

## **News story: War disablement pension rates 2019**



The new rates of war pensions and allowances proposed from April 2019 are set out in the [War disablement pension 2018 rates document](#).

The annual uprating of war pensions and allowances for 2019 will take place from the week beginning 8 April 2019.

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## **Press release: Change of British High Commissioner to Singapore: July 2019**



Ms Kara Owen CVO has been appointed British High Commissioner to the Republic of Singapore.

Ms Kara Owen CVO has been appointed British High Commissioner to the Republic of Singapore in succession to Mr Scott Wightman CMG who will be transferring to another Civil Service appointment. Ms Owen will take up her appointment in July 2019.

## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

Full name: Kara Owen

Married to: Commandant (Rtd) William Tierney

Children: Two daughters

2016 to present FC0, Director for the Americas  
2012 to 2016 Paris, Deputy Head of Mission  
2011 FC0, Head of Strategy, Communication and Training  
Department, Consular Directorate  
2009 to 2011 FC0, Assistant Director, Head of Diversity and Equality  
2005 to 2009 Hanoi, Deputy Head of Mission  
2005 Secondment to the EU as Private Secretary to Head of the  
Aceh Monitoring Mission, Indonesia  
2003 to 2005 FC0, Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary  
2001 to 2003 FC0, Assistant Private Secretary to Junior Ministers  
2000 FC0, Desk Officer, EU Social Policy, Europe Directorate  
1996 to 2000 Hong Kong, Vice Consul (Consular) and then Vice Consul  
(Political), British Consulate General  
1993 to 1995 FC0, Desk Officer, Russia

## **Further information**

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## **News story: Banks scored on quality of service: latest results published**



The measure was introduced by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) after it conducted a market investigation into the banking sector in 2016. The league table style results allow customers to clearly see how their bank

compares on quality of service and helps to drive competition between banks to improve the quality of their offering to customers.

Since August 2018, banks have been required to publish information on how likely people would be to recommend their bank – as well its online and mobile banking, branch and overdraft services – to friends, relatives or other businesses, with results being updated every 6 months.

Andrea Coscelli, Chief Executive of the Competition and Markets Authority, said:

We introduced this survey last August so that people can see exactly how well banks are treating their customers.

If people are unhappy with the customer service they are currently getting, I would encourage them to look at the results and think about switching to a better performing bank.

The results of the survey must be prominently displayed in banks' branches, as well as on their websites and apps.

The latest survey results are available on the following links:

- [personal](#)
- [small business](#)

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## **Press release: “Significant progress” made at 10 of most challenging prisons**

- Minister applauds progress of the ‘10 prisons project’ – six months after vowing to resign if violence did not start to fall within a year
- In latest innovation, teams of experienced officers will help build confidence of new recruits and ensure all staff get the basics right
- £10m project aims to reduce violence and drug use while improving decency at 10 of the most challenging prisons

Today (Friday, 15 February), the Prisons Minister announced the latest initiative to drive improvement – Standards Coaching Teams who will support new recruits and ensure good practice is delivered consistently across the jails.

Working on rotation around the 10 prisons, and comprising some of the

brightest and best officers from across the estate, the team will provide advice and encouragement to inexperienced officers to build their confidence, particularly in their relationships with prisoners.

The team is also supporting all staff to get the basics right and meet consistently high standards in routine tasks such as cell checks.

Around 60 experienced officers were selected to take up the coaching roles, and recently completed their two-week training course at the Prison Service (HMPPS) training college at Newbold Revel.

It is the latest measure in a £10m initiative to reduce violence and raise standards, which has already seen:

- X-ray body scanners installed – allowing staff to search for drugs and other contraband concealed in people's bodies
- Scanners installed which can detect invisible traces of drugs, including psychoactive substances, soaked into clothing and paper
- The introduction of Incentivised Substance Free Living units – where offenders willing to lead drug-free lives can access enhanced conditions
- Specialist staff and teams put in place at all 10 prisons, including additional entry searching staff and dog handlers
- Drugs strategy managers established to lead counter-drugs efforts and improve recovery for users
- Refurbished cells and shared areas, and enhanced sanitation, to raise standards of decency
- A 'drug diagnostic' visit for each prison to help them understand their drug issues and how to tackle them

Prisons Minister Rory Stewart said:

In six months these prisons have made significant progress, from tougher security to improved standards of decency, thanks to the tireless work of governors and staff. I am hugely grateful for their efforts.

I have no doubt the Standards Coaching Teams – who I had the privilege to recently see graduate – will make a significant contribution. Their knowledge and experience will be invaluable in driving further improvement.

I promised that I would resign if violence did not start to fall within a year. There is still much to do, and I do not underestimate the scale of the challenge, but the first six months have given us a solid platform from which we can set a more positive direction for all our prisons.

The 10 prisons project was announced in August 2018 to tackle the serious problems facing some of the most challenging prisons in the country.

It has seen the introduction of significant additional security measures to tackle the influx of drugs which fuels violence, as well as investment in leadership and building refurbishment.

The ten prisons will serve as models of excellence for the rest, with good practice to be spread across the prison estate.

### Notes to editors:

- Geographical clusters of prisons in Yorkshire, the north Midlands and London were selected for the project, to ensure a targeted approach to tackling the supply of drugs from organised crime in those areas.
- The ten prisons making up the project are: HMP Hull, Humber, Leeds, Lindholme, Moorland, Wealstun, Nottingham, Ranby, Isis and Wormwood Scrubs.

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## [News story: Grayling announces new Dawlish sea wall as part of £2 billion investment in south-west](#)

- government publishes '[Investing in the South West](#)' detailing £2 billion of funding targeted at supporting growth and prosperity
- Transport Secretary makes up to £80 million available to build a brand new, more resilient sea wall at Dawlish

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has today (15 February 2019) announced further funding of up to £80 million in the south-west to deliver a new sea wall at Dawlish, providing better protection for the railway and homes behind it.

Upgrades to the sea wall will increase its height by 2.5 metres and include wave returns to reduce the impact of waves and the likelihood of the line being closed during adverse weather. This will help ensure the serious damage and disruption seen during storms in 2014 is not repeated.

The improvements at Dawlish are part of an extensive programme of investment in the south-west to transform connectivity throughout the region, outlined in the [Investing in the South West](#) report. This includes schemes totalling more than £2 billion, improving the strategic road network, high-speed direct bus connectivity, safe and continuous cycle routes and easier transfer between transport modes.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

We cannot allow the disruption and damage endured by Dawlish and the south-west to happen again. This significant investment demonstrates our cast-iron commitment to delivering a resilient and safe railway, giving passengers, businesses and residents confidence in a reliable service.

With up to £80 million of funding available to create a rigorous set of defences, this new sea wall will help protect this vital route, building on our ambitious plans to grow this region's economy and prosperity through stronger transport connections.

Today's announcement was made as the Transport Secretary visited Dawlish, meeting with Network Rail and local businesses, to discuss how government investment is focused on giving people across the south-west the modern, reliable services they deserve.

Work on the new sea wall will begin in the spring and is expected to be complete by 2021. The government has already provided £15 million for Network Rail to design a long-lasting solution to this problem, in addition to the £40 million spent by Network Rail to repair the damage caused in the 2014 storm.

Building on detailed geological surveys, Network Rail is continuing to develop solutions for the cliffs along the coast immediately north-east of Teignmouth using the £15 million previously announced. This includes the development of an application for the necessary planning consent for work to maintain the cliffs and protect the railway.