

# News story: UK-US defence partnership to reach new heights in years ahead

Gavin Williamson was a panellist at the Reagan National Defense Forum, at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in California, where he discussed the importance of allies working collectively in the modern world.

Speaking at the Reagan National Defense Forum, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The UK has been with the US through thick and thin – we share values and stand together in global leadership. The UK is not slipping back to our shores but is in fact stepping out.

Our budget is rising year-on-year, boosted by more than a billion dollars to invest in Armed Forces, and in 2019 we are poised to take our great relationship to even greater heights.

During the conference, Mr Williamson also held a one-to-one bilateral meeting with US Secretary of Defense, Jim Mattis, to discuss how to combat emerging threats, both state-based and from extremist organisations.

He also visited Edwards Air Force Base, home to the US' Air Force Test Pilot School and NASA's Armstrong Flight Research Center.

The UK is the US' only tier one partner on the F-35 programme, the biggest defence project in history. That partnership led to a historic moment in September, when the first batch of F-35 jets landed on the UK's new aircraft carrier, HMS Queen Elizabeth, off the east coast of the US.

Unmanned Air Systems and a Common Missile Compartment for UK-US Ballistic Missile Submarines are other recent examples of collaboration.

Both nations play leading roles in NATO, which is vital to our transatlantic partnership. Both countries have been calling for other nations to invest more in security and to increase the readiness of their forces. By the end of 2018, eight members are meeting the commitment of spending 2% of their GDP on defence, compared with just three in 2014.

An even closer bond is expected after Brexit, as the UK establishes new relationships and trade deals outside of Europe.

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# News story: Seeking disability sector champions for 2019



Are you a business leader? Are you passionate about accessibility? Do you want to encourage culture change within UK business? If your answer to these questions is yes, you could be one of the next disability sector champions.

There are currently 14 sector champions who use their influential status as leaders in their sectors to drive improvements to the accessibility, and quality, of services and facilities in their sector.

These champions have all made great progress in their sectors but there is much more to do to ensure disabled people are fully included across the whole of society.

So we are issuing a call for business people to become sector champions initially for one year, in each of the following sectors:

- countryside and heritage
- fashion
- food and drink
- product design
- retail
- technology
- website accessibility

We need champions who are ambitious, passionate and dynamic, with strong networks and the ability to reach out to a wide range of organisations and to create momentum for change.

## **Express your interest**

If you are ready for this challenge, and welcome the opportunity to work within your sector and beyond to deliver on these goals, please download and complete the application form:

ODT, 10.5KB

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Email the form to [odi.contactus@dpw.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:odi.contactus@dpw.gsi.gov.uk) (Office for Disability Issues)

Further information is available in the candidate information pack:

ODT, 1.57MB

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If you have any enquiries please contact us at the email address above.

The closing date for applications is midnight on 20 January 2019.

Published 3 December 2018

Last updated 15 January 2019 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 15 January 2019 Changed closing date to 20 January 2019 from 13 January 2019 after an extension by the Minister for Disabled People.
2. 3 December 2018 First published.

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**[News story: New guidance to help parents avoid unsafe out-of-school](#)**

# settings

New guidance to help parents choose safe, high quality out-of-school settings – such as clubs and tuition centres – for their children has been [published today](#).

The document, now open for consultation to ensure it meets parents' needs, sets out ten key questions parents may want to ask providers – as well as the answers they should expect – to help them assure themselves that their children are playing and learning in a safe environment.

Questions include checking whether staff and volunteers have had appropriate training (such as health, safety and child protection), and clarifying whether adults who aren't staff or teachers will be present.

It also sets out a number of red flags parents should look out for, like providers not being aware of how to spot or report concerns of harm, or whether the building looks unsafe or poorly maintained with loose wires and damp present.

The guidance was developed as part of the Integrated Communities Strategy published earlier this year.

School Systems Minister, Lord Agnew, said:

The overwhelming majority of out-of-school settings, from Scouts to dance classes to holiday clubs, offer strong provision in a safe environment. For young people involved it can broaden their experiences and unlock their potential.

I remain concerned, however, about the small minority of settings that may be putting children at risk of harm, or encouraging views that are extremist or dangerous. I hope this guidance will help parents and provide reassurance about the places they are sending their children. It will also help the settings themselves understand what good practice looks like.

A new voluntary safeguarding code of practice is also being consulted on, designed to help providers understand how they can make their setting a safe environment for the children attending it. The voluntary code provides guidance for settings in relation to a wide range of issues, including safeguarding, online safety and suitability of staff.

The consultation follows the announcement earlier this year that the government is investing £3million to boost local authorities' capacity to improve oversight of out-of-school settings of concern. The work, taking place in pilot areas across the country, is encouraging collaboration between local authorities and relevant agencies, and will be used to identify settings and show how existing legal powers can be most effective in

addressing safeguarding and welfare concerns.

The consultation on a code of practice for out-of-school settings and guidance for parents will run for 12 weeks until Sunday 24 February.

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## **News story: Automation to provide better advice to people: apply for funding**

The [Citizens Advice Scotland](#) website has more than 3,500 pages of content. The process of scanning legislation and other sources for updates is currently done manually, taking a lot of time and leaving it open to human bias and error.

Working in partnership with Innovate UK, the organisation has up to £150,000 to invest in projects that look at automating updating to thousands of pages of information and advice for the public.

A further £300,000 could be available in a second phase to develop and test up to 2 of the best ideas.

Funding is provided by the [CAN DO Innovation Challenge Fund](#) and is under the SBRI (Small Business Research Initiative) programme.

### **Objective advice in plain English**

This competition is looking for solutions that would automatically scan for future legislation, pull content from trusted sources and create first drafts of changes to existing content.

These should support improvement over time through machine learning and use natural language techniques.

Projects should:

- scan future UK and Scottish legislation and recognise trusted sources
- schedule changes to content and automatically produce accurate, objective advice in plain English
- be quicker than the manual alternative, while allowing for manual intervention
- track content sources to provide an audit trail
- integrate with a content management system

## Competition information

- the competition opens on 10 December 2018, and the deadline for registration is at midday on 30 January 2019
- it is open to organisations of any size
- we expect phase 1 project costs to be up to £30,000 and for projects to last up to 6 months. Phase 2 projects costs can be up to £250,000 and last up to 12 months
- projects will be 100% funded
- a [briefing event](#) will be held in Edinburgh on 9 January 2019 with more information about the competition and how to make a quality application

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## News story: Professor Piers Forster joins Committee on Climate Change

Professor Piers Forster has been appointed to the post of climate scientist on the Committee on Climate Change (CCC).