

[News story: War disablement pension rates 2018](#)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Tobias Ellwood) has announced the new rates of war pensions and allowances proposed from April 2018 are set out in the [War disablement pension 2018 rates document](#). The annual uprating of war pensions and allowances for 2018 will take place from the week beginning 9 April. Rates for 2018 are increasing by 3.0% in line with the September 2017 consumer prices index.

[Press release: Girls' education to be central pillar of UK foreign, development and defence policy](#)

Updated: Added translation

Championing girls' education to promote global stability will be at the heart of UK foreign, development and defence policy to positively transform the lives of women and girls in conflict settings, senior ministers have agreed.

At an event today (16 January) at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt, Minister of State for the FCO and the PM's Special representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon and Defence Minister Mark Lancaster will launch the [UK's fourth national action plan \(NAP\) on women, peace and security](#). The plan sets out how the UK will support women in conflict zones around the world to play an active role in ensuring peace and security in their communities.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

From Somalia to Syria, and from Burma and Afghanistan, women have been instrumental in the development of the UK's national action plan on women, peace and security.

It's a sad truth that women suffer disproportionately all around the world during times of crisis. It's essential to harness the huge potential of the next generation to work towards a more secure, more prosperous future. We know that women can be agents of change which is why DFID is placing women at the very heart of its

peace, security, education, and humanitarian programmes.

Minister of State for the FCO and the Prime Minister's Special representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

Conflict affects whole communities, but women and children are often the worst affected.

This year the Foreign Secretary and I will focus on ensuring that girls in the poorest countries in the world receive at least 12 years of quality education because this is the single most powerful spur to development and progress.

Without question women must have a seat at the table. We know that when women and girls participate in political processes, conflict resolution and mediation their contribution helps to build a more sustainable peace.

Defence Minister Mark Lancaster said:

Protecting human rights goes to the very heart of who we are as a nation, and our Armed Forces are leaders in this on an international level.

Our national action plan sets out to create a better future for women across the globe: in which there is zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, and in which women and men make a full contribution to the peace and security of all.

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by conflict and crisis and they are part of the solution. For example, evidence shows that when women participate meaningfully in peace agreements they are 35% more likely to last at least 15 years.

This NAP sets a bold new direction, putting women and girls at the heart of Britain's work to prevent and resolve conflict for the next five years.

Three new countries have been added to the plan Nigeria, South Sudan, Iraq in addition to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Libya, Syria, Burma and Afghanistan. The NAP sets out that to build sustainable and lasting peace and create stable societies, women around the world must be able to participate in peace processes and peacekeeping missions.

Read the new [national action plan](#).

Notes to editors

- the NAP will focus on 7 strategic outcomes where the UK can really make a difference (decision making; peacekeeping; gender-based violence; humanitarian response; security and justice; preventing and countering violence extremism; and UK capabilities) which are linked to the 4 pillars of Women, Peace and Security (prevention, participation, protection, relief and recovery)
- the NAP is part of the UK government's wider efforts on gender equality, which includes investing in teachers to provide quality education – making sure that children aren't just in school but are learning the foundational skills they need for work and life
- the Ministry of Defence has been training and mentoring thousands of African, Kurdish and Iraqi forces on combatting sexual violence in conflict situations
- through the NAP the UK will tackle violence against women and girls, and will ensure security and justice actors are held accountable to all the populations they serve including women. The UK support is also helping to drive up women's political participation in some of the most challenging contexts across the world
- as part of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, DFID's work is designed to meet the needs of women and girls and insist partners engage with women at all stages of design and delivery
- UK aid for the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh for example is helping provide: access to female bathing cubicles and sanitary items for more than 35,000 girls and women; counselling and psychological support for over 10,000 women suffering from the trauma of war and over 2,000 survivors of sexual violence; and medical help for over 50,000 pregnant women to give birth safely.

[**News story: UK fighter jets intercept Russian bombers approaching UK**](#)

airspace

Today (Mon 15 January), RAF Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) Typhoon aircraft scrambled from RAF Lossiemouth to monitor two Russian planes approaching UK airspace. The Russian Blackjack Tupolev Tu-160 long-range bombers were not talking to air traffic control, making them a hazard to all other aviation.

The RAF worked closely with NATO partners to monitor the jets as they passed through a variety of international airspace, before they were intercepted by the RAF in the North Sea. Subsequently, our fighters escorted the Russian Blackjacks north, out of the UK's area of interest. At no time did the Russian bombers enter UK sovereign airspace.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The threats this country faces are intensifying and we will not hesitate in defending our skies from acts of aggression.

Our excellent RAF tracked the Russian aircraft every step of the way, and they continue to police UK and international airspace every hour of every day, to help keep the British people safe.

RAF QRA was launched today because the Russian Military aircraft were not talking to air traffic agencies.

The RAF routinely intercept, identify and escort Russian aircraft that transit international airspace within the UK's area of interest and continue to be on call; 24/7, 365.

Speech: Statement on behalf of NATO allies, 24th OSCE Ministerial Council

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM
(ALSO ON BEHALF OF ALBANIA, BELGIUM, BULGARIA, CANADA, CROATIA, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, DENMARK, ESTONIA, FRANCE, GERMANY, GREECE, HUNGARY, ICELAND, ITALY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, LUXEMBOURG, MONTENEGRO, THE NETHERLANDS, NORWAY, POLAND, PORTUGAL, ROMANIA, SLOVAKIA, SLOVENIA, SPAIN, TURKEY, THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

This statement is delivered on behalf of the following participating States: Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, and the United States of America, as well as my own country, the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chairperson,

Arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation continue to play an important role in the achievement of our security objectives. Both the success and failure of these efforts can have a direct impact on our security environment. We welcome the Decision on small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunitions.

Enhancing military transparency and confidence in Europe is a top priority. We remain committed to conventional arms control as a key element of Euro-Atlantic security. Full implementation and compliance with these commitments is essential to rebuild trust and confidence in the Euro-Atlantic region. Russia's unilateral military activity in and around Ukraine continues to undermine peace, security, and stability across the region, and its selective implementation of the Vienna Document and Open Skies Treaty and long-standing non-implementation of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty have eroded the positive contributions of these arms control instruments. We call on Russia to fully adhere to its commitments and treaty obligations. Reciprocal military transparency and risk reduction have the potential to improve stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic area, helping to avoid miscalculation and misunderstanding. We are determined to preserve, strengthen, and modernise conventional arms control in Europe, based on key principles and commitments, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, reciprocity, transparency, and host nation consent.

We remain, inter alia, committed to improving implementation of and achieving concrete progress in 2018 on modernising the Vienna Document to adapt it to the evolving security environment, including through its substantive update. We welcome the wealth of concrete proposals aimed, inter alia, at strengthening risk reduction mechanisms, enhancing military transparency, preventing military incidents and rendering verification more effective. We call on Russia, which has a very substantial conventional military force, to constructively engage by joining other Participating States in the ongoing discussions in the OSCE to modernise the Vienna Document, so that we can reach agreement on meaningful updates. Full implementation and modernization of Vienna Document will help to avoid miscalculation and misunderstanding. We also underline that the OSCE remains a relevant and inclusive forum to rebuild trust and confidence through multilateral military dialogue.

We welcome the Structured Dialogue as an opportunity to renew a meaningful exchange of ideas among all of the stakeholders of European Security in the OSCE area to rebuild trust. The process will take more time but we value the significant, initial work done in the Structured Dialogue at OSCE during 2017, including discussions of threat perceptions, challenges to the rules-based order, military to military contact, and analysis of trends in military

force postures and exercises. We look forward to the continuation of the Structured Dialogue in 2018.

Mr. Chairperson,

The participating States subscribing to this statement request its inclusion in the journal of this Ministerial Meeting.

Thank you.

News story: Bids open to host annual Armed Forces Day National Event in 2019

In 2019, Armed Forces Day will celebrate eleven years of supporting our Armed Forces Community, from serving personnel and reserves to veterans, cadets and families.

The eleventh Armed Forces Day, on Saturday 29 June 2019, will be a chance for the British public to show their gratitude to the Armed Forces for their hard work and sacrifice, to keep us safe at home and abroad.

Defence Minister for the Lords, Earl Howe, said:

This is a fantastic opportunity for a town or city to be at the centrepiece of the nationwide celebration as events and celebrations take place up and down the country.

In recent years the Armed Forces Day National Event has been held right across the country, showing the spectrum of British society – from the nation's capitals like Edinburgh and Cardiff to Liverpool and coastal communities like Cleethorpes and Blackpool.

This year's event will be hosted by the historic North Wales seaside town of Llandudno. The hosts, Conwy Council, have a spectacular range of celebrations planned to show their gratitude to the Armed Forces community. Councillor Gareth Jones, Leader of Conwy County Borough Council, said:

We are proud and privileged to be named as the Host of the National Armed Forces Day in 2018.

Conwy County has a deep affiliation with the Armed Forces and a strong historical link. Llandudno will be a great destination to

showcase the outstanding work of the Armed Forces past and present.

The event will be supported by all the North Wales Councils and key colleagues across Wales. Serving personnel and veterans of our Armed Forces Community will be assured of a very warm welcome and an event that thanks them for their commitment to keeping the country safe.

Anyone interested in becoming the 2019 host should contact the Ministry of Defence Armed Forces Day team for more information by email at armedforcesday-events@mod.uk or by telephone on 020 7807 0970. The deadline for applications to be considered as host is 15 March 2018.

More information about Armed Forces Day is available at armedforcesday.org.uk