Gwyneth Nurse appointed as Director General, Financial Services at HM Treasury

News story

The Prime Minister has approved the appointment of Gwyneth Nurse as Director General, Financial Services at HM Treasury.

Gwyneth Nurse will take up her new role at the beginning of January 2022, taking over from Katharine Braddick.

A trained tax inspector, Gwyneth joined HM Treasury in 2003 and has held a number of roles including Deputy Director, Assets, Savings and Wealth, and Deputy Director, Banking and Credit. She is currently Director, Financial Services.

The Director General of Financial Services is responsible for leading the delivery of HM Treasury's work to promote stability, fairness, efficiency and competitiveness in financial services. She also leads the Treasury's relationship with the Prudential Regulatory Authority and the Financial Conduct Authority, and will represent HM Treasury on the Bank of England's Financial Policy Committee.

Information on the recruitment process:

- The recruitment campaign was a fair and open competition run according to Civil Service Commission rules
- It was advertised externally for four weeks. There were 21 applicants with three shortlisted for interview.

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First of new FDIS contracts comes into force in Scotland and Northern Ireland

The £160-million contract, which will provide key maintenance work, repairs, servicing, and hard facilities management to more than 4,400 Defence buildings across Scotland and Northern Ireland, is being delivered by Mitie on behalf of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO).

It is the first contract to come into service as part of the FDIS Programme, which is transforming DIO's approach to maintaining the Defence estate and aims to bring improvements to the experience of Service personnel.

DIO has worked closely with Mitie, outgoing supplier Amey, and its Armed Forces customers to ensure readiness for the new contract and to do everything possible to minimise disruption to personnel as the new arrangements come into effect.

The new contract aims to make a real difference to Service personnel. It has been designed with customer satisfaction at its heart and includes performance incentives, which will encourage continuous improvement throughout its seven-year duration.

The new arrangements allow for more efficient processes and the quicker delivery of high volume, lower value works, ensuring increased value for money. They also move away from 'fix-on-fail', instead focusing on delivering preventative maintenance and a lifecycle replacement regime. The contract is aligned to industry maintenance standards and will provide improved data management to support better decision making.

DIO's Chief Operating Officer David Brewer said:

> DIO is committed to delivering the best service it can to its Armed Forces customers and today marks an important milestone in the FDIS programme, as the first of the new contracts comes into service.
>
> Through collaboration between DIO, Mitie and the Armed Services the FDIS contracts will make a real difference to the experience of personnel, including improving accountability, increasing agility and providing better value for money.
>
> We look forward to working with Mitie to ensure that we deliver services that fully meet the requirements of our Servicemen and women.

Phil Bentley, Chief Executive Office, Mitie, said:

> As proud supporters of the British Armed Forces, we are honoured to have been selected by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation to provide these vital services. By combining our exceptional frontline colleagues with our industry leading technology, we will deliver safe, efficient and sustainable sites across Scotland and Northern Ireland and better places for the people of our military to live and work.

Air Cdre Ady Portlock, Assistant Chief of Staff Infrastructure (Air), said:

> The roll-out of the first FDIS contract is a significant milestone in Defence's ongoing journey to improve the condition of our infrastructure. The new contract is a major step change in the way we manage the Air and wider Defence Estate and I look forward to working with DIO, Mitie and the other FDIS contractors as each of the regions mobilise in the coming months.

The contract for Scotland and Northern Ireland is part of the £3-billion FDIS Programme, which is delivering new contracting arrangements for the Defence Built Estate, accommodation services and the Defence Training Estate.

The next Built Estate regional contracts to come into service will be the Central and South West regions in February next year.

Rail fares capped to prevent high increases for passengers

- government caps annual fare increase at 3.8%
- Book with Confidence scheme extended to 31 March 2022, supporting passengers as they return to the railway
- changes to rail fares will come into force in March next year, giving passengers more time to purchase cheaper flexible and season tickets at the existing rate

Next year's rail fare rise will be 3.8%, below the current retail price inflation of 7.1%. The government will not increase fares by the retail price index (RPI) rate plus 1%, as it did in 2021.

Until the pandemic, fares were raised in January each year by a formula based on the RPI rate of the previous July, 6 months beforehand. In 2022, the increase will take place in March, giving passengers more time to purchase cheaper flexible and season tickets at the existing rate.

Taxpayers have already invested over £14 billion to keep services running during the pandemic. The rise will help meet some of these costs and will also help pay for the service increases and improvements on many lines, which began this week.

To further support those returning to the railways, the [Book with Confidence scheme] has been extended, meaning that until 31 March 2022, passengers can change their travel plans up until the evening before departure without being charged a fee, or cancel their trains completely and receive refunds in the form of rail vouchers.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said:

> Capping rail fares in line with inflation while tying it to the July RPI strikes a fair balance, ensuring we can continue to invest records amounts into a more modern, reliable railway, ease the burden on taxpayers and protect passengers from the highest RPI in years.
>
> Delaying the changes until March 2022 offers people the chance to save money by renewing their fares at last year's price. That includes the 100,000 people who are already making savings with cheaper and more convenient flexible season tickets.
>
> We're driving ahead with the reforms in our Plan for Rail, creating a more passenger-focused railway that delivers a truly first-class service for everyone.

The government has also announced that the recently launched flexible season ticket has already been purchased by more than 100,000 passengers, offering savings for customers. This new product offers regular passengers the potential to save hundreds of pounds and far greater flexibility for those travelling 2 or 3 days a week.

Andy Bagnall, Director General of the Rail Delivery Group, said:

> The government's decision to hold fares down in line with July's inflation is welcome compared to last year's above-inflation increase and the rate of inflation right now.
>
> It is important that fares are set at a level that will encourage more people to travel by train in the future, helping to support a clean and fair recovery from the pandemic.
>
> We know the railway must not take more than its fair share from the taxpayer, which is why the rail industry is working to create a financially sustainable and more passenger-focused service – that will both keep costs down long-term and attract people back to the train.

Flexible season tickets are part of the reforms set out in the government's Plan for Rail, to give a better deal to commuters adopting new ways of working. Alongside this option are a whole host of railcards offering discounted travel for young people, veterans, seniors and more, helping ensure our railways are an affordable way to commute, travel and see the country.

The government is also pressing ahead with creating Great British Railways, to provide passengers with a single, familiar brand responsible for the railways.

Community Interest Companies Christmas opening hours

News story

Need to contact us over Christmas and New Year? Our festive opening times are

Monday 20th December – Office open as normal: 9am – 4.30pm

Tuesday 21st December – Office open as normal: 9am – 4.30pm

Wednesday 22nd December – Office open as normal: 9am – 4.30pm

Thursday 23rd December – Office open as normal: 9am – 4:30pm

Friday 24th December – Office open: 9am – 2:00pm

Monday 27th December – Office closed

Tuesday 28th December – Office closed

Wednesday 29th December – Office open: 9am – 3.00pm

Thursday 30th December – Office open: 9am – 3.00pm

Friday 31st January – Office open: 9am – 2.00pm

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Government backs social care with record funding

- New £1.4 billion fund to help local authorities offer a fairer cost of care to providers
- More than £1 billion for local authorities to support social care
- £300 million extra for workforce recruitment and retention

Care providers, residents and staff will all benefit from additional funding to support the social care sector.

A total of £1.4 billion will be made available over three years to help increase the fee rates local authorities pay to care providers.

Further funding of more than £1 billion will be available for local authorities in 2022/23 to fund social care. This will help councils respond effectively to rising demand and cost pressures.

This is on top of the £300 million announced last week for workforce recruitment and retention – taking the total to £462.5 million.

Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid said:

> It is vital we continue to do all we can to protect social care during the pandemic and it is more important than ever the sector takes advantage of its priority booster status since the emergence of the Omicron variant.
>
> At the same time we need to plan for the longer term – and this money and the details confirmed will help do that.

Many local authorities pay care providers less than the cost to deliver the care. This results in higher fees for self-funders and a lack of investment. This needs to be addressed to make social care more accessible and payments fairer – which is one of the pillars the ten year vision for adult social care reform – People at the Heart of Care – is based on.

This £1.4 billion will help local authorities to support a fairer cost of care.

It is part of the £5.4 billion Health and Social Care Levy which will also, through charging reform, protect people from unpredictable care costs and move to a position where people who fund their own care to access the same fee rates for care in care homes that local authorities pay.

The transformed social care charging system, which includes a significant increase in state support, will apply to people in both residential and at-home care and will set daily living costs at a lower rate than originally proposed, helping people save more money. It will mean nobody is forced to sell their home in their lifetime.

Together with the money from the local government finance settlement this will sustain and develop the care sector in communities across England with overall local government core spending power increasing by four per cent.

Minister for Care Gillian Keegan said:

> The measures announced in the past six months, and those to come on integration early next year, will mean transformational change for social care.

> Not only are we tackling the immediate challenges of COVID-19 but the longer term need to reform adult social care.

> This is the start of the journey but one we will take alongside caregivers, providers, local authorities and those receiving care.

The workforce survey, published today, has also shown what was already known, staff shortages and the pandemic have combined to leave the social care sector struggling in spite of the incredible efforts by staff.

This is why last week it was announced care workers will benefit from a £300 million extension, in addition to the £162.5 million announced in October, to support recruitment and retention. It can be used to pay for bonuses and bring forward planned pay rises for care staff, fund overtime and staff banks increasing workforce numbers up until the end of March. Grant conditions are being published today.

This is on top of the £500 million for workforce training, qualifications and wellbeing announced as part of the levy.

This is all part of the wider plans to improve social care and fulfil the ten year vision set out in the adult social care reform white paper – ‘People at the Heart of Care’. Further details on integration will follow early next year.