

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP  
10 Downing Street  
London  
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15<sup>th</sup> May 2018

Dear Prime Minister

Veterans' Transition

Following my appointment as the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Veterans' Transition in September 2012, I conducted a wide-ranging independent review of the process of leaving the Armed Forces and returning to civilian life. My report, *The Veterans' Transition Review*, was published in February 2014. The government agreed to implement all the significant recommendations, and I have since monitored progress in their implementation in my three annual follow-up reports.

An enormous amount has been achieved, not only by central government departments but in the devolved administrations, local authorities, the NHS, the charity sector and indeed the Armed Forces themselves. To highlight just a few of the many examples: the importance of a good transition is more widely recognised at senior levels in the Forces and in government; personnel will be encouraged to begin preparing for transition much earlier in their careers; the handover between the defence and civilian health services is much smoother; more work is done to ensure military qualifications and experience can be recognised by civilian employers; the particular needs of veterans and Service Leavers are better understood by providers of public services; and different parts of the charity sector work more effectively together, with initiatives like Veterans' Gateway, the new single contact centre, to ensure that those who need help can find it quickly. When all the changes have had time to take full effect, the process that Service Leavers experience will have improved very significantly from when we began.

Two areas of concern remain. The first is that while many useful initiatives have been developed separately – by the NHS in England, Scotland and Wales, individual authorities, charities and other bodies – these are too often confined to their respective silos. Best practice needs to be shared more effectively.

The second is public perceptions: people greatly overestimate the likelihood that Service Leavers and veterans will experience physical and (especially) mental health conditions, and other problems such as homelessness. These problems do exist, and we must continue to do all we can to ensure the best help is available to those who need it. But the persistent view that these problems are more widespread than is really the case creates an extra hurdle for Service Leavers to overcome. It also damages the Forces' wider reputation and their ability to recruit.

However, I am assured both of these issues are now receiving proper attention. I understand that the question of public perceptions is firmly on the agenda of the Ministerial Covenant

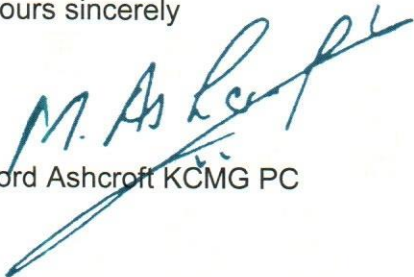
and Veterans' Board, and the forthcoming Veterans' Strategy should bring coherence across government in taking all of this work forward.

That being the case, I believe the work I set out to do as the PM's Special Representative on Veterans' Transition is now complete, and I have decided that this is the right time for me to step down from the role. I am pleased with the many practical changes that have been brought about as a result of the *Transition Review*, and that the whole issue of veterans' transition now has a higher profile in government and beyond. I would also like to put on record my appreciation for the openness and co-operation my team and I have received from Ministers, officials and the Armed Forces, both in providing information we have asked for and their willingness to listen to our findings and act on them.

It has been a privilege to hold this position and to play a part in helping those who have served the nation. I will of course continue to take an interest in the field and will be ready to step forward if I can be of help in the future.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Ashcroft', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC