



Ministry
of Defence

Lead Non-Executive Board Member Candidate Pack

Closing Date: 11-Aug-25



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Opening message from the Rt Hon John Healey, Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence



Dear Candidate,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Lead Non-Executive Director on the Defence Board. This is a pivotal moment for Defence, and I am pleased that you are considering joining us in this vital leadership role.

The Ministry of Defence is undergoing significant transformation. With the implementation of the Strategic Defence Review and our commitment to modernising Defence capabilities, we are reshaping how we operate to meet the complex challenges of today and tomorrow. The Lead Non-Executive Director will play a central role in this transformation – supporting me as Chair of the Defence Board and working closely with the Permanent Secretary and Chief of Defence Staff to ensure the Department delivers on its priorities with rigour, transparency, and ambition.

This role is central to strengthening corporate governance across Defence. As Lead NED, you will provide independent challenge and strategic insight, helping to ensure that the Board operates effectively, and that the Department remains accountable, forward-looking, and resilient. You will lead a team of Non-Executive Directors, bringing external expertise and a fresh perspective to the heart of Defence decision-making. Your contribution will help us strengthen governance, drive reform, and ensure that Defence remains agile, accountable, and aligned with the nation's interests.

If you share our commitment to public service and have the experience and qualities we are seeking, I encourage you to apply. I look forward to working with a Lead Non-Executive Director who will help shape the future of Defence and ensure we remain secure at home and strong abroad.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "J Healey". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a short horizontal line.

The Ministry of Defence

The Defence Purpose

We work for a secure and prosperous UK with global reach. Through strong Armed Forces and international partnerships, we protect our people, values, and interests, supporting national security and prosperity.

Context

The Civil Service supports the government in delivering public services and policy. While much of this happens within over 40 departments, 12 cross-government functions and numerous arms-length bodies also play a key role.

The MOD is one of the largest Civil Service departments, with a workforce of nearly 197,000, including civil servants and regular and reserve military personnel, serving in the UK and overseas. Our mission is to keep the UK secure at home and strong abroad

Our Priorities

Following publication of the Strategic Defence Review, the department has set out a clear shift in direction, towards warfighting readiness to enhance deterrence and reinforce security across the Euro-Atlantic. In support of this, the department is now focused on the following key priorities:

- **Move to warfighting readiness**—establishing a more lethal ‘integrated force’ equipped for the future, and strengthened homeland defence.
- **Engine for growth**—driving jobs and prosperity through a new partnership with industry, radical procurement reforms and backing UK businesses.
- **‘NATO first’**—stepping up on European security by leading in NATO, with strengthened nuclear, new tech and updated conventional capabilities.
- **UK innovation driven by lessons from Ukraine**—harnessing drones, data and digital warfare to make our Armed Forces stronger and safer.
- **Whole-of-society approach**—widening participation in national resilience, and renewing the Nation’s contract with those who serve.

Our Evolving Structure

The MOD is undergoing significant transformation to meet the demands of a changing global landscape. This modernised structure is designed to ensure Defence is agile, transparent, and equipped to deliver on its mission in a complex and fast-moving world.

This includes:

- Strengthening governance and accountability through a reformed Defence Board
- Enhancing integration across military and civilian leadership
- Driving digital and acquisition reform
- Improving workforce planning and delivery capability

Who we are?

The MOD has adopted a new operating model to enhance strategic coherence, delivery agility, and accountability. This model is built around four core leadership centres:

Department of State (DoS)

The strategic engine of Defence, responsible for setting policy, strategy, and international engagement. It is structured around four key areas:

- Policy & Strategy – Aligns Defence activity with government direction
- People & Culture – People in defence are safe, secure and supported
- Finance & Resources – Oversees investment, budgeting, and governance
- Delivery & Reform – Drives transformation and performance

Military Strategic Headquarters (MSHQ)

The operational brain of Defence, translating strategic intent into action. It leads on:

- Operational design and prioritisation
- Cross-government and international coordination
- Performance assurance and readiness

National Armaments Directorate Group (NAD Group)

Delivers Defence capabilities through a problem-led, multi-disciplinary approach. It integrates:

- Strategic insights and innovation
- Delivery portfolios and acquisition reform
- Industry and export engagement

Defence Nuclear Enterprise (DNE)

Oversees the UK's nuclear deterrent and infrastructure. DNE ensures nuclear capabilities are safe, secure, and aligned with strategic priorities, contributing to approvals, risk management, and long-term planning.

Role Description

This is an exciting time to join the Ministry of Defence. We are looking to appoint an individual with commitment and expertise to become the Lead Non-Executive Director on the Defence Board.

Non-executives bring external experience and expertise to the decisions and processes of MOD's Board by providing collective strategic leadership to the department. Exercising their role through influence, scrutiny, challenge, and advice, they act as a trusted sounding board to the Secretary of State for Defence and senior executive leadership team.

We are looking for a candidate that is recognised for their strategic expertise, with an open and independent mind, and the courage to offer a view constructively. Candidates must have the ability to consider complex and highly sensitive issues effectively and be able to analyse and contribute to resolving difficult problems. Candidates must have a genuine interest in contributing to the effective running of the department and, as appropriate, across government.

Key responsibilities

- Support the Secretary of State in their role as Chair of the Defence Board, enabling the Board to provide effective advice, support, and challenge on departmental delivery and strategy and on the operational, commercial and delivery implications of policies;
- Constructively challenge and contribute to the development of strategy and business planning, including the setting and development of key objectives and targets;
- Work with the Permanent Secretary to scrutinise the performance of the organisation in meeting agreed goals and objectives, monitor the reporting of performance, including financial targets, and the department's risk management processes;
- Review and monitor the Department's reform performance;
- Support the department to deliver its plan by providing independent scrutiny, support and assurance;
- Provide external oversight and expertise to the Defence Board, underpinned by consideration from an independent standpoint, which informs the department's decision-making process;
- Connect the Board to people and organisations who can provide different perspectives, opinions and expertise which will assist in furthering the business of the department;
- Undertake (or assist with) specific project work by agreement with the Secretary of State related to the management of the Board to assess and enhance the department's performance (including annual Board Effectiveness Reviews);
- Work with the Government Lead Non-Executive Board Member, and Non-Executives across government, to learn from the experiences of other government departments and other comparable organisations, including playing an active role in the cross-government network of lead NEBMs and to feedback views to the Prime Minister;
- Undertake an annual assessment of the Permanent Secretary's performance to inform the Permanent Secretary Remuneration Committee and the Cabinet Secretary;
- Lead the department's Non-Executive team, meeting the other NEBMs regularly, ensuring that they are able to fulfil their roles effectively.

Person Specification

It is essential that you provide evidence and proven examples against each of the selection criteria below in your personal statement.

Essential criteria:

- Leadership: the ability to set strategic vision and drive forward priorities of the organisation with a strong track record in relevant senior leadership roles;
- Knowledge: a clear understanding of the work, priorities and challenges of the Ministry of Defence and the context within which it operates;
- Experience: a strong track record of delivery on significant policy issues within the private, public or voluntary sectors.
- Relationship building: an ability to build strong stakeholder relationships, including with Ministers and Senior Government officials and external stakeholders;
- Communication: strong communication and interpersonal skills with the ability to listen, accept challenge and constructively challenge others in discussions with clarity and respect;
- Judgement: effective decision-making skills with the ability to critically analyse a wide range of information to make clear and objective evidence-based recommendations to support the delivery of the organisation's objectives; and
- Collaboration: the ability to work closely with the executive board and other key stakeholders, providing support, constructive challenge and assurance as appropriate.

Desirable criteria:

- Experience of transforming the performance and culture of a large organisation and visibly leading significant change, with clear emphasis on outcomes and value for money;
- Digital Leadership: experience applying new technologies (digital/automation/AI) in complex organisations and contexts to drive faster, smarter decision-making and improved outcomes;
- Extensive business and commercial experience at the FTSE 100 or equivalent board level;
- Senior thinktank, research or academic professional with a background in international relations and strategy;
- A clear understanding of Whitehall departments and processes.

Due diligence: Please note that as part of the recruitment process, due diligence, including social media checks will be undertaken on the appointable candidates.

Application Process

The deadline for applications is **23:59 on Monday 11 August 2025**. Late submissions will not be accepted.

Appointments are made on merit following a fair and open competition, in line with the Governance Code for Public Appointments.

To apply, visit:

- <https://apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk/create-account> (if new)
- <https://apply-for-public-appointment.service.gov.uk/auth/sign-in> (if you already have an account)

You will need to submit:

- A concise CV (max 2 pages, min font size 11) outlining your career, qualifications, and relevant achievements.
- A supporting statement (max 2 pages, min font size 11) demonstrating how you meet the person specification.
- Details of any outside interests, conflicts, or reputational issues.

If shortlisted, you'll be asked to provide contact details for two referees (names and email addresses). By submitting their details, you consent to us contacting them if you are shortlisted.

Please note:

- Applications are assessed solely on the documents submitted.
- You will receive an acknowledgment upon submission.
- Feedback is only provided to candidates interviewed.

For queries, contact the MOD Boards Secretariat: StratHub-NEDS@mod.gov.uk

Guidance on writing a supporting statement is available at: [Public appointments - GOV.UK](#)

Indicative Timetable

Please note that these dates are only indicative at this stage and could be subject to change.

Closing date	11 August 2025
Short-listing meeting	22 August 2025
Candidate interviews	19 September 2025
Start/provisional date:	10 November 2025

Selection Process

Selection Process

This appointment follows the Governance Code on Public Appointments, based on the principles of merit, openness, and fairness.

An Advisory Assessment Panel (AAP) will assess applications against the essential criteria to shortlist candidates for interview. Subject to Ministerial agreement, interviews will then be held to determine appointable candidates.

Panel Members:

- David Williams, MOD Permanent Secretary
- Gen Dame Sharon Nesmith, Vice Chief of Defence Staff
- Pavita Cooper, Senior Independent Panel Member
- Baroness Louise Casey, Government Lead Non-Executive Director

Interviews will take place in London and last approximately 45 minutes. Final appointment decisions rest with the Defence Secretary and may include a Ministerial meeting.

Please note:

- Expenses are not reimbursed unless agreed in advance.
- A 12-month reserve list may be used for similar future roles.
- We will update you on your application status. Feedback is only available to interviewed candidates.

Terms of Appointment

Time Commitment & Fee: Up to 30 days per year, including 6 Defence Board meetings. Annual fee up to £24,996. Reasonable travel and subsistence costs will be reimbursed when attending locations outside of MOD Main Building. The role is not pensionable.

Term: 3 years, with potential reappointment for another 3 years, subject to performance and Ministerial agreement. This is a public appointment, not Civil Service employment.

Location: Meetings held at MOD Main Building, London, SW1A 2HB.

Start Date: As soon as possible, subject to pre-appointment checks.

Security Clearance: UK nationals only. Developed Vetting (DV) clearance is required before appointment. Further details are available on GOV.UK.

Confidentiality: Appointees are bound by the Official Secrets Act and must not disclose sensitive or classified information acquired during their duties.

Disqualification: You may not be eligible if you have recent serious criminal convictions, are subject to bankruptcy restrictions, have been disqualified as a company director or charity trustee, or had a previous public appointment terminated under certain conditions.

Conflicts of Interest: Applicants must declare any outside interests, reputational risks, or political activity. These will be reviewed at interview if shortlisted. Declaring a conflict does not automatically disqualify you, but mitigation may be required. Public domain checks (including social media) will be conducted. Political activity will be published in line with the Governance Code. Holders of public office are expected to adhere and uphold the Seven Principles of Public Life and the Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies (Annex A).

Due Diligence: Public domain checks (e.g. media, social media) will be conducted. Appointees may be required to relinquish conflicting interests. Political activity will be published in line with the Governance Code.

Political Activity

Appointees must remain politically impartial and declare any significant political activity during their term. Declarations are reviewed only by the panel before interview and published if appointed. Relevant political experience may be included in your application if you feel it supports your suitability.

Equality & Diversity

The Ministry of Defence is committed to diversity, fairness, and merit-based appointments. We welcome applications from individuals of all backgrounds across the UK. Data on applicants' backgrounds helps ensure our processes are inclusive and effective.

Disability Confident

As a Disability Confident employer, we guarantee an interview to disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria and request consideration under the scheme. This will not affect your application outcome.

Reasonable Adjustments

We are committed to making reasonable adjustments for applicants with disabilities or health conditions. This may include accessible formats, adapted interview settings, or support workers. You can request adjustments when applying.

Complaints

We aim to treat all applicants fairly and process applications promptly. If you wish to raise a concern about how your application was handled, please contact:

✉ DBSCivPers-ResPublicAppts@mod.gov.uk

If unresolved, escalate to:

✉ HeadOffice-PublicBodiesandAppts@mod.gov.uk

We aim to acknowledge complaints upon receipt and respond within 15 working days. If still dissatisfied, you may contact the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments at:

✉ publicappointments@csc.gov.uk

Data Protection

Your data will be handled in line with the Cabinet Office privacy policy. The MOD's supplementary privacy notice is available on GOV.UK.

Contact

For queries or to request an informal discussion about the role, contact the MOD Boards Secretariat: ✉ StratHub-NEDS@mod.gov.uk

Annex A – Principles of Public Life and Code of Conduct for Board Members

Principles of Public Life

Holders of public office are expected to adhere to and uphold the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#).

- 1. Selflessness** – Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
- 2. Integrity** – Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
- 3. Objectivity** - In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
- 4. Accountability** – Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
- 5. Openness** – Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
- 6. Honesty** – Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
- 7. Leadership** – Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Code of Conduct for Board Members

The Government expects all holders of public office to work to the highest personal and professional standards. In support of this, all Non-Executive Board Members of UK public bodies must abide by the principles set out in the [Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies](#). The Code sets out the standards expected from those who serve on the boards of UK public bodies and will form part of your terms and conditions of appointment.