

News story: MOD launches Defence People Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

Tobias Ellwood, Minister for Defence People and Veterans, has today launched an innovative strategy to improve the mental health and wellbeing of the Armed Forces, their families, veterans, and Defence civilians.

While rates of mental disorder are slightly lower in the Armed Forces (3.2%) than in the general population (3.5%), the challenge of improving the mental health of the MOD's entire workforce is an important one. The Defence People Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2017-2022, launched by Mr Ellwood at an international conference with counterparts from the United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, builds on five years of research and aims to build 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.

The new Strategy will include 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.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

A fitter force is a more effective force and keeping our people

healthy helps keep this country safe. This new strategy recognises the importance of mental health, alongside physical injuries and will improve the prevention, detection, and treatment of mental health issues which is vital to the wellbeing of our military.

I'm also delighted to host Ministers from some of our key partner nations, to consult and share best practice on veterans' issues.

Yesterday, ahead of the International Ministerial Conference on Veterans' issues held at Royal Chelsea Hospital, the Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon and Mr Ellwood attended a reception at No.10 Downing Street. This was held to bring the community that supports veterans together and was attended by several Chelsea Pensioners. It also provided an opportunity to provide an update on plans for the Invictus Games, which this year will take place in Toronto in September.

Tomorrow, Ministers will discuss how best to improve the transition into civilian life for veterans, including hearing how Governments may be able to use new technology to bring about new opportunities to make the transition smoother; the importance of partnering with the health and charity sector, and the Armed Forces Covenant.

Mr Ellwood and his international counterparts agreed that the sharing of ideas has an important part to play in building a greater common understanding of veterans' issues and that there must be an ongoing commitment to ensure support services continue to meet the needs of our serving personnel, their families and veterans.

[News story: Gold award for DIO's commitment to safety](#)

The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) was recognised recently for its commitment to accident and ill health prevention with the highly prestigious Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Gold Achievement Award.

DIO's Chief Operating Officer, Geoff Robson attended the awards ceremony held at the Birmingham Hilton Hotel on 12 July 2017, to accept the highly prestigious award on behalf of DIO.

RoSPA achievement awards are a highly regarded and sought after business accolade. The scheme is open to businesses and organisations of all types and sizes from across the UK and overseas. Judges consider entrants' occupational health and safety management systems, including practices such as leadership, active performance monitoring and workforce involvement.

To satisfy the strict criteria for the RoSPA Gold Award, DIO was required to provide evidence of a very high level of safety performance, demonstrating well developed occupational health and safety management systems and culture, outstanding control of risk and very low levels of error, harm and loss. In addition, we were required to demonstrate continued and improving performance over the past 5 years.

In accepting the award Geoff Robson said:

It is a great honour to accept this award on behalf of DIO based on evidence of working practices across our whole organisation. Putting safety first is our primary value, and what better evidence of our organisation honouring that commitment than receiving such a prestigious award. Moreover, it demonstrates to those visiting, working or living on the defence estate our commitment to their safety.

The entry was coordinated by Clare Read, Head of Regional Health and Safety Support Team who said:

We are extremely proud of our health and safety achievements and the very real improvements in safety performance across the organisation as evidenced in our award submission. To attain our target of a Gold Award is a fantastic achievement, which places DIO in the health and safety “premier league” and reflects the hard work put into developing and improving our Safety Management System. We look forward to reviewing the RoSPA award panel feedback and will be seeking ways to further develop and improve our process and procedures.

[News story: UK extends training of Ukrainian Armed Forces](#)

The Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon has confirmed this will provide Ukrainian personnel with enhanced skills to protect themselves against these threats – a key cause of injuries and fatalities – now and into the future in the Donbas.

Since the beginning of the Donbas conflict in March 2014, 2,700 Ukrainian servicemen have been killed and a further 10,000 injured. 128 UAF have been killed this year alone.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

We continue to stand side by side with our Ukrainian friends in the face of Russian belligerence and aggression. This training, defensive in nature, will help protect Ukrainian troops against the threats that they face on a daily basis. By stepping up our training programmes we are sending a clear message that we support the people of Ukraine and are firmly committed to its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

Last week, Sir Michael also announced that the UK has directly trained over 5,000 members of Ukraine's Armed Forces in 14 locations away from the Donbas.

Since 2015, over 1,300 British personnel have been deployed in support of Operation ORBITAL. Drawing from eleven different regiments, including two squadrons of reservists, they have been training the Ukrainian Armed Forces in a number of skills such as the identification of mines and IEDs, medical care and logistics. Last year, Sir Michael confirmed that the training mission will continue until at least early 2018.

The new training elements confirmed today will be rolled out later this year.

[News story: Royal Navy and Royal Marines train alongside partner naval forces](#)

Around 60 Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel exercised with their counterparts from other countries during the five-month annual French naval deployment to the Indian Ocean and Far East, including the first ever four-part maritime exercise involving France, Japan, the UK and US.

The two-staged exercise named Forager Deux and Arc 17 took place in the sea and in the skies near to Japan, Guam, and Tinian, with the purpose of enhancing joint operating between the UK and international partners and deepening Defence cooperation.

In addition to UK maritime personnel, the exercise also included two Royal Navy Merlin Mk3 helicopters from the UK's Commando Helicopter Force, which as part of a week-long practice assault moved 330 French, Japanese and American troops to and from Tinian.

UK forces have been on board French assault ship FS Mistral since March as part of the Jeanne d'Arc 2017 French task group, which has visited Singapore, Sri Lanka, Japan, Guam, Australia and Vietnam.

Minister of State for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster said:

Working shoulder-to-shoulder with French forces, as well as personnel from other partners' navies, shows the flexibility of our world class Armed Forces.

The Royal Navy and Royal Marines play an important role carrying out Britain's commitment to international maritime security, as well as protecting our own shores.

Several instalments of training and Defence Engagement have taken place as part of this deployment.

This week, UK personnel worked alongside French and Egyptian armed forces when the Jeanne D'Arc task group arrived in Egypt to take part in Exercise Cleopatra. The cross-decking exercise, which saw UK Merlins land on the Egyptian warship ENS Nasser, was the latest in a series of multilateral amphibious exercises that the UK has taken part in throughout the five month deployment.

[News story: Defence Secretary announces £120m investment in UK air power](#)

Updated: Updated.

The deals will sustain 330 British jobs and help the RAF to continue to perform at its best by improving training for fast jet pilots and making sure the Hercules C-130J aircraft can continue to support the UK's Armed Forces around the world.

The Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon, said:

These contracts demonstrate our commitment to supporting the UK's air power, through maintaining battle proven aircraft and training the next generation of fast jet pilots.

This substantial investment will ensure our Air Force can continue to perform at its very best. Backed by our rising defence budget and £178 billion equipment plan, these contracts will sustain high skilled jobs in Britain and > ensure that our Armed Forces have the best equipment and training available to keep the UK safe.

The first contract, worth £110 million, is with British company Marshall Aerospace and Defence Group. It will replace the centre wing box for the RAF's Hercules C-130J aircraft and will sustain 330 jobs in Cambridge, contributing to the 5,100 UK jobs Marshall already support in the region.

This replacement will extend the Hercules C-130J aircraft's out of service date to 2035, making sure this essential aircraft can continue to transport personnel and equipment around the world, having previously supported defence and humanitarian relief efforts in Iraq, Nepal and South Sudan.

The MOD has also signed a £9.5 million contract with QinetiQ to provide Typhoon pilots with the latest cockpit technology to prepare them for front line combat.

With the nature of global conflict ever evolving, it's vital that the Armed Forces are trained effectively to deal with a variety of scenarios. This technical update will give Typhoon crews based at RAF Lossiemouth and RAF Coningsby the ability to link to the Air Battlespace Training Centre at RAF Waddington and undertake 10 weeks of simulated battle training a year in the latest cockpit and simulated training technology.

The trainee aircrew will be exposed to state-of-the-art, simulated battlefield situations and the training facilitators can develop scenarios, provide mission management support and post mission debriefs, ensuring the crews will be best prepared for deployment.