

News story: Memorandum of Understanding between Canada and United Kingdom

The UK and Canadian Governments have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) relating to each nation's ambitions for Digital Government.

Canada and the UK will now work together towards four shared goals:

- to provide better digital public services
- to ensure that we support everyone in using digital public services
- to promote economic growth
- to use open standards for government information, data and software

Minister for Digital Matt Hancock said:

Over the past six years the UK has developed a model for digital government transformation that is recognised as among the best in the world. This Memorandum of Understanding reflects the UK and Canada's shared ambition to make sure that digital innovation continues to underpin the delivery of our public services.

Scott Brison, President of Canada's Treasury Board, said:

It's a pleasure to sign this Memorandum of Understanding with the UK's Minister for Digital, Matt Hancock. This MOU commits us to working together to deliver improved government services to those we serve, and to do so in an open, transparent manner. I'm excited about the potential of what we can do.

The UK was a pioneer in the first wave of digital and technology reform of the public sector, and by 2016 we were ranked first by the United Nations in their digital government benchmark.

Our technology reforms alone saved over £4bn between 2011-2015 and specific initiatives such as crown hosting and the digital marketplace continue to deliver savings at significant scale through better commercial terms and diversification of supply.

Press release: New leave allowance for bereaved parents will be one of the most generous in the world

- New laws will give employed parents two weeks' paid leave if they lose a child under 18
- The bill goes significantly further than most other countries in providing this kind of workplace right for employees
- Businesses will be able to claim back parental bereavement pay from the Government

Employees who have suffered the death of a child will benefit from significant new paid leave allowances [under proposed laws published today](#) (13 October).

While the Government expects employers to be compassionate and flexible at such a difficult time, there is currently no legal requirement for employers to provide paid time off for grieving parents.

But under proposed new laws, for the first time employed parents who lose a child under the age of 18 will have the right to two weeks' paid leave to allow them time to grieve. This will honour the manifesto commitment to introduce a new entitlement for parental bereavement leave.

The Parental Bereavement (Pay and Leave) Bill, introduced by Kevin Hollinrake MP and supported by the Government, will give a day-one right to parental bereavement leave and employees with a minimum of 26 weeks' continuous service will be eligible for statutory parental bereavement pay.

Kevin Hollinrake MP, bill sponsor, said:

Sadly I have had constituents who have gone through this dreadful experience and while some parents prefer to carry on working, others need time off.

This new law will give employed parents a legal right to two weeks' paid leave, giving them that all-important time and space away from work to grieve at such a desperately sad time.

Margot James, Business Minister, said:

We want parents to feel properly supported by their employer when they go through the deeply distressing ordeal of losing a child.

That's why Government is backing this bill which goes significantly further than most other countries in providing this kind of

workplace right for employees.

Francine Bates, CEO of The Lullaby Trust said:

We warmly welcome this new law giving paid leave to bereaved parents. Losing a child is one of the most devastating experiences that a parent can go through and it is vitally important that they are supported by their employer and not made to return to work before they are ready.

We know many bereaved parents who have campaigned tirelessly for paid compassionate leave after the death of a child and are very pleased to see that the UK is now leading the way in supporting parents who need time away from work to grieve for their child.

Debbie Kerslake, Chief Executive of Cruse Bereavement Care, said:

Cruse Bereavement Care welcomes legislation introducing parental bereavement leave recognising that the death of a child is devastating.

It is vital that at such a distressing time those who are bereaved can take time away from work.

Small employers will be able to recover all statutory parental bereavement pay while larger employers will be able to reclaim almost all of it.

Details of the proposed new law were published today in Parliament ahead of the bill's second reading on 20 October, with the ambition of it becoming law in 2020.

Notes to editors

1. Currently under the Employment Rights Act, employees have a day-one right to take a "reasonable" amount of unpaid time off work to deal with an emergency involving a dependant, including making arrangements following the death of a dependant. What is "reasonable" depends on the circumstances but in practice the length of time off will be agreed between the employer and their employee
2. In the unlikely event that employee and employer can't agree what is "reasonable", this can be resolved through Acas or an employment tribunal
3. Acas has also published good practice guidance for employers on managing bereavement in the workplace.
4. We estimate the annual cost of statutory payments under this proposal to be between £1.3m and £2m

Press release: New charity investigation: Jole Rider Friends

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has opened a new statutory inquiry into Jole Rider Friends, registered charity number 1112914. The investigation was opened on 5 September 2017.

The charity's objects are to advance education, in particular by providing or assisting in the provision of facilities and equipment at educational establishments in Africa.

The trustees have failed to submit their charity's annual accounts on time for the last two financial years; the charity is currently 257 days overdue in submitting their 2016 accounts. The charity's 2015 accounts contained an independent examiner's report which highlighted concerns surrounding potentially unauthorised payments and the charity's stock control.

The Commission has therefore opened a statutory inquiry to address significant regulatory concerns with regard to the administration, governance and management of the charity by the trustees.

The Commission stresses that opening an inquiry is not in itself a finding of wrongdoing. The purpose of an inquiry is to examine issues in detail and investigate and establish the facts so that the regulator can ascertain whether there has been misconduct or mismanagement; establish the extent of the risk to the charity's property, beneficiaries or work; and decide what action needs to be taken to resolve the serious concerns, if necessary using its investigative, protective and remedial powers to do so.

It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and what the outcomes were. [Reports of previous inquiries](#) by the Commission are available on GOV.UK.

The charity's details can be viewed on the Commission's [online charity search tool](#).

Ends

PR 68/17

Notes to editors

1. The Charity Commission is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our [annual report](#).
2. Search for charities on our [online register](#).

3. Section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 gives the Commission the power to institute inquiries. The opening of an inquiry gives the Commission access to a range of investigative, protective and remedial legal powers.
-

[News story: Medicine and vaccine manufacturing centres: apply for funding](#)

Innovate UK is seeking proposals from UK organisations to set up national centres that will help businesses to develop, commercialise and manufacture new vaccines and medicines.

Up to £66 million in capital funding is available to build and establish a national vaccines development and manufacturing centre. A further £13 million is available towards the setting up of a national medicines manufacturing and innovation centre.

The funding is under the government's Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund to develop first-of-a-kind technologies for the manufacture of medicines.

Vaccines development and manufacturing centre

The UK has strong expertise in researching new vaccines. However, there are gaps in our ability to develop, commercialise and manufacture new vaccines.

Establishing a new national centre will bridge that gap and ensure that the UK is best set up for infectious disease outbreaks. It will also be able to provide expertise and advice to those working in the sector.

It will be an independent, physical centre based in one location, and will have pilot and medium-scale manufacturing capacity. Other centres of national and international importance will link in.

Competition information

- this competition is open, and the registration deadline is at midday on 15 November 2017
- up to £66 million is available in capital funding to establish the centre
- the project can be led by a business, a research and technology organisation, or a not-for-profit company with experience in vaccine development and manufacture. It must include partners from academia and industry
- the project is expected to last up to 4 years

- businesses could attract up to 50% of their total project costs

Medicines manufacturing and innovation centre

While the UK has a strong medicines manufacturing sector, with more than 1,300 companies producing £26 billion in exports in 2015, its relative impact has declined in recent years.

The medicines manufacturing and innovation centre aims to reverse that decline by delivering radical improvements in productivity through new small-molecule drug products. The centre will be a focal point for innovation in fine-chemical or pharmaceutical manufacturing and will be able to prove the viability of production methods to relevant standards.

By working with partners across research and manufacturing it will act as a hub around which small and large businesses can base themselves.

Competition information

- this competition is open, and the deadline for registration is midday 1 November 2017
- up to £13 million is available towards the total costs of establishing the centre
- projects must be led by a UK-based research and technology organisation or not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. You must have experience in manufacturing processes producing small-molecule pharmaceuticals or fine chemicals
- projects must include partners from academia and industry
- the project is expected to last up to 4 years

Press release: Move to end bogus holiday sickness claims

- Practice costs travel industry millions and risks pushing up prices for law-abiding holidaymakers

Travel industry bosses and others are today being invited to submit evidence to help drive the government's crackdown on the holiday sickness claims culture.

The call for evidence being launched today (13 October 2017) will give Ministers a greater insight into the reported rise in suspected false insurance claims for gastric illnesses like food poisoning being brought by British holidaymakers.

It is the latest stage of the government's crackdown on a problem which is

damaging Britain's reputation overseas and which could drive up holiday costs for hard-working families.

The upsurge in holiday sickness claims in this country – partly fuelled by touts operating in European resorts – could be as high as 500% since 2013, according to travel industry estimates. This is not seen in other European countries, and has raised questions over the scale of bogus claims.

The call for evidence will ask the industry and others to submit a wide range of information, from the volumes of claims to the amount of damages awarded. This will be used to help Ministers identify next steps to tackle false claims.

Justice Minister Dominic Raab said:

Bogus claims against tour operators risk driving up the price of summer holidays abroad for hard-working families who have earned a break. We're taking action to deter these claims, and protect holiday-makers from being ripped off.

The call for evidence, which will remain open for four weeks, follows government action over the summer aimed at reducing cash incentives to bring spurious claims against package holiday tour operators.

Tour operators often settle holiday sickness claims out of court, rather than challenge them because – due to the fact these spurious claims are arising abroad – legal costs are not controlled, so costs for tour operators can be out of all proportion to the damages claimed.

Ministers have put forward proposals which would mean tour operators would pay a prescribed sum depending on the value of the claim, making defence costs predictable and helping to deter bogus claims.

These proposals will be considered by the Civil Procedure Rule Committee, which is responsible for setting rules on legal costs. We aim to bring the new rules into force early next year.

Notes to editors

1. The Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) reports a 500% increase from around 5,000 claims in 2013 to around 35,000 claims in 2016. This is despite the fact that travel industry data on the global trend for reported incidence of illness in resorts has actually declined in recent years.
2. ABTA has also found that while the average value of a gastric illness claim is about £2,100, the average cost of defending a claim is almost £3,800. The projected total cost of claims to the industry in 2016 (including damages paid) was estimated by ABTA to be over £240 million.

We will look into these figures as part of the call for evidence.

3. For more information call the Ministry of Justice press office on 020 3545 8953.