

News story: 32 million people better off as key legislation passes final hurdle

32 million people will pay less income tax than in 2015-16, after the government's Finance Bill 2018-19 received Royal Assent yesterday (12 February 2019), paving the way for measures from last year's Budget to be introduced in the spring.

Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mel Stride, said:

The country can be proud of its hard work.

The government's balanced approach since 2010 has produced a stronger, fairer economy in which people and businesses can thrive. With wages growing at their fastest pace in over a decade, the income tax changes in the Finance Act will ensure that people can keep more of their hard-earned cash.

This Finance Act 2019 comes in against a backdrop of the highest wage growth in a decade, a deficit cut by four fifths since 2010, and nine consecutive years of growth.

A basic rate taxpayer will pay over £1,200 less income tax than they did in 2010, thanks to the government's changes, giving people more help with the cost of living.

As well as cutting taxes for millions of people a year earlier than planned, fuel duty has been frozen for a ninth year in a row, and beer, cider and spirits duty have also all been frozen.

The act means first-time buyers will be eligible for relief from stamp duty on shared-ownership homes, to help them realise their dream of owning their own homes.

And businesses will benefit from a new capital allowance for qualifying non-residential structures and buildings and an increase to the Annual Investment Allowance to £1 million for two years – helping to maintain our economic success by increasing investment and productivity.

Finally, the government's commitment to a fair and sustainable tax system is further realised in this Finance Bill, through making individuals or entities that reduce their tax bill by holding intangible property in low-tax jurisdictions liable to pay the tax they owe in the UK, making non-residents liable for capital gains tax on the sale of all immovable UK property, and

introducing rules to prevent firms fragmenting profits between unrelated entities to avoid tax.

[News story: Air ambulance charities invited to bid for share of £10m funding](#)

The £10 million in capital funding will help air ambulance charities to invest in new equipment and upgrade facilities to support them in providing vital services to patients across England.

Air ambulance services are not NHS funded. They are provided by 18 charitable organisations across England, with most of their resources supported by their own fundraising activities.

The 18 air ambulance charities in England will be able to [bid for the additional funding](#) specifically to support capital projects. This could include:

- buying state-of-the-art medical equipment for critical care teams
- modernising helicopters and helipads
- increasing the number of missions flown or extending the hours services are available
- expanding operational facilities to allow them to hire more highly skilled staff

Each charity will be able to bid for up to £2 million of grant funding. Air ambulance charities will also be able to partner with NHS Trusts to make joint bids, for example to modernise helipads that are owned by the hospital trust.

Air ambulance crews are often called out to those with serious conditions, carrying rapid response medical specialists who can provide expert critical care at the scene of an incident. This can involve treatment usually given in a hospital setting, such as blood transfusions and open-chest surgery.

The crews support the wider NHS emergency response on the ground, ensuring patients get specialised care in both urban settings and hard-to-reach rural areas.

The call for bids, developed in collaboration with the Air Ambulance Association, asks air ambulance charities to present proposals to fund projects.

The Department of Health and Social Care will prioritise applications that

deliver clear benefits to patients, while ensuring value for money for the taxpayer.

Applications close on 8 March 2019 and funding will be allocated in April this year.

Health Minister Stephen Hammond said:

Air ambulance charities are a vital life-line for people in critical conditions who rely on urgent treatment before they can reach a hospital.

Generous donations from the public help keep air ambulances in the air and this £10 million will help to ensure that they're equipped to provide lifesaving care to patients in need.

The NHS Long Term Plan will improve emergency care for all patients, including those treated by air ambulance charities. Today's funding recognises their unwavering contribution to our health service and, combined with essential public donations, will ensure these charities can have world-class facilities to match their reputation for world-class care.

Paula Martin, Chairman of the Association of Air Ambulances, said:

It's a very exciting time for the air ambulance community and the opportunity to bid for a grant to help enable significant capital projects is very welcome. Whilst public purse funding being made available for the first time is very exciting, the operating cost for every air ambulance charity and the lifesaving work that it does continues to be entirely dependent on public donations and traditional fundraising.

Air ambulance charities in England are poised to submit a diverse range of applications to help fund capital projects which will deliver good value for money and most importantly benefit the patients and communities they serve.

[Yellow Label Service moratorium](#)



A moratorium has been put in place on new technical and applied qualifications entering the 16 to 18 performance tables. This will remain until the post-16 qualifications review at level 3 and below has concluded.

The review may lead to significant changes in the qualifications offered by awarding bodies to students. It may also be the case that some qualifications continue to be offered, but are no longer funded by the Department for Education, in which case it would not be appropriate for them to be covered by the YLS contract.

Given the uncertainty about future changes to the system, a moratorium has been imposed on including new technical and applied qualifications in the YLS until the moratorium ends.

This moratorium does not apply to GCSE, GCE and Functional Skills qualifications, which will still be considered as normal.

Key stage 4 Technical Awards

A list of key stage 4 Technical Award qualifications approved for inclusion in 2024 performance tables is found at [Key stage 4 qualifications, discount codes and point scores](#).

In 2023, the YLS will collect papers for Technical Award qualifications included in 2023 or 2024 performance tables.

Published 13 February 2019

Last updated 20 September 2022 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 20 September 2022

updated information for 2022/2023

2. 13 February 2019

First published.

Press release: Opioid Expert Working Group meets at MHRA

The EWG will undertake a comprehensive independent scientific review of all available evidence on the use of opioid medicines in the UK, drawing on best practice internationally, to make sure the information for patients and health professionals helps curb the over-prescription and misuse of these medicines.

In light of growing concerns about overuse and misuse, the review will:

- consider the current data on the utilisation of opioid-containing medicines in the UK, both prescribed and over the counter
- examine whether the risk minimisation measures implemented for over the counter and prescription opioids have been effective or whether further measures are required
- consider the benefit/risk of opioid-containing medicines in particular for non-cancer indications, taking into account alternatives
- make recommendations for regulatory action to better support appropriate use of prescription opioids, such as relevant changes to the Summary of Product Characteristics and Patient Information Leaflet, product labelling and packaging, and any other risk minimisation measures

The EWG is made up of experts in relevant scientific disciplines, including:

- pain management
- general practice
- nursing
- pharmacy
- psychiatry and substance abuse
- anaesthesia
- toxicology and pharmacology
- geriatric medicine
- paediatric medicine
- rheumatology
- epidemiology
- a lay member

The review is anticipated to work promptly in line with the regulatory process.

To support this, we will be engaging with relevant stakeholders from across the health sector, charities and addiction support groups, to advise on how we can improve communications on the use of opioids. We will work together with these stakeholders to raise awareness among both healthcare professionals and the public on the risks of addiction and how these can be managed.

Dr June Raine, Director of MHRA's Vigilance and Risk Management of Medicines

Division, said:

Our highest priority is making sure the medicines you and your family take are safe and effective.

In response to the growing concern internationally and in the UK about overuse and increased prescribing of opioid analgesics, we are seeking expert advice on the benefits and risks of opioid medicines, including best practice for risk minimisation.

We will be listening to patients, stakeholders, and relevant experts, and working across the health sector to make sure the warnings on opioid medicines are consistent, clear, relevant and represent the known risks of tolerance and addiction.

Anyone who has questions about their pain-relieving medicine should speak to their healthcare provider who is best placed to provide advice.

Professor Jamie Coleman, Chair of the Opioid Expert Working Group, said:

In taking forward this important work we will focus on providing clear information to healthcare professionals, patients and carers – no one should be unaware of the potential risks of opioid medicines.

We have set out a clear programme of work to look at regulatory options. We have already planned some initial steps to work with stakeholders to produce consistent and clear label wording that opioid medicines may lead to addiction. We are also going to examine access to opioid medicines.

If you suspect you have experienced a side effect to a medicine, please report this to us through our [Yellow Card Scheme](#).

[Press release: Jeremy Hunt to chair Yemen Quad meeting on next steps in peace process](#)

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt, with US Secretary of State Pompeo, will co-host a meeting of the Yemen Quad – Foreign Ministers of the UK, UAE, USA and Saudi Arabia – to discuss the Yemen crisis, in Warsaw later today.

Quad ministers will inject fresh international political momentum and support to the Yemen peace process, and discuss measures to alleviate humanitarian suffering.

Today's Quad meeting was called by the Foreign Secretary and is the latest in a succession of diplomatic initiatives to strengthen international support for peace in Yemen. We can be under no illusions, the crisis is deep; resolving humanitarian suffering, achieving sustainable peace and regional stability are urgent UK priorities. The resolutions proposed by the UK and adopted by the United Nations Security Council in January and December have galvanised international support around a UN-led path out of the crisis. Ministers will today reiterate their full commitment to a comprehensive political solution in Yemen.

On the ground, the careful work of the UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths is supporting the parties to implement commitments made at Stockholm's landmark peace talks: to build confidence in a political process and to unblock the most urgent obstacles to alleviating human suffering. Quad discussions will focus on how international partners can help parties to implement existing agreements and move towards a second round of peace talks. Seized by the scale of the humanitarian crisis, the Quad will discuss how to accelerate steps to: help stabilise Yemen's economy; support the government of Yemen's commitment to pay salaries of civil servants, teachers and health workers; and to keep food and fuel flowing into Yemen.

Ahead of the Quad the Foreign Secretary said:

We now have a shortening window of opportunity to turn the ceasefire into a durable path to peace – and stop the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Real progress has been made to reach a political solution but there are also real issues of trust between the two sides which mean the agreement in Stockholm has not been fully implemented.

So more must be done. Today, I will chair a meeting in Warsaw of my US, UAE and Saudi Arabian counterparts to give UN envoy Martin Griffiths our full backing and undertake to redouble efforts to reach a lasting political resolution.

Yemen's devastating famine is a man-made economic crisis not a natural disaster. Today we can make clear strides to support the government of Yemen, including on practical steps to improve Yemenis' lives, such as resuming the payment of government salaries to civil servants. This significant step could improve access to food for millions.

Further information