

[News story: Funding granted for new global platform to protect children from online abuse](#)

A £635,000 investment from a Home Office-led consortium has been awarded to The Marie Collins Foundation (MCF), to support its vital work to help children who have been sexually abused online.

MCF has developed the Global Protection Online Network (GPON), a programme to help countries take steps to respond to the threat of online child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSEA).

GPON will help train safeguarding professionals to develop best practice on how to intervene in CSEA cases, including new guidelines and help to design new legislative measures. This will go alongside ongoing targeted interventions such as training and consultancy from MCF for professionals who work with young people and give access to an online portal for knowledge sharing, advice and research updates.

The £635,000 has been provided by the Global Fund to End Violence Against Children (EVAC) – of which the Home Office is the major donor.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Victoria Atkins said:

The Marie Collins Foundation do invaluable work in providing support for victims and survivors of online child sexual abuse. Providing guidance and resources for governments to tackle this sickening crime will make a huge impact in stamping it out at source.

Child sexual exploitation is a global problem and one which requires a global response. The government is absolutely committed to tackling this horrific abuse wherever it occurs and we are working closely with governments and organisations across the world to protect children from harm.

Founder and CEO of the Marie Collins Foundation, Professor Tink Palmer MBE, said:

We are thrilled to have been awarded this funding, which will allow us to activate GPON and begin to have real impact on the global community enabling colleagues to do more to protect their children through new knowledge, resources and infrastructure.

Our vision is to ensure that all children who suffer abuse via the internet and mobile technology are able to recover and live safe

and fulfilling lives. The nature of the internet means that the sexual abuse of children online is a global problem yet currently the service response is ad hoc, ill-informed and sparse.

Our unique portal will enable the international professional community to share knowledge, gain advice and have access to the most recent research, as well as training materials and templates for relevant policy, legal and practice guidance developments.

The MCF will work in partnership with other NGOs in priority countries. Vietnam has been identified as the first country that will receive bespoke support through training for professionals in how best to help children who are sexually abused online. Vietnam is recognised as a prominent source country for children trafficked for sexual purposes, while online child sexual exploitation is also a growing concern.

The EVAC grant will be used to employ staff to lead and manage the GPON platform and ensure safeguarding professionals across the globe have access to its resources and to develop training programmes.

During a speech in September, the Home Secretary set out that it was his “mission” to help eradicate CSEA, including children being abused on live streams around the world.

In the speech he said that children were often abused to order, sometimes for as little as £12.

In addition to the End Violence Against Children fund, the Home Office is a leading member of the WePROTECT Global Alliance, a global movement that brings together the influence, expertise and resources required to transform how online child sexual exploitation is dealt with worldwide.

The WePROTECT Global Alliance is driven and funded by the UK Home Office and forms a key element of our international response to this crime. 87 countries are members of the alliance along with 20 global technology companies and 25 leading Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), including the Marie Collins Foundation. The Home Office has also secured £2 million funding from the 2018 to 2020 Commonwealth Fund to fund capacity building projects in commonwealth countries to tackle online child sexual exploitation.

Press release: High streets to benefit from £62 million heritage boost

- Dozens of locations across the country will benefit from the investment□.

- Culture Secretary says innovative programme will make our heritage work for modern life.

A new £62 million fund will breathe new life into historic high streets across the country, Culture Secretary Jeremy Wright announced today.

High streets lie at the heart of communities but are under increasing pressure as more people choose to shop online.

Building on successful programmes, the funding will be used to regenerate places by turning disused or underused buildings into creative spaces, offices, retail outlets and housing.

It is part of the Government's ongoing work to help high streets adapt to changing consumer habits.

Culture Secretary Jeremy Wright said:

Our heritage makes communities more attractive places to live, work and visit.

This £62 million investment will breathe new life into high streets right across the country, benefiting local people and businesses, as well as providing assistance to much-loved historic buildings.

It is right that we do all we can to not only protect our heritage, but make it work for modern life so it can be enjoyed by as many people as possible.

Today's initiative is part of the government's comprehensive plan for High Streets announced at last year's Budget, including a £675 million Future High Streets Fund and a £1 billion business rates discount for small high street retailers. Communities Secretary, the Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

We're absolutely committed to seeing our high streets thrive now and in the future.

That's why we put a plan to secure the future of the high street, and are taking action to ensure they can adapt to changing consumer demand and the rise of online shopping.

This welcome announcement will help the high street to capitalise on local heritage by restoring treasured historic buildings for economic use. This is a proven way to drive footfall, increase

further investment and generate even greater civic pride in our high streets.

Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mel Stride, said:

High streets are the lifeblood of towns and cities across the country.

By reviving older, disused buildings, we're ensuring high streets can not only adapt and change to suit our modern lives – but remain at the heart of our communities for years to come.

Research has shown that for every £1 invested in heritage in England, £1.60 is brought into the wider area.

The funding includes:

- £44 million of government and [Historic England](#) funding to create dozens of High Streets Heritage Action Zones overseen by Historic England. From today, local authorities can apply to the scheme, which will give councils, businesses and community groups access to expert advice and investment to bring historic buildings back into use and support historic high streets to adapt to the challenges they face.
- £3 million from the [National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) to support a cultural programme to engage people in the life and history of their high streets.
- £15 million for the [Architectural Heritage Fund](#) to support social enterprise organisations like Historic Coventry Trust to take ownership of and bring buildings of local importance – such as pubs, libraries or theatres, as well as shops – back into use. The Transforming Places Through Heritage Programme will open for applications in June.

Also in the run up to [UK City of Culture 2021, Coventry](#) will receive £2 million for a new project in shopping street The Burges. It is one of the few remaining parts of Coventry to survive the Second World War and post-war redevelopments of the city, which saw large numbers of ancient buildings destroyed. The money will be used to acquire, restore and regenerate Coventry's historic buildings to help create a sustainable future for each building.

ENDS

Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive of Historic England said:

We know that people value their high streets and town centres as spaces where they can meet and feel a sense of communal ownership and belonging. We are therefore delighted to be opening up for

applications grants for High Street Heritage Action Zones.

Through physical improvements and cultural and community activities, we will work with partners to find new ways to regenerate our historic high streets. We recognise the scale of the challenge with empty shops and the significant shift in retail trends and we will combine our experience with the knowledge and passion of local councils, businesses and community groups, to help revive the streets which form the hearts of our historic towns.

Liz Peace CBE, Chairman, Architectural Heritage Fund:

With the right funding and expertise, thriving social enterprises can inject life into our high streets and the heritage assets around them. The Transforming Places through Heritage programme will help accelerate investment into many other places like Coventry and begin to reimagine our high streets as once more places of both social and commercial prosperity.

Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive of the National Lottery Heritage Fund said:

We know from our track record of investing in the heritage of our high streets that economic activity increases and people feel a greater sense of pride about the place they live and work in. The National Lottery Heritage Fund is delighted to be working in partnership with Historic England to deliver a significant programme of cultural activities to bring these essential parts of our community to life.

Notes to editors:

- Information on applying for Historic England's High Street Heritage Action Zones is available [here](#). □
- The funding builds on the success of projects in Margate, Grantham and Derby where the redevelopment of Derby Cathedral Quarter brought nearly 100 properties and more than 2,700 m² of commercial floor space back into use through Historic England's Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas. □
- There are currently 18 Heritage Action Zones across England including Grimsby, which was announced as a key part of the Grimsby Town Deal in 2018. It is expected that this new funding will see the creation of 40 – 50 more across England. □

Ways the Government is backing the high street: □

- The Budget saw business rates relief cut small retailers' bills by a

third, building on over £13 billion of business rates support since 2016.□

- In response to recommendations from the independent expert panel, the Government has launched a £675 million Future High Streets Fund to help improve infrastructure and access to high streets, put historic buildings back to use and make town centres fit for the future.□
- We have also announced a Town Centre Task Force to give local leaders expert advice and support in implementing their plans to revitalise their local high streets.□
- The Open Doors scheme will see empty shops being opened up to community groups offering services to the most vulnerable in our communities.□

The [Architectural Heritage Fund](#) helps communities across the UK find enterprising new uses for the old buildings they love. It has supported a number of high street and town centre regeneration projects in recent years, including Havens Department Store in Southend, which is being revitalised by Age Concern Southend as a hub for older people. □

[Speech: We need answers for the people of Idlib](#)

Statement by Ambassador Karen Pierce, UK Permanent Representative to the UN, at the Security Council briefing on Syria Thursday, 17 May

Thank you very much Mr President. Thank you to our briefers. I want to start Mr President, we'll hear from Turkey later but I wanted to start by welcoming Turkey's efforts to agree the Sochi ceasefire last September. Just as we welcome that then, so we welcome now their efforts to restore that ceasefire and de-escalate. I think we heard very clearly from both Under-Secretaries General why that is a matter of urgency. Thank you to Kuwait for calling this meeting which is clearly needed.

Mr President the situation in Idlib is so dire that I won't repeat our well-known position on the political process which has not changed nor indeed on chemical weapons, likewise. I want to use this session to focus purely on Idlib, the nightmare in Idlib and the slaughter that's happening in Idlib. Mr Lowcock asked a number of questions, as he said more questions than answers. It would be good Mr President, to get some answers for the people of Idlib from this session today.

As we've heard, the regime offensive in northwest Syria has left 180,000 people displaced since 28 April alone and many killed and wounded. Since that date, at least 18 health facilities including nine primary health care centres, nine hospitals and 17 schools have been hit by airstrikes. That's a clear violation of SCR 2286 and International Humanitarian Law. And as the Belgian Ambassador explained, where do we see Mr President what has happened

to the principles of proportionality, distinction and necessity?

What is necessary Mr President? What is proportionate about bombing 18 health facilities with the devastating effect on the local population that the Under-Secretary General outlined. I was interested Mr President, in Mr Lowcock's confirmation that the UN does provide details of the locations of hospitals to the parties to the conflict and I note with grave concern the International Humanitarian Law obligations that he cites which should not be taken lightly. He asked the question; Who is bombing these hospitals? Whoever it is has a modern air force and precision weapons. And are the hospitals and other facilities being deliberately targeted despite the de-confliction mechanisms? Mr President, it would be absolutely grotesque if NGOs and health workers providing coordinates to a mechanism they believe is there to assure their safety were finding themselves being the authors of their own destruction because of deliberate targeting by the regime. But I'd like to know Mr President, I'd like to know since we know that Russia and Syria are the only countries that fly planes in the area, is the answer to Mr. Lowcock's questions the Russian and Syrian air forces? I think we need answers Mr President today, and if the answer is the Russian and Syrian air forces, I call on both Ambassadors here today to give us an assurance that the attacks will stop, and there will be no more deliberate targeting of civilians in this manner in facilities that every single member of the international community has a duty to protect.

The Belgian Ambassador also referred to the fact that CT (counterterrorist operations) are not a license for indiscriminate attacks on civilians. And I just want to underscore that point as well Mr President. It's in the Geneva Conventions. It's a central doctrine of International Humanitarian Law; proportionality, distinction and necessity really matter and they don't seem to be in evidence in Idlib.

Mr President, Russia has claimed that its so-called retaliatory strikes in support of the regime were surgical – I quote – surgical in their precision.

Mr President I hope I do not need medical treatment in Moscow if surgical accuracy means what we've seen on the ground in Idlib.

So either these statements or the strikes are wildly inaccurate. Mr President, Russia must ensure that its own forces and those of its ally in Damascus strictly abide by International Humanitarian Law and the agreements and resolutions that as a member of the international community, as a P5 member, it has agreed. There's one other question that struck me Mr President from the Under-Secretary General; Why aren't the resolutions being complied with? I think that's a very good question. I think every parent in Idlib has the right to know the answer to that question. It's not a \$64,000 question Mr. President, to use a vernacular phrase. It's a question that's costing 160 lives in Idlib and 400,000 lives since the conflict in Syria began. Thank you.

Speech: Delivering long term stability to the Sahel region

Thank you very much Mr President and may I like others start by passing our sincere condolences to Niger and France for the loss of their servicemen and women.

Let me also thank our briefers and welcome to the Council His Excellency Mr Alpha Barry, Foreign Minister of Burkina Faso.

As set out in the Secretary-General's Report Mr President, there is some clear progress to be welcomed – particularly the resumption of Joint Force operations since January 2019 and the deployment of 75 per cent of troops as of March 2019. We recognise the efforts of the G5 Sahel States to combat cross-border threats despite difficult and adverse circumstances. Now, the Force must accelerate its efforts to achieve full operational capacity and demonstrate that its security capacity is greater than the sum of its parts. Evidence of tangible results from operations will build the Force's credibility, both regionally and internationally.

To aid the Joint Force in overcoming the challenges they face in terms of funding and thereby achieving full operationalisation, the United Kingdom strongly urges all partners to make good on the financial commitments they have made with the utmost urgency.

On the UK's part, we have contributed to the European Union's package of support and provided further bilateral contributions which for the Joint Force alone totals around \$20 million – that's set against a far bigger contribution for the Sahel as a whole.

Continuing the close cooperation with the EU, MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane is a vital step in aiding operational efforts. In this regard, we welcome the creation of the Coordinating Body for Mali in January, which serves as a framework to enhance information sharing and coordination among the various military and security forces present.

We also welcome the steps taken to advance the human rights compliance framework and strongly urge continued efforts to further embed and operationalise this across the G5 Sahel Joint Force. This will not only lead to enhanced civilian protection but also support efforts to win "the hearts and minds" of the populations the Joint Force was created to protect, crucial to the stabilisation of the region. Any alleged human rights violations need to be fully investigated.

Looking forward, we encourage the G5 Sahel Secretariat to finalise the Joint Force's strategic concept of operations, which will both demonstrate a unity of purpose within the Joint Force and boost donor confidence.

Mr President, the challenges facing the Sahel region are becoming

progressively more complex. With increasing incidents of terrorism, criminality and inter-community violence in Mali's central regions, we share the Secretary-General's concerns about the spread of insecurity and terrorism to other parts of the region, including into Burkina Faso. We call upon G5 Sahel countries to expedite their efforts to deploy all outstanding troops and to fully establish the police component in order to address the growing trans-border threats.

As with all areas of instability, military action alone is not the solution. As recognised by this Council in its December 2017 resolution on the support to the G5 Sahel Force, long term stability will only be delivered to the region if security efforts are accompanied by programmes to address governance, development, human rights and humanitarian issues.

Thank you.

[Press release: Universal Periodic Review 33rd session: Minister for Human Rights statement](#)

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process, involving a peer review of the human rights records of all 193 UN member states. It is an important tool of the Human Rights Council (HRC) aimed at sharing best practice. The UK is a strong supporter of the UPR, having spoken at every session and about every country since the process began. During my time as the UK's Human Rights Minister I have prioritised direct ministerial engagement with both the Human Rights Council, and ministerial approvals of the UPR process. This session saw reviews of 14 countries, namely, [Albania](#), [Bhutan](#), [Brunei Darussalam](#), [the Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), [Costa Rica](#), [Côte d'Ivoire](#), [Dominica](#), [Equatorial Guinea](#), [Ethiopia](#), [the Democratic People's Republic of Korea](#), [Nicaragua](#), [Norway](#), [Portugal](#) and [Qatar](#).

Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

Modern slavery and human trafficking is priority for the Prime Minister and a global problem that requires all states to take steps to eradicate. For this reason, the UK raised issues related to modern slavery at every country's UPR during the 33rd session. We commended the proactive steps that many countries are taking to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, and human trafficking, and made constructive recommendations for every government to drive forward policies that will make the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8.7 a reality. In support of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) 50 for Freedom Campaign, we encouraged countries to ratify the ILO Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, requiring governments to take measures

to tackle forced labour in all its forms and provide protection to victims. Through the Call to Action to end Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, which has now achieved 88 endorsements, the UK continues to advocate for better international coordination to deliver commitments made under SDG 8.7. We will seek new commitments through the G7 and G20, to ensure a coordinated international approach that uses existing UN processes to review progress. The UK will present its very first Voluntary National Review at this year's High-Level Political Forum, which will be an important opportunity to review progress and galvanise government action on this agenda.

Since the 27th session of the UPR, we have made the recommendation to 'adopt an open, merit-based selection process when selecting national candidates for UN Treaty Body elections' to a considerable number of states. These expert bodies are a central part of the UN human rights system, charged with monitoring the implementation of human rights conventions in states which have signed up to them. The UK will continue to advocate strengthening the quality, independence and diversity in Treaty Body membership.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

On the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), I welcome recent successes in bringing perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence to justice, but urge the Government to increase efforts to end impunity for all who commit and direct human rights violations and abuses. I am deeply concerned by restrictions on media freedom and that those exercising freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly are subjected to intimidation, detention and violence and urge the incoming Government to address these as pledged during President Tshisekedi's inaugural address. I also call on the DRC Government to strengthen the capacity and independence of the judicial system to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of sexual and gender based violence, as well as provide effective and necessary support for the victims.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

I welcome that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) signed up to the joint declaration of commitment for 12 years of quality education for girls in July 2018, and encourage follow up on this commitment. I also note its engagement with the UPR and its recent report under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. However, I remain deeply concerned by reports of ongoing, widespread and systematic human rights violations in the DPRK. It is unacceptable that citizens face surveillance, imprisonment or even death for their religion or belief. I am also concerned that citizens are not allowed access to independent media or sources of information. I urge the DPRK Government to allow human rights actors immediate and unhindered access to the country.

Brunei

Turning to Brunei, I welcome the assurances given by His Majesty The Sultan, which address concerns about the final phases of the Sharia Penal Code, including the unequivocal decision to outlaw all forms of cruel, inhumane or

degrading punishments under any circumstances, through ratifying the UN Convention Against Torture. I also welcome his confirmation that the de facto moratorium on the death penalty will apply to punishments under the new laws. However, I call on Brunei to formally abolish capital punishment and judicial corporal punishments. I also call on Brunei to formalise its commitment to respecting individual human rights, including those of LGBT people.

Nicaragua

On Nicaragua, I regret the suspension of the recently resumed political dialogue. The Government must engage constructively and honour its commitments under the roadmap for dialogue. I acknowledge that the release of some political prisoners was a positive step, however, many remain under house arrest and must be released unconditionally. Moreover, I remain concerned by the repression and the arbitrary use of force against peaceful protesters, journalists and human rights defenders, treatment of political detainees and the disproportionate use of terrorism charges to criminalise dissent. We urge Nicaragua to allow the OHCHR access to the country and to ensure progress is made on electoral reforms, including the OAS recommendations.

I urge all countries under review during this session to give full and serious consideration to the UK recommendations. I encourage them not only to accept them but to implement all the recommendations in a timely and comprehensive manner. I look forward to the formal UPR adoption at the 42nd session of the UN Human Rights Council in September 2019.

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad, Minister of State for the UN and the Commonwealth, Prime Minister's Special Representative of Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict
Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief.