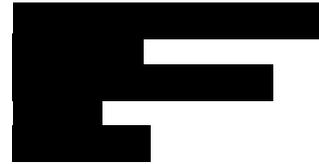




# Office for Veterans' Affairs



**LEO DOCHERTY MP**  
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE AND MINISTER  
FOR DEFENCE PEOPLE AND VETERANS

21st July 2021

Dear Tobias,

## **DELIVERING THE STRATEGY FOR OUR VETERANS: 2022-24 ACTION PLAN**

I am writing to update you on the government's work in support of our veteran community, through the delivery of the Strategy for our Veterans and the development of the next iteration of the Strategy Action Plan. As a nation we must ensure that those who have served in our Armed Forces and been willing to make the ultimate sacrifice in defence of their country are supported and celebrated as veterans. The Strategy for our Veterans, published in 2018, set out an ambitious ten year vision for the government's support and recognition of the veteran community. In the Strategy we set ourselves stretching goals to support and empower those who have served across a range of policy areas, from making sure our veterans have the health and wellbeing support they need to ensuring they are able to find employment that recognises their unique skills.

Since the Strategy was published in 2018 we have been delivering on the promises we made to our veterans, launching the Veterans Railcard, a manifesto commitment, making it easier for veterans to bring their skills to careers in the Civil Service, and introducing a tax break for businesses who employ veterans. There is still more to be done to deliver on our ambitious goals, and we are now working on developing the next iteration of the Strategy for our Veterans Action Plan, which will set out the actions the government will take to support the veteran community from 2022-24.

The Action Plan will cover three key strategic themes: developing a better understanding of what our veterans need through our work on research and data; continuing to promote the transformation of veterans' services; and showcasing the contributions veterans make to society. I have set five key priorities for the 2022-24 Action Plan, building on the 2018 Strategy and aligning with other key parts of the government's policy agenda, from celebrating veterans' contribution to the union to levelling up by ensuring our veteran community, dispersed across the UK, have the services and support they need.

The Rt Hon Tobias Ellwood MP  
Chair  
House of Commons Defence Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

My five key priorities for the 2022-24 Action Plan will be:

1. We must address the **legacy issues** relating to Northern Ireland, which we have committed to.
2. We must also listen, learn and address with compassion the **historic hurt** that sections of the veterans community feel. This includes, for example LGBT veterans affected by the pre-2000 ban on serving in the Armed Forces, female veterans who may have varying support needs, or those non-UK personnel who do not have settled status, where we should align any policy with the proposals being consulted on for serving personnel.
3. Our **services must be gold-standard**, enabling veterans to access the health and wellbeing support they need and to easily navigate the range of government services available through modernised, digital means. We will also focus on delivering a **data and research programme**, to inform service design and delivery. This will enable us to understand the veteran community's needs and experiences through projects including a new research strategy, as well as fully leveraging the opportunities presented by the inclusion of the veteran question in the 2021 census.
4. Key to positive life outcomes is **maximising veteran employability** so that as we Build Back Fairer they are one of the groups at the forefront of opportunity. This will mean ensuring that the public sector is an exemplar employer of veterans and that we do more to support and incentivise private sector employers, unlock industry partnerships and new training opportunities and champion and unleash the potential of every veteran.
5. Finally, I believe that delivering for our veterans gives us an unparalleled opportunity to **celebrate and strengthen the Union**. Our Armed Forces represent the very best of our four nations working together and the skills, experience and talents developed through service can benefit all corners of the UK if our veterans can contribute in full to their communities.

My officials have been working with teams across government departments to develop an initial set of draft Action Plan commitments, which will be refined and further developed over the Summer. My officials are also working closely with colleagues in the Devolved Administrations, working to align policy wherever possible.

The Action Plan will be further developed over the Summer, with the intention to publish by the end of 2021. I hope that you will welcome this work as a clear demonstration of our commitment to delivering on the promises we have made to the veteran community, and to achieving our vision to make the UK the best place in the world to be a veteran. If you feel that an informal briefing on this project at this stage would be helpful, I will be

happy to arrange this. We also look forward to the publication of the HCDC's report on the experiences of women in the Armed Forces, and we will ensure we develop a government response to this important work and integrate recommendations into the Action Plan wherever possible.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leo Docherty', written in a cursive style.

**LEO DOCHERTY MP**