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[Health and wellbeing amongst staff](#)

It's a pleasure to be here.

My team have been really excited about the work that has been going on, which I will come onto in a minute.

I follow 2 fantastic speeches. Firstly, the former minister [Sarah Newton], who I am just a mere replacement for, with a show of brilliance. And I am really grateful for the huge amount of work that she is continuing to do, particularly in getting cross-party support in this incredibly important area.

Secondly, a brilliant speech about the shining best practice of John Lewis and the work they've done; and I am full of admiration for John Lewis. Not just because I spent most of my wedding anniversary on Sunday in the Cheltenham store.

My 10 week old baby Margot insisted on being carried the entire time because she loved all the layouts and the colours.

That aside, what has been set out about investing in staff, supporting staff, making sure those staff feel valued and can be productive and can stay in the workplace is a huge step forward. The key message here is that it is a win-win.

It's not just good for the staff, though it is obviously good for the staff.

It is good for business, it is good for the government and this is a really important area of work for the government.

We have commitments to get more people with disabilities and long term health conditions into the workplace. And we have managed to get 404,000 more disabled people into work in the last 2 years alone – over a million more in the last 6 years – supported by schemes such as disability confident, access to work, more personalised, tailored support through Universal Credit and sharing best practices with businesses.

But that's only half the challenge. The other half is making sure that people do not crash out of work. We lose an estimated 300,000 people a year through mental health conditions and it is crystal clear that by using early intervention within the workplace it is significantly easier to support someone than once they've crashed out to try to rebuild their confidence to get them back into work.

And that's why as a government we have commissioned this vital consultation [[Health is everyone's business: proposals to reduce ill health-related job loss](#)], and I know many members of this audience have contributed, and we've been overwhelmed with really helpful, constructive feedback into that consultation.

Because obviously, we need to increase the capacity of health support workers, not just for organisations like John Lewis who are leading the way, a shining example, but for those small and medium businesses that make up 40% of the private sector jobs. And I know this first hand. Before I came to parliament I ran my own small business. I had staff who had health challenges and by making very, very small changes, more often than not, we were able to keep that person in work, keep a brilliant team member for the business and we benefitted.

Now some of those asks are about increasing capacity, some are about improving signposting. Obviously big organisations like John Lewis have got collective expertise in this area. It's a given, its embedded into their very culture. But for a lot of those small and medium sized businesses, they don't have human resources departments. They don't have personnel departments, they are busily trying to stay a thriving growing small business. Therefore collectively, we must do better: to signpost them, to give them the confidence to seek that additional support.

And it has not been missed – like in most meetings I attend there is a bit of a financial ask about a tax incentive (for supporting employees experiencing mental health issues). Now that is a matter for the Treasury.

But what I would say is key for us, partly through the consultation, partly through the ongoing work that you are doing is to gather that evidence so we can prove to those in treasury that early intervention is a win-win; not just for the business and not just for the employee but also for the treasury who have to pick up the cost once people crash out of work.

And the final thing I would say that shows just how important this is – you

may have heard some rumours about a potential forthcoming election. People are campaigning there are hustings going on...

Yes, the Speaker's election – I don't know which other one you might have thought about.

And it's interesting, that as the 10 candidates to become Speaker, people who represent the House of Commons, who are responsible for our welfare as MPs on a day to day basis – one of the big issues they're campaigning on is to improve this support for us in the workplace. So if we accept this should be a given, then it should be a given for everybody in society.

So I pay tribute to all of you who are doing fantastic things.

Thank you for what you are doing, keep giving me that evidence, it will champion the work that I am pushing on, but more importantly Sarah [Newton] through her amazing cross party work to make sure that this is something, one of those few areas that politicians of all persuasions can get behind because it is a genuine win-win.

Thank you.

[Chancellor marks beginning of decade of renewal for UK economy](#)

A new chapter for the UK economy has begun which will kickstart a decade of renewal the Chancellor, Sajid Javid, will say at the annual IMF and World Bank meetings in Washington D.C. today (17 October).

In meetings with his international counterparts, the Chancellor will support calls from the IMF for countries to invest in long term growth. He will say that after a decade of hard work to get the deficit under control, the UK is determined to take advantage of record low borrowing costs for productive investment that improves living standards. He will also say that getting Brexit done is essential to unlocking the investment that has been held up by Brexit uncertainty, and that the UK will remain an open economy.

During his first trip to the US since entering 11 Downing Street, the Chancellor will meet with Kristalina Georgieva, the new Managing Director of the IMF, attend G7 and G20 meetings, and separately meet finance ministers from the US (Steven Mnuchin), India (Nirmala Sitharaman), Ireland (Paschal Donohoe), Japan (Tarō Asō), and The Netherlands (Wopke Hoekstra).

Further Information

On Tuesday, the IMF forecast the UK to be the third fastest growing G7

economy next year, ahead of Italy, Germany, France and Japan.

ESFA letters to academy trusts about high pay – October 2019

On 3 October 2019, Eileen Milner, chief executive of the Education and Skills Funding Agency, wrote to the chair of trustees at 11 academy trusts, with between 4,500 and 6,000 learners on roll, about levels of executive pay.

The first letter is about levels of executive pay. The second letter is about levels of executive pay at academy trusts previously contacted by ESFA.

Included is a list of academy trusts that received letters from ESFA about high executive salaries in October 2019.

HS2 to streamline procurement process for civils sub-contractors

Four of HS2 Ltd's biggest contractors will introduce a standardized pre-qualification (PQ) system for subcontractors in a bid to streamline the process, reduce costs and boost productivity.

The new Common Assessment Standard will ensure that bidders looking for work with the high speed rail company's four main civils contractors – Align, BBV, EK and SCS Railways – will go through identical pre-qualification processes.

Developed as part of HS2's 'Collaboration Hub' initiative, the contractors worked with two of the sector's biggest representative organisations, Build UK and the Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA), and through industry body, High Speed Rail Industry Leaders Group (HSRIL), to agree the new system.

According to research, it is estimated that suppliers in the construction industry are currently spending up to £1bn per year on tendering for work. This new system will help avoid duplication and cut costs. Build UK, CECA, and HSRIL joined forces two years ago to deliver the new PQ system and have just launched its first phase. HS2's contractors will be the pioneers of the new system, implementing it at scale through the future HS2 supply chain.

The Common Assessment Standard for PQ's will mean suppliers have a choice in

assurance provider creating market competition and reducing the costs associated with infrastructure procurement. It ensures that all suppliers meet a high-quality standard, essential for HS2 to deliver a safe and quality supply chain.

HS2's Collaboration Hub enables HS2's Main Works Civils Contractors to work together to find common approaches and initiatives that will ensure consistency across the HS2 programme, and that the best procurement decisions are made for the project. HS2 will represent approximately 11% of UK infrastructure spend over the next decade and will be the largest individual client in the sector. The approaches taken to procurement on the project will not only have an impact on HS2 but the wider construction sector.

Andy Cross, Procurement Director, HS2 Ltd said:

Building Britain's new high speed railway provides a significant opportunity for the construction industry to innovate and work together, to leave lasting improvements on the sector as a whole. By adopting new approaches, such as the Common Assessment Standard, we can potentially transform the way in which the industry works, and procures goods and services.

Jo Fautley, Deputy Chief Executive, Build UK said:

The construction industry is making great strides towards more collaborative working and the Common Assessment Standard has been developed by industry, for industry, based on standards that clients, contractors and the supply chain have all agreed on. The adoption of the Common Assessment Standard by leading clients such as HS2 will help to improve efficiency and reduce duplication and cost, supporting the future delivery of world-class infrastructure.

Under the new trailblazing system, a supplier will be able to take the accreditation to any sector of the construction industry, beyond the rail sector. Not only will this reduce the costly, complex and repetitive burden the current procurement approach takes, but could improve standards across the board in the sector.