

140 companies honoured for outstanding support towards the Armed Forces

Representing the highest badge of honour, Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Awards are awarded to those that employ and support those who serve, veterans and their families.

This year's awardees brings the total number of Gold holders to 493.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans, Leo Docherty said:

I would like to thank all the organisations who have proven their support for the Defence community during such unprecedented and challenging times.

The vast range of those recognised this year demonstrates how employing the Armed Forces community makes a truly positive and beneficial impact for all employers, regardless of size, sector or location.

To win an award, organisations must provide 10 extra paid days leave for Reservists and have supportive HR policies in place for veterans, Reserves, and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers, as well as spouses and partners of those serving in the Armed Forces.

Organisations must also advocate the benefits of supporting those within the Armed Forces community by encouraging others to sign the Armed Forces Covenant and engage in the Employer Recognition Scheme.

This year, organisations include NHS trusts, educational institutions, financial services, hotels, charities, law firms, police services, football clubs and museums. Nearly 50 per cent are a small or medium-sized enterprises and 72 per cent are private companies, demonstrating the wide range of organisations offering support to the military community regardless of size, sector or location.

Daniel Frumkin, Chief Executive Officer at Metro Bank said:

I am absolutely delighted that Metro Bank has been recognised with this prestigious award. We are dedicated in our commitment to support both those that currently serve and those that have served our country including veterans, reservists and forces' families, as well as the communities in which they reside. Metro Bank will continue to honour and support this special community.

Rob Robson, Director of Levertch said:

Everyone at Levertch is delighted to be awarded Gold in the UK Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. We are proud of our record of working together as a business to support the Armed Forces community, be that through policies aimed at our Reservist and veteran employees, donations to military charities, or sharing our commitment to the scheme with our team, our clients and our supply chain.

We recognise the knowledge, transferable skills and comradery that Veterans and Reservists bring to our company and their contribution to wider society. We are determined to continue to improve the support we provide and increase our wider advocacy for the Armed Forces Community.

[Crime news: updating the police station representatives register](#)

News story

Register containing your data is available to view on our 2017 crime contract page and we need supervising solicitors to check for accuracy.



We are updating our police station representatives register and need the support of supervising solicitors of accredited representatives to help with this work.

What do we need to do?

Emails from the Defence Solicitor Call Centre (DSCC) will be going out soon

to supervising solicitors of accredited representatives with data validation forms.

These will be sent in the week beginning 19 July 2021. These need to be completed and returned as soon as possible to the originating mailbox:

dataupdate@dutysolicitors.org

Where is this information held?

The data can be found on our 2017 crime contract web pages and is a record of probationary and accredited representatives

What exactly are you checking?

The register contains a nominated supervising solicitor against each representative. But the information needs to be updated for accuracy.

Representatives who are no longer supervised or active need to have their practising PIN giving DSCC access suspended.

Impact of COVID-19

We are conscious the Covid lockdown impact may mean representatives have not been able complete the usual requisite 25 cases over the last 12 months. If that is the case you should make this clear within the 'comments'' section of the form.

We will not be validating probationary records as these applications are current and progressing through the usual accreditation process. We will also not be checking records of those representatives recorded as suspended.

Why are you doing this?

It is a contractual requirement for police station representatives to be supervised by a solicitor. Payments are made under the 2017 standard crime contract on that basis. So, it is important that we have accurate data to show that this is happening.

How long does the update take?

We expect the exercise to be completed by the end of August 2021. Failure to return a data validation form may result in representatives having their PIN cancelled.

How can I check for accuracy?

An updated register is published monthly and can be viewed along with other documents on the 2017 crime contract page.

Further information

dataupdate@dutysolicitors.org – mailbox to return data validation form

[Standard Crime Contract 2017](#) – to view police station representatives register

[DSCC online portal](#)

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[Insects make a beeline for wildflowers on Yorkshire road](#)

Highways England has transformed sections of the A64 along the York Bypass, the Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and Seamer from areas of open grass with occasional patches of scrub into species rich grasslands full of wildflowers.

More than 12 hectares – an area the size of 12 international rugby pitches – were seeded and planted at the end of 2019 and now, in Bees' Needs Week, more than two dozen different species are flourishing including yarrow, sneezewort, oxeye daisy, meadowsweet, betony, cowslip and devil's bit scabious, creating an attractive highway for insects.

Bees' Needs Week (12-18 July) is an annual event coordinated by Defra, working alongside charities, businesses, conservation groups and academic institutions to raise awareness of bees and other pollinators. [Read this previous press release.](#)

Tim Haskell, Senior Environmental Specialist for Highways England in Yorkshire and the North East, said:

Bees and other pollinators are a vital part of so many ecosystems. We rely on them to pollinate the food we eat and the trees and flowers that provide havens for wildlife. It's not an exaggeration to say that without them we would struggle to survive.

The reduction in wildflower-rich grasslands over the past 70 years is one of the biggest factors leading to declines in our native insect pollinators. Restoring and creating these habitats will help to reverse the loss and help to reconnect pollinators across the landscape.

We've been able to link up fragmented areas of species-rich grasslands to create a more joined up wildlife-rich, sustainable, diverse and aesthetically-pleasing grassland habitat on a landscape scale. Basically, the verges look good and do good and are a fantastic example of how Highways England is building back greener.

A bee orchid alongside the A64 near Askham Bog nature reserve

The locations were chosen because the verges are relatively wide and therefore less affected by vehicle pollution and spray from the road, and for the ability to improve connectivity with neighbouring wildlife sites such as the Askham Bogs nature reserve.

Biodiversity surveys will be carried out later this summer to identify further species that have been attracted to the area since the work began.

Highways England have funded support to this project through the Environment and Wellbeing Designated Funds programme. More information is available on the [Designated Funds webpage](#).

One of Highways England's key performance indicators is associated with improving the biodiversity on our network. Specifically, the company is required to achieve no net loss of biodiversity by 2025 and net gain in biodiversity by 2040 across its activities.

Highways England has also recently changed its verge creation policy, removing topsoil from new areas of grassland verge created by its Major Projects programme. This will make sure that new landscapes being created result in the right conditions for wildflowers to thrive as standard. This scheme demonstrates how Highways England works hard to balance the demands of running the high-speed road network with sensitive environmental management.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Norovirus outbreaks increasing in England](#)

The advice comes after [routine surveillance](#) shows that the number of outbreaks caused by the vomiting bug has increased in recent weeks (5-week period from end May to July), particularly in early year educational settings, and that cases are returning to pre-pandemic levels across all age groups and settings in England.

Norovirus is highly infectious and causes vomiting and diarrhoea but usually passes in a couple of days. It is easily transmitted through contact with infected individuals or contaminated surfaces. The increase in outbreaks has been mostly in educational settings, particularly in nursery and childcare facilities, with far more incidents reported to PHE than would be expected in the summer months. In the last 5 weeks, 154 outbreaks have been reported, compared to an average of 53 outbreaks reported over the same time period in the previous 5 years.

The overall number of laboratory confirmed norovirus reports across all age groups has also recently increased to the levels seen in previous years before the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Professor Saheer Gharbia, Deputy Director, National Infection Service, PHE, said:

Norovirus, commonly known as the winter vomiting bug, has been at lower levels than normal throughout the pandemic with less opportunity to spread between people in the community but as restrictions have eased we have seen an increase in cases across all age groups.

Symptoms include sudden onset of nausea, projectile vomiting and diarrhoea but can also include a high temperature, abdominal pain and aching limbs. Stay at home if you are experiencing norovirus symptoms and do not return to work or send children to school or nursery until 48 hours after symptoms have cleared. As with COVID-19, handwashing is really important to help stop the spread of this bug, but remember, unlike for COVID-19 alcohol gels do not kill off norovirus so soap and water is best.

How to reduce the spread of norovirus:

1. Stay at home if you are experiencing norovirus symptoms. Do not return to work or send children to school until 48 hours after symptoms have cleared. Also avoid visiting elderly or poorly relatives, particularly if they are in hospital.
2. Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly with soap and warm water. Alcohol hand gels don't kill norovirus.
3. When an infected person vomits, the droplets contaminate the surrounding surfaces. A bleach-based household cleaner or a combination of bleach and hot water should be used to disinfect potentially contaminated household surfaces and commonly used objects such as toilets, taps, telephones, door handles and kitchen surfaces.
4. If you are ill, avoid cooking and helping prepare meals for others until 48 hours after symptoms have stopped, as norovirus can be spread through food contaminated by the virus when food is handled by symptomatic people or infected individuals.
5. Wash any contaminated clothing or bedding using detergent and at 60°C, and if possible, wear disposable gloves to handle contaminated items.

Norovirus activity is now increasing and it is possible that unusual or out of season increases could be seen in the coming months, following further easing of COVID-19 control measures. PHE's National Norovirus Surveillance Team will continue to closely monitor all available surveillance data to ensure early detection of any unusual norovirus activity and outbreaks.

Those showing symptoms should avoid visiting their GP but if they are concerned should contact NHS 111 or talk to their GP by phone.

[Sellafield new build project powers ahead](#)

News story

One of the nuclear site's biggest ever construction projects has taken a huge step forward – 2 months ahead of schedule.



Construction continues on the The Sellafield Product and Residue Store Retreatment Plant

The Sellafield Product and Residue Store Retreatment Plant has received full business case approval from the government.

It means the project can now accelerate, leveraging investment from Sellafield Ltd and its delivery partners and creating long-term construction and manufacturing opportunities for the local and national economies.

Once complete, the building will treat and store historic nuclear waste. It will play a key role in delivering Sellafield's mission to create a safe environment for future generations.

The project is being delivered by Sellafield Ltd's Programme and Project Partners.

Steve Harnwell, head of the project for Sellafield Ltd, said:

This is a major step forward for the project.

It allows us to give certainty to our partners and be able to start making the large commitments for construction and manufacture required to progress and deliver this mission critical project within the wider UK supply chain.

The partnering approach to project delivery has provided confidence to the government that our cost and schedule predictions are realistic.

All this has helped deliver the business case early and allow this project to contribute to the first steps of improving project delivery at Sellafield.

Construction of the plant began in earnest in February 2020 with the laying of its vast base slab via 18 separate concrete pours.

But almost as soon as construction got going, COVID-19 intervened and work had to be suspended as the UK locked down.

It quickly bounced back becoming the first Sellafield project to return to construction post-lockdown in May 2020.

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