



Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Paymaster General and
Minister for the Cabinet Office

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Johnny Mercer MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

TO: ALL MPs

16 October 2019

Dear Colleague,

Launch of the new Office for Veterans' Affairs

We are pleased to let you know that the government is today delivering on the Prime Minister's promise, made during his first week in office, to create a new Office for Veterans' Affairs at the heart of government.

We have been asked to oversee it in our roles as the Minister attending Cabinet with responsibility for veterans and Minister for Defence People and Veterans.

Veterans have offered to make the ultimate sacrifice in defence of our country, so the Government has a moral duty to them and their loved ones to provide the best possible support after they leave service.

We want the UK to be the best place in the world to be a veteran and the Office for Veterans' Affairs will be a champion for our ex-servicemen and women at the centre of government - building on the excellent work done since 2010. It will promote the outstanding contribution veterans are already making to our economy and society and ensure no individual who needs help is left behind after they leave service.

As part of the recent spending round, we announced £5 million of government funding to staff and resource the new Office. This comes on top of the extensive investment we are already making in support for veterans who need help with their mental and physical health, homelessness and employment.

This work needs to be guided by veterans themselves, not bureaucrats, so we have appointed Colonel (Retired) David Richmond CBE as the Head of the Office. David was the most senior officer injured in combat in Afghanistan and subsequently became the Director of Recovery at Help for Heroes - so he understands perfectly both the support veterans need and how much they have to offer.

David starts work this week and one of his first tasks will be to produce a detailed work programme, informed by the responses to the government consultation on the Strategy for our Veterans. We have asked him to focus on in particular:

- Pulling together all functions of Government, and delivering better collaboration with charity sector provision, in order to ensure this nation's life-long duty to those who have served

- Ensuring that every single veteran and their family knows where to turn to access support if required
- Helping to generate a 'single view of the veteran' by making better use of data to understand veterans' needs and where gaps in provision exist
- Improving the perception of veterans and showcasing the brilliant contribution they make after leaving service.

Both we and David will be engaging widely over the next few months and we would value your views as MPs on how we can ensure the Office helps us deliver on our promises to veterans and their families.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Oliver Dowden", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized "JM", with a period at the end.

Johnny Mercer MP