

Government urges businesses to take advantage of National Insurance relief when hiring veterans

Businesses hiring military veterans can now save their firms thousands of pounds in employee National Insurance contributions, thanks to a scheme launched by the government's Office of Veterans' Affairs.

From today (6 April 2022), employers will not have to pay National Insurance contributions for veterans in their first year of civilian employment after leaving the armed forces. Businesses will also be able to claim this relief retrospectively for any qualifying employees who joined their company in the last 12 months.

The tax incentive provides a double boost to businesses – providing them with potential savings of up to £6,200 per employee, while also allowing them to benefit from the fantastic skills and experience that veterans bring.

Businesses could save £2,567 per employee on the average salary in the UK. A business hiring 10 qualifying veterans could save over £25,000.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Leo Docherty said:

Our veterans have made important contributions to keeping our country safe. The skills they gain during service are invaluable, and businesses can greatly benefit from their dedication.

I encourage all businesses to consider hiring veterans and supporting their journey to civilian life after service.

Lucy Frazer, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, said:

If it wasn't for our heroic servicemen and women protecting our country, we would not have a United Kingdom to live in.

That is why as a society we must do all we can to help them when they come home – employers across the UK can benefit from our veterans' vast wealth of knowledge, skills and experience to help their organisation grow and thrive.

The policy, which delivers on the government's manifesto commitment, was launched in April 2021. The move is part of wider incentives to support

veteran employability, including the roll out of the 'Great Place to Work for Veterans' scheme across government.

This National Insurance contributions holiday provides an incentive for employers to hire veterans. Businesses will benefit from the numerous transferable skills veterans gain in service, including collaboration and dedication.

The relief is available to all employers of veterans, regardless of when the veteran left the regular armed forces, providing that they have not been employed in a civilian capacity since leaving service. The relief will be available to all qualifying veterans each time they leave HM Armed Forces.

Employers will be able to claim National Insurance contributions relief on the earnings of qualifying veterans. A person qualifies as a veteran if they have served at least one day in the regular armed forces.

Detailed guidance on how employers can claim back national insurance is available [here](#).

[UK backs hydrogen technologies with £400 million awarded to Johnson Matthey](#)

- £400 million government-backed loan given to Johnson Matthey, which is developing global solutions to the climate crisis
- Cash boost will help deliver Government's [Ten Point Plan](#) for a green industrial revolution
- Biggest single investment for a UK company researching hydrogen-based energy and re-usable technology of its kind will help tackle climate change and reach net-zero

The UK will be a step closer to reaching net-zero by 2050 as the government has underwritten a £400 million loan to boost research and development in sustainable technologies today (Wednesday, April 6).

The loan will be given to Johnson Matthey (JM), which is a world-leading multinational company based in London, specialising in sustainable technologies ranging from metal recycling to green hydrogen. The financing is being provided by HSBC, Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation and Bank of America, with the government backing it via UK Export Finance.

JM will be investing in the latest research and development into sustainable technologies across the globe. This will support high-skilled jobs at home, with the company employing thousands of people in green jobs across the UK in

Hertfordshire, Swindon, Lancashire and London.

With further investment in hydrogen technologies, we can heat our houses, have fleets of hydrogen HGVs across the country and provide the fuel needed for heavy to abate sectors, such as steel or glass making.

International Trade Secretary, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, said:

Investments in Hydrogen technologies will blast domestic energy production higher than ever – securing the future supply of cleaner energy at home and helping us to export abroad. This will make for a healthier, wealthier future for the UK while protecting the planet.

JM is a global leader in producing sustainable chemicals and technologies such as hydrogen that could power homes, transport and industries worldwide. The company has strong green credentials and 95% of its sales and R&D spend will contribute to sustainable projects by 2030.

In its agreement with HSBC, Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation and Bank of America, JM has committed to a reduction in its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and to decarbonise its energy procurement, with progress against its GHG reduction goals to be independently monitored by a third party.

Stephen Oxley, Chief Financial Officer at Johnson Matthey, said:

The announcement today demonstrates the strength of JM's commitment to sustainability goals and targets announced last year. The loans will help support the significant investment we are making to help create a cleaner, healthier world.

[UK medics provide training to frontline workers in Malaita Province](#)

The UK Emergency Medical Team who travelled to the province on 24 March was deployed to work alongside the Solomon Islands Ministry of Health and Medical Services and the World Health Organization to strengthen the country's Covid-19 response.

Since January 2022, Solomon Islands has been affected by community transmission of COVID-19, which has spread across several regions of the country. Reports from across the country indicate that Solomon Islands is in

the midst of a wave of Delta and/or Omicron.

Team Leader and Public Health Specialist, Ms Eunice Chege said:

We did a rapid assessment of the COVID situation at both hospitals and found a number of issues including not having in place proper standard operating procedures, lack of proper case management and care of patients among others.

Twenty-five participants including three from Atoifi hospital in East Malaita took part in the two weeks of training and mentorship since Friday 1 April 2022.

The Public Health Specialist said despite Kilu'ufi and Atoifi hospitals being very old with equipment capacity issues, she hopes participants will utilise the knowledge and skills gained through the training to respond to COVID-19 cases efficiently.

Dr. Eunice Chege the UK Emergency Medical Team Leader said the team is honoured to support the Solomon Islands:

It is my hope that we shall make a difference through training and mentorship in the provinces as this brings better access and quality health care closer to the people.

The team consists of 10 experienced staff, including doctors, nurses and humanitarian health programme management experts from the UK, Netherlands, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Italy.

They will provide on-the-job clinical support as well as training and capacity building in infection prevention and control and COVID-19 case management to health professionals in Solomon Islands.

The team have six more weeks in the country to work with community and health workers.

British High Commissioner to Solomon Islands and Nauru, His Excellency Thomas Coward said:

COVID-19 has negatively affected Solomon Islands' health system and economy, with the number of daily cases being a real concern. The deployment of the UK Emergency Medical Team will provide expertise to Solomon Islands health care professionals, building their capacity to respond better and more effectively to the on-going health crisis and ultimately save lives.

The deployment of the UK Emergency Medical Team will help address critical gaps in the COVID-19 response by providing assistance in the provision of

direct interventional clinical support to allow local practitioners to better handle patients with varying levels of acuity, and to operate in a safe and secure manner.

Government future proofs Britain's energy system with launch of new body to boost energy resilience

- Government to create new Future System Operator (FSO) to oversee UK energy system
- new body will boost security and resilience of UK energy supplies and support transition to net zero emissions
- proposal follows consultation with industry who backed the creation of a new public body

The government has today committed to delivering a new public body to strengthen the resilience of Great Britain's energy system.

The Future System Operator (FSO), to be launched once legislation is passed and timelines have been discussed with key parties, will look at the Great Britain's energy system as a whole, integrating existing networks with emerging technologies such as hydrogen.

The FSO will be a new public body founded on the existing capabilities of the Electricity System Operator (ESO), and, where appropriate, National Grid Gas (NGG). It will work with energy suppliers and networks to balance the UK's electricity systems and ensure continued energy resilience and security of supply for households and businesses. It will also provide strategic oversight of the UK gas system by taking on longer-term planning in respect of gas (but not real-time operation, which will remain with NGG).

With high global wholesale gas prices and renewed pressure on energy networks following Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, consumers are facing increased costs and there is an urgent need to safeguard and boost domestically produced energy.

Today's announcement comes ahead of the forthcoming Energy Security Strategy to be published later this week which will set out our approach to ensuring greater clean energy independence for Britain. Government, Ofgem, National Grid and the ESO have agreed a joint statement published alongside this announcement, which sets out their shared vision for the FSO and their commitment to working together to deliver it.

Energy Minister Greg Hands said:

Russia's appalling aggression in Ukraine amid escalating global gas prices has shown the vital importance of strategic change to the UK energy system. We need to boost our energy resilience, reduce our dependence on expensive imports and slash emissions. The FSO will do just that.

Jonathan Brearley, chief executive of Ofgem, said:

A fully independent system operator will help to transform Great Britain's energy system and cut customers' energy bills. Critically, the FSO will ensure that we will build a smart, efficient and flexible system that will mean that Britain moves to a secure low carbon and low-cost system.

We look forward to working with National Grid, government and the wider industry to implement this important change in the way the energy system is managed.

Fintan Slye, Executive Director, Electricity System Operator, said:

We warmly welcome today's announcement that the ESO will be at the heart of the system operator of the future. Building on our track record and skills as a world leading system operator, together with industry and government and regulators we will help deliver an affordable, reliable and clean transition for all.

The ESO will continue working closely with all parties involved in the coming weeks and months to enable a smooth and successful transition.

The move aims to further build the resilience that energy providers and billpayers need. This will deliver greater energy security whilst ensuring the clean energy produced by the UK's burgeoning renewables sector gets to the homes and businesses which need it across the country.

As a trusted and expert body at the centre of the gas and electricity systems, the FSO will take a significant role in shaping the energy system and facilitating competition, overseeing new projects and integrating them with existing energy supplies.

The announcement follows extensive consultation with the energy industry, where there was broad agreement that Great Britain needed a new public body with operational independence from government, to oversee developments across the UK's energy networks.

The operator will take a whole-system approach to coordinating and planning the network, looking across electricity, gas and other emerging markets such as carbon capture, usage and storage, as well as offshore wind networks.

The FSO will also have a duty to provide independent advice and technical input to the government and industry regulator, Ofgem, to inform key strategic policy decisions.

The consultation responses, published today, also give Ofgem a new strategic function overseeing energy companies' governance codes. This decision is expected to result in a long-term net benefit for industry and consumers, by ensuring that the detailed technical and commercial rules which guide energy providers keep pace with our net zero ambitions and deliver for UK consumers.

The creation of the FSO and the government's reform to the governance arrangements of the energy codes are set out in the official response to the consultations launched in July 2021.

Stakeholders broadly endorsed the proposed changes in consultation, with many arguing for these high levels of ambition and citing a clear need for more coordinated, strategic and whole systems planning.

We will work closely with National Grid, NGG and ESO over this period with a view to the FSO starting operations as early as is consistent with a smooth transition whilst avoiding disruption to current energy system operation activities.

There are other proposed roles for the FSO which are closely linked to other strategic work being undertaken by BEIS and/or Ofgem, which respondents agreed needed further consultation and engagement as the details are further developed.

The consultation responses also set out our decision to create a new governance framework for the energy codes, which will entail granting Ofgem new strategic code functions, including the ability to select and license code managers, in order to better enable strategic change to the codes and create a more responsive regulatory landscape.

This decision is expected to result in a long-term net benefit for industry and consumers, with no adverse material impact on consumer energy bills.

Health and Social Care Levy to raise billions for NHS and social care

- From today the Health and Social Care Levy will begin raising billions to tackle Covid backlogs and reform routine services
- £39 billion over the next three years will put health and care services on a sustainable footing
- Levy will deliver biggest catch up programme in NHS history and end spiralling social care costs

From Wednesday 6 April, the Health and Social Care Levy will come into effect and begin to raise billions to help tackle the Covid backlogs and reform the adult social care system.

Over the next three years, a record £39 billion will be invested in the health and social care system to ensure it has the long-term resource it needs to provide world-class care, while delivering the biggest catch up programme in the NHS' history.

The pandemic put unprecedented pressure on the NHS. The number of people waiting for elective care in England is over 6 million – up from 4.4 million before the pandemic – and this is expected to rise, as up to 10 million people didn't come forward for treatment during the pandemic.

The necessary, fair and responsible Levy will reduce waiting times and deliver millions more scans, tests and operations, while reforming the way routine services are delivered so the NHS is fit for the future.

This means the NHS resource budget will increase to over £160 billion in 2024-25, including £5.9 billion of capital investment to support diagnostics, technology, and elective recovery.

The Levy will also reform the social care system, backed by £5.4 billion. It will end spiralling social care costs, provide a limit to the cost of care for everyone in the adult social care system for the first time, and significantly increase state support.

Prime Minister, Boris Johnson said:

We must be there for our NHS in the same way that it is there for us. Covid led to the longest waiting lists we've ever seen, so we will deliver millions more scans, checks and operations in the biggest catch-up programme in the NHS' history.

We know this won't be a quick fix, and we know that we can't fix waiting lists without fixing social care. Our reforms will end the cruel lottery of spiralling and unpredictable care costs once and for all and bring the NHS and social care closer together. The Levy is the necessary, fair and responsible next step, providing our health and care system with the long term funding it needs as we recover from the pandemic.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The pandemic put unprecedented pressure on the NHS and is causing the Covid backlogs. This investment will go into tackling those backlogs and will help make sure everyone can get the care and treatment they need.

We can't have business as usual, which is why we are rolling out

Surgical Hubs and Community Diagnostic Centres up and down the country to deliver millions more scans, checks and operations.

This vital funding will ensure the NHS is equipped to not only reduce waiting times but also tackle the big challenges we face – from cancer to heart-disease and dementia. We will also reform the adult social care system, invest in the workforce and protect people from catastrophic care costs.

Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak said:

This Government will not shy away from the difficult decisions we need to take to fix our social care system and slash NHS waiting times. The Health and Social Care Levy will fund a third more elective care, over 17 million extra diagnostic tests and a cap on the cost of care so people no longer live in fear of losing everything to pay for care.

The British people deserve the best health care in the world and delivering that is our top priority.

The record funding will help deliver:

- Around 30 per cent more elective activity in three years' time than before the pandemic.
- 17 million more diagnostic tests over the next 3 years.
- The expansion of operating theatres and diagnostic centres for cancer and other conditions.
- Better control for patients over their care, with more information and access to specialist teams. For example through the My Planned Care platform, now available to 5.5 million patients to find the average waiting time at their local hospital. In future the service will include advice on stopping smoking, diet and exercise, to help patients get ready for surgery and make sure they recover as quickly as possible. GPs and primary care teams will also be able to access the information, helping them to have more informed conversations with patients.
- A fair cost of care, £1.36 billion will support local authorities in England to move towards paying a fair cost of care to adult social care providers, ensuring market sustainability and preparing markets for reform.
- Charging reform, an £86,000 cap on care costs will be put in place in October 2023 so people can have certainty over how much they will need to pay, a measure backed by a further £2.2 billion.

Patients will also be offered the right to choose and more information on average waiting times at the point of referral. Those waiting the longest will be contacted by the NHS to be given the opportunity to change provider to reduce their wait. The NHS will support patients with travel costs if feasible and will engage with the independent sector so all options available. By the end of this year, all patients that have been waiting for

18 months or more will be contacted to discuss the choices they have about changing provider.

The Levy will end unlimited and unpredictable care costs. Currently, anyone with assets over £23,250 pays their care costs in full. From October 2023, anyone with assets under £20,000 will have their care costs fully covered by the state.

The cost of care is capped at £86,000 and raises the point at which people meet the full cost of their care from £23,350 to £100,000 – this is nearly four times higher than the current system.

People working in adult social care in England will also benefit from at least £500 million to improve recruitment, retention, progression and staff wellbeing. This will fund measures including continuous professional development budgets, investment in social worker training, and wellbeing and mental health support.

Work is already underway to deliver more tests and scans through up to 160 community diagnostic centres by 2025, which are more efficient and closer to home for patients. Seventy-three centres are already open, and another four are opening by the end of May. They have already delivered over 700,000 additional scans and tests, with around 30,000 tests a week.

The latest figures, due this week, are expected to show three quarters of a million additional tests were delivered for patients in need by the end of March. Alongside this, new surgical hubs will be added to the network of over 40 standalone hubs already operating across the country, helping to reduce waits for procedures such as cataract surgery or hip replacements.

The Levy will initially be based on national Insurance contributions (NICs) and from 2023 will be legislatively separate.

Every individual will contribute according to their means. Those who earn more pay more, with the highest 15 per cent of people paying over half the revenues.

Low earners will be shielded from the levy following action taken by the Chancellor in the Spring Statement last month. From July, the level at which people pay National Insurance on their income will rise to £12,570, saving a typical employee over £330 a year. The change does not affect the funding available to Health and Social Care.

This means that the NHS gets the vital funding it needs to clear the Covid backlogs but it's paid for by those with the broadest shoulders, whilst those on low and middle incomes are protected.