

Press release: Minister for Europe opens Strategic Dialogue with Georgia

Minister for Europe and Americas, Sir Alan Duncan, will today [October 23] welcome Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Georgia, Mikheil Janelidze for the fourth round of the UK-Georgia annual strategic dialogue, known as the Wardrop Dialogue.

Deputy Prime Minister Janelidze's will also meet Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson before joining the Lord Mayor at Mansion House for talks on business links.

Georgian Defence Minister, Levan Izoria, is also visiting London to participate in the Dialogue and will meet Defence Secretary Sir Michael Fallon.

Relations between the governments of the UK and Georgia are at an all-time high. The dialogue will provide an opportunity to discuss continued co-operation on trade, defence, and mutual values, which underpin the strength of our ties.

Minister for Europe Sir Alan Duncan said:

Our relations with Georgia are stronger than ever, and I'm delighted that Deputy Prime Minister Mikheil Janelidze visited London for the fourth round of our annual Wardrop Dialogue.

The UK stands by Georgia in support of its territorial integrity, security, and ambitious reform agenda. This commitment is underlined by our Good Governance Fund, through which the UK helps Georgia to deliver necessary reforms, and reach its economic potential.

As the UK leaves the European Union, we are ensuring our relationship with Georgia will continue to grow. Trade will be an important element and the Prime Minister's appointment of Mark Pritchard as our new Trade Envoy reiterates our optimism over the future of UK-Georgian trade.

Not only is Georgia a role-model in the region for reform, democracy and human rights; they also play a pivotal role in the wider security of the region in the face of external pressures. We also support the positive role the EU plays in the region, which we expect to be reiterated at the Eastern Partnership Summit in Brussels in November.

Further information

[Press release: Awards ceremony honors unsung heroes who support victims and witnesses](#)

Giving evidence can be a painful and difficult experience, which often involves people having to recount one of the most horrific moments in their lives.

The inaugural 'Celebrating Services for Witnesses' awards ceremony, held in Nottingham on Friday night, has honoured the unrecognised people and agencies who spend their day to day lives supporting victims and witnesses to perform their invaluable role.

This can include a Witness Liaison Officer in a court who can advocate for the witness and make sure the court is doing all it can to make the experience easier, a court operations manager who makes sure the waiting rooms for victims and witnesses are comfortable and reassuring, or a volunteer for the Witness Service charity who offer a source of emotional support and practical advice.

The ceremony was held at Nottingham Trent University, and was supported by the university's Law School, the Crown Prosecution Service, defence lawyers including members of the independent bar, the British Transport Police and the Citizens Advice Witness Service.

There were six award categories:

- unsung hero award (individual)
- specialist support award (team or individual)
- frontline services award (individual)
- significant improvements award (team or individual)
- partnership award (team)
- the Victims' Commissioner's award (team or individual), presented by Baroness Helen Newlove, the Victim's Commissioner.

Susan Acland-Hood, CEO of HMCTS, said:

I am delighted to have been at the first 'Celebrating Services for Witnesses' awards, to honour those who support some of the most vulnerable in the courts system. It's vital that we make sure victims and witnesses feel as comfortable and confident as possible, allowing them to give their best evidence and help to

make sure justice is done.

Mr Justice Haddon-Cave, Presiding Judge of the Midlands, said:

These awards are a wonderful opportunity to thank, honour and encourage the many volunteers, professionals and agencies who do vital work in our courts up and down the country helping and supporting victims and witnesses.

Professor Janine Griffiths-Baker, Dean of the Law School at Nottingham Trent University, said:

We are delighted to have sponsored such a momentous event and to have hosted so many distinguished guests from across the justice sector.

As a Law School which prides itself on playing an active role in the legal community, we recognise that the justice system only works when those who give evidence are provided with support from a wide range of agencies. The nominees for these awards have displayed enormous determination and innovation in championing the rights of witnesses.

The safety and security of citizens is a theme that the Nottingham Law School centres much of its research around; the work that those who have been celebrated by these awards does is a crucial part of a justice system which keeps the public safe and secure.

The Government is investing over £1 billion to reform the courts and tribunals system – this will make sure it is providing targeted care to those who need it, by reducing stress for victims and the most vulnerable, and lessening the emotional turmoil experienced through crime.

It has put in place a range of measures to help reduce the anxiety of attending court, including: the use of video links to give evidence; giving evidence behind a screen; the use of a registered intermediary; allowing more vulnerable and intimidated victims of sexual offences to have their cross-examination pre-recorded before trial, so they do not have to face their attacker in live court; and plans to ban men with a record of violence or sexual abuse from cross-examining vulnerable partners or children in family courts.

Press release: Unpaid internships are damaging to social mobility

An overwhelming majority of the UK public support the introduction of a legal ban on unpaid internships lasting 4 weeks or more.

New polling data released by the Social Mobility Commission, found that 72% of the public back a change in the law – with 42% ‘strongly supporting’ a ban.

The survey also reveals that 80% of people want companies to be required to openly advertise internships and work experience opportunities, rather than organise them informally.

YouGov polling of nearly 5,000 people has been released ahead of the second reading of [Lord Holmes of Richmond’s Private Members’ Bill](#) in the House of Lords on Friday 27 October, which proposes a ban on unpaid work experience or internships lasting more 4 weeks.

The Social Mobility Commission, an independent public body which monitors progress towards improving social mobility, has repeatedly called for a ban in its successive [State of the Nation reports](#) to Parliament.

Many interns fall under the definition of ‘worker’ under the [National Minimum Wage Act 1998](#) and are already legally entitled to be paid the national minimum/living wage. But the law, as it stands, is not being enforced effectively. A lack of clarity means many companies exploit the loophole or are unaware of the legal requirements to pay interns.

A broad consensus of support for a ban has emerged in recent years:

- the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Mobility called for a ban on unpaid internships over 4 weeks after hearing evidence on barriers to social mobility
- in April, the Institute for Public Policy Research published a report which provided new evidence that internships have increased to around 70,000 a year and also recommended a ban after 4 weeks. Many times this number – up to half – are locked out of these opportunities because they are unpaid and/or restricted to networks
- leading businesses and trade bodies support a 4-week limit. The Institute of Student Employers, Arts Council, UK Music, Creative Skillset, The Royal Institute of British Architects, Business in the Community, Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion and Trust for London all oppose long-term unpaid internships
- The Matthew Taylor review into employment practices recently concluded: “It is clear to us that unpaid internships are an abuse of power by employers and extremely damaging to social mobility.”
- A 4-week limit is supported by two-thirds of businesses, with only 1-in-8 opposing the legislation (YouGov 2014)

The Rt Hon Alan Milburn, Chair of the Social Mobility Commission, said:

Unpaid internships are a modern scandal which must end. Internships are the new rung on the career ladder. They have become a route to a good professional job. But access to them tends to depend on who, not what you know and young people from low-income backgrounds are excluded because they are unpaid. They miss out on a great career opportunity and employers miss out from a wider pool of talent. Unpaid internships are damaging for social mobility. It is time to consign them to history.

Lord Holmes of Richmond added:

Unpaid internships leave young people in a catch-22 situation; unable to get a job because they haven't got experience and unable to get experience because they can't afford to work for free. The practice is clearly discriminatory, crushes creativity and competitiveness and holds individuals and our country back. It's time we consigned them to the past, to the novels of Dickens.

Sir Peter Lampl, Chairman of the Sutton Trust and of the Education Endowment Foundation, said:

Unpaid internships are a major obstacle to social mobility. Our research has shown that it costs an intern with no roots in the capital approximately £1,000 a month to live there. Unpaid internships prevent young people from low- and moderate-income backgrounds from getting into some of the most competitive sectors like the media, city and the arts.

It is no surprise that a majority of the public want to see an end to them. We welcome the commission's call to ban unpaid internships that last for more than 4 weeks. There also needs to be greater transparency in recruiting for these positions, so that young people without professional networks are not at a disadvantage.

Ben Lyons, Chair of Intern Aware, added:

The government needs to show that it cares about the next generation, and crack down on long-term unpaid internships which exclude young people who can't afford to work for free for months on end.

1. The Social Mobility Commission is an advisory, non-departmental public

body established under the Life Chances Act 2010 as modified by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. It has a duty to assess progress in improving social mobility in the United Kingdom and to promote social mobility in England. It currently consists of 4 commissioners and is supported by a small secretariat.

2. The commission board currently comprises:
 - Alan Milburn (Chair)
 - Baroness Gillian Shephard (Deputy Chair)
 - Paul Gregg, Professor of Economic and Social Policy, University of Bath
 - David Johnston, Chief Executive of the Social Mobility Foundation
3. The functions of the commission include:
 - monitoring progress on improving social mobility
 - providing published advice to ministers on matters relating to social mobility
 - undertaking social mobility advocacy
4. Lord Holmes Private Members' Bill seeks to limit unpaid internships specifically by amending the National Minimum Wage Act 1998 to make provision for the prohibition of unpaid work experience exceeding 4 weeks. The bill was given its first reading on 27 June 2017 and second reading will be on 27 October 2017.

YouGov survey methodology

YouGov surveyed 4,723 UK adults and fieldwork was conducted between 6 to 9 March 2017. The survey was carried out online and figures have been weighted and are representative of UK adults aged 18+. YouGov ensured the survey was made representative based on several criteria:

- age and gender
- political attention
- region
- education level
- general election vote in 2015
- EU referendum vote in 2016

YouGov is a member of the British Polling Council.

Headline YouGov survey results

Would you support or oppose a requirement for companies to openly advertise internships and work experience opportunities, rather than organise them informally? %

Strongly support	40
Tend to support	40
Total support	80
Tend to oppose	4
Strongly oppose	1
Total oppose	5
Don't know	14

Would you support or oppose a ban on unpaid internships of longer than 4 weeks?	%
Strongly support	42
Tend to support	30
Total support	72
Tend to oppose	8
Strongly oppose	2
Total oppose	10
Don't know	17

[Press release: Increased security measures to give prison officers right tools for the job](#)

- Investment of £2 million for 5,600 body-worn cameras.
- A further £1 million for the introduction of new 'police-style' handcuffs and restraints.
- Four prisons to trial the use of PAVA incapacitant spray to boost officer safety.
- Every prison officer in England and Wales now has access to body-worn cameras after 5,600 were rolled out as part of a security boost announced today by Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah.

With an investment of over £2million, the cameras will act as a visible deterrent against violence and will assist in prosecutions against those who commit crimes in jails.

A further £1million is being invested in new 'police-style' handcuffs and restraints, whilst four prisons will also trial the use of PAVA incapacitant spray, giving prison officers an additional tool when dealing with violent offenders.

The package forms part of a commitment by the Government to ensure prison officers have the right resources for the job and that strong evidence is available for use against those who are violent towards them.

Prisons Minister Sam Gyimah said:

I am absolutely determined to tackle head-on the issues that undermine the safety and security of our prisons and to ensure our dedicated officers have the tools they need to do the job.

That is why we have introduced a range of measures to boost security – bringing 300 sniffer dogs trained in detecting

psychoactive substances and putting in place technology to block mobile phones.

This latest investment underlines our commitment to transform our prisons into places of safety and reform and should send a clear message to those intent on thwarting our efforts to make progress that we will do everything in our power to stop them.

Following successful trials in 22 establishments, officers at every prison across England & Wales now has access to a body-worn cameras. These devices are being used to record incidents, acting both as a deterrent and evidence to aid prosecutions.

It follows the start of a rollout of body-worn cameras by the Metropolitan Police Service, which announced it would be issuing cameras to 22,000 frontline officers in October last year.

Together with the rollout of rigid bar handcuffs and restraints, these will provide prison officers the confidence they need to act swiftly and safely. The new restraints will reduce the need for staff to use physical holds to control aggressive prisoners, improving safety for both staff and prisoners.

In addition, four prisons are to trial the use of PAVA incapacitant spray. It will mean that regular, establishment-based officers will for the first time have the power to deploy PAVA when a prisoner is armed with a weapon and it is deemed the most appropriate way to subdue the offender without putting themselves at risk of serious injury.

Governors at priority prisons have already been given an additional £10 million to help promote safety and tackle the influx of violence. This funding has ramped up security measures by providing additional 24-hour patrol dogs, CCTV cameras, mobile phone detection technology, and metal detectors.

This is in addition to boosting staff numbers on the front line, and we have already brought in 1,290 extra officers – passing the halfway point of our target of 2,500. The Government is also backing a bill to increase sentences for those who attack emergency workers, including prison officers.

Notes to editors

- The four prisons that will trial PAVA are HMP Wealstun, HMP Risley, HMP Preston and HMP Hull
 - Staff are currently being trained in how to deploy the spray
 - Specialist National Tactical Response Group officers already have access to PAVA.
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Press release: Government acts to improve the home buying process

As part of a continued drive to make the housing market work better, we want to hear from everyone with an interest in home buying including estate agents, solicitors and mortgage lenders.

We want to ensure that we address issues across the whole sector, from ways to tackle gazumping and reduce time wasting to increase commitment to a sale.

Views will be taken on:

- Gazumping – Buyers are concerned about gazumping, with sellers accepting a higher offer from a new buyer, we will look at ways this could be tackled.
- Building trust & confidence – Mistrust between parties is one of the biggest issues faced, we want to look at schemes including ‘lock-in agreements’. Although 1 million homes are bought and sold in England each year, around a quarter of sales fall through and hundreds of millions of pounds are wasted, we want to increase confidence in the housing chain
- Informing customers – How to provide better guidance for buyers and sellers, by encouraging them to gather more information in advance so homes are ‘sale ready’
- Innovation – You can now search for a home online, but the buying process is too slow, costing time and money so we’re looking for innovative digital solutions including making more data available online

Communities Secretary Sajid Javid said:

We want to help everyone have a good quality home they can afford, and improving the process of buying and selling is part of delivering that. Buying a home is one of life’s largest investments, so if it goes wrong it can be costly. That’s why we’re determined to take action to make the process cheaper, faster and less stressful.

This can help save people money and time so they can focus on what matters – finding their dream home. I want to hear from the industry on what more we can do to tackle this issue.

Today’s (22 October 2017) announcement will build on recent proposals to cut out abuses of leasehold, protections for renters and a crackdown on unfair managing agents, now we are looking at modernising the home buying process.

The Housing White Paper set out plans to fix the broken housing market, getting the right homes built in the right places and measures to improve affordability and protections for renters and home purchasers.

This exercise isn't about adding extra work for buyers and sellers or seeing a return to Home Information Packs, this [call for evidence](#) will look at how we can further improve the home buying experience.

The government manifesto committed to reforming and modernising the home buying process so it is more efficient and less costly.

This is important as [research published today](#) sampling more than 2,000 people who have bought or sold a home recently shows that some of the key issues are:

- of those that experienced delays, 69% of sellers and 62% of buyers reported stress and worry as a result of the delay
- 46% of sellers had concerns about a buyer changing their mind after making an offer
- 24% of sellers would use a different estate agent if they were to go through the process again; and
- 32% of sellers and 28% of buyers were dissatisfied with the other party's solicitor

Research from [Which?](#) shows that people find moving house more stressful than having children, as part of research on life events.

The [call for evidence](#) will run for 8 weeks from Sunday 22 October

We have also looked to other countries, such as Denmark and the USA where it's perceived that home buying and selling works much more smoothly.