

The Orders of Knighthood

The honours system is made up of a number of different orders, decorations and medals. Each award recognises a different form of achievement. The Prime Minister's list is made up of honours from the four orders listed below:

- The Order of the British Empire was created in 1917 by George V. It is used today to recognise contributions from all walks of life and awards in this five-level order make up the bulk of each honours list.
- The Order of St Michael and St George is a three level order founded in 1818 to honour service overseas or in connection with foreign and commonwealth affairs.
- The Order of the Bath was established formally in 1725. It is a three level order and is awarded to members of the Civil Service and the armed forces.
- The Order of the Companions of Honour is a one level order limited to 65 persons who have made a significant national contribution to politics, science or the arts.
- The appointment of Knight Bachelor is similar to knighthoods in the above orders and it carries the title of Sir.

The Queen may also make awards in the Order of the Garter, the Order of the Thistle, the Royal Victorian Order, and the Order of Merit.

Gallantry awards

Bravery awards recognise specific acts by individuals who risk their own lives in order to save, or attempt to save, the life of one of The Queen's subjects. They are also used to recognise similarly selfless brave acts undertaken in the prevention of crime or in the arrest or attempted arrest of dangerous criminals.

For civilian awards, the Ceremonial Secretariat co-ordinates the assessment of nominations and submits them to The Queen for approval.

There are four awards:

- The George Cross
- The George Medal
- The Queen's Gallantry Medal
- Queen's Commendation for Bravery (or Queen's Commendation for Bravery in the Air)

Two lists of gallantry awards are published every year, usually in the spring and autumn.

For more information on recommendations for gallantry awards please contact the Ceremonial Secretariat on: 020 7276 2728.

In addition to the above there are a number of other medals and decorations awarded for military or civilian service. More information can be found on our website:

www.honours.gov.uk



A brief guide to honours



Who can receive an honour?

Anyone can be honoured if they reach the required standard of merit or service. Each honours list contains a wide variety of people from different backgrounds.

Specific attention is paid to those who:

- Have changed things, particularly in terms of practical achievement;

- Have delivered in a way that has brought distinction to British life and enhanced the UK's reputation in the area or activity concerned;

- Are examples of the best sustained and selfless voluntary service;

- Have demonstrated innovation and entrepreneurship;

- Carry the respect of their peers and are role models in their field; and

- Have shown sustained achievement against the odds.

On each honours list you will see the names of those working in the public services, the arts, sport, industry, science, journalism and broadcasting, as well as diplomats and members of the Armed Forces. The largest number of awards go to those providing services to their local communities, most of whom are volunteers.

People who are not UK nationals (or citizens of Commonwealth countries of which The Queen is head of state) are eligible to be considered for honorary awards.

How can I nominate someone for a national honour?

Contact us to get a copy of the nomination form and guidance notes. You can write, telephone, fax or e-mail.

Ceremonial Secretariat,
35 Great Smith Street,
London SW1P 3BQ

Tel. 020 7276 2777
Fax. 020 7276 2766

www.honours.gov.uk

Alternatively you can download the form from the website above.

Who administers the system?

The Civil Service is responsible for policy work and the administration of the selection of Knighthood at St James's Palace is responsible for investitures and the orders of Knighthood.

When are honours lists published or announced?

The honours lists are published twice a year at New Year and in mid-June on the date of The Sovereign's official birthday. Details can be found in The London Gazette and other newspapers.

What is the honours system?

The honours system is a means of recognising merit and service to the nation. There are several different types of award. Each award recognises a different type of contribution.

How does the system work?

The Queen awards honours on the basis of recommendations made to her by the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence. The diagram below illustrates how the Prime Minister's list is compiled and approved.

