

[Change to pre-2012 income contingent \(ICR\) student loans interest rate](#)

News story

The Department for Education (DfE) has announced a change to the pre-2012 income contingent (ICR) student loans interest rate.



Pre-2012 income contingent (ICR) student loans have an interest rate of either RPI (from the March prior to the September when the new interest rates are implemented) or the Bank Base Rate + 1%, whichever is the lower (this is known as the “low interest cap”). The low interest cap mechanism means that the interest rate on Plan 1 loans may change in-year, if the Bank Base Rate changes.

On 3 February, the Bank Base Rate changed to 0.5%. This means that the Bank Base Rate + 1% is now 1.5%.

In line with this, from 3 March 2022 the interest rate for pre-2012 ICR loans will increase to 1.5%.

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[United Kingdom and Turkmenistan begin Structured Dialogue](#)

During the first day of the Dialogue, which was held virtually, representatives discussed a wide range of topics. One priority topic was the relationship between the UK and Turkmenistan in bilateral and international forums. Justin McKenzie Smith, Additional Director EECAD and co-chair,

highlighted the importance of laying the foundation for focused cooperation this year, which marks the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations.

Justin McKenzie Smith, Additional Director EECAD and co-chair

Co-chair Vepa Hajiyev, Deputy Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan, thanked the UK delegation for active participation. He stressed that discussions and exchange of views on bilateral, political and foreign policy, human dimension, climate change, trade and economy, as well as defence issues, will help to define new areas of cooperation. Exchange of views about the situation in both Afghanistan and Ukraine was also high on the agenda.

The second day of the Structured Dialogue was also rich in variety of themes. Vepa Hajiyev and Justin McKenzie kicked off the day with cooperation in the area of climate change. Speakers Janet Rogan, COP26 Regional Ambassador: Middle East and Africa, John Hamilton, Deputy Head of Mission in Ashgabat, and Mr Magtymguly Akmuradov, Ambassador and Counsellor of the International Organisations Department, took the opportunity to discuss post COP26 cooperation and how the United Kingdom can continue to support Turkmenistan reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

Janet Rogan, COP26 Regional Ambassador: Middle East and Africa

Magtymguly Akmuradov, Ambassador and Counsellor: International Organisations Department

Exchange of views about economic and trade relations between Turkmenistan and the UK was another highlight of the day. Jane Grady, Deputy Trade Commissioner for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and Ozgur Kutay, UK Export Finance, spoke about the UK export and finance offer and laid the groundwork for cooperation on green economy. British Ambassador to Turkmenistan, Lucia Wilde, highlighted that the UK has a great deal of expertise and experience to share with Turkmenistan regarding green economy, and is interested in deepening cooperation in this area. Mr Maksat Chariyev, Head of International Economic Cooperation at the Turkmen Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stressed the importance of bringing UK and Turkmen experts together and tapping into new areas of cooperation.

Both Turkmen and UK representatives concluded that the Structured Dialogue meetings had proved to be a very effective format for the two governments to discuss potential areas of cooperation in detail.

Later in the day, Mr Meredov, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and UK Minister for Central Asia, Lord Ahmed, held a virtual meeting. They closed the first meeting of the Structured Dialogue with a positive discussion about the situation in Afghanistan and Ukraine. They also exchanged views on regional stability, human rights, climate change and green growth. At the end of the meeting, the Ministers

signed a MoU on future cooperation between the two foreign ministries.

Skills and connectivity boost for East Yorkshire and the Humber as region is named UK's fastest growing region for digital jobs

- £37,500 invested to keep digital skills growing across the Humber region
- Boost comes as Hull and East Yorkshire named UK's fastest growing region for digital jobs
- 37 local primary schools get lightning-fast broadband for next generation of online learning

A new drive to improve the digital skills of thousands of people across the Humber is being launched today following match-funding from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). It comes as new figures reveal Hull and East Yorkshire's tech sector is one of the fastest growing in the UK.

Tech Minister Chris Philp is in Hull today to formally launch a new Local Digital Skills Partnership, a new campaign aiming to equip people for the region's digital jobs boom and ensure more residents can benefit from the thriving local tech sector.

New data from smarter job search engine [Adzuna](#) and Dealroom published today reveals the number of employees in Hull and East Yorkshire's digital sector is expanding at eight per cent per year, making it the fastest growing region in the UK for digital jobs.

It follows a [report](#) published by DCMS which showed the region's digital sector is expected to add an extra £1.6 billion to the economy every year by 2025 creating an additional 42,200 jobs.

The partnership – a coalition of local authorities, businesses and education providers – will make it easier for businesses and residents to identify gaps in their skills and access training on a range of topics from software development and data management to digital marketing.

It comes as the government continues its mission to level up communities and revolutionise public services with faster internet speeds, with the completion of a project to connect a raft of primary schools in East Riding with high speed and ultra-reliable gigabit broadband.

Digital Minister Chris Philp said:

Yorkshire and the Humber has massive potential to be a leading UK tech destination which will put rocket boosters on the region's economy and help unlock new innovations that improve people's lives. But we must make sure people have the skills and talents needed for these jobs of the future. Our Local Digital Skills Partnership will give residents and businesses the chance to be part of the digital revolution happening on their doorstep.

Following a successful independent pilot, the Humber Local Digital Skills Partnership has been match-funded by DCMS to continue its important work in the community.

Hull City Council Leader Daren Hale said:

The Humber region has led the way in boosting digital skills and creating opportunities in the digital sector, so I'm pleased that the government has recognised the success of the Humber Local Digital Skills Partnership pilot. The council has continued to support the LDSP, sitting on its steering group to offer support and expertise to help shape the digital future of the city. The partnership has proven to be very valuable to the council and the local economy.

Since 2018 DCMS has successfully run partnerships in seven other locations, including Lancashire, Cheshire and Warrington and the West Midlands. Being part of the partnership means local councils can benefit from monthly networking events and sessions with industry, learning from leading skills programmes like [Google Digital Garage](#) and the [Lloyds Bank Academy](#).

These initiatives have brought benefits including improved career opportunities for local people – including from groups typically underrepresented in the digital workforce – and a better understanding for businesses of the training provision available up and down the country.

Charlotte Collyer, South West LEP Digital Skills Partnership Manager, said:

The Heart of the South West LEP Digital Skills Partnership has been connecting people and businesses with high-quality, fully-funded digital skills initiatives for 3 years across Devon, Somerset, Plymouth, and Torbay.

The strategic input from DCMS Digital Skills Partnership Policy Lead and connections made through the DSP network has enabled us to leverage a significant additional investment for digital skills activity for our region and we welcome the opportunity to work with East Yorkshire and Humber DSP to share our knowledge and build best practice.

Today's launch comes as government-backed work, in partnership with East Riding of Yorkshire Council to connect 37 primary schools in East Riding is completed. This roll out will transform online learning opportunities for pupils and stimulate commercial investment in full fibre networks in the area.

Councillor Jonathan Owen, leader of East Riding of Yorkshire Council, said:

The successful delivery of these two full-fibre broadband programmes will be a boost to our more rural schools, making a welcome difference for both pupils and staff as they continue their learning.

We want to continue to provide the best, cutting-edge technological capabilities to our region, and this is an essential example of this forward thinking.

The gigabit broadband rollout in East Riding builds on Hull and East Yorkshire's high level of broadband coverage, with Hull benefitting from the best full-fibre broadband coverage out of all UK cities to support a thriving tech startup scene. Hull is home to more than 60 tech startups, including challenger broadband provider Connexin, which recently raised £80 million in investment, and product lifecycle management software Bombyx PLM.

Lucy Blackley, founder and director of Bombyx PLM, said:

Bombyx PLM had a brilliant 2021 – we've grown 300% over the past 12 months, added new clients in the UK and our team has increased to 10 people.

I couldn't imagine growing my business in any other city – the welcoming atmosphere at C4DI and the support network of other entrepreneurs in Hull have been integral in helping us achieve these fantastic results. I look forward to seeing what 2022 has in store for Bombyx PLM. Minister Philp will also visit Hull's Centre 4 Digital Innovation, a tech accelerator which helps new companies to scale and build connections within the local digital community.

ENDS

Notes to Editor: *□The Humber Local Digital Skills Partnership has been granted £37,500 in match-funding from DCMS. *An independent evaluation conducted by Amion Consulting assessed the impact made by six regions operating Local Digital Skills Partnerships in September 2021. The full report can be found [here](#). □The 37 primary school connections were funded via £847,000 investment from two government schemes: Local Full Fibre Networks (£508,000) and Rural Gigabit Connectivity (£339,000).□*

UK to bring in further sanctions targeting provision of insurance

News story

UK to bring in further sanctions targeted at the provision of insurance and reinsurance services for Russian companies



- Russian companies in aviation and space industry prevented from access to UK insurance sector
- Measure will severely limit access to the global insurance and reinsurance market

Russian companies in the aviation or space industry will be prevented from making use of UK-based insurance or reinsurance services directly or indirectly, the UK Government has announced today, in response to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

These further economic sanctions will limit the benefits Russian entities receive from their access to the global insurance and reinsurance market.

Through Lloyd's and the London Market, the UK is a world leader in these sectors of the global insurance market. In taking such action, the UK is demonstrating its commitment to apply severe economic sanctions in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The UK Government will bring in legislation to prohibit UK based insurance and reinsurance providers from undertaking financial transactions connected with a Russian entity or for use in Russia. Further details of the legislation will be available in due course. Coupled with similar actions by the EU, this move further isolates Russia's economy from the international financial system.

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Multi-million pound boost for new families as adoptions increase

Thousands of vulnerable children in care can find permanent homes faster, through a multi-million pound investment to support new adoptive families settle into their new lives.

Since the launch of the government's [National Adoption Strategy](#) published last summer, figures published today illustrate the impact of transformational reforms to the system, strengthening families across the country. The strategy aimed to tackle how long children wait in care, and figures show adoptions are on the rise and figures with a 23 per cent increase in the number of families approved to adopt, from 1,930 in September 2020 to 2,370 at September 2021.

The government is investing a new £160 million over three years to build on this support, removing remaining barriers and reducing delays for thousands more children still waiting in care, so they can be matched more quickly with the right family.

Adoptive families will also receive additional support including cognitive therapy, family support sessions and activities to help children recover from earlier traumas like abuse or neglect, helping them settle into their new families and homes.

The total investment includes £144 million for the Government's Adoption Support Fund to strengthen support for new and growing adoptive families, which has already helped nearly 40,000 adoptive families since 2015.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said:

The importance of a loving, stable family cannot be overstated, no matter what shape it takes. Family are crucial in giving children the warmth, background and opportunities they need to succeed in life.

We launched our National Adoption Strategy last summer, and I'm really encouraged to see it is already having a meaningful impact on the adoption system across the country, as waiting times for children in care reduce and they find the loving homes they need.

Whether it's through investing in adoption and our expanded Family Hub network, or looking into the findings from the upcoming Care Review, it is my mission to make sure that family stays at the heart of our policy.

Launched in 2021, the Government's National Adoption Strategy is improving adoption services in England by putting in place better recruitment across the country and removing any unnecessary delays, through more training for front line staff, improving approval process and funding for targeted recruitment campaigns. It has also resulted in improved working between Regional Adoption Agencies, Virtual School Heads and Designated Teachers, who are using best practice to drive up standards of support across the country.

The new funding includes £19.5 million to strengthen the work of Regional Adoption Agencies, to improve national matching between parents and children, and focus on recruitment of prospective adopters from all communities so make sure they are not deterred from the idea of adoption because of their background.

The Department for Education launched its recruitment campaign to find more adoptive parents in 2019, which includes a focus on prospective parents from Black and Minority Ethnic communities. New data published today shows an increase in the number of approved adopters waiting to be matched to children in care since this campaign started, with over 100 more adopters from Minority Ethnic backgrounds were approved at the end of September 2021: 590 compared to 450 at the end of March 2020 – an increase of more than 30%.

Overall, 3,700 children left care under a permanence order between April-September 2021-22 – either through an adoption or a Special Guardianship Order, where a close relative or family friend takes parental responsibility – an increase of 31% on the same period last year.

The number of children waiting longer than 18 months to be adopted has also dropped, despite the challenges faced by the care sector during the pandemic.

Research published today shows that boys aged 6 to 18 and girls aged 12 to 18 who were adopted into families benefitting from the Adoption Support Fund saw significant improvements in their conduct and aggressive behaviour. The data is made up of responses to two surveys; a baseline conducted between November 2018 and February 2020 and a second wave ending in March 2021.

Sarah Johal, National Adoption Strategic Lead, said:

I welcome the new funding for Regional Adoption Agencies which will help us transform the adoption system by bringing together best practice and testing out new innovative approaches to recruitment; matching; early help and adoption support. Our ambition is to ensure services are delivered to the same high-quality standards across the country.

Dr Krish Kandiah, Chair of the Adoption and Special Guardianship Leadership Board, said:

I'm delighted that the Government is investing significant new money into adoption. We need to make sure that we all working

together to help children get the families they need – loving families who will commit to them for life whatever trauma they have faced in the past and whatever their futures might hold.

The increase in the Adoption Support Fund will help ensure that adopted children and their families are given every resource they need so they can thrive together.

Dr Carol Homden CBE, Chief Executive of Coram, said:

It is vitally important to children in need of adoption that they find the loving home they need as early as possible and that, no matter where they live, they have an equal chance of accessing high quality support in a timely way to enable them to thrive. This strategic commitment and resourcing gives a welcome boost to this shared aim across the sector and the results will be seen in the lives of children for years to come.

Evaluation reports have also reflected on how post-adoption support, facilitated by the Adoption Support Fund, is helping families. Parents and carers said they most frequently accessed were focused on helping them form attachments as a family ('Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy'), therapeutic 'life story' work aimed at supporting open, honest conversations about a child's history, play therapy for the child, sensory processing therapy for children who have difficulties with change or transitions, or training for parents such as non-violent resistance or in building and nurturing attachments.