

UK and US reaffirm defence ties ahead of NATO's 70th Anniversary

In a meeting today in London, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace and the US Secretary for Defense Mark Esper both reiterated the historic and enduring defence relationship shared by the two countries.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

In the year that we commemorate the 75th anniversary of D-Day and the 70th anniversary of NATO it is right that we reflect on our historic and enduring relationship. Our shared values and commitment to global security are as strong now as they were all those years ago.

The UK is the US's most reliable and most capable ally, and with our Armed Forces operating together all over world we will continue to work together to promote justice, tolerance and freedom around the world.

During the meeting both the Defence Secretary and his US counterpart restated their commitment to NATO, the cornerstone of the transatlantic partnership that has succeeded in keeping Europe at peace for over 70 years.

Both the UK and US are currently leading multinational battlegroups in Eastern Europe as part of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence demonstrating the leading roles both nations play in the Alliance. UK troops from the Scots Dragoon Guards are working side by side with their US counterparts in Poland, while over 850 UK troops are leading a battlegroup in Estonia.

Both parties also spoke of their desire to jointly tackle global threats such as the re-emergence of great power competition with Russia and China as well as traditional threats such as religious extremism. Both parties were also keen to raise further cooperation in conventional spaces such cyber and space.

The UK and the US has the broadest, deepest and most advanced defence relationship of any two nations and troops from both countries continue to operate around the world together in places such as Afghanistan, South China Sea, the Middle East, and Europe. The recent territorial defeat of Daesh was testament to how two of world's leading military forces can come together to overcome a common enemy.

Crime news: contacting the Defence Solicitor Call Centre

A new mailbox is now available for providers to log any issues with the operation of the Defence Solicitor Call Centre:

complaints@dutysolicitors.org

This will allow our supplier, HGS UK, to collate issues with the operation of the service so that learning points can be identified. Service improvements can then be made where necessary.

Providers also have the option of using the DSCC call centre helpline on 0345 543 8910.

There is also a change to the general enquiries mailbox, which is now:

enquiries@dutysolicitors.org

Why is this necessary?

We attach great importance to any issues with the operation of the DSCC. We want to ensure that lessons are learned when appropriate and explain the process for raising any problems. This follows recent difficulties during a transition phase for the DSCC, which is changing its supplier from Capita to HGS UK.

What were the problems?

Maintenance work meant that the DSCC website was unavailable for longer than anticipated when it was taken down on Wednesday 28 August.

There were also issues with call volumes which meant telephone enquiries were not answered as quickly as usual.

The service has now stabilised and the website was restored on Saturday 1 September. The LAA is continuing to monitor the situation and additional support is being provided where needed.

Further information

[DSCC online portal](#)

complaints@dutysolicitors.org – to flag issues when there are problems

enquiries@dutysolicitors.org – general enquiries

0345 543 8910 – to call DSCC

Home Secretary tasks MAC on Australian-style points-based immigration system

In response to the [request from the Home Secretary](#) the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) will consider how points could be awarded to prospective migrants for things like educational qualifications, language proficiency, work experience and willingness to work in areas or sectors with a shortage of workers.

The MAC has also been commissioned to review the [salary thresholds](#) for the future immigration system. The MAC will continue with this work in addition to the PBS and report to the government by January 2020.

September apprenticeship payment

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) has today confirmed a change to the way apprenticeship payments are made for September.

The change also means the absence of some notification reports that support payments.

This does not affect providers getting payment and on the date expected.

The notification reports that will not be available to some providers and employers to support their payments include:

- Datamatch report that identifies which apprentices we will make payments for
- Monthly payment summary report – that confirms the funding paid at apprentice level
- for employers, they will not see payment summaries within their accounts.

The absence of the notification reports and the payment changes for September means the following.

For providers that deliver training to employers using the apprenticeship service (employers that pay the apprenticeship levy):

- Due to not being able to see datamatch and payment reports, providers

will not be able to identify errors in the data they submit. This only affects apprentices that have started since 1 August 2019, and we expect the affected group to account for up to 3 per cent of all apprentices. We will apply a simplified datamatch for this month to minimise the disruption to providers and make it easier for them to identify where their data needs to be corrected. Providers, at a later date, when reports become available, will be able to identify the errors and correct their data.

- All apprentices funded from the apprenticeship service will be funded at 100%. This is to avoid any negative financial impact to providers from this issue, but providers should be aware a small number of payments will need to be corrected when the issue is resolved (currently this impacts 1 per cent of the overall payment value).

This issue only affects the datamatch function. All other aspects of the apprenticeship service are unaffected by this issue.

For providers delivering training to small employers that do not pay the apprenticeship levy, there is no impact to payments.

However, these payments will not be shown on the payment summary report normally produced at each month-end. Providers can view these payments on the earnings report they receive whenever they submit data to ESFA.

The reason that some notifications will not be available to support payments, follows an issue, we have communicated on our data forum, FE connect, with the operation to match individualised learner records (ILR) data to the corresponding apprenticeship service records. Currently this process has an adverse effect to the efficiency of the data collections service (Submit Learner Data) and we do not want this to impact the wider payments ESFA is responsible for.

We aim to resolve this issue as soon as possible and before the next payment run at R02 ,which is due to close on 4 October 2019. When resolved we will bring these payments back onto the service with no additional action needed by employers or training providers.

We will communicate when the issue has been resolved on our [@ESFADigital Twitter account](#), GOV.UK and [FE Connect](#).

[Regulator investigates linked charities over financial concerns](#)



**CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**

The Charity Commission is today announcing a class statutory inquiry into seven charities linked by two common trustees and common registered contact details, due to serious concerns over potential misconduct and/or mismanagement at the charities.

The charities are:

- IPAD ([1131132](#))
- FAO (Friends of African Organisations) ([1147157](#))
- BAC (British Africa Connexions) ([1171412](#))
- KDDA (Kono District Development Association UK) ([1160673](#)) [now removed – see notes to editors]
- Hope Direct ([1114725](#))
- SAAPA (Social Action and Poverty Alleviation) ([1111959](#))
- ACT (Action for Community Transformation) ([1174726](#))

During a proactive exercise the Commission identified a series of discrepancies across the charities' accounts. It therefore exercised its power to obtain the charities' bank statements to examine its concerns further. After examining IPAD's annual return, the Commission found discrepancies of over £83,000 income and £39,000 expenditure between information submitted in the charity's annual return and what was shown in the charity's bank statements. The issues indicate a potential misapplication of charitable funds and possible personal benefit.

The Commission is also concerned that the trustees have knowingly acted against their legal duty by providing false and misleading information to the Commission. The accounts held by the Commission for IPAD for FYE 2014 contain identical financial information to three other sets of accounts submitted by two other connected charities included in the class inquiry. With the exception of one charity there is no evidence of charitable activity which raises concern that there may have been a potential misuse of funds. The Commission has therefore frozen the bank accounts held in the names of six of the charities in order to protect charitable funds.

The inquiry opened on 29 April 2019 and will examine whether:

- the linked charities have been operating for exclusively charitable purposes for public benefit in furtherance of their charitable objects;
- the financial controls of the linked charities are adequate and their funds have been properly expended and accounted for;

- the trustees of the charities have complied with their legal duties in respect of their administration, governance and management of the charities;
- the trustees' compliance with legal obligations for the content and preparation of the charities accounts and other information or returns is in line with the statutory requirements.

It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and what the outcomes were. Reports of previous inquiries by the Commission are available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

Ends.

Notes to Editors

1. As of 27 September 2019, Kono District Development Association (KDDA) UK was removed from this inquiry. We will be reporting on our findings once the class inquiry has concluded.
2. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales; our role is to regulate charity trustees' compliance with the charity law framework.
3. Section 76(3)(d) of the Charities Act 2011 gives the Commission the power to order any person who holds any property on behalf of the charity, or trustee of it, not to part with the property without prior approval of the Commission. It is a temporary and protective measure.
4. It is an offence under section 60 of the Charities Act for a person knowingly or recklessly to provide the Commission with false and misleading information.

Published 6 September 2019

Last updated 1 November 2019 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 1 November 2019 The notes to editors section has been updated to reflect changes to the ongoing inquiry. Based on information reviewed in the class inquiry, the Commission is satisfied with assurances provided by Kono District Development Association (KDDA) UK and has removed it from the class inquiry. We intend to publish a report setting out our findings once the class inquiry has concluded.
2. 6 September 2019 First published.