

# Sellafield Ltd's chooses its local charities to support

Every year we ask our employees to help us choose our charities of the year, with funds raised split between organisations in West Cumbria and Warrington.

During 2019/20 employees helped to raise a massive £18,000 for MIND in West Cumbria and a further £11,000 for St John Ambulance in Warrington.

This year, due to Covid-19, we haven't been able to go through the normal selection and voting process, so went back to our 2019/20 shortlist to select a charity that had branches close to Sellafield and our Warrington offices.

Due to the impact the pandemic has had on local charities and the community, we wanted to choose a charity that has seen an increase in demand and will continue to provide much needed support in the future.

The selected charity – and our charity of the year for 2020/21 – is the Samaritans. Funds raised will be donated to [Samaritans of West Cumbria](#) and [Warrington and Halton and St Helens Samaritans](#).

Gary McKeating, Head of Community and Development said:

It's been so encouraging to see the continued commitment from our workforce to support local causes and volunteer in their local communities over the last few months.

The chosen charity scheme is not just about raising funds, it's about increasing awareness of the work that organisations in our communities do to support local people.

The Samaritans volunteers have seen an increased demand over the lockdown period and will continue to provide much needed help in the coming months.

The Samaritans answer a call for help every 6 seconds and they are there day or night for anyone who is struggling to cope, who needs someone to listen without judgement or pressure and help to prevent crisis.

They give people ways to cope and the skills to be there for others and encourage, promote and celebrate the connection between people that can save lives.

The Samaritans and NHS have been working in partnership, creating a confidential support line for NHS workers and volunteers in England, to help nurses, doctors and porters to caterers, procurement teams and service managers.

Glynis Peacock, Branch Director, Samaritans of West Cumbria said:

Covid-19 is affecting the way many of us live our lives and it's normal that this will affect people's mental health.

There are lots of unknowns about the immediate and long-term future, and it's becoming clearer that we are going to have to do things a little differently, particularly in the way we live our day-to-day lives. It's natural that uncertainty and change will affect people's mental wellbeing.

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## Homes England contracts Vistry Partnerships to develop more than 900 homes across two schemes

- At Sandymoor in Halton, Cheshire, 11 hectares of land will be developed to deliver 335 new homes.
- At the former Lea Castle Hospital site near Kidderminster, 600 new homes will be built.

Homes England has completed the sale of two sites to developer Vistry Partnerships which will see 935 homes be built.

At the Sandymoor site in Halton, the government's housing agency has concluded a deal with Vistry Partnerships to develop 11 hectares of land for delivery of 335 homes. The development will provide a range of housing types, including two, three and four-bedroom houses for market sale and affordable homes in a 100- apartment extra care scheme, to be delivered in partnership with Halton Housing Trust.

As well as using its land capabilities to bring the site forward for development, the agency also flexed its investment muscles and utilised a grant from the Affordable Housing programme to support the delivery of affordable housing in excess of what is required by the planning authority.

The wider 50-hectare Sandymoor site has capacity for up to 1,500 homes, where the agency has invested in infrastructure to bring the site forward for development in phases, with land with capacity for more than 550 homes having already been sold to Morris Homes, Barratt David Wilson and Bloor Homes.

Alongside new homes, the site already accommodates a brand-new secondary school and work is anticipated to start next year on the development of a new local centre to meet the needs of residents. Homes England is now working to

secure planning permission for the southern phases of Sandymoor and Wharford Farm, to bring forward further new homes.

In another recent deal with Vistry Partnerships, 600 homes will be built at the former Lea Castle hospital site near Kidderminster, with work set to start on site immediately. The scheme will be delivered by Lea Castle JV LLP, a joint venture between Vistry and Citizen Housing and will consist of one, two, three and four-bedroom homes in a range of tenures.

Detailed planning consent has recently been secured by Vistry Partnerships for the 49-hectare site via virtual planning committee, and this scheme will also deliver affordable housing in excess of what is required by the local planning authority.

As part of Homes England's commitment to placemaking, the agency is promoting adjacent land for employment opportunities, such as a community hub, flexible office space and a café and shop. The planning application is supported by landscape proposals which include open spaces, play areas, habitat creation and a woodland management plan.

**Stephen Kinsella, Chief Land and Development Officer at Homes England, said:**

These deals demonstrate that we're continuing to support ambitious partners who share our aim of delivering much-needed new homes. While the housebuilding industry is facing a challenging time, it's vital that we continue to work with partners to create development opportunities like this to help the sector recover.

At both sites we're delivering more affordable homes than were required, and at Lea Castle, development will be able to start on site immediately thanks to Vistry securing reserved matters planning consent via virtual planning committee.

We are very pleased to once again be working in partnership with Homes England to transform these two important sites. These vital developments will provide a range of new affordable homes, enhance the existing landscape and boost economic growth. They also increase the number of homes that we are currently delivering on Homes England's sites to over 3,000, exemplifying our reputation as a leading partnerships organisation.

Vistry Partnerships is absolutely committed to delivering quality homes to help support the UK economy as we begin our recovery and we already have more than 5,000 people working safely on 74 contracting sites and 34 mixed tenure sites across the UK.

## **Housing Minister Rt Hon Chris Pincher MP added:**

Building the homes we need is central to the mission of this Government, which is why we have safely reopened the housing market.

This announcement is a real statement of intent for Halton and Kidderminster, delivering nearly 1,000 homes and new neighbourhoods to be proud of – including plans for community centres and a new school.

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## **Universities Minister announces mental health support for students**

Good morning everyone. I am so pleased to be able to join you today and I'd like to thank HEPI for going ahead with this conference, in spite of Covid's many challenges. If the pandemic has shown us anything it is that it is so important to keep our communications going, and to keep talking to one another because the world hasn't suddenly ground to a halt and young people's hopes and aspirations haven't stopped. The same dreams are still being dreamt and their plans are still being made. I'd like to say at this point that I am so proud and grateful for the leadership our higher education providers have shown throughout the crisis, which has meant that students plans haven't had to be put on hold.

Universities didn't close and students will graduate as planned and new students will start university this year.

However, it is really important to note that this is also massively down to the resilience and resourcefulness of our students.

This is a really unsettling time for students, and we are working very hard with the sector to support them as we all try to adjust to this new way of living.

But I want to take this opportunity to basically say – hats off to our students – university is challenging enough time as it is – but this cohort have also faced an entire new set of challenges.

And in years to come I genuinely believe employers will seek out the students of today who will be synonymous with resilience, flexibility and determination.

So, as you know, last month my Department announced a package of measures to stabilise university admissions, relieve cash flow pressures on the sector and generally enhance the information available to students as well as support mechanisms.

Let me be clear, we want every student who wishes to go to university and who meets the entry requirements to do so, coronavirus or no coronavirus, but we had been seeing activities that were putting students under undue pressure like the 30,000 unconditional offers made in one week alone.

The controls we have asked for will help reduce pressure on students by allowing them the flexibility to work out what is right for them and what is in their interest.

Our package makes provision for higher education providers to recruit students up to a temporary set level. This has been based on forecasts from the sector themselves, which allows additional growth of up to 5% in the next academic year.

The Education Secretary may also allocate an additional 10,000 places on top of this, of which 5,000 will be allocated to students studying nursing or allied health courses.

I began by stressing the importance of talking to one another and we will continue to work closely with the sector in putting the policy into practice.

The impacts of this crisis are stark and they are varied, and I know that unfortunately this means some students will be far worse affected than others. I want to reassure you that we are very aware of this and I continue to work with the sector to ensure hardship funding is available. That is why we have worked closely with the OfS to enable universities to draw upon grant funding aimed at access and provision, worth up to £23 million per month from April to July, to use towards those funds.

When lockdown began, as we all know, universities needed to make sure that students would continue to get high quality teaching and assessment.

Provision did move online quickly, and in many cases within just 24 hours. Now we're in a position where the vast majority of HE providers plan to move to blended or dual provision for the next academic year.

So while courses and timetables are being redesigned to be suitable for these new styles of delivery and the next academic year already looks very different to what students may have expected; the depth and breadth of the curriculum, the quality of the teaching, and the value of the degree achieved, must stay the same.

Covid-19 could be with us for a very long time and as universities prepare for the next academic year, they may well be operating in a very different learning environment. Regardless of this, they must still make sure that all students, no matter what background, can expect to get the same kind of high quality academic experience that they would have done before the pandemic broke out.

The Office for Students, has published information and guidance for providers and The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education has developed a series of guides to secure academic standards and to support student achievement.

I must say I really was pleased to read HEPI's own survey that many providers have been pretty successful in meeting their students' academic needs. Students felt that overall, academic experience was better than expected, and that contact hours had actually increased. They were also doing more assignments, getting more feedback and were feeling more supported in their independent study.

This is quite frankly tremendous feedback and was partly achieved by making the most of educational technology. I do think this sets us up well for the future and I would encourage all providers to build on this as they plan ahead over the next few months and after Covid.

However, the HEPI survey also revealed that COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the experience of some students, both academically and in terms of their wellbeing, and no one can be surprised by this.

The survey found that students are reporting far lower levels of wellbeing compared with the general population which I find, and I'm sure you will find, deeply concerning.

I know that many universities have already put support services in place and I would like to use this opportunity to thank them for being so quick on the ball in responding to their students' needs.

When the pandemic struck my first letter to each institution specifically reminded them of their responsibility of care to students and especially in relation to student mental health. I made it clear that I expected support to be transitioned online, prioritised and bolstered where possible.

I know that some universities have for example been offering additional student check-in services, where staff have volunteered to provide direct support services, and others have enhanced their feedback and online wellbeing services.

In addition to this I also welcome providers reaching out directly to vulnerable groups of students, checking they are well and supported during this time.

Please don't let up on these efforts. Vulnerable students are going to need all the help they can get, especially those who are estranged or who are care leavers.

And to any student who is listening and who may be feeling anxious or need help, I would urge you to get in touch with your university's student support and welfare teams. They really will be able to offer you valuable help and support.

The Office for Students have published guidance on vulnerable students on a range of topics, to help universities give the best support that they can.

And I can confirm that student premium funding which I referenced before can be used during this time to support student mental health.

In addition to this, the £1m of funding that I announced in March for the OfS Challenge Competition to develop innovative approaches to addressing mental health challenges for at risk groups will also move this agenda forward.

Mental health and the wellbeing of all students, whether they come from here or further afield, must be a top priority and it certainly is one of mine. I don't want any student to feel that they cannot get help if they need it.

University is hard at the best of times, we all know that, but the challenges and upheaval that young people face can be compounded and create mental health problems. It's an area I feel we must continue to shine a spotlight on – now more than ever because I can only imagine the turmoil that adding Covid-19 into the mix must produce.

So that's why I have worked with the OfS and today I am delighted to announce Student Space, a new online resource that will be funded up to £3 million by the Office for Students, and led by student minds.

It will really enable all students at English and Welsh universities to have access to a variety of mental health and welfare support services.

They'll be able to draw on this whatever course they're doing or whatever university they're studying at and it will operate daily for a period of six months.

Student Space has been developed to close those gaps in student support services which have become apparent during the pandemic and is designed to work alongside the existing services.

It will offer a whole range of help including preventative support and immediate interventions for those in distress, from therapeutic interventions, to stress relievers, suggestions for strengthening mental health, and quality-assured online resources such as peer support platforms and volunteering opportunities.

I do believe that Student Space will make a true difference to so many students across England and Wales.

To conclude I want to reiterate my thanks to both staff and students, but let's be under no illusion – there is still significant work and challenges to face ahead as we ease out of lock down.

However, by working together we can continue to deliver for students and with the best Higher education offer in the world. And at the heart of this process we must keep the welfare and health of our students – who, after all, are actually the heart of all our Universities.

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# Self-employed new parents can claim support grant

News story

Further details of the change for self-employed parents will be set out by the start of July in published guidance.



Self-employed parents whose trading profits dipped in 2018/19 because they took time out to have children will be able to claim for a payment under the self-employed income support scheme (SEISS), the government has announced.

The scheme, which is one of the most generous in the world, requires claimants to have traded in 2018/19 with their profits making up at least half of their total income. They must also have submitted a self-assessment tax return on or before 23 April 2020 for the 2018/19 tax year.

The Treasury has ensured parents, including mothers, fathers and those who have adopted, who took time out of trading to care for their children within the first 12 months of birth of the child or within 12 months of an adoption placement, will now be able to use either their 2017-18 or both their 2016-17 and 2017-18 self-assessment returns as the basis for their eligibility for the SEISS.

They will also need to meet the other standard eligibility criteria for support under the SEISS. Further details of the change for self-employed parents will be set out by the start of July in published guidance.

The SEISS, which has so far had 2.6m claims, was extended last month, with those eligible able to claim a second, final grant in August, as well as being able to receive the first.

## **Further information**

- more information about the SEISS can be found in this [factsheet](#)

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## UN Human Rights Council 43: Interactive Dialogue on Mali

Mr Vice President,

The United Kingdom thanks the Independent Expert for his report.

We remain deeply concerned by the situation in Mali, and by the tragic impact that it has on the lives of many in the country. Since the suspension of this session, COVID-19 has added an extra layer of complexity.

We welcome steps taken to implement the peace agreement, but call on the Government to sustain momentum; this includes the enactment of the Inclusive National Dialogue's key recommendations. The Malian people urgently need their Government to provide basic services and good governance in all regions.

We support the Malian Authorities in the difficult tasks of restoring stability. The Government must respect its human rights obligations and take measures to prevent and punish violations and abuses committed by both state and non-state actors, including by delivering thorough, fair and impartial investigations into allegations.

Gender equality is fundamental to building peaceful, stable societies. The report's findings on the situation of women and girls is particularly concerning and we support calls to make the political system more inclusive.

Mr Tine,

How can the Malian Government best follow up on the report which will be published in June 2020 on historic crimes committed in Mali between 2012 and 2018?

Thank you