

Ministers accelerating action on winter pressures

As part of intensive work across Government, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Kit Malthouse today gathered ministers to accelerate work on tackling winter pressures.

The meeting saw ministers update on how they are mitigating the challenges people may face this winter.

Those assembled, who will meet regularly to discuss progress, included ministers and officials from HM Treasury, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department of Work and Pensions, the Department for Transport, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and the Department for Education. Senior officials, including the Chief Medical Officer, also attended.

Ministers discussed the rising cost of living, energy prices, NHS pressures and industrial action, as well as the comprehensive work being undertaken to mitigate their impact.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Kit Malthouse tasked departments with a range of priority actions to take forward to ensure smooth preparations for winter and report back on their progress.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Kit Malthouse said:

The winter is always a challenge, but a particular difficulty this year is the number of problems coming together at the same time.

People are already feeling the squeeze of rising energy and fuel costs, and we are continuing to work on boosting our energy security to mitigate these. We also have the wider global inflation problem, which is further adding to the cost of living pressures. Our NHS is also still recovering from Covid-19 but is going into a winter where there may again be a rise of cases but also the usual seasonal flu.

My job is to test, challenge, and coordinate work across government, working with ministers and officials, as well as our partners and industry, to make sure we have a real grip of the issues and that they're all addressed at the same time, making sure we protect people as much as possible from the challenges this winter will bring.

The government has already taken a number of steps to mitigate the impact of the global spike in energy prices on the most vulnerable, these include allocating £37 billion of help for households including the £400 discount on

energy bills this winter, and £1,200 of direct support to help with the cost of living.

Elsewhere, the Department of Health and Social Care and the UK Health Security Agency are further developing their plans for health resilience at pace, including to boost the NHS and Adult Social Care workforce ahead of winter – this includes a new DHSC taskforce for international recruitment.

The Department of Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy is also continuing to strengthen its contingency plans for winter energy security. Equinor and Centrica recently signed a major agreement to shore up Britain's gas supply over the next three winters – adding around one billion cubic metres of gas per year to our supply.