

News story: Penny Mordaunt calls for action on sexual abuse within aid sector

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt has called upon the international community to step up alongside the UK to drive up safeguarding standards so that we can stamp out “horrifying” sexual abuse and exploitation from the aid sector.

Speaking at the first ever End Violence Solutions Summit in Stockholm, alongside Sweden’s Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Queen Silvia of Sweden, Penny Mordaunt issued a call to action to the whole international development community to bring about an urgent culture change and exhibit the moral leadership and transparency required to protect the most vulnerable – or face losing the UK’s partnership and support.

This follows Ms Mordaunt’s announcement earlier this week that the UK is taking urgent action to review safeguarding across all of its work and with all its partners. This includes introducing tough sanctions so that she can have absolute assurance that all partners are maintaining the high standards on safeguarding and protection that the UK requires.

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt said:

The sexual exploitation of vulnerable people, vulnerable children, is never acceptable. But when it is perpetrated by people in positions of power, people we entrust to help and protect, it rightly sickens and disgusts. And it should compel us to take action. [...] This past week has to be a wake up call. If we don’t want the actions of a minority of individuals to tarnish and endanger all the good work that we do, then we must all respond quickly and appropriately.

We must regain the trust of the public. We must make staff aware of their moral responsibilities as well as their legal duties.

But above all else, we must strive to ensure that no child, no one, is harmed by the people who are supposed to be there to help.

At the summit, Ms Mordaunt also announced her support (£5 million) to the End Violence Against Children partnership, which will see the UK teaming up with the biggest group of stakeholders in the world to investigate and implement solutions that work to keep children safe. Over a million children across the

world face some form of violence in their everyday lives – including modern slavery, child marriage, child labour and violence in schools.