

News story: New free website for schools to advertise vacancies

Education Secretary Damian Hinds has launched a clampdown on agencies charging schools “excessive” fees to recruit staff and advertise vacancies, in a drive to help save money and enable teachers to focus on what matters in the classroom.

Many schools rely on supply teachers at some point in the year to cover short and longer term vacancies, or pay for adverts to recruit the staff they need. Some agencies charge schools costly finder’s fees if headteachers want to make supply staff permanent and do not set out how much they are charging on top of the basic wages paid to supply staff.

To help combat these costs, the Secretary of State has announced a free website has been launched to advertise vacancies, which currently costs schools up to £75 million a year. This website will include part-time roles and job shares to help keep experienced teachers working in the classroom and make schools attractive 21st Century workplaces.

In another step to tackle unnecessary costs, Mr Hinds will launch a new nationwide deal for headteachers from September 2018 – developed with Crown Commercial Service – providing them with a list of supply agencies that do not charge fees when making supply staff permanent after 12 weeks.

The preferred suppliers on the list will also be required to clearly set out how much they are charging on top of the wages for staff. This will make it easier for schools to avoid being charged excessive fees and reduce the cost burden on schools of recruiting supply teachers through agencies.

Today’s announcements follow the Education Secretary’s pledge at the [National Association of Head Teachers’ annual conference in May](#) to work with schools and drive down unnecessary cost pressures so schools can get the best value for every pound they spend and bring in the best staff.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

Great schools are made by great teachers, so I want to reduce teacher workload to make it a more fulfilling profession and help schools bear down on costs so they can invest more on their frontline.

Every pound that’s spent on excessive agency fees, or on advertising jobs, is a pound that I want to help schools spend on what really matters: making sure every child, whatever their background, is inspired to learn and to reach their potential.

We have the most talented generation of teachers yet, and there are record numbers working in our schools. These measures will help us

to build on this, making it easier for headteachers to recruit the staff they need and ensuring teaching continues to be an attractive, rewarding profession.

The vacancies website will initially be launched in Cambridgeshire and the North East, with a view to rolling it out nationally by the end of the year.

By 2020, core school funding will rise to a record £43.5 billion – its highest ever level and 50% more per pupil in real terms than in 2000 – and the introduction of the National Funding Formula will address historic disparities in the system.

Today's announcement is the latest in a series of steps taken by the department to help schools deliver the best value for money and ensure resources can be targeted at the frontline.

This includes national deals, which can save a typical school 10% on energy and up to 40% on printers, piloting new 'buying hubs' to bulk buy and help schools get best value for money from procurement as well as a network of advisers to working with schools and provide practical support on how to use their budgets more effectively.

[Press release: Winners of the 2018 Queen's Award for Voluntary Service announced](#)

Winners this year range from [FISH Neighbourhood Cafe](#), an organisation situated in Barnes, Mortlake and East Sheen in Greater London, which combats loneliness and social isolation in older and vulnerable people, to [The Monday Night Club](#) who provide social opportunities and sport activities for adults with learning difficulties in Worcestershire.

The unique UK national honour was created by Her Majesty to mark the Golden Jubilee in 2002 and to recognise the outstanding contributions made to local communities by groups of volunteers.

See the full list of [winners](#)

(MS Excel Spreadsheet, 31.7KB)

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Tracey Crouch, Minister for Sport and Civil Society, said:

Everyone who has received this award should be incredibly proud. Their service, commitment and care has a profoundly positive impact on communities throughout the country and I am delighted they have been recognised with this prestigious award.

The record number of recipients this year is testament to the strength of the voluntary sector and I am sure this trend will continue into the future. If you know any organisations that deserve to be recognised, make your voice heard and nominate them for next year.

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service Independent Committee Chair, former broadcast journalist Sir Martyn Lewis said:

This year's record number of Queen's Award awardees are a powerful testimony to the remarkable achievements and innovative ideas which characterise volunteering in the UK. They prove that, more than ever, volunteers beaver away at grassroots level are the active lifeblood of our communities, identifying all kinds of problems and issues and tackling them with enthusiasm, talent and a high degree of success.

The recipients of the Queen's Award are at the very top of a formidable volunteering movement in the UK involving millions of our citizens, and going from strength to strength.

Any volunteer-led group made of two or more people can be nominated for the award. Visit the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service website for more details.

Nominations for the 2019 awards close on 14 September 2018.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service:

This is the highest award given to volunteer groups across the UK to recognise exceptional service within their communities. The recipients of the award are announced each year on 2 June – the anniversary of the Queen's Coronation.

Press release: HMRC saves public £2.4M by stopping fraudsters

Scammers create websites that look similar to HMRC's official site and then direct the public to call numbers with extortionate costs in comparison to the low cost and no cost service HMRC provides. These sites promote non-HMRC premium rate phone numbers as a means of reaching HMRC but these are merely call forwarding services which connect callers to HMRC at a significant price. HMRC's own 0300 numbers are mostly free or charged at the national landline rate. In other cases, sites charge for forwarding information to HMRC which can be provided free of charge through [hmrc.gov.uk](https://www.hmrc.gov.uk).

HMRC has successfully challenged the ownership of these websites, masquerading as official websites, and taken them out of the hands of cheats. Analysis has shown that had HMRC not taken this action then the public would have lost £2.4m to these phone scams.

Treasury Minister, Mel Stride MP the Financial Secretary to the Treasury said:

We know that HMRC is the most spoofed government brand as criminals try to take advantage of the fact that everyone has some involvement with the tax authority. In this particular case, scammers try to dupe the public into paying large sums for services that are available for free or low cost.

This is a brazen con, charging premium rates whilst simply redirecting calls to the real HMRC numbers that are available at low or no cost. It is a testament to the hard work of HMRC that they have prevented criminals extracting £2.4m from the public.

The public should go direct to [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) to obtain genuine HMRC contact numbers. These will not be premium rate numbers. People should be alert for sponsored adverts, websites charging for government services which would be expected to be free and those with disclaimers denying association with HMRC or government.

Consumer Minister Andrew Griffiths MP said:

Anyone can fall victim to scams and the cost can be devastating, so it's great to see HMRC cracking down on these bogus websites and protecting the public's purse.

This Scams Awareness Month I'm encouraging anyone who has fallen foul of false phone numbers to speak up, so we can stamp scams out.

Further information

- This announcement comes at the start of scam awareness month organised by Citizens Advice which is running throughout June
 - In 2017 HMRC took a formal approach to denying others ownership of misleading domains, so far 105 domains have been recovered which were being used to host a range of misleading content.
 - The specific tactics and costs on each site vary, but the maximum cost of a call is £3.60 a minute, capped at £36 per call. Anecdotal reports show the average victim reporting a cost of around £15 per call.
 - Check [GOV.UK](https://gov.uk) for information on how to avoid and report scams and recognise genuine HMRC contact.
 - Follow [HMRC Press Office](#) on Twitter.
 - HMRC's [Flickr channel](#)
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Speech: Abstention of resolutions on long-standing issues between Israel and the Palestinian people

Thank you Mr President and may I join colleagues in welcoming you to the Presidency for this month and saying that the United Kingdom looks forward to working with Russia. And may I also thank Poland for their very distinguished Presidency of this Council.

Mr President, the United Kingdom remains extremely concerned by the situation in Gaza. We condemn the violent activities of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other terrorist organisations and we condemn them unreservedly. We have witnessed recently, unacceptable mortar and rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel. Such acts of terror are destructive to peace efforts and they need to stop. And in the past weeks, we have seen violence, Hamas' exploitation of peaceful protests and a disturbing volume of live fire. Hamas' military wing has been proscribed as a terrorist organization by the UK since 2001 and the United Kingdom has sanctions in place against senior Hamas officials.

The recent violence has led to the tragic loss of life of over 100 Palestinians, and we reiterate that there is an urgent need to establish the facts surrounding past weeks' events.

Mr President, the deteriorating situation in Gaza should concentrate our minds on how we can work urgently towards a resolution of the long-standing issues between Israel and the Palestinian people.

The United Kingdom has long supported UN action on Israeli-Palestinian

issues. It is therefore regrettable, Mr President, that today's resolutions contain elements that are either imbalanced or too vague to be viable. For example, the Kuwaiti text fails to name terrorist actors including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. And its suggestion of an international protection mechanism risks raising unrealistic expectations. We condemn Hamas, but at the same time, we regret that the American text does not adequately reference Israel's responsibilities and obligations with regard to Gaza. Therefore Mr President, the United Kingdom will abstain on both resolutions today.

I have set out our principled rationale and nothing more should be construed. Thank you.

News story: Operational note for UK industry: US steel and aluminium tariffs

Background:

Following an announcement of steel and aluminium tariffs under the Section 232 of the US Trade Expansion Act of 1962 earlier this year, the UK Government has worked extensively with the United States (US) and European Union (EU) counterparts to secure an EU wide exemption.

We are therefore deeply disappointed at the unjustified decision by the US yesterday to apply tariffs to EU steel and aluminium imports. The UK and other European Union countries are close allies of the US and should be permanently and unconditionally exempted, any claim that UK steel and aluminium imports harm US national security is without foundation.

The Prime Minister and Secretary of State for International Trade, Liam Fox, have made clear to the US Government at the highest levels the importance of UK steel and aluminium to its businesses and defence projects.

Whilst we will continue to press for a permanent EU exemption from these tariffs, we also recognise that industry will be deeply concerned by their immediate impact. We have set out below the process to apply for product exemptions from tariffs and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) will be holding a meeting with industry on Tuesday to share information and advice on how they can best navigate the procedure.

In parallel, we will support UK industry, by continuing to press the case for UK products to secure exemptions through this process. The Secretary of State for International Trade spoke to US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, who is leading the product exemption process, on Thursday, and raised with him the

importance to the UK of protecting its businesses.

We will also continue to work with the EU, while we remain an EU Member State continuing to engage with both the European Commission and other EU Member States. We must abide by EU trade decisions, and any EU response will be coordinated by the Commission covering all 28 Member States. We will support EU efforts to secure the swiftest possible action to safeguard industry from the knock-on effects of other countries diverting US exports into the EU.

In addition, the government will be working with the EU to shape a measured and proportionate response, in line with World Trade Organisation rules, to the impact of the US tariffs. We continue to believe that a multilateral approach, not least in the framework of the Global Forum on Steel Overcapacity, remains the best way to address structural problems in the global steel market. An escalating trade dispute between the US and EU will harm consumers and industries on both sides. We will continue to liaise with all industries involved to reflect their concerns.

OPERATIONAL NOTE

The Response to US Tariffs from the European Union

While we remain a member of the EU, the European Commission will be coordinating the EU response.

The EU has taken steps to facilitate three possible courses of action:

- Under Article 8 of the WTO Safeguards Agreement the EU believes it is entitled to introduce duties on the US to rebalance the harm caused by US tariffs – these duties are known as ‘countermeasures’ or ‘rebalancing measures’. Under WTO rules, the EU must notify the WTO of its list of potential countermeasures and then wait at least 30 days before triggering tariffs. The list is made up of 103 steel and 8 aluminium product lines, and a range of other products.

Following a unanimous vote by Member States, the EU notified the WTO of its potential list on 18 May, and could therefore trigger tariffs on this list of products from 20 June. The Commission is required to seek Member State approval a second time in order for any of the countermeasures to come into effect. The date of this vote is yet to be determined by the Commission.

- An investigation towards possible imposition of ‘safeguard’ measures on steel was launched on 26 March. Safeguards are measures used to protect domestic industry from injury caused by unforeseen surges in imports. They act as a safety valve and provide industry with some breathing space to adjust to increased imports.

The Commission has nine months to decide whether safeguard measures will be necessary. This decision could also be taken much earlier in the proceedings, if the investigation confirms the necessity for swift action. The Commission has also put in place a surveillance system for imports of aluminium to be prepared in case action will be required in that sector.

- On 1 June, the EU launched a WTO dispute challenging US steel and aluminium tariffs.

Product exemptions from steel and aluminium tariffs

The tariffs imposed under Section 232 of the US Trade Expansion Act of 1962 include provision for individual companies to seek an exemption for their products. This process is being led by the US Commerce Department. DIT and BEIS have been supporting UK firms to appeal for exemptions under this process and will continue to do so. The issue was raised by Trade Secretary Liam Fox with US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross on Thursday 31 May.

Details on the process for seeking product exemptions are outlined below:

- On March 18th the US [Department of Commerce announced](#) that it would oversee a process to allow requests for excluding products from steel and aluminium tariffs. Commerce published a notice on the '[Federal Register](#)' setting out the process
- All exclusion requests must be in electronic form and submitted to the Federal rulemaking portal www.regulations.gov.
- Only companies with business activities in the US can apply. This means UK firms without a presence in the US cannot apply directly to Commerce for a product exemption and firms will need to work with the end users of their products in the US to apply for the for a product exemption.
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- Approved product exemptions will only apply to the US firm applying, i.e. even if the producer is the same each end user must apply separately.
- All the information is on the [regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) website along with the [guide](#) and [application form](#).
- The data required for application is detailed and must demonstrate that the product is not readily available in the US.
- Each request will be posted online for 30 days for comment.
- Processing of exclusion requests normally will not exceed 90 days, including adjudication of objections submitted on exclusion requests.

Government support

The Government will continue to press the US for an EU wide exemption from these unjustified tariffs. The Government will also make representations to the Commerce Department to process applications for product exemptions promptly. UK firms will lead on liaising with their US customers on submitting the applications for product exemptions.

To support UK firms, the Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy has shared from a US legal firm advice on seeking product exclusions and has also invited industry to a meeting on Tuesday to discuss matters further.