

Press release: Number in employment reaches record high

This is a rise of 415,000 compared to last year's figures.

The figures, released by the Office for National Statistics, also show that unemployment is at its lowest level since 1975.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Esther McVey, said:

We had a record-breaking 2017 for employment, and I'm delighted to see this trend continue as we enter the new year.

The number of people in work is at an all-time high and the unemployment rate has not been this low for over 40 years.

At this time of year, straight after Christmas, people might be feeling a squeeze on their finances. We're determined to help people keep more of what they earn.

That's why we've increased the National Living Wage, introduced Universal Credit to offer greater flexibility and taken millions of people out of income tax altogether by raising the tax-free personal allowance.

In 2017, at least 10 employment records were broken. The employment rate and the number of people in work, the number of women in work and black and minority ethnic employment all reached record highs during the year.

Today's employment figures also show:

- there are a record 810,000 vacancies in the economy at any one time
- the number of people in employment has increased by over 3 million since 2010
- the UK has the third highest employment rate in the G7
- the number of workers aged 50 plus has reached a record 10 million
- youth unemployment has fallen by over 40% since 2010

Separate figures also released today show there are [700,000 people claiming Universal Credit](#) as the rollout of the new benefit continues, with 42% in employment.

Follow DWP on:

News story: New emission controls will help improve air quality

Restrictions on air pollution from combustion plants and generators were passed by parliament this week, as the government continues to take action against poor air quality.

Air pollution is the biggest environmental risk to public health in the UK, and currently unregulated medium sized combustion plants (MCPs) and generators, commonly used to heat hospitals, hotels, offices, prisons and other large buildings as well as powering some industries, are a significant source of pollution.

A statutory instrument was debated and passed in the house of Commons and House of Lords on Monday and will come into force shortly, implementing a new Medium Combustion Plant Directive.

However, the government is going even further by introducing additional domestic emission controls on generators to tackle pollution from small scale, flexible generators which not covered by the Directive but are highly polluting and have been increasingly used in recent years.

The new regulations are expected to provide 43% of the sulphur dioxide emissions reduction, 9% of the reduction for particulate matter, and 22% of the nitrogen oxides emissions reduction needed to meet the UK's 2030 targets.

Environment Minister Therese Coffey said:

Air pollution has improved significantly since 2010, but we recognise there is more to do which is why we have put in place a £3.5 billion plan to improve air quality and reduce harmful emissions.

These regulations will help deliver further substantial reductions in emissions, while minimising the impact on energy security and costs to businesses. Poor air quality affects public health, the economy, and the environment, which is why we are determined to do more, and later this year we will publish a comprehensive clean air strategy which will set out further steps to tackle air pollution.

These regulations will require new medium combustion plants to reduce emissions from 20 December 2018 and existing medium combustion plants from 2025 or 2030, depending on their size – larger plants must comply sooner than smaller plants.

Additionally, newer generators will need to comply with a nitrogen oxides

emissions limit from 1st January 2019. Older generators, operating prior to December 2016, and those providing certain services to the National Grid will need to comply from a later date, depending on their size, emissions, operating hours, duration of their agreements with National Grid and whether they sign up to new agreements.

Dr Penny Woods, chief executive of the British Lung Foundation, said:

Breathing in toxic pollutants increases all our chances of getting lung cancer, it can worsen symptoms for people who have a lung condition and it can stunt the growth of children's lungs. We therefore welcome these restrictions on generators that will see a reduction in the invisible but deadly pollutants harming our health.

We need action on all sources of pollution, from traffic emissions to generators, if we are truly going to clean up the air in our towns and cities.

News story: High demand for innovation in Indian healthcare system

UK healthcare innovation in action: the Hamlyn Centre at Imperial College London is pioneering brain computer interface technologies to improve complex skills training.

India's healthcare market is estimated to grow to \$280 billion (US) by 2020 (CII-KPMG 'The Indian services sector: Poised for global ascendancy' Report 2016). It's a country with a diverse and geographically spread population, with a real need for excellent in clinical care of lifestyle diseases.

With its recent commitment to developing 100 smart cities across the country, demand for innovative healthcare solutions in the Indian healthcare system has never been higher. Indian healthcare leaders are looking for solutions that will drive further efficiencies in costs, increase patient access in remote areas, and provide more personalised healthcare solutions.

India looks to the UK for innovative care solutions

The UK is well placed to meet this demand. The UK's National Health Service (NHS) continues to be ranked by the US-based Commonwealth Fund as the leading

health system in the world. To remain at the top of the rankings, the NHS and UK healthcare sector are focusing their expertise towards continuous development of innovative healthcare practices.

Healthcare utopia is a future with no waiting time for patients, sophisticated surgical robots in operating rooms, radiology images in the cloud, consulting in real time and flexible touch screens capturing important health data. A future of disruptive technologies; artificial intelligence, wearable sensors, virtual reality and artificial intelligence.

India Innovation Mission: February 2018

Healthcare UK is bringing representatives of the UK healthcare system to India to learn how India is:

- approaching the challenges of scale and resource
- sharing their expertise
- discussing with Indian healthcare colleagues what can be achieved through working with the latest smart systems and devices

These representatives are from leading NHS hospitals and pioneering British companies whose innovative solutions are delivering results across health and care economies in the UK and around the world.

If you are an innovative healthcare system provider looking to develop operations overseas please contact us at healthcare.uk@trade.gov.uk to discuss how we can help you.

Healthcare UK is a joint initiative of the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England and the Department for International Trade. Find out more about what we do [here](#).

[Press release: A third of tax returns are outstanding a week before deadline](#)

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) today (24 January 2018) announced that just over 3 million customers are yet to complete their 2016 to 2017 returns with only one week to go before the 31 January deadline.

As of today, around 8 million people have filed their Self Assessment return for 2016 to 2017. HMRC is reminding customers that if you send your tax return late, you will receive a £100 penalty – even if you do not owe any tax. The longer you delay, the more you will have to pay.

Angela MacDonald, HMRC Director General of Customer Services, said:

The 7-day countdown to 31 January has now begun. Put a stop to that niggling feeling and do your Self Assessment now. Our helpful online services offer support and advice, so you can complete your tax return quicker than you think.

The deadline for sending 2016 to 2017 Self Assessment tax returns to HMRC, and paying any tax owed, is 31 January 2018.

Self Assessment customers can now also submit their return through their personal tax account. It takes 5 minutes to sign up for a [personal tax account](#). If you think you won't be able to submit your tax return by 31 January, please ring us, so we can help you.

1. If you are submitting your 2016 to 2017 Self Assessment return online for the first time, you will need to register for [Self Assessment Online](#). It can take a few days for the registration to arrive in the post, so it's important that customers do it as soon as possible. They should contact HMRC for support if they're concerned about missing the deadline.
2. Help is available from the [GOV.UK website](#) or from the Self Assessment helpline on 0300 200 3310.
3. The penalties for late tax returns are:
 - an initial £100 fixed penalty, which applies even if there is no tax to pay or if the tax due is paid on time
 - after 3 months, additional daily penalties of £10 per day, up to a maximum of £900
 - after 6 months, a further penalty of 5% of the tax due, or £300, whichever is greater
 - after 12 months, another 5% or £300 charge, whichever is greater.
4. There are additional penalties for paying late of 5% of the tax unpaid at 30 days, 6 months and 12 months.
5. An audio clip of Angela MacDonald's statement is available from the [press office](#).
6. Follow HMRC's press office on Twitter [@HMRCpressoffice](#).
7. See [HMRC's Flickr channel](#).

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Speech: Condemning Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria

Thank you Mr President,

When I heard Russia had called today for an urgent meeting on the use of chemical weapons in Syria, I was glad that we could return to an issue on which this Council has a duty to ensure that those responsible are held to account.

That duty is even more pressing today, because yet another heinous attack on civilians was reported yesterday to the Council by the UN Secretariat. In this attack on Douma, in Eastern Ghouta, at least 21 civilians were treated with symptoms consistent with chlorine exposure. This follows a further reported attack on Eastern Ghouta on 13 January affecting six people.

Mr President,

In 2016 the Joint Investigative Mechanism found in three cases that the Syrian regime had used chlorine gas to attack civilians. Last year, it found the regime had used Sarin in Khan Sheikhoun. Now, as the regime are escalating their attacks on eastern Ghouta in an attempt to force the besieged opposition to surrender, we remain deeply concerned by continued reports of chemical weapons use in Syria.

In all this let us not forget that it was the regime's attack on Eastern Ghouta using Sarin in 2013 that led to this Council adopting resolution 2118, which had the clear, unanimously endorsed aim of disarming Syria of its chemical weapons programme.

Throughout this process Russia has claimed to act as a leading power, a guarantor. But when the Assad regime deliberately ignored its obligation to stop using chemical weapons and continued to do so with such careless disregard for civilian life, Russia has chosen to abuse its power of veto to protect the Assad regime.

Russia says that they supported the renewal of the JIM mandate and that it was the rest of us who could not agree with their terms that killed it. Yet their previous resolution would have removed the JIM's ability to investigate the Assad regime, which has been found responsible for multiple attacks. Russia has made clear several times they will not support a new investigative mechanism as long as it has the power to hold to account a Member State of the United Nations. And it seems from my rapid reading of the latest text that this proposal is another attempt to shift attention onto non-state actors. The Russians have even claim that Syria is a signatory in good standing of the Chemical Weapons Convention. They are not. They have not completed their declaration. The OPCW has repeatedly warned of inconsistencies, gaps and omissions. Russia has great influence over the Assad regime. For the sake of the Syrian people, for the sake of preventing

future use of chemical weapons, we call on Russia to persuade their Syrian friends to get rid of their chemical weapons and comply fully with the Chemical Weapons Convention.

By ending the JIM, Russia also stopped the mechanism's investigations of Daesh chemical attacks – the investigators had found that these terrorists had carried out at least two such attacks. We unreservedly condemn Daesh for its use of these vile weapons, which is yet another reason why we need to defeat these terrorists once and for all.

Mr President,

The UK was proud to join the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons led by our French colleagues today in Paris. The use of chemical weapons is barbaric, illegal under international law and must stop. We must ensure we re-establish a mechanism to ensure accountability. We all know where the obstacle to that lies. In response, we will only redouble our efforts to pursue accountability for these crimes.

Thank you Mr President.