

News story: War Pension Scheme payments increases from April 2017

Updated: Correct timescale for receiving pension letter included.

The new rates of pensions and allowances payable under the War Pension Scheme from 10 April 2017 have now been announced and are [available here](#).

The rates have been increased by 1%, in line with the September 2016 Consumer Prices Index figure.

Those currently getting a War Pension or War Widows(er)'s Pension will receive a letter confirming their new pension details between 13 March 2017 and 15 July 17.

Please note if you are a local authority or council office, please be aware of the timescales above, the letter confirms a breakdown of the pension and the new rates. This is a system generated letter.

For more information on the War Pension Scheme and other compensation payable for injuries, illnesses or disablement related to service, please see www.gov.uk/claim-for-injury-received-while-serving.

News story: MOD builds links with SMEs in North East

The North East makes a key contribution to the UK's defence. A&P Tyneside delivered blocks used in the innovative modular construction of the Royal Navy's new Queen Elizabeth Class Carriers, which are being constructed in Rosyth; as well as manufacturing key parts for the Astute nuclear submarine programme in their shipyard at Hebburn, sustaining jobs and bringing work worth some £7 million to the region.

Today's event took place at Pearson Engineering's cutting-edge Armstrong Works. Alongside eight other defence companies based in the north and north east, Pearson Engineering is part of the extensive UK supply chain for the Ajax Armoured Fighting Vehicle programme, the biggest order of armour for the British Army in a generation. Ajax has substantially better firepower, mobility and protection than any of its peers worldwide. The Army will take delivery of the first production vehicles in 2017.

Partnerships between Defence and North East industry over the last year include:

- BAE Systems Global Combat Systems' construction and support of the Royal Engineers' Terrier armoured combat engineer vehicle.
- Cook Defence Systems Ltd's construction of armoured vehicle tracks and support.
- UK Docks Marine Services North Ltd's support for the UK's maritime capability across the world.

As the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is aiming to increase the share of its contracts with SMEs from 19% to 25%, the Minister led discussions with 12 companies in the Northern Defence Industries trade group (NDI) on how Defence and businesses of all sizes can work together. In particular, they looked at how to grow exports, drive innovation and support the UK supply chain.

Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin said:

The North East makes an important contribution to our national security and economy. From the Ajax armoured vehicle to our new carriers, the companies I've met are delivering the equipment and services our Armed Forces need to keep Britain safe.

Here in Newcastle today, we looked at how the businesses based here can help make Britain one of the most innovative, most prosperous countries globally, for an economy that works for everyone.

The Minister's SME roundtable was hosted at Pearson Engineering's cutting-edge Armstrong Works in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. The Works, which reopened in 2015 following a £20 million refurbishment. It is a great example of the invaluable role that northern Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are playing in the Defence supply chain.

Managing Director of Pearson Engineering and Chairman of NDI, Craig Priddy said:

It has been a pleasure to welcome the Minister for Defence Procurement to Pearson Engineering today, particularly at a time when the MOD is in the process of renewing its industrial policy.

NDI's member companies make an enormous contribution to the capabilities of our armed forces and it is reassuring that the Department is taking the time to consider the views of the UK defence community right across the supply chain as it formulates its future intentions in this regard.

Andy Collier, NDI Director, said that:

This has been a great opportunity for MOD to engage further with the UK supply chain.

This sort of engagement is crucial to ensure that MOD can establish the means through which we, as an industry, can work ever more closely with the Department in the best interests of the UK economy.

News story: Britain and Italy stand together to tackle security threats

In meetings with his counterpart Roberta Pinotti, Sir Michael Fallon said Britain was a key ally of Italy and would not be stepping back from European defence and security commitments following the Brexit vote.

They reviewed their partnership within the NATO alliance in particular. After the UK has spearheaded NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force this year, Italy will take on the responsibility in 2018.

The UK and Italy are also working closely to tackle illegal mass migration. The Defence Secretary confirmed the UK is considering providing more training to Libya's Coastguard as part of support to Operation Sophia, which focuses on tackling human smugglers and arms traffickers who endanger the lives of migrants seeking travel to Europe.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

In leading NATO's high readiness force and tackling illegal migration in the Mediterranean, Britain stands together with Italy to tackle threats to our security.

The Royal Navy has played a key role in training the Libyan Coastguard and we're now looking at extending this training alongside Italy and other European partners.

A small team of specialist Royal Navy personnel successfully trained members of the Coastguard before Christmas in the southern Mediterranean. They were taught search and rescue techniques and how to sail alongside, board and inspect vessels.

The purpose of the training, led by the Italians, is to increase Libya's ability to secure its own borders by increasing their Coastguard's ability to disrupt people smuggling and illegal arms trafficking in and around Libya.

Elsewhere, the UK has also supported NATO counter migration efforts in the Aegean Sea, and HMS Mersey recently returned home following six months supporting this task, contributing to nearly twelve months of Royal Navy presence in the Aegean. She will now undertake maritime security operations around the UK, maintaining the integrity of home waters.

Sir Michael added:

NATO is the cornerstone of our Defence, and the UK remains committed to European security, working with Italy and our European friends to tackle threats.



Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon today met with his Italian counterpart Roberta Pinotti. Picture: Ministero della Difesa Italiana – Ufficio Pubblica Informazione.

The Defence Secretary and Defence Minister Pinotti also discussed the development of the UK – Italian Defence industrial relationship, and potential trade options in the future. Sir Michael extended an invitation to host his Italian counterpart in the UK.

Sir Michael also recognised Italy's contribution to peace operations around the world and domestically, including support to disaster relief operations after earthquakes and heavy snowfall.

- HMS Echo continues to spearhead the UK's role in Operation Sophia, and Royal Navy ships have rescued more than 15,000 of the 32,000 lives saved

since operations in the Mediterranean began.

- Echo has already rescued nearly 2,000 people and was involved in a rescue incident as recently as last week, when more than 500 migrants were saved.
- Royal Navy vessels have destroyed more than 140 smuggler vessels, and in addition to Echo, several other ships have been involved: HMS Enterprise, HMS Bulwark, HMS Diamond, HMS Richmond and RFA Mounts Bay.

News story: Thousands of students will benefit from new cadet units backed by £50 million Government plan

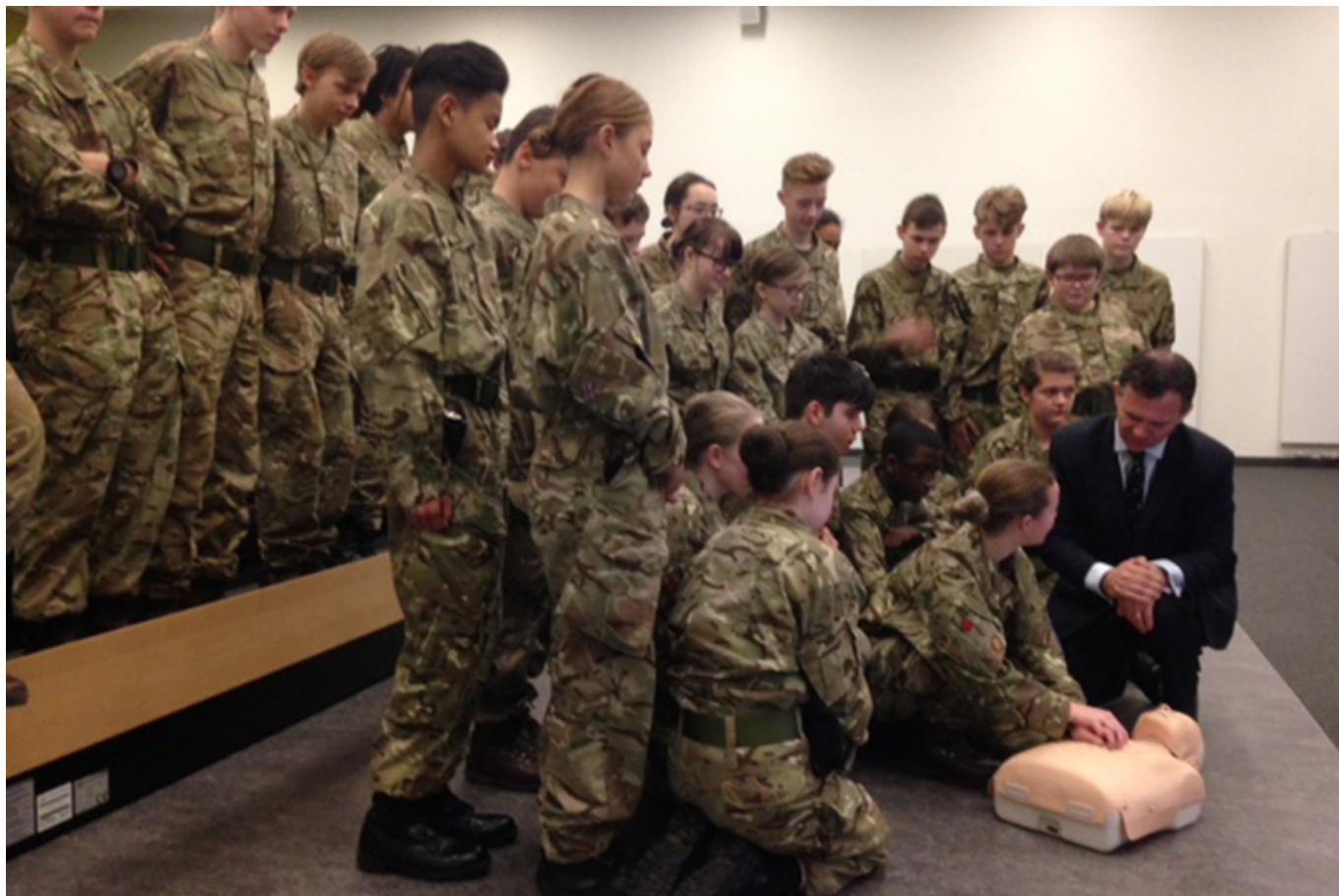
Thousands of students, many often from less prosperous areas, are set to benefit from the development prospects and new skills, such as team-work, problem solving and leadership that school cadet units bring. These will be opened in areas where previously opportunities such as this were limited.

This new wave of cadet units follows an [announcement last year by Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon on another 25](#), as the government remains on target to have a total of 500 running in UK schools by 2020. The CEP is backed by £50 million funding from LIBOR fines, which pays for set up costs, the students' uniforms, equipment and training.

Speaking at Brompton Academy today, Defence Minister Mark Lancaster, said:

These new units help deliver on the Government's manifesto commitment that more students should be able to enjoy the rewards of joining the cadets from every background.

Cadet Forces offer a fantastic opportunity for students, providing exciting new opportunities and helping to instil the positive values of citizenship, responsibility and fairness.



Defence Minister Mark Lancaster meets Army Cadets at Brompton Academy as he announces 25 schools to create new cadet units. Crown copyright.

Cadet units, provide challenging and enjoyable activities for students, offering them the opportunity to learn new skills, engage in adventurous activities, and help them gain vocational BTEC qualifications. Schools also recognise the benefits, with a number of Head Teachers saying that having cadets as students improves attendance and classroom behavior and research has shown an increase in academic achievement, self-esteem and self-confidence.

Learn more about the [Cadet Expansion Programme here](#).

The Schools that will be setting up new Cadet units are:

- Ash Manor School- Surrey
- Aston University Engineering Academy- West Midlands
- Barr Beacon School- West Midlands
- Boldon School- Tyne and Wear
- Cookstown High School- County Tyrone, Northern Ireland
- Haberdashers' Aske's Knights Academy- Kent
- Hayesfield Girls School- Somerset
- Isle of Portland Aldridge Community Academy- Dorset
- Knole Academy- Sevenoaks, Kent
- Maxwelltown High School- Lochside Rd, Dumfries
- Northbrook College- West Sussex
- Ron Dearing UTC- Hull
- Shenfield High School- Essex

- Sirius Academy West- Hull
 - St Antony's Catholic College- Greater Manchester
 - The Dean Academy- Gloucestershire
 - The Hawthorne's Free School- Merseyside
 - The International School – West Midlands
 - The John Warner School – Hertfordshire
 - The Phoenix Collegiate- West Midlands
 - The Priory City of Lincoln Academy- Lincolnshire
 - The Priory Ruskin Academy- Lincolnshire
 - The Priory Witham Academy- Lincolnshire
 - The Victory Academy- Kent
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News story: Defence Secretary praises 'good partners' Croatia during visit

Sir Michael Fallon welcomed Croatia's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Damir Krstičević to sign an agreement aimed at developing existing security and Defence relations.

At the Ministry of Defence in London today they discussed Britain's bilateral relationship and explored ways the UK can work together with Croatia on joint activities.

The Defence agreement focuses on developing the UK-Croatian Defence relationship including focus on: existing joint operations to support stability, peace and security; effective deployments together on future international operations; and further opportunities and benefits for defence procurement and equipment support.

By signing the agreement the Defence Secretary has also confirmed the UK will hold annual Defence talks with Croatia, which will be held at policy director level.

This year Croatia is contributing to the NATO high readiness force which the UK is leading, by providing a platoon of Military Police and a Civil Military Co-operation Team. Croatia will also contribute to the German Enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania.

Croatia has around 100 troops deployed on operations in Afghanistan, where 500 UK personnel are based in Kabul to provide officer training and wider assistance and advice.

Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon said:

Croatia is a good partner of the UK with our Armed Forces' serving

together within NATO in Afghanistan and in Europe. The UK will continue to play a leading role in NATO and I welcome Croatia's commitment to the high-readiness force that we are heading this year.



Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon and Croatia's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Damir Krstičević signed a Defence agreement during the visit. Crown Copyright.

During their meeting the ministers also discussed the Defence Secretary's meeting with Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic in October and HMS Defender's visit to the port of Split last June.

The UK enjoys good relations with several states in southern and south eastern Europe. In September the Defence Secretary visited Bulgaria and Albania as part of his regional engagement, and last month met UK personnel providing training to the Armed Forces in Ukraine.