

Written Ministerial Statement – 24 June 2009

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Kevan Jones): I am pleased to announce that a feasibility study will be undertaken to look at the possibility of establishing a Defence and National Rehabilitation Centre in around 10 years' time, looking at how the whole issue of rehabilitation should be developed in 21st century terms. The study will build on the remarkable achievements of the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) at Headley Court in Surrey, and exploit what we and others have learnt in recent times about complex injury. It will look at doing so in the context of creating a national centre for civilian as well as military rehabilitation. We shall also look at the inclusion of rehabilitation research, the potential for developing further our world-class para-Olympic athletes and a "train the trainer" capability for rehabilitation in conflict and post-conflict afflicted states. We shall be considering potential sites in the midlands with close links to the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine, and estimate that the study will take about a year to complete.

The feasibility study will consult widely across Government, the NHS and the charitable sector. The trades unions will also be consulted fully. An external benefactor has agreed to sponsor this feasibility work. This continues a long and distinguished tradition of charitable involvement in the care of injured service personnel, including in this context the work of the Headley Court Trust, Help for Heroes, SSAFA, BLESMA and Brain Injury and Rehabilitation Trust (BIRT), to name only a few. I stress that this work will scope possible options for creating a Defence and National Centre with the defence capability at its core—there are no foregone conclusions.

The Government are committed to delivering state-of-the-art treatment for our injured service personnel. They deserve nothing but the best. The MOD continues to invest in DMRC at Headley Court to ensure its provision of world-class care. We would only envisage leaving Headley Court if there were an assured level of future care that surpassed even that which is offered by DMRC's current and planned capabilities.