

## [News story: Defence Secretary announces Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans Board](#)

Co-chaired by Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon and First Secretary of State Damian Green, and reporting to the Prime Minister, the board underlines the Government's enduring commitment to the Armed Forces community.

Meeting biannually, the Board will drive forward the existing Armed Forces Covenant commitments community across all Government departments responsible for delivery, with a specific focus on the priority areas of healthcare, including mental health. Housing, education, and employment opportunities are also other areas which will be covered. In addition, the Defence Secretary and the First Secretary of State will meet separately with leading Service charities and the single Service Family Federations to discuss the Covenant on an annual basis. This will ensure the views of the wider Armed Forces Community are represented in government decisions. Government initiatives delivered to date through the Armed Forces Covenant include:

- The Forces Help to Buy scheme (MOD), which has allowed thousands of Armed Forces personnel and their families to borrow up to half their salary to get on the housing ladder.
- The Armed Forces Covenant Fund, which provides £10M per annum to support mutually beneficial projects and programmes being delivered by organisations across the UK in partnership with the Armed Forces Community.
- The Job Centre Plus Armed Forces Champions (DWP) helps current and former members of the Armed Forces and their families access Jobcentre Plus services
- The Transition, Intervention, and Liaison (TIL) veterans' mental health service (NHS) acts as a front door to a range of mental health services across the health and care system for veterans.
- The Service Pupil Premium (DfE), which is paid to schools to engage with service children to mitigate any adverse impact of family mobility and parental deployment. The Board will also seek to maximise the potential of the Armed Forces Community through mutually beneficial partnerships with businesses, as well as with local communities throughout the UK.

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## [News story: UK collaboration at the](#)

# International Astronautical Congress

The conference, which ran from Monday 25 September to Friday 29 September, saw more than 4,500 space professionals and enthusiasts attend from 84 countries for a week of events, meetings, collaborations and discovery.

Earlier in the week a landmark agreement was signed between Surrey Satellite Technology Limited (SSTL) and Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) to provide Australia access to the cutting-edge British satellite NovaSAR-S.

Surrey Satellite Technology Limited (SSTL) will provide CSIRO a 10% share of the tasking and data acquisition capabilities from NovaSAR-S, a small radar satellite due for launch later this year.

Speaking at the conference Graham Turnock, Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency, said: "The UK space sector is in the middle of a renaissance, begun seven years ago under David Williams [former UK Space Agency CEO] here, and carried on over the last six years by a partnership between our excellent UK space industry, represented here by SSTL, and with continued support from the UK government at the highest levels.

"NovaSAR is an exciting opportunity for the UK and for our partners in the mission. Data from orbit has the potential to change the way we understand and interact with our changing environment, strengthening our public services as well as creating new opportunities for commercial services."

Computer generated image of NovaSAR-S in orbit. Credit SSTL.

NovaSAR-S is a technology demonstration mission designed to complement much larger, complex radar satellites with a smaller, lighter and more cost effective platform that delivers Earth observation Synthetic Aperture Radar imagery day and night, and through cloud cover. Managing the energy use on board the small SAR platform has been made possible by using a new, highly efficient S-band solid-state amplifier technology and flying an innovative S-band SAR payload developed by Airbus UK in Portsmouth.

The agreement gives CSIRO tasking rights and the ability to access the raw data directly from the satellite, and a licence to use and share the data with other Australian companies and organisations over an initial 7 year period.

The UK Government provided £21 million grant to assist in the development of NovaSAR-S and will also benefit from access to the SAR data, significantly boosting the UK's sovereign Earth Observation capabilities for applications such as ship detection and identification, oil spill detection, forestry monitoring and disaster monitoring, particularly flood detection and assessment.

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## Press release: Priti Patel cracks down on “scandal” of unethical practices with tough new reforms on aid suppliers

The International Development Secretary Priti Patel today announced a bold plan for tough reform of the Department for International Development’s (DFID) work with suppliers, by clamping down on the risk of profiteering, excessive charges and unscrupulous practices.

Following a fundamental review of DFID’s work with suppliers, Ms Patel is introducing stricter new rules that will ensure all contractors deliver the best possible results for the world’s poorest people and provide value for taxpayers’ money, with the threat of legal repercussions for those who break the rules.

New measures announced today include:

- a robust new Code of Conduct which is leading the way across government to ensure the highest standards of ethical and professional behaviour by DFID suppliers, with legally enforceable sanctions – such as ending contracts early – for those caught breaking the rules by our new compliance team
- tougher scrutiny of costs and greater transparency by including new clauses in contracts to allow DFID to inspect costs, overheads, fees and profits of suppliers in detail and new powers to intervene to tackle profiteering and cut out waste
- publishing annual league tables of supplier performance to name and shame those who are not delivering value for money
- stopping so-called “bid candy” practices, by which large suppliers include smaller businesses to win bids, but then drop them from the contract
- cutting red tape to boost competition and open up DFID’s market to new businesses including small enterprises in the UK and the world’s poorest countries.

The International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

These tough reforms provide a clear message to aid suppliers – any misuse of taxpayers’ money is a scandal that will not be tolerated.

DFID is leading the way across Government with new measures that will ensure aid is spent in the best way, with every single penny delivering value for money. New legal penalties allow us to take firm action against those who break the rules.

We will make the supplier market we work with more competitive and transparent, providing greater opportunities for new and smaller businesses in the UK and ensuring we work with those who can achieve the best results that UK taxpayers and the world’s poorest deserve.

These reforms will ensure that every DFID contractor upholds the highest standards and is held to account for meeting them. They enable DFID to be smart and tough with its big suppliers and give more opportunities to new and smaller businesses in the UK and the poorest countries.

Aid contractors play an important role in development work when they deliver well. They provide specialist expertise, flexibility and deliver UK aid’s life-changing work in some of the most fragile and dangerous places in the world.

## **Note to Editors**

1. In December 2016, the International Development Secretary announced a fundamental review of DFID’s management of its contracted suppliers, to ensure the highest standards of ethical behaviour and protect against any possibility of profiteering by suppliers. This review has now concluded.
2. The International Development Secretary has published an open letter to suppliers today setting out these tough new reforms, as well as a [new code of conduct for suppliers and DFID staff](#).
3. DFID has already introduced new contract terms and conditions to apply to all new procurement tenders and extensions from September 1 2017. From today, we will begin to renegotiate existing contracts in line with these changes, focusing on our existing major, high-value contracts. These are contracts individually totalling over £20 million, which account for a third of the overall value of DFID’s contracts and are delivered by our 30 biggest suppliers.
4. We will continue to roll out these tough new reforms to Civil Society Organisations funded by Accountable Grants over the coming months.
5. New clauses in supplier contracts include Open Book Accounting clauses allowing DFID to inspect costs, overheads and fees of suppliers in detail, and clauses giving DFID the power to intervene to prevent profiteering – both policed by a rolling programme of compliance checks.
6. As part of its wider international development reform agenda set out in

the [Multilateral Development Review](#), DFID will press multilateral development organisations to adopt similar measures.

7. As a demonstration of the important work DFID has been undertaking in recent months, the Department has been awarded the 2017 Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) Annual Award for 'Best Contribution to the Reputation of the Procurement Profession'.

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## [News story: Health Secretary announces nursing workforce reforms](#)

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has announced wide-ranging reforms to increase nurse training places and retain staff.

A 25% increase in training posts for nurses is part of a range of measures to:

- ensure the NHS meets current and future nursing workforce needs
- improve working conditions
- provide new routes into the profession

The government will provide funding for the clinical placements required for an additional 5,170 pre-registration nurse degrees from 2018. This builds on the commitment to 10,000 more training places for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals announced in August this year.

### **Nursing associates**

A further 5,000 nursing associates will be trained through the apprentice route in 2018, with an additional 7,500 being trained in 2019. Nursing associate is a new role which provides a work-based route into nursing for existing health and care staff or new recruits who may not be able to give up work to study full-time at university.

A new shortened nurse degree apprenticeship route will also be introduced for qualified nursing associates who wish to work towards full Nursing Midwifery Council registered nurse status.

As part of this expansion in nursing staff, we will explore opportunities for higher education institutes to deliver formal classroom teaching in a more innovative way in employers' facilities. This training will not compromise on quality and will continue to meet the high standards expected of trainees by the nursing regulator, the Nursing Midwifery Council.

### **Increasing participation and social mobility**

The measures are part of the government's commitment to widen participation

and social mobility throughout the health sector. They will also help to reduce the reliance on overseas recruitment by boosting the supply of home-grown nurses.

Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Health, said:

The NHS will be looking after a million more over-75s in just a decade, so we need to jump-start nurse training.

This represents the biggest increase in nurse training places in the history of the NHS – and we will make sure that many of the additional places go to healthcare assistants training on hospital sites. This will allow us to expand our nurse workforce with some highly experienced people already working on the NHS frontline.

We will also improve retention rates amongst our current workforce, introducing new arrangements to support flexible working available to all NHS staff, and a new right of first refusal for affordable housing built on NHS property. Combined with the 25% increase in undergraduate medical school places announced last year it will transform the ability of the NHS to cope with the pressures ahead.

## **Improving working conditions**

As well as training more nurses, the Health Secretary announced new measures to improve working conditions for the NHS workforce, including:

- arrangements to support flexible working to help staff to balance work-life commitment.
- a system of staff banks for flexible workers across the NHS, increasing opportunities for NHS staff to work on NHS terms and reduce agency costs for employers
- a 'Homes for Nurses' scheme – which will give 3,000 NHS workers first refusal on affordable housing generated through the sale of surplus NHS land

If you would like to keep up to date with news about nursing workforce reforms please sign up to our [mailing list](#).

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## [News story: HM Land Registry wins government counter fraud award](#)

Fraud is now the most prevalent crime in the United Kingdom. The annual [Government Counter Fraud Awards](#) recognise exceptional achievement and innovation in fighting fraud in the public sector. Entrants included counter fraud teams and individuals from across the UK public sector, including those working in local government and central government agencies and departments.

Our award was for the work we have done in raising awareness of how property fraud can occur, who is most at risk and what people can do to protect themselves. The awareness campaign focused on our free [Property Alert](#) service, encouraging people to sign up so they can receive an early warning of fraudulent activity on their property.

With minimal direct contact with citizens itself, HM Land Registry relies heavily on business customers such as conveyancers and estate agents to encourage their clients to sign up for Property Alert and read our [fraud advice](#). In addition to making the public more aware of property fraud and how to protect themselves, our counter fraud team provides training to employees, law enforcement agencies and financial investigators in how to detect and prevent registered title fraud.

The judges said:

Property fraud is an area of significant risk and the campaign left no stone unturned in its efforts to raise awareness and engage citizens with its Property Alert service. They were astute in selecting the most effective, audience-appropriate channels and received justifiably very positive feedback for their efforts.

As a result of the increased numbers of people signing up to Property Alert in 2016/17, 100,000 more properties are better protected against fraud – an estimated £20 billion worth of property assets based on the average house price of £200,000.