

International Development Minister thanks Brits fighting debilitating disease on World Polio Day

To mark World Polio Day this year, International Development Secretary Alok Sharma met with fundraisers, campaigners and polio survivors to thank them for their tireless efforts in the fight against the debilitating polio disease.

Speaking at the event, the International Development Secretary underlined the importance of support across society to end the disease, which can leave children unable to walk for the rest of their lives.

The commendable work of the Rotary Club's members was celebrated, with clubs around the world having raised almost \$2 billion to fight the disease. More than \$40 million of this was raised by the Rotary Club's 45,000 members in Great Britain and Ireland.

The UK is playing a leading role to eradicate polio, helping to immunise more than 45 million children around the world each year. The number of people contracting the disease around the world has been reduced by over 99.9% since 1988.

While only three countries in the world are yet to be declared wild polio free, experts predict that new cases could increase to 200,000 a year over the next ten years if efforts to fight the disease stall.

Speaking at the event, International Development Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Meeting with British people from across the country passionate about the fight against polio was a really uplifting moment. It was an honour to meet British polio survivors who have not only overcome adversity to succeed, but are now campaigning tirelessly to end the disease around the world.

We have made tremendous progress to fight the disease, and members of the Rotary Club here today have been pivotal in this, raising almost \$2 billion globally since efforts began.

The UK is the second largest government donor in the fight against polio globally, and this is something I am incredibly proud of. We need to continue this vital work to immunise children, both around the world and in the UK, to keep polio at bay.

If we were to pull back on immunisations, in a decade we could see 200,000 new cases each year, which would be a tragedy for the children and the families affected, but also the world.

British polio survivors from across the UK joined the event to talk personally about how the disease affected their lives and why it is vital we work together across the world to eradicate it once and for all.

Fundraising efforts led by the Rotary Club in the UK has included their famous “Purple for Polio” campaign, where fundraising efforts are themed by the colour dye used to mark children’s fingers when they have received the polio vaccine. Creative fundraising events have included purple ice cream and teddy bears with purple jumpers.

There are now only three countries around the world that have not yet been declared wild polio free – Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria – with Nigeria not recording a case in the last three years.

[General practice is the bedrock of the NHS](#)

Good morning.

It’s great to be able to join you today through the wonders of modern technology. And if this call cuts out it’s probably due to the patchy wifi in Westminster rather than a failure with the tech.

The Commons isn’t the most dynamic, fast-moving place – as you may have noticed.

I’m delighted to have the opportunity to speak with you today because, even amid everything that’s going on here, some things are more important than Brexit. Things like the NHS. Things like primary care.

Primary care is the foundation of the health service in this country, which means GPs are the bedrock of the NHS.

And, I’d like to briefly talk about 3 things that, I believe, are fundamental to getting that foundation right.

Number 1: people.

Number 2: structure.

And 3: tech.

I'll take each in turn.

First: people.

There are over 3 times as many doctors working in hospitals than there are doctors in general practice. And yet, last year, there were nearly 15 times as many GP visits as there were hospital admissions.

Clearly, there's a disconnect between those figures. And of course acuity is higher in hospitals. But the number of hospital doctors has gone up much faster than GPs.

More than a million appointments a day now happen in general practice, but, historically, we haven't prioritised general practice enough.

It's absolutely vital we get more people into general practice: we need to recruit more, we need to retain more, we need to make the perception, and reality, of being a GP as prestigious as any specialism.

So I'm delighted that the latest Health Education England figures for GP recruitment, published this week, show that 3,538 doctors have accepted a place on GP speciality training this year – the highest ever number in history.

This builds on the record numbers we recruited last year. And the 250 more full-time equivalent doctors we have working in general practice this year.

We need to go further and faster, and remain committed to recruiting 5,000 more GPs.

We have started to recruit an additional 20,000 clinical staff to support GPs in primary care within the next 5 years.

There's more money going into primary and community care: £4.5 billion extra each year by 2023 to 2024 – funding increasing faster for primary care than the NHS as a whole. Because we know there are staffing challenges and it's critical we address those challenges to build a sustainable NHS.

So that means building on our recruitment success, and addressing the underlying issues that affect retention: workload, pensions, pay, training. Doing everything we can to help experienced GPs stay on, or back into, the profession.

Second: structure.

I like to use this analogy: previously, many GPs were like soloists, or perhaps a string quartet – brilliant individual musicians.

But now, and increasingly in the future, you're going to be more like the conductor of an orchestra. Pulling together a team of specialists to produce something more than the sum of its parts.

So your specialist skill is still going to be vital to the delivery of

primary care, but you're also going to need another set of skills as primary care networks and multi-disciplinary teams expand.

Expanding your clinical skills, and developing your leadership skills.

And we have to ensure that leaders not only have the right numbers of people, but also the right structures in place to succeed.

We launched the landmark Clinical Negligence Scheme for General Practice in April.

And we're doing more to help you limit personal liabilities, reduce risk, and work in bigger teams.

We want to make it easier for GP practices to become mutuals.

And we're bringing forward a range of recommendations in the Partnership Review to make your lives easier.

Structure also means addressing the outdated practice preventing GPs from being listed on the General Medical Council's (GMC) specialist register. It's not right, and it doesn't reflect the increasingly important role GPs are going to play in the delivery of personalised, preventative healthcare in the future.

We will work with the GMC to change this and include GPs on the specialist register at the earliest opportunity.

But structure is also about process.

When I've seen practices and networks of similar sizes and similar demographics, the striking difference between the ones performing really well, and the ones who aren't performing as well, is the processes they have in place.

By changing the process, you can improve performance.

Just to give you one example I saw at the Quorn Medical Centre in Loughborough.

Their telephone triage system is excellent. Patients can get a same-day telephone appointment, and if appropriate, they'll be asked to come to the surgery, or directed to a pharmacist, or other primary or secondary care.

And the reason it works so well is because they have one of their most experienced GPs on the telephone triage system.

So many surgeries use their most junior staff, often the receptionist. But an effective and efficient triage system can make an enormous difference to access, and that's what matters most to people: feeling like you can speak to your GP when you need it.

And this a 150-year-old technology we're talking about – even Jacob Rees-Mogg

has one.

Informed by the access review, we will enable the spread of best practice to support practices and networks. Many will receive targeted support to help them adopt new ways of working, to free up time to improve access, and to implement best triage.

This will build on the good work already done by the Time for Care programme. That has already supported practices to free up more than half a million hours of time for patients.

Which brings me to the third, and final, thing I'd like to talk about today: tech.

Tech is our friend.

It's allowing me to speak to you now. It's going to transform the delivery of primary care.

And it isn't about replacing people, it's about enhancing what trained, skilled, experienced professionals can do.

So let me paint you a picture: you're a GP, you're also a parent, you're balancing work and childcare, like so many people do.

Using the tech of today, you can do video consultations, from your own home, after dropping the children off at school. You can advise, prescribe and book a patient in with a colleague at your GP surgery or primary care network.

Tomorrow, it may be other way around, with you at the surgery, and your colleague working from home.

Modern tech, allows for modern ways of working and living. It helps with recruitment and retention. And, above all, it means we improve access for patients.

People get frustrated by the lack of access, not just by the lack of appointments. At the moment, physical appointments are often the only way to get access, but as we expand phone and video, there's so much more we can do to help you do your jobs, and get the very best out of each and every one of our 44,570 GPs.

So digitising paper records, real-time and secure access to records for GPs and patients, IT infrastructure that works, inter-operable systems as standard, electronic prescribing to complement the millions of people now accessing GP services digitally – getting all of this tech right so we can deliver better care for people.

That's what all of us want.

And, I'd just like to end by paying tribute to someone, who has done so much to improve primary care, both for staff and patients: Helen Stokes-Lampard.

She's done a wonderful job as chair, and I would say I'm sorry to see her go, but she's only going as far as the new National Academy for Social Prescribing, where she'll still be championing general practice and leading the way on social prescribing.

So thank you, Helen, for your fantastic contribution, and I'd like to welcome Martin Marshall to this vital role.

I look forward to working with you because general practice has always been, and always will be, the bedrock of the NHS.

Thank you.

[Ambassador Marshall updates UK nationals in Luxembourg on Brexit](#)



Ambassador John Marshall answering questions

Addressing a full auditorium Ambassador Marshall delivered a presentation, focussing on a 'no deal' Brexit. With an emphasis on preparation he explained the steps necessary to ensure those attending were getting ready for Brexit.

The presentation, which is available on the [British Embassy Facebook page](#), discusses residency, the right to work, healthcare, driving licences, education and pets.

The session ended with an extensive Q & A session which gave guests the opportunity to express their concerns and seek advice on their individual circumstances.

Published 24 October 2019

Culture Secretary addresses Telegraph's Tech for Good conference

Thank you very much.

It is a real pleasure to be here to open this important conference on how to make sure that technology transforms lives for the better.

It is not an exaggeration to say that this is one of the most important policy questions facing Governments all across the world.

Get this wrong and we can entrench the divisions that exist in our society, and create tools for abuse and harm.

But if we get this right the opportunities are monumental.

To build a fairer and happier society, with more targeted services and a freer exchange of ideas.

So it is really exciting to me, and the Government that the tech for good movement has grown so rapidly in the past few years, and that so many of these pioneering firms are forming and basing themselves here.

We have so many tech for good firms in the UK and they have raised over a billion in total venture capital between them.

Our 'tech for social good' sector was worth 2.3 billion pounds last year, with a turnover of 732 million pounds.

This really demonstrates how the dial is shifting in favour of socially minded technology – and the wider tech sector is playing a role in this shift too.

From initiatives like Versus Arthritis, which is using IBM's Watson technology to deliver ongoing care and support to arthritis sufferers nationwide...

To Vodafone, who are using their expertise around connectivity to better understand how technology can help tackle complex problems like loneliness.

Because driving innovation and responsible technology are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they are mutually reinforcing.

Responsible technology builds the trust amongst users that is needed to ensure its widespread adoption.

And so before today's conference gets underway, I wanted to offer some views about the role we can all play – Governments, businesses and civil society –

to keep this momentum going.

Creating the right conditions in the UK

First, we need to create the right conditions right here in the UK.

It is fantastic that so many of our top tech firms are working on solutions to major social challenges.

And as technology plays an increasingly large part in our lives, Governments have a duty to support the firms who are able to make a difference.

One way of doing this is through a relentless focus on digital skills and tech talent.

As new technologies continue to change the nature of work, we need a digitally skilled workforce, so everyone can take advantage of the jobs and opportunities on offer, and nobody gets left behind.

So from making coding in the curriculum compulsory at school age, through to expanding digital training for adults, we have a far-reaching programme to support digital skills.

Just look at the activity this month. We have seen large scale investment in tech talent across all tiers, including new research programmes, and more AI masters places, thanks to new collaborations between industry and academia.

And today I am pleased to announce that we have appointed five new academic fellows, who will be working with the Alan Turing Institute, the UK's national institute for data science and AI.

The Fellows will be building research teams to secure the economic and societal benefits that AI can bring.

For example, one project will be using high performance mathematical simulations to develop new methods of building faster, lighter, and more sustainable aircraft.

And these five fellowships are just the start. We will be appointing many more as part of our mission to attract, retain and develop world leading AI academic talent.

Another aspect of this skills agenda is making sure charities have the digital capability they need.

If they embrace the tech for good agenda, then they can increase their reach, better serve their beneficiaries, and make their organisations more resilient in the face of ongoing change.

And we want to help them to do this.

Our million pound Digital Leadership Fund has given essential digital skills training to around 1,500 charity leaders, from the South West to the Scottish

border.

And we have also supported the Catalyst, a movement that aims to upskill 10,000 charities over the next two years to help them use digital to achieve their goals.

The Catalyst will massively accelerate how charities and voluntary organisations use digital, which means they can be even more responsive to the communities they interact with.

The second area where we are working to create the right conditions is making sure firms have access to investment.

Customers and investors are becoming increasingly discerning about where they spend their money and the impact that their purchases have.

But although last year investment in UK tech was the highest in Europe, social tech ventures sometimes report that they find it hard to raise capital.

And according to a report from Tech Nation, who I see are a Knowledge Partner today, 45 per cent of the companies that make up our tech for good sector are at seed stage.

So we need to make sure there is sufficient access to capital to keep these companies growing and thriving.

We have supported the creation of a fund, run by the Social Tech Trust.

This is aiming to raise up to 30 million pounds to focus on three key strands of investment; communities, health and financial inclusion, where targeted funding has the potential to transform society.

There are many success stories in this room today and we want to create even more.

Later you will hear from Paul Miller, the CEO of Bethnal Green Ventures, Europe's leading early-stage tech for good investor.

The Government has been a strong supporter of Bethnal Green Ventures, providing them with funding through our Social Incubator Fund.

Since then, along with other incubators and accelerators, they have gone on to help hundreds of Tech for Good organisations to scale.

Bethnal Green Ventures, as the name suggests, is based here in the capital, which has now been cemented as a global tech for good hub.

In London in 2016 there were 22,000 tech meetups, nearly three times that of Berlin, Paris or Amsterdam.

But the tech for good movement offers opportunities to promote thriving tech hubs outside the capital, and we are already making great progress here.

The data shows that median funding for tech for good firms is higher in the South West and Northern Ireland than it is in London.

So we must use this positive momentum to promote our regional economies and spread opportunity all across the United Kingdom.

International focus

But we cannot see tech for good as solely a domestic matter. In an increasingly connected world, we need to look internationally in our response.

The social issues that our tech for good companies are tackling, like climate change, healthcare and poverty, span borders and Governments.

So to fulfil the potential of technology we must work with global partners, share our best practice, and learn from innovation wherever we find it.

The UK is leading the global debate in this area.

And I want us to use our platform to keep advocating the values we believe in, to shape digital norms and ethics which balance security, openness, fairness, innovation and growth.

Part of this involves working with like minded Governments to develop meaningful frameworks on issues like online harms and terrorist material online, and we are seeing some incredible technological advances here.

But we also need to develop tech for good partnerships with other nations where the tech ecosystem is maturing; so we can support inclusive and sustainable development and create global social benefits.

That is why DCMS is establishing a network of International Tech Hubs, in a number of countries including Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Brazil, India and Indonesia, alongside the existing UK-Israel Tech Hub.

Led by experts from the local tech sector, the Hubs are focused on expanding and developing local digital economies and high-end digital skills.

This will support tech for good entrepreneurs, and provide opportunities for international partnerships and increased investment.

One of the network's flagship programmes is Go Global, which equips early-stage tech for good startups with the tools needed to expand globally. Earlier this year, Go Global Africa brought together 18 of the continent's most ambitious development-focused startups, who are using technology to solve important issues in their communities.

From social enterprises providing credit for women running small businesses in rural areas in Kenya...

to companies providing mobile-based health resources for pregnant women in Nigeria...

Go Global alumni are at the forefront of applying cutting-edge tech for good.

Throughout an immersive two week programme they exchanged ideas, learnt how to scale and grow their business, and showcased their innovations to investors and leading figures from the UK's tech sector.

This work is so important. Because tech for good is truly an international mission.

And if we want new technologies to reflect the values that we hold dear, then will need to form strong and enduring international partnerships with like minded nations.

Diversity

The final area I wanted to discuss today is very close to my heart – how we need to make sure our tech sector is representative of the people it seeks to benefit.

I am pleased to see that there is a session later today about diversity and inclusion.

Because so much of the tech for good agenda is about answering the ethical questions that underpin the development of technology.

Important questions like how to handle data and how to ensure algorithms are free from subconscious bias.

And the groups who are at risk from the adverse development of new technologies should be at the table when decisions like these are made.

So diversity, of all kinds, is a crucial element in the tech for good equation.

But the figures show that there is a lot of work to be done.

A Tech Nation report showed that while women make up 49 per cent of the workforce, they make up only 19 per cent of tech roles.

And Colorintech's FTSE diversity audit also found only 2.6 per cent of UK tech company board members were from BAME backgrounds.

So we are working to make tech open to everyone, whether it's through embedding tech in the school curriculum, or delivering flexible AI and data science conversion courses, and scholarships for under-represented groups.

We are already seeing the impact of the Digital Skills and Inclusion Innovation Funds, launched last August.

Totalling over 1.4 million pounds, the Funds have been supporting initiatives to tackle digital exclusion and help women, disabled people and residents in disadvantaged areas to gain vital skills to pursue digital careers.

And we are also striving to get greater diversity in tech roles through our

Tech Talent Charter.

Signatories pledge to implement recruitment and retention practices that will address the imbalance in so many tech roles.

We recently doubled our funding for this Charter, bringing it up to over 350,000 pounds to date.

Over 400 companies, from international tech giants right through to start-ups and charities, have already signed up, and I hope that those of you who haven't yet done so will look at doing the same.

Because decision making is always improved by diversity of thought.

And we will need to make use of all our available talent if we are to make this digital revolution a success.

Conclusion

Tech for good is at its core all about connections.

Connections between the tech sector and civil society.

And connections between like minded businesses and nations all across the world.

Events like this one today are so important in forging connections, and encouraging the exchange of ideas.

And tech for good pioneers like those in this room will not only make technology better, they will make the world better.

So please keep innovating and creating, and forging a better future for us all.

Thank you very much.

International Partnership Programme wins Better Satellite World Award

The Agency's International Partnership Programme (IPP) has been honoured by the Space & Satellite Professionals International (SSPI) in their fifth annual Better Satellite World Awards.

The awards recognise those who make the world a more prosperous, healthier, better-educated, sustainable and inclusive place.

Dr Graham Turnock, Chief Executive of the UK Space Agency, said:

Our International Partnership Programme is the world's largest space programme for sustainable development and it's doing fantastic work delivering innovative solutions to problems all over the globe.

We are proud of the difference IPP makes to the lives of those in developing and emerging countries, while supporting jobs in the UK, and I am delighted this has been recognised by SSPI.

IPP is an annual £30 million space development programme established in 2016. It focuses on utilising the UK space sector's research and innovation capabilities to deliver sustainable economic and societal benefits to emerging and developing economies around the world.

The Better Satellite World Campaign, run by SSPI, works with partner associations and dozens of supporting companies around the world to change the global conversation about satellites and promote their influence on the economy, business and societies everywhere.

The selection of the recipients for the Better Satellite World Awards was made by an international jury consisting of a broad cross-section of industry thought leaders and distinguished professionals.

Other winning recipients include Geeks Without Frontiers, which aims to bring broadband connectivity to an estimated 3.5 billion people, and BIRDS Satellite Project, which trains graduate students from developing countries in using systems engineering.

The recipients will be honoured at the Better Satellite World Awards Dinner on 2 December in London.