that the deal is carefully monitored and properly enforced, and that both sides deliver on their commitments.

They agreed that the international community needed to be clear-eyed about the threat that Iran poses to the Gulf and the wider Middle East, and that the international community should continue working together to push back against Iran's destabilising regional activity.

[News story: Plans launched to drive](#)

social mobility in Opportunity Areas

Ambitious plans to raise education standards and broaden the horizons of young people in areas struggling with social mobility have been unveiled today (9 October) by the Education Secretary Justine Greening.

The Opportunity Area programme is a key part of the Education Secretary's priority of tackling social mobility and improving opportunities for young people across the country. These 12 areas, identified as social mobility 'coldspots' – areas with both poor social mobility and schools that face challenges – will receive a share of £72 million to boost opportunities for young people in these communities.

Publication of plans for the first six Opportunity Areas – Blackpool, Derby, North Yorkshire Coast, Norwich, Oldham and West Somerset – mark the first anniversary of the programme, following a year of collaboration between local educators, employers and voluntary and community organisations to set out the key areas for improvement. Plans for the remaining six areas, announced more recently, will be published by the end of the year.

Local independent partnership boards – made up of school leaders, business owners, council leaders and other local partners – will work to boost attainment from the early years of a child's education right through to university. Other initiatives include projects to raise aspirations, by providing all young people in Opportunity Areas with at least four inspiring 'encounters' with the world of work, for example through work experience or mentoring.

Education Secretary, Justine Greening, said:

For too long, young people in these areas have been at a disadvantage because of where they are growing up.

I want young people living in these areas to have access to a world-class education, that's why we are setting out our ambition in these first six opportunity areas. As we prepare for Brexit, it is vital that we raise the horizons of young people and give them the opportunity to go as far as their talents and hard work will take them.

The government has also announced today that £22 million will be shared among all 12 Opportunity Areas through a new Essential Life Skills programme, to help disadvantaged young people have access to the same opportunities as those in the top-performing schools. The aim is to help them develop wider skills such as resilience, emotional wellbeing and employability. The programme will complement the individual Opportunity Area plans by providing extra-curricular activities, such as sports, volunteering and social action projects, which give pupils the opportunity to develop leadership skills.

The six regional plans also outline how the transition to adulthood will be improved by working with local 'cornerstone' employers to provide young people with experience of the world of work. These include EDF Energy, GCHQ, Barclays and Lloyds Banking Group, Burberry and Rolls Royce. This work is being led by the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) to create programmes for young people aged 11 to 18 that raise their career aspirations.

Claudia Harris, CEO of the Careers and Enterprise Company, said:

We know that providing young people with exposure to the world of work while in education is one of the most effective ways to improve their employment outcomes.

That is why we are proud to be leading the charge with over 40 of our economy's leading businesses. This scale of collaboration with more than 260 schools and colleges in the Opportunity Areas will help ensure young people have flourishing futures and workplaces can access the talent they need.

The Education Endowment Foundation will also support schools in Opportunity Areas to improve outcomes for young people, particularly those from disadvantaged homes, by sharing best teaching practice.

Sir Kevan Collins, Chief Executive of the Education Endowment Foundation and 'evidence champion' for the Opportunity Areas, said:

It's good to see local partners, schools and organisations joining together to improve outcomes for young people. Only through a concerted effort will we be able to make a difference to social mobility in these 'coldspots'. The need now is to move swiftly from planning to action so that children and young people experience the benefit of this investment.

To really have an impact, change has to be informed by evidence. Our Research Schools will be crucial in doing this in each of the Opportunity Areas. They will help to break down barriers so that research does not stay in the pages of academic journals but has a real impact on classroom practice. Allowing teachers to use lessons from what's worked to inform their practice can make all the difference to attainment.

The National Citizen Service (NCS) is also working in each area to help young people benefit from a programme of personal development and volunteering.

Jonathan Freeman, localities lead for the National Citizen Service, said:

The National Citizen Service is a powerful vehicle that brings young people from all communities together, contributing to more

integrated communities. The independent evidence is clear that the programme boosts confidence and leadership, well-being and young peoples' ability to succeed in later life.

It is also getting them involved in social action in their communities; in Scarborough alone last year, 2800 hours of volunteering was made possible through NCS and 93 young people participated in the programme – our aim is to triple this by 2020, ensuring that young people from all backgrounds can benefit.

Jim Whittaker, a member of the West Somerset Opportunity Area Partnership Board member and Managing Director of Channel Training Ltd, said:

The Opportunity Area plan for West Somerset represents a unique and exciting move to make a lasting change in our community. As an educationalist, local business owner and parent, I'm very pleased to be involved in the project.

The plan works across business, education and community to create and maintain more opportunity for our young people. The work done and relationships built during the project will be making a positive difference here for many years to come.

Further information

The full list of Opportunity Areas are as follows: Blackpool, Bradford, Derby, Doncaster, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, Hastings, Ipswich, North Yorkshire Coast, Norwich, Oldham, Stoke on Trent and West Somerset. The areas chosen were amongst the weakest in both the 2016 Social Mobility Commission's index and the Department for Education's data on school standards and capacity to improve.

The Essential Life Skills programme will be targeted at all 12 Opportunity Areas. The Department will work closely with local partners in each of the Opportunity Areas as well as high quality providers to offer schools and local authorities extra-curricular activities in order to meet the specific needs of each area. The programme will focus on offering children greater access to the same opportunities as are available to those attending the highest achieving schools.

The [Careers and Enterprise Company](#), established in 2014, works to transform the provision of careers education and advice for young people and inspire them about the opportunities offered by the world of work.

The [National Citizen Service](#) is open to all 16 and 17-year-olds in England, providing them with the skills and experience that they need to thrive as active citizens.

Eleven Research Schools named by the Education Endowment Foundation and the Institute for Effective Education will act as local centres of excellence,

working with schools in the Opportunity Areas to deliver evidence-based approaches to tackling social mobility and provide resources for teachers. This will support local teachers to be the best they can be and tackle the regional inequalities surrounding educational outcomes for local pupils.

[Press release: New Minister for Trade and Export Promotion starts at the Department for International Trade](#)

As a former Business Ambassador for UK Trade and Investment with a strong background in global business, Baroness Fairhead brings a wealth of business and economic experience to the department.

Her responsibilities will include building strong relationships with UK exporting companies, helping smaller businesses export to the global market and overseeing the GREAT campaign to boost the UK's global trade.

Baroness Fairhead will also bring together expertise from across government and the private sector to create a new export strategy that establishes a renewed culture of exporting across the UK.

The strategy will ensure the government puts the right financial, practical and promotional support in place to allow businesses to make the most of global opportunities and generate wealth for the whole of the UK.

As lead Minister for [UK Export Finance](#), her work will put finance at the heart of trade promotion, and improve support for businesses to take advantage of new opportunities when we leave the EU – a key aim of the government's Industrial Strategy.

Baroness Fairhead starts her new role at DIT as the UK's trade deficit narrowed by £2.4 billion in the second quarter of 2017, this largely being driven by a narrowing of the trade in goods deficit.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox, said:

As an international economic department our role is to promote the huge benefits of trade and help businesses make the most of global opportunities.

Baroness Fairhead's wealth of business experience will help the UK boost exports, forge closer trading links with new markets, and ensure more companies can respond to the enormous appetite for British goods and services.

Minister for Trade and Export Promotion, Baroness Rona Fairhead, said:

I'm honoured to be appointed as the Trade and Export Minister at a time of unprecedented new opportunities for UK trade.

There is huge potential for growth as UK businesses meet the global demand for their world-class goods and services; I look forward to working with businesses of all sizes so we can forge a new culture of exporting.