

First ever armed forces commissioner selected to champion service personnel and families

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Former Air Commodore Polly Perkins CBE has been chosen as the preferred candidate for Armed Forces Commissioner by the Defence Secretary John Healey MP - delivering on the government's key manifesto commitment to give serving personnel and their families an independent voice to improve service life.

The Armed Forces Commissioner is a new statutory office that will be an independent champion and direct point of contact for personnel and their families and have unprecedented powers to investigate welfare issues and raise concerns that impact service life, including equipment, housing, and unacceptable behaviours. The office will be up and running from 1 April 2026.

Polly's appointment is subject to a pre-appointment hearing by the House of Commons Defence Select Committee (HCDC) on Wednesday 25th March 2026 in line with the public appointments process. HCDC will publish their views and recommendations after the session which the government will consider before finalising and agreeing the appointment.

Appointing an Armed Forces Commissioner was a lead defence manifesto commitment by this Government to renew the nation's contract with those who serve.

Former RAF Air Commodore Polly Perkins served for over 30 years in the Royal Air Force, specialising in logistics and holding senior leadership roles including Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff, British Forces Cyprus. She deployed on operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan and worked with NATO partners to improve multinational logistics. She holds an MA in Defence Studies from King's College London and was awarded a CBE for her service.

Defence Secretary John Healey MP said:

Our Armed Forces are at the heart of our nation's security. With demands on defence rising, from the conflict in the Middle East to growing Russian aggression, we are asking more of our military, and it is right that we continue to step up our support for them and their families.

I am proud that we legislated in our first year of government to create this new Commissioner role, with powers to challenge Ministers and military leaders and to report directly to Parliament.

Polly brings deep experience of service life and exceptional leadership as this country's first ever Armed Forces Commissioner, she will be the independent champion and direct point of contact that our Armed Forces and their families deserve. Our message to the Armed Forces community is clear: this government is on your side.

The Armed Forces Commissioner will be able to visit UK Defence sites unannounced, commission reports, and will report directly to Parliament to hold the Government to account. Personnel and

their families will be able to contact the Commissioner about issues affecting them, with the Commissioner empowered to investigate these concerns, seek relevant information from the Ministry of Defence, and make recommendations for improvement.

The appointment builds on this Government's commitment to improve all aspects of service life including a new defence housing strategy to make homes fit for heroes, the biggest pay rise for personnel in 20 years and putting the Armed Forces Covenant into law through the Armed Forces Bill introduced this year.

The move to appoint a commissioner has been inspired and modelled on the Commissioner for the Armed Forces in Germany, who has been received positively by German personnel.

The Commissioner will be able to investigate individual welfare concerns, undertake thematic reviews into systemic issues affecting service life, and report findings directly to Parliament – strengthening transparency and public understanding of welfare matters across Defence.

This appointment delivers on the Government's commitment to renew the nation's contract with those who serve, ensuring that welfare, dignity and respect sit at the heart of Defence.

The Interim Commissioner will carry out all the functions of the Commissioner and a permanent appointment is due to be made in the coming months through an open competition. Further details about the role and how personnel and families can engage with the Interim Commissioner will be shared in due course.

The Armed Forces Commissioner role came into law under the Armed Forces Commissioner Act on 3 September 2025. They will take responsibility for the existing Service Complaints Ombudsman and will ensure there is no break in that service.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/first-ever-armed-forces-commissioner-selected-to-champion-service-personnel-and-families>