

News story: Armed Forces to step up Commonwealth recruitment

The Ministry of Defence has announced today that Britain's military will increase the number of Commonwealth recruits to 1350 per year, that will be introduced over several years.

The move builds on the long-held links Britain's military has with Commonwealth countries, where recruits from across the globe have bravely served in a variety of roles, in many conflicts.

The importance of the Commonwealth to the military is underlined by the fact that Britain already employs some 4500 Commonwealth citizens in the Armed Forces.

Minister for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster said

As an outward-looking nation, Britain has always counted on the dedicated service of our friends from the Commonwealth to keep this country safe.

From Australia to Jamaica, to Fiji and South Africa, Commonwealth recruits are already playing a key role in our Armed Forces.

So we're stepping up the numbers of recruits from the Commonwealth, knowing that they will bring key skills and dedicated service to our military.

Their different perspectives will also help us to enhance our cultural understanding, giving us an operational advantage over our adversaries.

Of the 1350 new annual recruits, the Army is expecting to hire around 1000 personnel, with the Navy and the RAF expecting to recruit around 300 and 50 respectively.

The MOD previously had a five-year residency in the UK requirement, in order to allow Commonwealth personnel to qualify for recruitment into the Armed Forces. Today's announcement removes this requirement.

As part of the phased approach, those who have already applied for Army roles but been on hold due to the limited numbers we were able to accept each year, will be given priority. The Royal Navy and RAF will begin recruitment procedures immediately, with Army applications opening in early 2019.

All roles and ranks will be open to Commonwealth citizens, from all Commonwealth countries who are aged 18 or over.

In 2016 the five year residency requirement was waived to allow for 200 Commonwealth citizens with specialist skills apply for a limited number of roles.

In recent years, the Armed Forces has had more than 7500 Commonwealth citizens in its ranks, with a wide variety of countries represented, including Fiji, Ghana, South Africa, Jamaica, Australia and St Vincent.