

Independent champion for Armed Forces appointed as new team stands up

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The UK's first ever Armed Forces Commissioner - Former Air Commodore Polly Miller-Perkins CBE - has been appointed by the Defence Secretary John Healey MP.

The appointment delivers 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 is an independent champion and direct point of contact for personnel and their families. Polly has unprecedented powers to investigate welfare issues and raise concerns that impact service life, including equipment, housing, and unacceptable behaviours. The office was up and running and Polly was in post on Monday 30 March 2026.

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

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.

Armed Forces Commissioner, Polly Miller-Perkins CBE, said:

As the first Armed Forces Commissioner, I am deeply honoured to take on a role dedicated to championing the lived experience of our Service personnel and their families. Throughout my career in Defence, education and public service, I have been fortunate to lead teams in some of the most challenging and rewarding environments across the UK and overseas. Those experiences have shaped my belief that people are at the heart of everything we do — and that when we truly listen to them, we strengthen and improve the systems that support them.

Ultimately, my purpose as Commissioner is simple: to ensure the lived experience of those who serve is understood, valued and continuously improved. I will work tirelessly with Serving communities across all Services to understand personal experiences and ensure concerns reach the people who can deliver real and lasting change.

Commissioner Miller-Perkins 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.

She 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.

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.

The decision to appoint a commissioner was inspired and modelled on the Commissioner for the Armed Forces in Germany. They have been received positively by German personnel.

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.

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/independent-champion-for-armed-forces-appointed-as-new-team-stands-up>