

Press release: £12m pay boost to strengthen prison frontline and attract new recruits

- Prison officers at 31 prisons to receive immediate pay increase
- Thousands of staff to benefit from specialist training opportunities in skills such as self-harm and suicide prevention – further professionalising and building pride in the service

Thousands of frontline staff in London and the South East will benefit from an immediate boost to their pay, thanks to a new £12 million package announced today by Justice Secretary Elizabeth Truss.

The new package will mean prison officers at the 31 establishments will see a pay boost of up to £5,000, with new recruits receiving higher starting salaries. New starters will receive up to £29,500 – an increase of £5,000 – while a prison officer in London could see earnings increase to £31,000.

Justice Secretary Elizabeth Truss said:

Prison officers do a challenging and demanding job day in and day out. I want frontline staff to know that their work, experience and loyal service is valued. We also want to attract the best new talent into the service, ensuring we recruit and retain the leaders of the future.

These hard-working, dedicated staff are key to delivering our ambitious reform agenda, and it is right that we offer them greater support as we move ever closer to transforming prisons into places of safety and reform.

Thousands of new learning and development opportunities which will help staff progress in their career will also be made available nationwide.

As part of a comprehensive strategy to further professionalise and upskill the service, staff who take part in the new training scheme will be required to support and mentor colleagues – handing down knowledge and supporting future leaders.

They will also be given specialist training in mental health and self-harm prevention, boosting their pay and progression in the Prison Service.

This investment supports the government's nationwide recruitment drive to recruit the best talent from around the country.

Governors at 30 prisons across the country have also been given greater freedom and flexibility to attract and recruit locally, reducing the time it takes to get new recruits through the door. Applicants will also be able to visit the prison before they take up post, and be in touch with a mentor while the recruitment process is underway

This wholesale, organisational reform will be supported by measures within the Prisons and Court Bill, which will set out a new framework and clear system of accountability for prisons, building on the wide-ranging reforms set out in the Prison Safety and Reform White Paper.

Today's news comes just days after ministers announced a new frontline service focused on reforming offenders and cutting crime, to launch from April 2017. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service will have full responsibility for the operational management of offenders in custody and the community, including strengthening security in prisons, tackling extremism and building intelligence about criminal gangs.

Notes to editors:

The pay increase will be granted to Band 3 Officers on Fair and Sustainable (F&S) terms at eligible prisons.

The prisons include: Aylesbury, Bedford, Bullingdon, Coldingley, Cookham Wood, Downview, Elmley, Feltham, Grendon, High Down, Highpoint, Huntercombe, Medway, Send, Stanford Hill, Swaleside, The Mount, Woodhill, Brixton, Belmarsh, Isis, Pentonville, Rochester, Wandsworth, Wormwood Scrubs, Erlestoke, Lewes, Whitemoor, Chelmsford, Guys Marsh and Littlehey.

The new award replaces existing pay increments for staff at the most difficult-to-recruit prisons.

Since publication of the White Paper

- 389 job offers have been made to new recruits wanting to join the Prison Service which puts the government on track to recruit the first 400 of the additional frontline officers committed to be in place by March 2017
 - we are appointing 75 mentors for new starter Prison Officers to help them in their first few months in the job which we know can be a difficult time
 - we have started targeted local recruitment initiatives at 30 sites so that governors can more easily recruit the people they need
 - we are launching a new Prison Officer apprenticeship scheme that will help increase diversity and make it easier to join the Prison Service
 - we have launched a new graduate scheme to attract people from top universities to join the Service
 - we have launched a Troops to Officers scheme that will support people to join the Prison Service after leaving the military.
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5.7-km bridge to connect artificial islet



The rendering of the multi-functional bridge [Photo: CCTV]

Construction started Saturday on a multi-functional bridge that will connect China's southernmost province of Hainan to a nearby man-made islet.

The bridge will be 27.5 meters wide and 5,666 meters long, spanning over sea north of the provincial capital Haikou to link to the Ruyi Islet, a tourism project still under construction, according to the 2nd Engineering Company of the China Railway 18th Bureau Group, a major contractor of the bridge.

The bridge will have six main functions: road, a tramway, and being a corridor for water, electricity, natural gas and optical fiber.

The sea under the bridge has an average depth of 10 to 15 meters, and the construction could be challenged by strong wind, thick fog and tides, according to the company.

He Changsong, project manager at the company, said the bridge was designed to resist super typhoons and earthquakes of more than magnitude 8.

The sail-shaped bridge is scheduled to be completed in the first half of 2019.

[China starts developing 256-slice CT scanner](#)

China on Saturday launched a program to develop its own 256-slice Computerized Tomography (CT) scanner to gain a footing in the manufacturing of advanced medical imaging equipment.

The program is led by MinFound Medical Systems Co. Ltd (MinFound), based in Zhejiang Province, and joined by nine other entities including research institutes and hospitals. The program also receives a funding support of 50 million yuan (7.35 million U.S. dollars) from the state.

MinFound's CEO Jiang Haochuan said the latest scanner, compared with its older generation products, is faster and smarter, produces better images, and emits less radiation.

With a single rotation of its gantry, the device can produce clear images of any human organ, he said. It can, for example, help cardiologists make better diagnosis with high quality images of the heart and its arteries.

China's current 256-slice CT scanners are all pricy imports. Industry insiders say once the home-made equivalent hits the market, it will become more available to patients in need and cut their medical bills.

[Tsinghua University rejects foreign student admission criticism](#)

Tsinghua University has denied suggestions the university's new system of admission for international applicants has made it easier for foreign students to get a chance to study in the university, reports People's Daily.

A heated debate was triggered after media reported that an updated procedure had been adopted for the university's international student recruitment.

According to the new rules regarding undergraduate programs, applicants will be admitted by Tsinghua University if he or she passes two hurdles: the 'Online Application' and a 'Comprehensive Evaluation', which includes an 'Application Review' and 'Interview'.

Outstanding applicants recognized by Tsinghua University may have the interview waived and get an offer directly.

One of the main differences from the previous year's rules is that applicants

don't have to take academic tests.

Some critics say this has made it much easier for foreigners to get into Tsinghua University, especially those who are originally Chinese.

In response, the university has said the new rules do not lower standards for international applicants.

Applicants are required to provide a National/Regional Graduation Examination/Matriculation Examination Certificate.

If applicants don't have that certificate, they have to provide the GPA and/or the academic ranking certification from their high school.

Applicants should also have passed HSK Level 5 or above, scoring over 60 points in each subject.

For those applicants who have only reached HSK Level 4, they will have to attain Level 5 or above in each subject, scoring over 60 points within the first academic year at Tsinghua University. Students who do not achieve this will have to leave the university.

For those who have given up their original Chinese citizenship and have become foreign citizens, the applicant should have lived overseas for at least 2 years out four, before April 30th in the year they are admitted by Tsinghua University.

In addition, Tsinghua University stresses that it will offer admission to around 3,300 undergraduates from the Chinese mainland this year. The number of international undergraduates will be almost the same as in previous years. The number of domestic students won't be affected by international student recruitment.

Around 39 majors in 19 schools at Tsinghua University are open to international applicants at the undergraduate level.

Currently, around 286 international undergraduates are studying at the university.

[News story: Defence Secretary: Britain committed to leading European security](#)

Sir Michael told the annual Munich Security Conference that while Britain is leaving the European Union, the UK would not be stepping back from its role in European security.

Britain's leadership this year is demonstrated by two new major commitments

to the NATO Alliance:

- Leading NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, otherwise known as the 'spearhead force'. This UK-led NATO Brigade is ready and willing to respond to any threat the Alliance faces and shows how NATO is strengthening its collective defence and deterrence.
- Deploying a battle group of around 800 personnel to lead in Estonia NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence, another way in which NATO is stepping up to deter threats. Britain will deploy as part of the battle group the United States is leading in Poland, with over 100 troops.

The Defence Secretary also met with his German counterpart, Ursula von der Leyen, where he discussed the unprecedented level of cooperation between the two countries. Sir Michael also welcomed Germany's commitment to increase its defence spending.

Sir Michael, along with the Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson, yesterday [launched](#) Britain's new strategy for engaging more internationally in defence activity.

The International Defence Engagement Strategy is the way in which all defence activity, short of combat operations, work abroad to prevent conflict, build stability and gain influence internationally.

Speaking at the Munich Secretary Conference, Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Britain is committed to Europe's security, and we're stepping up our engagement internationally. Whether defeating Daesh in Iraq and Syria, deploying with our NATO Allies to deter threats, or engaging globally to help countries develop their security, Britain is playing a major role – and will continue to do so.

The Defence Secretary also confirmed that Britain would keep the momentum up in the fight against Daesh. In Iraq and Syria, the RAF are flying day and night to defeat Daesh.

The RAF hit over 300 targets as part of recent operations to liberate eastern Mosul, and is now focussing efforts on the approaches to the west of the city, where it is expected the liberation operation will begin within days.