

Helicopter Pilot

Helicopter pilots operate the flying controls, monitor the equipment and instruments and, on larger helicopters, instruct and supervise the crew members. They are responsible for the safety of all passengers and crew.

The Work

You could be:

- filing the flight plan, having checked for altitude, weather conditions and any airspace restrictions
- checking instruments, payload (weight to be carried) and the fuel requirements
- requesting clearance for take-off from air traffic control
- operating controls and instruments during take-off, flight and landing
- keeping radio contact with air traffic control and following instructions
- using instruments to navigate, whether in conditions of good or poor visibility
- ensuring the safety of passengers and keeping them informed about the flight and flying conditions
- shutting down the engines after landing
- writing up the flight report and the duty hours log.

Pay

The figures below are only a guide. Actual pay rates may vary, depending on:

- where you work
- the size of the company or organisation you work for
- the demand for the job
- your length of experience.

Helicopter pilots in their first four years earn up to around £30,000 a year. With more experience this can rise to around £70,000 or more, particularly if working in the oil and gas industry.

Conditions

- You would spend long periods sitting in the helicopter which can be a noisy, enclosed space.
- You may have to carry out speedy take-offs (within 15 minutes), landings and rescues in dangerous conditions, which will call for intricate manoeuvring.
- You may sometimes fly alone, taking sole responsibility for the helicopter.
- You may have to work irregular hours (although the number of hours is restricted by law), including weekends and nights.
- You may also have to spend occasional nights away from home.
- You would use headphones and communication equipment.
- You would wear a uniform or a survival suit if working over sea.

You could be involved in different types of work such as air ambulance, freight transport, construction (for example, carrying materials to the tops of buildings), oil rig supplies, crop spraying, aerial photography or

ordnance survey, environmental projects (for example, tracking the movements of salmon), charter or air taxi service for business clients, short pleasure flights for tourists, search and rescue in remote, coastal or mountainous areas or rescue work at sea.

Getting In

To become a commercial helicopter pilot you must gain the Commercial Pilot's Licence (Helicopter) (CPL(H)). This is the standard professional licence. Subsequently, you can go on to acquire the Airline Transport Pilot (Helicopter) Licence (ATPL(H)). This is the senior licence, which is necessary for piloting two-crew helicopters.

You can get the CPL(H) in one of two ways:

Modular Training

- This is a route for those who have already gained a Private Pilot's Licence (Helicopter) (PPL(H)).
- The PPL(H) licence is for private use only to fly with friends, relatives or colleagues and does not allow you to fly for 'hire or reward', or commercial use. But you can use it as an entry to commercial pilot training. Details of how to gain the PPL(H) can be found on the website of the British Helicopter Association (BHA). It will cost at least £12,000, possibly up to £20,000, to gain the private pilot's licence.
- You can't fly solo until the age of 16, and must be 17 before you can be granted the PPL(H).
- Having first gained the PPL(H), you would then be required to gain sufficient experience as a private pilot to achieve 155 hours total helicopter flight time, of which at least 50 hours must have been as pilot in command.
- You would also follow a commercial pilot's course through an approved 'Modular' Flight Training Organisation (FTO).
- This requires up to 500 hours of theoretical knowledge study, followed by 13 theory examinations.
- Study for the theoretical examinations can be taken in a classroom situation or by distance learning.
- Once the examinations have been completed, you would then commence a 35-hour commercial flying course, followed by a commercial pilot 'skill test'.
- If taken as a full time programme, it would take at least 9 months to obtain the CPL(H), and longer if the study is undertaken part time.

Integrated Training

- This route combines all aspects of the training requirements (flying and theoretical) and integrates them into a unified course.
- This course must be taken full time and is provided by an approved 'Integrated' Flight Training Organisation (FTO). The course lasts 12 months.
- Entry qualifications vary among training providers, but generally they would require a minimum of 5 subjects at National 5, including English and Maths or Physics as well as the satisfactory completion of aptitude tests.
- You may also be required to pass a professional pilot medical examination.
- The course covers 135 hours flying time, including 50 hours as pilot in command, and at least 350 hours of theoretical study.
- This is followed by the 13 theory examinations and then by the commercial pilot 'skill test'.

Fully qualified military helicopter pilots can convert their licence to allow them to operate as commercial pilots.

Whether Modular or Integrated, the cost for the complete CPL(H) course is in the region of £50,000 and, where relevant, the cost of board and lodgings is usually additional.

To fly across much of Europe pilots are required to be licensed by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). In the UK, EASA licenses are issued by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), who also issue and enforce the CPL (H).

Jobs can be with the oil industry, with police search and rescue or with private commercial companies.

There is a lot of competition for jobs. Before borrowing or spending the cost of training you should bear in mind that there is no guarantee of a job at the end of it.

What Does It Take

You need to be able to:

- communicate clearly
- concentrate on more than one thing at a time
- react quickly
- stay calm in a crisis
- take charge
- work either alone or as part of a team
- use your initiative.

You also need to be:

- reliable and responsible
- decisive
- alert
- practical
- well co-ordinated with good spatial awareness
- confident.

Training

- Having gained your Commercial Pilot's Licence (Helicopter), you can then go on to acquire the Airline Transport Pilot's Licence (Helicopter) (ATPL(H)). This is the senior licence and qualifies you to pilot two-crew helicopters.
- You would attend further courses throughout your career to keep up to date with new developments and new technology.
- You may undergo type rating training which qualifies you to pilot specific types and classes of helicopter.
- You may do advanced training to become an instructor.

Getting On

- You would start as a co-pilot or second officer, and with experience you could gain promotion to captain.
- You could take advanced training in order to become an instructor.
- You could become a self-employed pilot, or start up a business offering services such as air taxis, freight transport or pleasure flights.
- You could work in other parts of the world.

More Information

Although pilots are employed throughout the UK, there is a concentration in the east and south of England and in the east of Scotland.

Contacts

British Helicopter Association (BHA)

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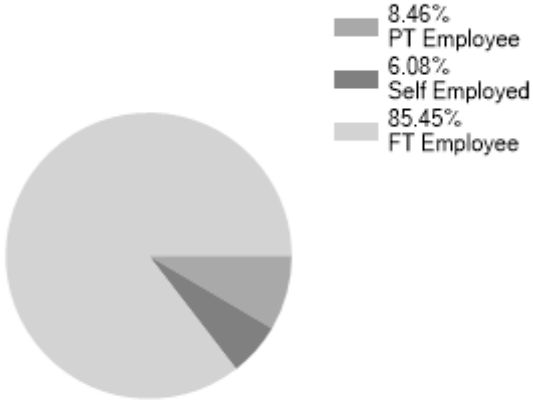
Website (2): www.careersinaerospace.com

Twitter: @AeroSociety

Facebook: www.facebook.com/RoyalAeronauticalSociety

Statistics

Employment Status UK %

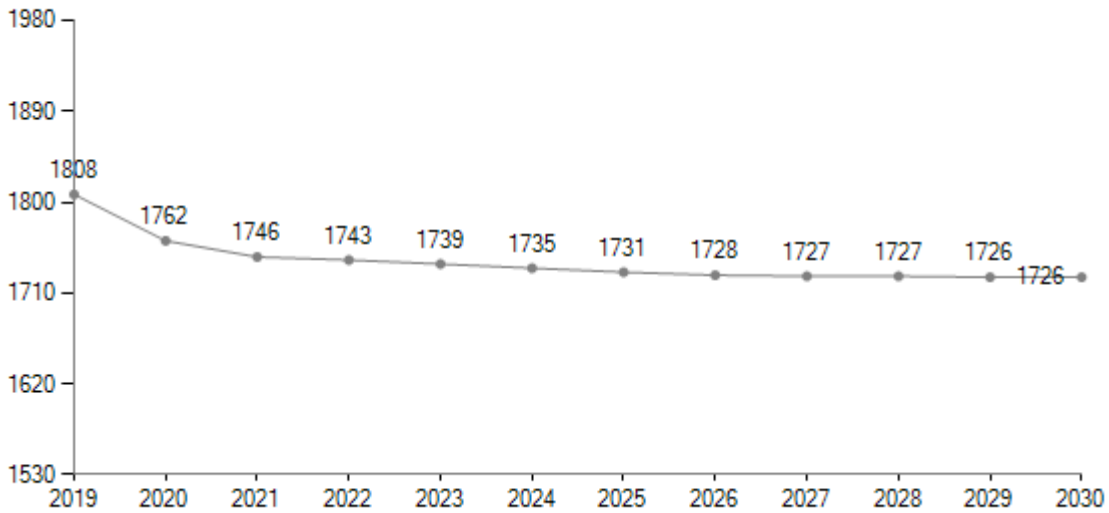


Past Unemployment - Scotland

No statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment in Scotland



LMI data powered by [EMSI UK](#)