

[Press release: Labour Market Statistics](#)

From:

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Part of:

James Brokenshire has today welcomed the latest Labour Market Statistics, which show continued stability for the Northern Ireland economy.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

I welcome today's Labour Market Statistics which demonstrate continued stability in the Northern Ireland economy. The number of people in work has increased, the unemployment rate is at an eight-year low and the number of people claiming unemployment-related benefits has fallen by 1,000 in January alone – the tenth consecutive monthly decrease.

As the UK leaves the EU and forges a new role in the world, this Government is determined to continue building a stronger economy and a Northern Ireland that works for everyone.

[News story: NATO must improve agility and spend, Defence Secretary urges](#)

Sir Michael Fallon is pressing NATO members to step up defence spending during a two-day defence ministerial at NATO's HQ in Brussels, following his first meeting with US Defense Secretary James Mattis.

Reflecting the strength of the UK-US Defence relationship, Sir Michael was the first minister Secretary Mattis called after his appointment and their hour-long meeting at NATO's HQ was the first bilateral working session today.

During their recent phone call, shortly after Secretary Mattis' confirmation, both ministers agreed on the need for NATO to be more agile and responsive so

it can respond faster to new threats including cyber and terrorism.

In July NATO confirmed that the UK meets the two per cent spending target, which includes a £178bn equipment plan and rising defence spending every year of this parliament.

The Defence Secretary spoke to fellow ministers to call for other states to spend both 2% overall and to spend 20% of that on new equipment to help tackle threats.

In his face-to-face meetings with Secretary Mattis Sir Michael reassured him that the UK stands shoulder to shoulder with the US in calling for NATO to be more agile to meet new threats in the fields of cyber warfare and counter terrorism.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

NATO has been a guarantee of mutual security for more than half a century. Britain is now calling for our partners to step up and share burdens on spending and help it become more agile in dealing with new threats including cyber and terrorism.

As leading player in the Alliance we recognise the importance of backing up our operational and exercise commitments with investment in new equipment to deal with threats to our security.

Sir Michael is discussing the UK's leadership in NATO. The UK's Enhanced Forward Presence deployment to Estonia is gathering momentum, seen this week in a 600-strong exercise in Sennelager in Germany which features British personnel from the Battle Group for 5 RIFLES. Hundreds of British troops including 5 RIFLES personnel from Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire have spent the last week exercising with four Challenger II tanks, Warrior Armoured Fighting Vehicles and Jackals – alongside Estonian, French and Danish troops.

The deployment of 800 British personnel to Estonia under EFP is part of a package of measures that the UK is leading in NATO this year. These include leading the land element of NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force with 3,000 British troops ready to deploy rapidly to threats wherever they arise in the Alliance, and committing RAF Typhoon aircraft to the NATO Southern Air Policing mission to offer reassurance to in the Black Sea region.

Over the two-day ministerial, defence leaders will discuss issues such as protecting NATO's southern border, developing NATO's deterrence and defence posture, and strengthening the transatlantic bond.

[Press release: Compound Semiconductor Applications Catapult: Chair appointed](#)

Kevin Crofton joins the [Compound Semiconductor Applications Catapult](#) with a 25-year career in the semiconductor industry. He has executive experience in the UK and USA, currently acting as President of SPTS Technologies in South Wales, and Corporate Vice President of Orbotech Inc.

His experience and insight will be invaluable in establishing the Catapult within the rapidly growing compound semiconductor cluster in South Wales.

It is the 11th Catapult to be opened by Innovate UK.

The market opportunity for the UK

Compound semiconductors are at the heart of many devices we use today, from smart phones to tablets and satellite communication systems. They are central to the development of new technologies including:

- 5G network
- high-efficiency lighting
- power electronics for next-generation electric vehicles
- new imaging techniques in security and health diagnostics

Data from the [BCC Research and Markets](#) forecasts the global market for compound semiconductors to be in the range of £75 billion to £125 billion by 2025. There is a market opportunity for the UK due to its world-class research base in this field, which has led to the creation of many companies along the value chain.

Maximising business and research opportunities

Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, Jo Johnson said:

The government's investment in the Compound Semiconductor Application Catapult is testament to our track record as a leader in advanced electronics – a strength that we will build on through our Industrial Strategy to ensure that the UK remains at the forefront of innovation.

The appointment of Kevin Crofton as Chair and his wealth of industry experience will help drive this and continue the Catapult's vital role in developing new technologies.

Secretary of State for Wales, Alun Cairns said:

Much of the advance technology powering our mobile phones and other devices is being pioneered right here in Wales. The new research centre will underline our reputation as a world leader in semiconductors and, with Kevin Crofton at the head, put us in the front row of digital development.

Innovations like the Catapult will lead to the creation of more high skilled and high paid jobs in Wales.

Innovate UK Chief Executive Ruth McKernan said:

Kevin's experience and expertise will spearhead the development of the new Catapult, and ensure we are maximising the business opportunities from the important compound semiconductors market.

Kevin Crofton added:

I look forward to helping to guide the Catapult's vital contribution to the compound semiconductor industry in the UK.

We expect the Catapult to bridge some of the primary research, development and test challenges that exist in the UK compound semiconductor sector. This should help to accelerate innovation among existing businesses and to aid spin-out companies in their success.

[News story: Bedford man pleads guilty to providing illegal immigration advice](#)

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Unqualified immigration adviser pleads guilty to providing unregulated immigration advice.

Mr Ziaur Rahman, aged 37, of Wendover Drive, Bedford, pleaded guilty at Luton Magistrates' Court on Tuesday 24 January 2017, to two offences of providing unregulated immigration advice between 5 June 2012 and the 28 December 2012.

Mr Rahman was previously regulated by the OISC but this ceased on 21 February 2012 however he continued to provide immigration advice unlawfully.

On 14 February 2017 Mr Rahman was sentenced to 6 weeks imprisonment on each count suspended for 12 months, to run consecutively. He was also ordered to complete 200 hours unpaid work within the next 12 months, and to pay compensation to the victims of £480 and £1352. He was ordered to pay prosecution costs of £1581.

When sentencing magistrates said:

"These were serious offences against two vulnerable victims. Mr Rahman knew the implications and devastating consequences for the persons he advised when he knew he was no longer qualified."

Speaking about the decision, Deputy Immigration Services Commissioner Dr Ian Leigh said:

"This is not a technical or victimless crime, Ziaur Rahman was advising vulnerable people who could not handle their immigration cases on their own. They trusted him and he betrayed that trust. I am delighted with the outcome in this case."

[News story: CMA updates register of advisory and warning letters](#)

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The CMA has updated its register of competition law advisory and warning letters with details for 2016.

The register lists the letters that the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) sent out in 2016 to companies it was concerned might be breaking competition law, along with details of the relevant sector and the suspected

behaviour of concern.

The CMA sends [advisory and warning letters](#) to businesses where it is concerned that their practices may be harming competition, but where a full formal investigation would not currently be justified under its [prioritisation principles](#). However, such letters do not preclude the possibility of a formal investigation at a later date.

Letters contain a deadline by which the business should confirm receipt and, in the case of warning letters, explain what steps it is taking to ensure it is complying with the law.

Both advisory and warning letters may also be sent in connection with a formal investigation; these are noted on the registers where relevant, and some CMA [case pages](#) and communications may also refer to these.

Further information on the CMA's use of advisory and warning letters is available on the [guidance](#) page.