

# [Public Appointments: Commissioners of Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission](#)

News story

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland invites applications for appointment to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission



A number of Commissioner positions will become vacant in September 2020 when the terms of office of the current members expire.

Membership of the NIHRC is a challenging and rewarding opportunity. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (the 'NIHRC') was created by the Northern Ireland Act 1998, as part of the Belfast Agreement. Its powers and duties stem from the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007.

The Commission operates as an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Northern Ireland Office and is a key part of the architecture of human rights protections in Northern Ireland.

Full details, including information on how to apply, is available at the [Cabinet Office website](#)

Published 4 June 2020

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## [Pharma company director disqualified](#)

# for competition law breaches

Amit Patel has signed undertakings that ban him from holding a director role at any UK company for the next 5 years, in connection with his involvement in illegal arrangements during his time at Auden McKenzie (Pharma Division) Ltd and Amilco Ltd.

## **Auden McKenzie**

From September 2014 to May 2015, Mr Patel was a director at the pharmaceutical company Auden McKenzie. A Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) investigation into agreements affecting [the supply of nortriptyline](#), an NHS prescribed drug used by thousands of patients to relieve the symptoms of depression, found that Auden McKenzie and King Pharmaceuticals Ltd had shared out between them the supply of the drug to a large pharmaceutical wholesaler. The 2 companies agreed that King would supply only 25mg tablets and Auden Mckenzie only 10mg tablets. They also agreed to fix quantities and prices to the wholesaler.

The object of this agreement was to limit competition, meaning the NHS – and ultimately the taxpayer – could have been paying higher prices than if competition hadn't been restricted by the agreement.

## **Amilco**

Mr Patel is currently the sole director at Amilco and has held this directorship since 2013. Mr Patel admitted that, from 1 March 2016 to 19 Oct 2016, [Amilco and another pharmaceutical company, Tiofarma, stayed out of the UK fludrocortisone market](#) enabling the market-leader Aspen to maintain its position as the sole supplier for the UK. Fludrocortisone is a prescription-only medicine that patients rely on to treat primary or secondary adrenal insufficiency, commonly known as Addison's Disease, and the CMA has alleged that this illegal agreement protected Aspen's monopoly, giving it an opportunity to increase prices charged to the NHS by up to 1800%.

Mr Patel has now admitted that, in exchange for staying out of the market, Amilco received a 30% share of the increased prices that Aspen was able to charge.

Amit Patel will now be disqualified from taking up any director role or being involved in the management of any company based in England, Scotland or Wales for 5 years.

Consistent with his admission, Mr Patel has also withdrawn his appeal against the CMA's nortriptyline decision.

Michael Grenfell, the CMA's Executive Director of Enforcement, said:

Company directors have a responsibility to make sure their

companies comply with competition law. And the CMA is determined to protect the public from directors who fail to do so.

Today's action should act as a warning to those in management positions – the CMA will not stand by when your firms break the law and take advantage of customers.

The disqualification announced today brings the total number of disqualifications secured by the CMA to 16, after it began actively using its power in December 2016. As part of the Company Directors Disqualification Act, the CMA can seek the disqualification of any director where their company has broken competition law. It is one of a number of tools the CMA can use to protect consumers from anti-competitive behaviour.

## Notes to editors

1. Amit Patel has received 2 director disqualifications – 1 in relation to his time at Auden McKenzie and 1 for his time at Amilco. These will be served concurrently.
2. The disqualification covers both Auden McKenzie (Pharma Division) Ltd and Auden McKenzie Holdings Ltd.
3. Under the Company Directors Disqualification Act, the CMA has the power to apply to the court to disqualify a director from holding company directorships or performing certain roles in relation to a company for a specified period, if a company which he or she is a director of has breached competition law. The Act also allows the CMA to accept a disqualification undertaking from a director instead of bringing proceedings, which has the same legal effect as a disqualification order. A disqualification can also come before a company is found to have broken competition law.
4. References in this press release to fludrocortisone acetate tablets and to fludrocortisone are to fludrocortisone acetate 0.1mg tablets.
5. The disqualification undertakings each relate to serious breaches of competition law. In the CMA's view, those breaches would have merited a disqualification of at least 6 years. The CMA has agreed to reduce this to 5 years, given the public interest benefit of securing an immediate disqualification, without the time and cost of court proceedings.
6. On 3 June 2020, the Competition Appeal Tribunal gave Mr Patel permission to withdraw his appeal against the CMA's decision relating to agreements

affecting the supply of nortriptyline.

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## **Armed Forces announce launch of first Cyber Regiment in major modernisation**

The Ministry of Defence has launched 13th Signal Regiment, the UK Armed Forces' first dedicated Cyber Regiment, which will protect vital defence networks at home and on operations overseas.

The unit was formally stood up on Monday, June 1, at a ceremony at Blandford, home of the Royal Signals.

As the character of warfare evolves, and the weapons used to fight those wars shift from the industrial to the information age, digital and cyber capabilities are increasingly relied upon to ensure the nation's security and the safety of our personnel overseas.

Our adversaries and hostile actors are operating in cyberspace right now, creating a new cyber frontline – alongside the traditional domains of Land, Sea and Air – without physical borders but also needing to be defended,

Secure communications are the foundation for any successful operation and 13th Signal Regiment will provide 'digital armour' around personnel operating overseas, giving commanders and their soldiers the ability to operate with confidence in their communications systems, often while working in challenging conditions.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

This is a step-change in the modernisation of the UK Armed Forces for information warfare. Cyber-attacks are every bit as deadly as those faced on the physical battlefield, so we must prepare to defend ourselves from all those who would do us harm and 13th Signal Regiment is a vital addition to that defence.

The 13th Signal Regiment is a regiment of the British Army within 1st (UK) Signal Brigade, under the command of 6th (UK) Division, responsible for conducting information manoeuvre and unconventional warfare, in support of the whole Armed Forces.

The specialist unit will provide the basis of the new Army Cyber Information Security Operations Centre, focusing on the protection of Defence's cyber domain, and it will work with the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force to provide secure networks for all military communications.

And ensuring that UK defensive cyber capabilities remain ahead of adversaries and aggressors, 13th Signal Regiment will also provide specialist technical support for a hub to test and implement next generation information capabilities.

Based at multiple key locations around a Headquarters in Blandford, Dorset, 13th Signal Regiment will be built around a core of 250 specialist servicemen and women who possess relevant high-end technical skills.

A number of existing cyber functions are being brought together from across the Army to establish the regiment, with personnel from 15 different cap badges represented in the first intake, plus specialist Royal Navy and RAF personnel.

The regiment will consist of several Cyber Protection Teams as well as technical staff who will secure the cyber domain for troops deployed on military operations.

Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Mark Carleton-Smith said:

13th Signal Regiment is the British Army's brand new cyber regiment – matching cutting edge technology with cyber-fit soldiers to compete and win in the Information Age.

13th Signal Regiment previously existed during WW2 as 1st Special Wireless Group, and helped to pioneer the use of wireless technology and high frequency wireless radios.

Renamed 13th (Radio) Signal Regiment in 1959, it had operators stationed in Berlin throughout the Cold War. The unit was disbanded in 1994, when its role in Germany was no longer required.

The new Cyber Regiment will take on the 13th Signal Regiment name and build on its predecessor's proud legacy of innovation and operational excellence.

Brigadier John Collyer, Commander 1st (UK) Signal Brigade, said:

The re-formation of 13th Signal Regiment is an exciting step forward as the Royal Signals, Army and wider Defence rapidly drives up their potency and resilience in the information environment and cyber domain.

The stakes are high and our success is increasingly and critically reliant on focusing our brightest men and women onto the opportunities and risks that underpin our operations – both home and away.

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## OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities: UK statement

I would like to join other delegations in welcoming you, Ambassador Zannier, to the Permanent Council today and thanking you for your comprehensive report.

The UK is a strong supporter of your institution, which plays a vital role in early warning and conflict prevention in the case of tensions related to national minorities.

Your report makes clear the broad scope of activities undertaken by your office and the extent to which you have helped participating States to enhance their security through ensuring the full enjoyment of human rights by all people, including those belonging to national minorities.

We were grateful for the information you shared in this report on how your office had considered a gender perspective in these activities, including in your valuable programmatic work in areas such as education. This demonstrates the importance of gender mainstreaming to help better fulfil your mandate. Taking into account the needs and circumstances of different genders will help us achieve more effective conflict prevention and better understand the intersecting discrimination that can be faced by women from national minorities. Whilst appreciating your institution's use of quiet diplomacy, I would be grateful for any additional information you can share on how you incorporate a gender perspective and analysis in your engagement with participating States and during country visits.

The UK fully supports your mandate and your institution's autonomy. We encourage all States to fully cooperate with you and your staff to enable you to fulfil this mandate. This means not only engaging with you to raise concerns about the actions of others, but also engaging positively with your requests for visits and suggestions and recommendations stemming from them. Albeit this is not currently possible due to the pandemic, we nonetheless reiterate the principle that it is important that you are able to travel freely throughout the entire OSCE region, including to areas affected by conflict and illegal annexation.

We were pleased to hear that you have been able to continue your work despite the challenges posed by Covid-19, and we commend you for the leadership you have provided during the pandemic. We were grateful for the guidance you issued to States in March and the thematic guidelines issued in April on how to ensure that short term responses to Covid-19 support social cohesion. As you rightly stated, it is important that when introducing emergency measures governments "remember to include the needs of everyone in society, including persons belonging to national minorities and other marginalised groups". Thank you for highlighting the particular issues affecting people belonging

to national minorities including access to healthcare and information, access to education and the impact of restrictions on movement. Thank you also for noting the double-discrimination faced by women from national minorities who are often concentrated in informal sectors of work and thus face socio-economic difficulties, as well as increased family responsibilities and increased risk of domestic violence.

We continue to value the thematic guidelines produced by your office, as well as your events and programmatic work to raise awareness of these guidelines. We welcome the conference that took place in Lund in November to mark the 20th anniversary of the Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life and we are pleased to hear that the panel considering the effective participation of women belonging to national minorities will inform further work on this issue. Likewise, we look forward to marking the anniversaries of the 1996 Hague Recommendations Regarding the Education Rights of National Minorities and the 2006 Recommendations on Policing in Multi-ethnic Societies. We look forward to seeing the results of systematic mainstreaming of gender into the recommendations on policing.

In conclusion, allow me to thank you and your dedicated team for all your work and wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

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## [Drivers granted 7 month photocard licence extension](#)

Press release

The extension applies to drivers with a photocard driving licence due to expire between 1 February and 31 August 2020.



Drivers with a photocard driving licence due to expire between 1 February and 31 August 2020 will be granted a 7 month extension from the date of expiry the DVLA has announced today (4 June 2020). This will help drivers to make necessary journeys without having to obtain a new photograph to renew their

licence.

Normally drivers are required to renew their photocard licence every 10 years, and bus and lorry drivers every 5 years. A new EU regulation has now been introduced which means photocard licences that expire between 1 February and 31 August 2020 will be automatically extended for a further 7 months from the date of expiry.

Drivers will be sent a reminder to renew before their 7 month extension ends.

This extension applies to the photocard. If a driver's entitlement to drive is due to expire and they wish to continue to hold a valid licence, they will need to renew this entitlement in the normal way.

DVLA Chief Executive Julie Lennard said

This extension will make it easier for drivers who need to update their photocard licence with a new photograph. This means as long as they have a valid licence, drivers will be able to continue to make essential journeys.

The extension is automatic so drivers do not need to do anything and will be sent a reminder to renew their photocard before the extension ends.

This change will be introduced from 4 June 2020.

### **Notes to editors:**

A car (Group 1) licence generally remains in force until the driver reaches 70, unless revoked or surrendered. At aged 70 the driver must renew their entitlement to drive every 3 years if they wish to continue to hold a valid licence. Bus and lorry (Group 2) licence holders aged 45 and over are required to renew their entitlement to drive every 5 years. Holders of short-term medical licences will also need to renew their entitlement to drive. The 7 month extension does not apply to renewal of entitlement to drive.

The DVLA's online services to [renew your driving licence](#) and [replace a driving licence](#) are available for those drivers who need to renew their entitlement to drive or replace a lost or stolen licence.

Published 4 June 2020