



**AVON &  
SOMERSET**  
POLICE & CRIME  
COMMISSIONER

# Increasing National Gallantry Awards and Recognition for Police Officers and Staff of all Ranks and Positions









## Foreword from Home Secretary Suella Braverman

“

**I am privileged to regularly meet many incredible police officers as part of my role as your Home Secretary.**

”

“When I speak with officers from across England and Wales, or speak to the public about their experiences, the scale and consistency of your bravery comes through loud and clear. It is for this reason that I fully support PCC Mark Shelford’s moves to increase the number of gallantry nominations and why I am happy to endorse this guidance.

As Home Secretary, I am keen to see as many acts of bravery by the police recognised as possible. This can only be achieved if acts of bravery are identified, with nominations submitted to the George Cross Committee for consideration. This guidance, using Mark’s efforts to increase the number of gallantry award nominations for Avon and Somerset Police, will be to the benefit of all in England and Wales.”

August 2023.











**The idea for this guide dawned on me whilst being honoured to attend the National Police Federation Annual Police Bravery Awards evening.**

A ritzy affair but as each candidate's story of incredible bravery was read out, I couldn't help but wonder why they were not receiving National Gallantry Awards presented to them by the Crown? I considered initially if there should be a bespoke Blue Light Gallantry award? I sought advice from Gallantry award experts including Lord Ashcroft, Major General Patrick Cordingley DSO, the Office of the Chief of Defence Staff, and my now deceased brother Harry Smee. Finally, I and my team met with the Cabinet Office to discuss options. What came out of this research was that there was a perfectly good set of Gallantry awards available for non-military in peace time, but the 'system' had plain forgotten. So, in simple terms this guide is there for anyone

in the wider Police Family but also the other Blue Light Services especially aimed at the hard-pressed Chief Constables' Staff Officers as a guide rail. Thanks to my own team especially my Staff Officer, Inspector Stuart King, for his tireless work in making this happen.

A call to arms, please use this guide and its cousin to get our incredibly courageous and effective people the national recognition they so rightly deserve."

## **PCC Mark Shelford's aim is to increase National Gallantry Honours nominations and recognition of our Officers and Staff.**

**Mark Shelford, Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner, June 2023.**



Scan this QR code for more information about Gallantry Award Nominations.







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# Introduction

“The object of giving medals, stars and ribbons is to give pride and pleasure to those who have deserved them. At the same time a distinction is something which everybody does not possess. If all have it, it is of less value. There must, therefore, be heart-burnings and disappointments on the borderline.

A medal glitters, but it also casts a shadow. The task of drawing up regulations for such awards is one which does not admit of a perfect solution. It is not possible to satisfy everybody without running the risk of satisfying nobody. All that is possible is to give the greatest satisfaction to the greatest number and to hurt the feelings of the fewest.

**Winston Churchill (Prime Minister) - 22 March 1944**



**The principal Government committee concerned with honours and awards is the Inter-Departmental Committee on the grant of honours, decorations and medals (the HD Committee).**

The Permanent Under Secretary in the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Services Secretary are both members of this committee, and the Defence Services Secretary is the normal service channel to the committee, through the committee's secretary. The Secretariat of the Committee is the Head of Honours and Appointments Secretariat at the Cabinet Office. The HD Committee provides the mechanism for discussion of all matters relating to United Kingdom honours and awards and the committee is the only channel through which proposals for additions to, or changes in, the system, may be submitted to The Sovereign.

A sub-committee of the HD Committee, the George Cross (Military) Committee, is responsible for maintaining the standards of the civilian gallantry awards (George Cross, George Medal, King's Gallantry Medal, King's Commendation for Bravery and King's Commendation for Bravery in the Air).

## **Orders, Decorations, Medals and Commendations**

United Kingdom awards comprise orders, decorations, medals and commendations. Individuals may be appointed to an order e.g. Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) or Companion of the Distinguished Service Order (DSO), be awarded a decoration e.g. Conspicuous Gallantry Cross (CGC) or Distinguished Service Cross (DSC), awarded a medal e.g. George Medal (GM), King's Volunteer Reserves Medal (KVRM), Operational Service and War medals; Jubilee and Coronation medals and medals for Efficiency and Long Service (e.g. Long Service and Good Conduct Medal and Meritorious Service Medal) together with King's Commendations complete the range of State awards. These awards may only be worn by properly entitled personnel. Entitlement is usually derived by announcement in the London Gazette or through an entry on a service person's record of service which can be verified at the Ministry of Defence Medal Office.



## Wearing of Ribbons, Miniatures and use of Post-Nominal Letters

The ribbons of the orders, decorations and medals are to be worn once the award has been announced in the London Gazette, or otherwise authorised by the relevant service honours and awards authority. The appropriate miniature may also be worn with immediate effect from this date even though there will be a lapse before the full-size insignia is presented.

An individual may use the authorised post-nominal letters as soon as the award has been gazetted. A higher class in a junior order takes precedence over a lower class in a senior order as regards the arrangement of all post-nominal letters, e.g. KBE precedes CB. Where bars are subsequently awarded asterisks may be added to a post-nominal within titles and correspondence to denote this, e.g. DSO\*, DSO\*\*.

## Honour of Knighthood

An officer appointed to a class in an order carrying the Honour of Knighthood (e.g. KCB, DCB, KBE or DBE) may use the title 'Sir' or 'Dame' immediately once the award is announced in the London Gazette and need not wait until they have been invested by The Sovereign.

## Presentation of Honours and Awards, Decorations and Medals

In general, personnel granted honours & awards and decorations at Levels 1 – 3 will be presented with their award by The Sovereign or His representative at an Investiture. The presentation of Level 4 awards; King's Commendations and Mention in Despatches, will be made under single service arrangements.

## Force guidance on the wearing of Medals and Medal Ribbons (2023)

Medals, commendation with star and ribbon brooch bars may only be worn if authorised by the Sovereign or the Chief Constable.

Only official honours, decorations, medals, or emblems which you have been awarded on behalf of the Sovereign, and approved for acceptance may be worn. Awards will be worn in accordance with the official 'Order of Wear', published by The London Gazette.

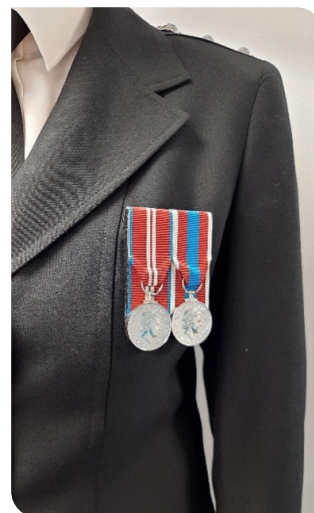
Unofficial, commemorative, and family member medals will not be worn whilst in uniform.

All medals must be either court mounted, or swing mounted onto a medal bar at the officer's own private expense. Unmounted or loose medals will not be worn.

Mounted medals will be worn at appropriate, authorised events and ceremonies, on the left breast of the ceremonial uniform (tunic), or civilian clothing for police staff, with the medal bar mounted above the ribbon bar(s). Medals will not be worn on any other police uniform style.

Medal ribbons may be worn mounted on appropriate ribbon bar(s) and will be worn on the left breast on the tunic, either centred over the pocket button or centred and horizontally in line with the bottom of the left lapel. Ribbon bar(s) may also be worn on the left breast of the body armour cover.

Each ribbon bar will not exceed four ribbons width. Additional ribbon bars may be mounted, but senior ribbons will move to the top, closest to the lapel. Incomplete rows will be centred above. See images below.









# Types of Gallantry Awards

You can recommend someone for the:

- George Cross (a first-level civilian medal for bravery, for acts of great heroism and courage in extreme danger)
- George Medal (a second-level civilian medal for bravery, for acts of great bravery)
- King's Gallantry Medal (a third-level civilian medal for bravery, for inspiring acts of bravery)
- King's Commendation for Bravery/Bravery in the Air (a fourth-level civilian medal for bravery, for acts which involve risk to life)



**Acts of gallantry in the police service normally attract the George Cross, George Medal or King's Gallantry Medal.**

**Acts of Bravery attract the King's Commendation for Bravery.**





## 1 The George Cross

The **George Cross (GC)** is the highest award bestowed by the British government for non-operational gallantry or gallantry not in the presence of an enemy.

The George Cross, since its introduction in 1940, has been equal in stature to the Victoria Cross, the highest military gallantry award. It is awarded “for acts of the greatest heroism” or for most conspicuous courage in circumstance of extreme danger, not in the presence of the enemy, to members of the British armed forces and to British civilians.



## 2 The George Medal

The **George Medal (GM)** instituted on 24 September 1940 by King George VI, is a decoration of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth, awarded for gallantry, typically by civilians, or circumstances where military honours are not appropriate.





## Types of Gallantry Awards

### 3 The King's Gallantry Medal (KGM)

The **King's Gallantry Medal (KGM)\*** is a United Kingdom decoration awarded for exemplary acts of bravery where the services were not so outstanding as to merit the George Medal, but above the level required for the King's Commendation for Bravery.

**\*Note:** KGM medal not cast at time of publication.



### 4 The King's Commendation for Bravery

The **King's Commendation for Bravery** is a United Kingdom award, open to both military personnel and civilians and was established in 1994.

The award is granted for bravery entailing risk to life and meriting national recognition, but not to the standard required of the King's Gallantry Medal.

Classed as 'level 4' awards by the Ministry of Defence, it is the lowest level of bravery award, alongside a mention in dispatches.





# Gallantry Award Nomination Guide

To nominate someone for a Gallantry Award you will need to carefully follow this guide, you can also visit the Government's own online guide to Gallantry Award Nominations - <https://www.gov.uk/honours/recommend-bravery-award>.

You will need to follow the guidance below before completing form GA1, which is available from the Chief Constable's Office - see pages 15 to 19.

Once complete, **please contact the Chief Constable's Staff Officer** to discuss your nomination. They will be able to provide further advice, guidance and ratification to proceed with **seeking approval from the Home Office to make the nomination**.

The **Chief Constable's Staff Officer** will supply the nominating Officer/Staff member with the contact details of the **Authorising Officer within the Home Office**.

The submission is then your responsibility to email/post your completed supported entry form GA1 to the: **Honours and Appointments Secretariat**.

**Email:** [honours@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:honours@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

**Post:**

Honours and Appointments Secretariat  
Cabinet Office

1 Horse Guards Road

London

SW1A 2H

## What happens after you've recommend someone for a gallantry award?

All recommendations will be assessed by the George Cross Committee, which makes recommendations to the King, who awards the honour.



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

# Gallantry Award Submission Flow Process

1

Read the Gallantry Award Submission guide carefully, further advice can also be found on the Government website: Recommend someone for a gallantry award - <https://www.gov.uk/honours/recommend-bravery-award>.



2

**Contact the Chief Constable's Staff Office** to obtain the **form GA1**. Once complete discuss your nomination with the Chief Constable's Staff Officer who will be able to provide further advice, guidance and ratification to proceed with **seeking approval from the Home Office to make the nomination**.



3

The **Chief Constable's Staff Officer** will supply the nominating Officer/Staff member with the contact details of the **authorising Officer within the Home Office**.



4

Once approval has been received from the authorising Officer within the Home Office, submit your nomination via e-mail to: **[honours@cabinetoffice.gov.uk](mailto:honours@cabinetoffice.gov.uk)** or post to Honours and Appointments Secretariat, Cabinet Office, 1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2H





# Police Submission For A Gallantry Award

## Form GA1 / Gallantry Award 1

This form is to be completed by the submitting Officer with the support of their Chief Inspector.

Please read the notes for completion at the end, before filling in the form.

<b>Submitting Officer and directorate/department:</b>	
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### PART 1 - Case Details

<b>1. Date of incident:</b>	
<b>2. Location of incident:</b>	

<b>3. Type of incident:</b>			
Accident		Armed individual threatening lives	
Car chase		Fire (in house of other)	
Rescue		Robbery	
Other (please specify)			

<b>4. Check list (Tick relevant box)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Are all relevant witness statements attached?		
Chief Constable etc recommendations attached?		
Photographs/map etc attached?		
Have experts been consulted?		

<b>If yes, please give details below:</b>



# Police Submission For A Gallantry Award

	Yes	No
Has any court/legal action been completed?		

**If yes, state outcome. If not, indicate expected date of trial etc. Please give details below:**

## PART 2 - Description of incident

**5. Description of incident (refer to attached guide): This will form the basis of the citation published in the London Gazette. Not more than 500 words. Avoid jargon.**



**PART 3 - Details of nominee (see note (ii) if more than one nominee)**

<b>6. Full name:</b>	
<b>7. Nationality:</b>	
<b>8. Rank/Occupation:</b>	

<b>9. Home address</b> <b>(If a posthumous award give name and address of next of kin)</b>	
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<b>10. Previous awards (Gallantry and meritorious)</b>	
--	--

<b>11. Level of award proposed for this incident:</b>	
a) by Nominator	
b) by Department	

<b>If (a) and (b) above are different, please explain why in the box below:</b>

<b>12. Other (local or specialist) awards for which the nominee is being, or has been, considered (e.g. Chief Constable's Commendation, Royal Humane Society award.)</b>





# Police Submission For A Gallantry Award

## PART 4 - Assessment of Nominee's actions

13. Tick the most appropriate box for each question. To succeed a nominee should have more 'X's than 'Y's.			
Tendency to:	X	Y	
Was the nominee:			
(a) fully aware			unaware of danger
(b) untrained			trained
(c) showing persistence			forced to retreat
(d) off duty			on duty
(e) unprotected and with makeshift equipment			wearing protective clothing of otherwise specially equipped
(f) unarmed			armed
(g) protecting third party			protecting self only
(h) in an unexpected or unplanned situation			taking part in a planned operation
(i) poor physical conditions (bad weather, dark, hot, cold)			good physical conditions (fine weather, good light)

**Comments:**



# Gallantry Secretaries' Handbook

## Introduction

**The aim of this handbook is to assist departments in considering people nominated for civilian gallantry awards.**

Gallantry awards are made to people who have demonstrated bravery, sometimes in the course of a single event and sometimes over a sustained period as part of their job. These are national awards, conferred by the Sovereign, and are therefore used to recognise only the most significant of acts. Like other forms of honour, gallantry awards are made after consideration of merit and precedents, based on the available evidence. Unlike other honours, they may be awarded posthumously.

Anyone can make a gallantry nomination, although the majority of recommendations are made through official channels (for example by the emergency services) where there is access to official evidence such as witness statements. This guidance gives details of the factors that departments should consider when investigating a case and which will be used in the assessment of nominations.

This guidance is not exhaustive. Further advice on how civilian gallantry works and how you recommend someone for an award can be obtained from the Honours and Appointments Secretariat in the Cabinet Office:  
telephone **020 7276 2777** or **020 7276 2081**.



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Annex 1	A Brief History of Civilian Gallantry

## Guidance for Departmental Honours Teams

Honours and Appointments Secretariat  
Cabinet Office  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

[www.gov.uk/honours](http://www.gov.uk/honours)

020 7276 2777 or 020 7276 2081

## Section 1 - An Overview of the Gallantry Process

### Departments' responsibilities - a summary

- Every department must have a designated contact responsible for gallantry nominations. This will usually be the person with responsibility for honours (section 2).
- Departments must undertake to investigate nominations and to sponsor them to the George Cross Committee where there is thought to be a case for national recognition (section 4). Nominations to the Committee must be approved by the department's Permanent Secretary or Chief Executive (section 2).
- Departments may arrange suitable publicity of awards they have sponsored. For the award of The King's Commendation for Bravery/Bravery in the Air, departments must arrange the presentation of the award (section 5).

### The assessment process - a summary

When a gallantry nomination is made, either by a member of the public or through an official route, the lead department in that area must take responsibility for investigating the claims of the case (section 2). Cases recommended for recognition are submitted to the George Cross Committee (section 4) which makes recommendations, via the Prime Minister, to HM King (section 4). Awards approved by HM King are announced in the London Gazette and on gov.uk (section 5).

### The awards - a summary

There are four levels of civilian gallantry (see section 2). In order of seniority:

- Level 1** - The George Cross (GC): the highest civilian gallantry award in the UK.
- Level 2** - The George Medal (GM).
- Level 3** - The King's Gallantry Medal (KGM).
- Level 4** - The King's Commendation for Bravery (KCB) and The King's Commendation for Bravery in the Air (KCBA).



## Section 2 - Departments' Responsibilities

### Which department is responsible for what?

The Honours and Appointments Secretariat in the Cabinet Office is responsible for the honours system, including civilian gallantry policy and processes. It receives public nominations and provides secretariat support to the assessment, approval and publication processes.

Government departments are responsible for submitting recommendations for gallantry awards in those cases which fall within their areas of responsibility. The main departments are:

- Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy: mining and industrial incidents.
- Cabinet Office (Constitution Group): civilians in the UK.
- Foreign and Commonwealth Office: anyone whose act of bravery occurred outside the UK.
- Home Office: police forces in England and Wales; the Fire and Rescue Service in England and Wales.
- Ministry of Defence: Armed Forces personnel involved in non-operational incidents, for example bomb disposal, intelligence and security work; or acting in civilian circumstances such as during a strike, air sea rescue etc.
- Ministry of Justice: HM Prison Service.
- Northern Ireland Executive: Police Service of Northern Ireland and Prison Service of Northern Ireland.
- Scottish Government: Police Scotland and the other Scottish emergency services.
- Department for Transport: rail, sea and air accidents and the British Transport Police (but not car accidents involving civilians - see Cabinet Office).
- Department for Work and Pensions: workplaces.

But other departments may occasionally also receive nominations.

### Who makes gallantry nominations?

Nominations originate from a number of sources. Unlike other honours, there is no standard nomination form, although the honours nomination form is sometimes used by members of the public. The public can make a nomination by writing to the relevant Government department. The emergency services identify possible cases and contact their parent department. Trial judges and coroners sometimes comment in their summing up about a person's bravery on the conclusion of a court case, which may be picked up by officials or journalists. Correspondence also comes in from MPs and other official sources. Departments should also keep an eye on incidents such as accidents and disasters, in case possible cases emerge.

### Gathering evidence

Departments must have procedures in place to identify and consider cases. The first step on receiving a nomination is to seek the advice of relevant expert advisers, officials or regulators (for example, HM Inspector of Constabulary or Air Accident Investigation Branch) and to gather as much evidence as possible to verify the facts. Evidence may include witness statements, photographs, accident investigation reports, police reports and trial transcripts. In some cases it may be necessary to liaise with other departments or agencies, if they have an interest in or can provide expert help with the assessment.



*It is essential to wait until all legal proceedings (including inquests) are complete before submitting a nomination, except in very specific circumstances where other pressures make this impossible. Such cases should be discussed with the Secretariat in advance. The aim is that a nomination should never prejudice or pre-empt legal proceedings.*

Departments should always carry out internet searches on both the nominee and the incident. This is particularly important in high-profile or potentially contentious cases but should be done as a matter of routine. Departments should highlight to the Secretariat anything which might have a bearing on the GCC's assessment of the case or which might be a presentational issue if an award is approved.

### **Confidentiality**

All enquiries made, and advice sought, in relation to gallantry nominations must be undertaken in confidence. Individuals should not be told they have been nominated for an award as it

could raise expectations of success and lead to disappointment if they are not met. Like other honours material, gallantry nominations should be held in confidence and all nomination material should be marked at least Official - Sensitive. Advice on Freedom of Information requests can be found in section 6.

### **What awards are available?**

When a department considers a nomination strong enough to submit to the George Cross Committee, it must propose a level of award. There are four levels of award for civilian gallantry.





<b>Level 1</b>	<b>The George Cross</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Granted only for acts of gallantry of the greatest heroism or of the most conspicuous courage in circumstances of extreme danger.</li> <li>• It may be granted posthumously.</li> <li>• It is restricted to British subjects.</li> <li>• Recipients receive their award at a Royal investiture.</li> <li>• Holders may use the post-nominal letters GC after their name.</li> <li>• Recipients of the GC receive an annual annuity.</li> </ul>	
<b>Level 2</b>	<b>The George Medal</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Granted for gallantry of an extremely high order.</li> <li>• It may be granted posthumously.</li> <li>• It is not restricted to British subjects.</li> <li>• Recipients receive their award at a Royal investiture.</li> <li>• Holders may use the post-nominal letters GM after their name.</li> </ul>	
<b>Level 3</b>	<b>The King's Gallantry Medal</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Granted for gallantry of a high order.</li> <li>• It may be granted posthumously.</li> <li>• It is not restricted to British subjects.</li> <li>• Recipients receive their award at a Royal investiture.</li> <li>• Holders may use the post-nominal letters KGM after their name.</li> </ul>	
<b>Level 4</b>	<b>The King's Commendation for Bravery / The King's Commendation for Bravery in the Air</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Granted for gallantry not up to the foregoing standards but entailing risk to life and meriting national recognition.</li> <li>• Both awards may be granted posthumously.</li> <li>• Both awards are not restricted to British subjects.</li> <li>• Recipients receive their award in a local presentation.</li> <li>• These awards do not give rise to post-nominal letters.</li> </ul>	

All the awards may be awarded more than once, if further acts of gallantry are performed and are considered worthy of recognition. For multiple awards, a bar is added to the ribbon of the GC, GM and KGM. Recipients of a King's Commendation may receive further Commendations.

### **Does the nomination meet the standard for national recognition?**

Gallantry awards are national honours. They are not intended to cover every act of bravery that occurs. Some acts will be more properly recognised by local awards such as the Commendations issued by Chief Constables, judges and Chief Fire Officers or awards from bodies covering specialist areas (for example St. John Ambulance or the British Red Cross) and other organisations (for example the Royal Humane Society or the Daily Mirror newspaper Pride of Britain Awards).

### **Making a nomination**

If the department considers that a national award is merited, they should complete the nomination form. This should be completed with reference to the criteria outlined in section 3 of this guidance and with as much detail as possible about the events in question. All relevant information and supporting evidence should be considered and included. If the department is aware of similar previous incidents following which individuals were considered for gallantry awards, they should also be detailed.



*Your Permanent Secretary or Chief Constable is responsible for gallantry nominations, as they are for other honours nominations. You must have their explicit approval before sending a nomination to the Honours and Appointments Secretariat for submission to the George Cross Committee.*

### **Timing considerations**

In line with the civilian honours and military medals policies, the George Cross Committee will not consider cases for awards arising more than five years after the event for which an award is sought took place.

Submissions should be made ideally within 12 months of the incident. The only exception to this is waiting for the outcome of judicial proceedings, for example an inquest, trial of suspects or an official accident investigation report. Any late submissions must be sent with a full explanation for the delay.

You can submit a gallantry nomination at any time and it will be considered by the George Cross Committee at the next available occasion. It may take several months for a case to be considered and an award approved and published. If there are timing considerations relevant to either assessment of the award or its publication, please let the Secretariat know.



## Section 3 - The Criteria for a National Gallantry Award

Once it has been decided that there is a case for a national award, a detailed assessment of the case should be undertaken to decide the appropriate level of recognition. As with other honours, policy is to try to avoid giving a person more than one medal or commendation for the same act, although occasionally both local and national recognition may be sought, particularly if there are delays submitting a case for a national award.

*In assessing a case, departments must bear in mind the points below and use them to suggest a possible level of award. Not all criteria will apply to every case, nor do they need to be given equal weight. But the more elements which are applicable to a nomination, the stronger it is likely to be.*

### (a) Acting above and beyond the call of duty

Members of the uniformed services and civilians should be treated in the same way when determining an appropriate level of award, although it should be borne in mind that civilians are not usually as highly trained as professionals. When assessing cases from the emergency services, including officers from the HM Prison Service, and other professionals such as ships' officers or pilots, it is important to establish that the officer was acting above and beyond the call of duty.

### (b) Risk

The degree of risk should be related to the level of award: a higher known risk to life strengthens a case. The table below is a rough guide to be used in conjunction with all other factors.

Risk of death	
George Cross	over 90%
George Medal	50 - 90%
King's Gallantry Medal	20 - 50%
King's Commendation for Bravery	below 20%

**Note:** this is a very rough measure. External organisations providing evidence to support a nomination should not be asked to give an assessment of risk of death.

At the highest level of GC, the hallmark is one of deliberate self-sacrificial heroism, generally over a sustained timescale, and with the imminent prospect of death and which may in a high proportion of cases lead to a posthumous award. (Of the 40 or so GCs awarded to date which are not war-related, about 60% have been posthumous.) This criterion should be considered in conjunction with the information in section 6 concerning posthumous awards.

Risk must be real as well as assumed: if a nominee thought that there might be danger but in reality there was none, the Committee will give less weight to the assessment of risk in the case.

## **(c) Choice**

It is important that the individual either:

- knew of the danger before taking action and had the opportunity to make a choice before proceeding; or
- once becoming aware of the danger, made a deliberate decision to continue to act positively in the face of that danger.

If the individual was caught up in a chain of events and took no positive action (for example, was a victim of circumstance), an award must be doubtful.

## **(d) Planning**

If the act of gallantry occurred during or as a result of a planned operation or an event for which the individual had been trained and/or was equipped to tackle, the degree of risk is reduced. Action in an unknown situation (for example, when a routine incident escalates into one involving firearms) weighs more heavily than acting in a similar incident when firearms are expected and officers are trained and prepared to deal with it. This aspect may have a bearing on the assessment of the action of civilians not belonging to the emergency services when faced with situations calling for a courageous response and for which they are not prepared.

## **(e) Persistence**

Individuals must have persisted in going forward in the face of danger. The exception to this rule is when their action may have been reckless or aggravated the situation, leading to increased risk to the lives of those involved. In some cases, awards may reflect courageous action in repeated incidents over an extended but coherent timescale.

## **(f) Protecting others**

Gallantry awards are available to those who attempt to save life but not to those who seek only to protect property. In some cases (for example, searching premises in the face of an immediate threat of fire or explosion to establish if people

are inside, even if it transpires that the property is empty), it may be appropriate to consider a gallantry award, provided the action was an attempt to save life. Self-preservation does not lead to an award, but due weight should be given to deliberate self sacrifice knowingly taken in order to save others.

## **(g) Physical conditions**

The physical surroundings - darkness, extreme temperatures or confusion arising from the scale of the event - may also influence the evaluation of the degree of risk. Photographs or maps are often helpful in clarifying these factors. A similar influence may be the extent to which one individual was the sole focus of attention (say of a gunman) or was part of a larger, widely spread group all dealing with the danger.



TRAFALGAR SQUARE, LONDON



## Section 4 - The George Cross Committee and Approval Process

### The George Cross Committee

National gallantry awards are considered by the George Cross Committee (GCC). The members are:

- Head of the Civil Service;
- Principal Private Secretary to HM The King;
- Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister;
- Permanent Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Defence;
- There are also two independent members.

The Honours and Appointments Secretariat provides secretariat support to the GCC, which meets at least twice a year.

### Assessment of nominations

The Secretariat considers the information supplied by departments and adds its assessment of the case, paying particular attention to precedents. If information is missing or inadequate to assess the case properly, the Secretariat will ask the department for clarification or to seek more evidence.

- The Committee will always want to see independent evidence, preferably from an official source like the emergency services.
- The GCC sees all the evidence submitted by a department and it is considered very thoroughly.
- Evidence must be submitted in a format suitable to circulate to the Committee and to a high standard of presentation.
- The GCC may ask additional questions about a case or how it compares to other similar incidents. You may wish to refer to previous similar incidents for comparison.

As appropriate, the Secretariat may also carry out probity checks on nominees.

*As outlined in section 2, the sponsoring department is asked to make an assessment of the right level of award and explain why. The Honours and Appointments Secretariat will review that assessment and may recommend a different level of recognition. The George Cross Committee may recommend any level of award, or no award at all, based on the available evidence.*

### The approvals process

If the GCC approves an award, a formal submission is made by the Chair of the GCC, through the Prime Minister, to The Sovereign for approval. Again, a summary of the case is sent to both the Prime Minister and The Sovereign so the department must ensure that the information submitted is complete and accurate to the best of its investigations.

### Contacting recipients

Departments are informed of the outcome, including when no award has been recommended. A reason is given if the recommendation is unsuccessful or the level of award has been changed from that proposed by the department. Departments are responsible for notifying nominators of the outcome of the submission, where appropriate. Where the emergency services are the nominators, this opportunity may be used

to explain any changes to the original level of award proposed, thereby providing information and guidance for future cases.

The Secretariat writes to recommended nominees at all levels. Although traditionally nominees for gallantry awards were not “sounded” to ask if they wish to accept the award, it is now usual practice to confirm that they wish to accept. Approaches are made in confidence and a nominee may refuse without anyone else becoming aware of the offer.

The letter gives the date for the publication of the list, which will be about a month in the future.

The letter will also include a copy of the information that will be published when the award is announced (as outlined in section 5) so that the nominee has the opportunity to comment on or amend errors. They can also opt to participate in publicity.

When the intended recipient is dead, their next-of-kin, their representative or their family liaison officer should be approached. Such letters should be written with due sensitivity for the impact of the bereavement and with the understanding that the (further) publicity brought by national recognition may not be welcome.

## Section 5 - Publication and Investitures

### Publication

Gallantry lists are published in the London Gazette and on gov.uk. Unlike honours lists, they are published as and when ready rather than on a regular timetable. Civilian gallantry awards to the Armed Forces are published in Military Operational Lists. Publication is coordinated by the Honours and Appointments Secretariat which leads for all lists except those to military personnel, which are handled by the MOD.

### Citations

Unlike for other honours where a “short citation” of only a couple of sentences is published, for gallantry awards a full paragraph citation is published. The Honours and Appointments Secretariat drafts a citation from the full nomination. This will give a broad description of the incident and of the recipient’s actions. A copy of this is given to the sponsoring department and to the recipient for comments. The citation is published in full in the London Gazette and on gov.uk, with the recipient’s name and the level of the award. Where the actions leading to the award are sensitive, alternative arrangements may be made after discussion with the Secretariat.

### Publicity

Lists are published in the London Gazette and on gov.uk. The Cabinet Office undertakes a

small amount of central publicity and will work with departments and external organisations as appropriate. Each department must decide whether and how best to publicise awards to their own networks, working with their press office and referring the Secretariat as necessary.

Sensitive cases, particularly posthumous awards, need careful handling. The Secretariat can offer advice if required. If press notices are issued, they should be consistent with the details of the incident published in the London Gazette and are subject to the usual embargo rules: as with honours lists, an embargo will be set by the Cabinet Office which must not be pre-empted. Any press notice should refer to the information on gov.uk for an explanation of how and why gallantry awards are made. The Honours and Appointments Secretariat would appreciate a copy of any press notice and/or local press cuttings for its records.

### Presentation

Recipients of the George Cross, the George Medal and the King’s Gallantry Medal receive their awards at an investiture. Arrangements for attendance at the investiture are handled by the Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood at St. James’s Palace, London SW1A 2BH (tel: 020 7210 5764) and all enquiries should be addressed



to them. The Secretariat notifies the Central Chancery of the awards and recipients' personal details.

The Central Chancery will usually agree that an incident involving several people receiving different levels of awards for actions in the same incident can attend an investiture together. An example might be an air sea rescue where the person winched down to a stricken ship might be awarded The King's Gallantry Medal but the air crew might be awarded The King's Commendation for Bravery in the Air. In such cases, the Honours and Appointments Secretariat will discuss this with the Central Chancery in advance.



Recipients of The King's Commendation for Bravery/Bravery in the Air receive their medals from a senior official, for example a Chief Constable, Chief Fire Officer or Lord-Lieutenant. It is the sponsoring department's responsibility to make arrangements for the presentation. These presentations fall to departments to co-ordinate, and if necessary, fund.

## Section 6 - Other Policy Considerations

### Injuries and death

As outlined in section 3, the degree of risk encountered by the nominee is an important criterion in assessing a gallantry nomination. However, a high degree of injury or the death of the nominee during/as a result of the incident does not necessarily lead to an award (or a particular level of award). Much will depend on the extent to which the risk of injury could be clearly predicted. On the other hand, an injury may demonstrate a higher degree of risk, unless the injury or death was accidental and would not normally have been expected (for example, the person had a heart attack). Injuries suffered by the individual before the act of courage (for example, a gunshot wound or severe burns) could enhance the degree of risk if the nominee put the needs of others before seeking treatment.

There is a misconception that if a person dies during an incident then that person must have therefore acted bravely. Death does not automatically mean that the person acted courageously in saving or attempting to save someone's life in the incident. The death may have been, sadly, a very tragic accident. Even when the individual is determined to have acted bravely,

that does not mean necessarily that a high award, like the George Cross, is justified. In consideration of the other criteria affecting the assessment, it may be appropriate to consider a lower award.

### Awards to foreign citizens

The George Cross is restricted to UK nationals but all other gallantry awards may be made to citizens of countries other than the UK if they saved, or attempted to save, the life of a UK citizen either in the UK or elsewhere. The procedure for considering the merits of the case is exactly the same as that for UK cases. If an award is approved, it will then be necessary to obtain consent for the award from the government of the person's country. The Honours and Appointments Secretariat will liaise with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (and the nominating department, when not the FCO) about such cases after an award has been approved by The Sovereign. Most civilian incidents that take place overseas are dealt with by the FCO.

### Awards for saving the lives of foreign citizens overseas

Careful consideration must be given when a department wishes to nominate someone who

has saved the life of a foreign citizen. Generally speaking, UK nationals who save, or attempt to save, the lives of foreign citizens in the UK should be handled as per any other nomination: the nationality of the person saved/assisted is not relevant to assessing the act of bravery.

UK nationals who save, or attempt to save, the lives of foreign citizens abroad should be usually recognised by the relevant foreign government (with The Sovereign's permission). It is for the authorities of the country of the person saved (or in which the event occurred) to consider the case under the rules of that country. The UK will not usually make its own award to avoid the possibility of "double medalling", i.e. recognising the same person twice for the same action. However, there are circumstances in which recognition by the UK will be appropriate. Such circumstances include when the nominee has also saved British lives; is acting on behalf of the UK (for example, in a humanitarian or other official context); or has saved people whose own government is not in a position to or would not wish to acknowledge the act. Further advice on specific cases can be sought from the Honours and Appointments Secretariat or the FCO.

## Freedom of Information

Departments may receive Freedom of Information (FOI) requests about gallantry nominations and awards, for example if a high profile nomination is delayed or unsuccessful.

Generally, honours information is covered by:

- **section 37:** conferring of honours and dignities, which is subject to a public interest test;
- **section 40:** personal information, which is an absolute exemption;
- **section 41:** information provided in confidence, which is subject to a public interest test.

Information on the general principles of gallantry which are in the public domain can be given, as well as about the general approach to assessing

cases. However, as a general rule, the Cabinet Office believes that the public interest test under section 37 is not supported by releasing details of individual cases. The Information Commissioner has consistently agreed with that approach. Advice on gallantry FOI replies should always be sought from the Secretariat, which may be able to suggest an approach or appropriate lines for use in the reply. Departments should never release information about a specific case without first consulting the Secretariat and the FOI Clearing House.

## Records

To maintain a consistent approach to gallantry awards, it is helpful for departments to maintain comprehensive records of nominations considered and awards made (or rejected).

## Forfeiture

As with other honours, gallantry awards can be forfeited if the recipient brings the honours system into disrepute. The Honours Forfeiture Committee will consider cases put forward by departments. Should a potential case occur, departments are asked to contact the Secretariat for advice on next steps.

## Appeals

An honour is a gift from The Sovereign as an exercise of the Royal prerogative. There is no right or entitlement of an individual to recognition. All nominees are recommended following an assessment process and any relevant probity checks. Consequently, there is no right of appeal against the decision of the GCC not to recommend someone for a gallantry award. However, the award of gallantry medals is subject to usual considerations of fairness and consistency of approach. It is important that the processes are demonstrably followed by departments and the Secretariat to ensure that the GCC's decision-making is robust and based on clear evidence.



# Annex 1: A Brief History of Civilian Gallantry

There is a long history in the UK of gallantry awards for brave acts undertaken through military service. Civilian gallantry awards were not considered necessary until the Second World War when the civilian population in the UK was subject to bombing. Accordingly, in September 1940, King George VI authorised the institution of the George Cross (GC) and the George Medal (GM) for acts of heroism and great gallantry other than in the face of the enemy. They became the first and second levels of civilian bravery awards.

Both the GC and the GM were intended to recognise acts by civilians but members of the Armed Forces operating in civilian circumstances (e.g. as bomb disposal officers or dealing with air accidents or bomb damage to military installations) were also eligible. In fact, in the first few years after its institution, the majority of GCs were awarded to the Armed Forces. A major difference at that time between the GC and GM was that the GC could be awarded posthumously, whereas the GM could not. This was changed in 1977 and today both can be awarded posthumously.

In June 1974, Queen Elizabeth II instituted The Queen's Gallantry Medal (QGM) for exemplary acts of bravery. This medal could be awarded posthumously and replaced the British Empire Medal (BEM) for gallantry as the third level of bravery award available to civilians. (The BEM is now used exclusively as a civilian honour)

The fourth, lowest, level of award is The Queen's Commendation for Bravery (QCB)\* and The Queen's Commendation for Bravery in the Air (QCBA)\*, as they are now known, which have been available since about the time of the Second World War

The Victoria Cross is the first level military award and the standard set for the GC should reflect a similar degree of heroism. The Conspicuous Gallantry Cross is the military equivalent to the GM, and the Military Cross to the QGM\*. The Queen's Commendation for Bravery (QCB)\* and The Queen's Commendation for Bravery in the Air (QCBA)\* are the civilian equivalents of the military Mention-in-Despatches.

Prior to the institution of the current gallantry awards, there were a range of awards designed to recognise bravery in specific situations. The most well known were the Albert Medal (for actions at sea and later on land) and the Edward Medal (for actions in mines and later in industry more generally). Awards of both these medals ceased with the introduction of the GC and GM, and holders were permitted to translate their awards into GCs and GMs.

There are Royal Warrants for the GC, GM and QGM\* but not for the QCB/QCBA\*. There is no limit to the number of awards available.

\*now King's or K.

At time of publication the King's Gallantry Medal had not been cast, the images used are of the Queen's Gallantry Medal.

**Correct at time of publication September 2023.**



Scan this QR code for more information about Gallantry Award Nominations.



# Increasing National Gallantry Awards and Recognition for Police Officers and Staff of all Ranks and Positions

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