

Government supporting schools and colleges to provide face-to-face learning for millions of children and young people

Hundreds of former teachers have signed up with supply agencies following the Education Secretary's call for them to temporarily return to the profession, data published today (Wednesday 12 January) shows.

Initial data from around ten per cent of supply agencies shows that 485 former teachers have signed up with agencies, with some teachers already placed back in the classroom during the first week of term. A further 100 Teach First alumni have also expressed interest in supporting the workforce.

Given the size of the sample, the actual number of ex-teachers who have signed up is likely to be much larger.

Supply agencies are reporting that the levels of interest they are receiving represent a marked increase in the levels they would otherwise have expected in a normal year.

This comes as millions of children and young people returned to early years settings, schools and colleges last week as the Government continues to prioritise face to face education.

Overall levels of teacher absence are relatively stable compared to the end of last term, however the proportion of staff absent due to COVID-19 is higher than normal as a result of the Omicron variant and is expected to remain a challenge throughout the first weeks of term.

Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi said:

Making sure all children and young people can attend school or college remains my number one priority.

I want to thank all former teachers who have come forward to support the national effort and help keep our children in face-to-face education. I call on all other former teachers who are able to do the same to come forward now.

The vaccine continues to help us pave the way out of this pandemic and more than ever it is absolutely vital that all those eligible get their booster or second jab, as well as continuing to test regularly.

Once teachers have signed up with an agency and have completed necessary

checks they are able to return to the classroom as soon as an opportunity arises that fits their subject specialism and local need.

The government continues to work closely with the sector to make sure every possible route is being used to keep schools equipped with the teaching staff they need to maintain face-to-face education.

Over a phased return during the first week, all secondary schools were asked to complete one on-site test for pupils to help reduce the transmission of Covid-19 after a period of social mixing. College and university students and all staff were asked to self-test at home before they returned to the classroom.

Proportionate safety measures remain in place in schools, colleges and universities to help reduce the transmission of the virus, including increased ventilation, testing and good hygiene, with older students and staff wearing face coverings in the classroom until the review point on 26 January.

All early years settings, schools, colleges, and universities are advised to continue to follow the latest guidance set out by the department which is kept regularly under review.

ENDS

UK and Oman kickstart Sovereign Investment Partnership to boost investment links

The UK and Oman have signed a Sovereign Investment Partnership (SIP), agreeing to work closer together on increasing high value investment into both countries.

The Memorandum of Understanding between the UK's Office for Investment (OFI) and the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) was signed in London by the UK's Minister for Investment, Lord Gerry Grimstone, and President of the Oman Investment Authority, HE Abdulsalam Al Murshidi.

The new partnership will strengthen the economic ties between the UK and Oman and identify and support commercial investments in areas such as clean energy and technology, which are already an important part of our £1 billion-a year trading relationship.

Today's signing follows Prime Minister Boris Johnson's meeting with the Sultan of Oman, Haitham bin Tarik al Said, at Downing Street in December,

where they discussed enhancing the bilateral relationship between the UK and Oman.

UK Minister for Investment Lord Grimstone said:

Oman is a long-standing and strategic partner in the Middle East and I am pleased that the UK is further deepening our investment relationship.

Our two countries share a vision for a sustainable and prosperous future. This Sovereign Investment Partnership ensures our respective private sectors and international investors are part of that journey.

Foreign Minister of Oman Sayyid Badr Albusaidi said:

The signing of the MOU is in line with the aspirations of both Oman and the UK as set in the Comprehensive Agreement on Enduring Friendship and Bilateral Cooperation.

We truly believe that by focusing our efforts on strategic joint investments, we will be able to reach further fruitful and tangible outcomes, in support of our mutual desire to continue developing a dynamic and stronger partnership.

President of Oman Investment Authority H.E Abdulsalam Al Murshidi said:

This partnership is a perfect embodiment of OIA's mandate under Vision Oman 2040, especially for financial sustainability and attracting foreign investors who consider OIA their partner in potential investment

UK companies have a long history of investment in Oman, with Foreign Direct Investments from the UK accounting for nearly 50% of the foreign investment into Oman in recent years. (1)

As a sign of this growing partnership, UK waste-to-energy pioneer Greenfuels has partnered with 44:01 and other local stakeholders to form Wakud International, a joint venture which has invested around \$2 million into its Oman-based operations since breaking ground last year.

Wakud's biorefinery at Khazaen Economic City in Oman is the first solar-powered biodiesel plant in the world. It will eventually process 20 tonnes per day of used cooking oil collected from restaurants and food processing establishments into European-standard biodiesel, for local consumption as road fuel and for export to the UK and EU. Expansion out of Oman into the

wider GCC will begin this year, and the partnership has already created new jobs in the region.

It comes as the UK and the Gulf Cooperation Council, of which Oman is a member, prepare to formally launch talks over a new Free Trade Agreement. Negotiations are expected to commence this year, with a future deal set to boost links in areas like investment and services.

The signing of the MoU today coincided with a meeting of the UK-Oman Strategic Advisory Group, chaired by Minister for Investment Gerry Grimstone.

Further information

- The UK businesses invested 7.9 billion Omani Rials of FDI stock in Oman. This was is equal to 49.6% of Omani FDI capital expenditure stock in 2020Q4. Source: Omani National Centre for Statistics and Information: Foreign Investment. (1)
- The UK and Oman shared a trading relationship worth nearly £979 million in the four quarters to the end of Q2 2021.

Areas selected for planning pilots for deprived communities

Communities across England have been selected for two pilot schemes aimed at encouraging more people in urban and deprived areas to engage in the planning system.

The pilots involve neighbourhood planning, which was introduced by the Localism Act and gives communities power to shape the development of their area. This includes choosing where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, what these new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has allocated up to £45,000 to 7 areas as part of its Simpler Approach to Neighbourhood Planning pilot for schemes that will make it easier for communities to set out their priorities for development.

The government has also awarded up to £50,000 to 4 councils from the Bidding Fund for Local Planning Authorities in Underrepresented Areas. This will go towards initiatives that give additional support to residents to produce a Neighbourhood Plan, which must be used by a local authority when determining planning applications.

Despite the benefits of creating a Neighbourhood Plan, currently less than 7% of existing plans are in the most deprived areas and only 5% are in urban

areas.

These schemes will support the government's plan to level up the country by empowering communities through local decision-making.

Housing Minister Rt Hon Christopher Pincher MP:

Local people know their areas best and by getting involved in neighbourhood planning, they can properly influence future development in their communities.

Through these pilots, we are giving more people, and particularly those from under-represented areas, the tools they need to influence decisions that affect their lives.

Over 1,200 communities across England have completed a neighbourhood plan, and more than 2,800 have started the neighbourhood planning process. They have been used by communities to encourage the delivery of affordable housing, homes for older people and young families, and for the conservation of green areas.

For example, in Newham the Greater Carpenters Neighbourhood Plan was produced by residents of a post-war housing estate and sets out proposals to develop and reoccupy existing empty homes, build new housing on open space within the estate, and deliver low-cost family sized homes.

The Wooler Neighbourhood Plan, developed by residents in Northumberland, encourages housing for older people in central and accessible locations in the town as well as affordable housing for younger families.

The schemes allocated funding are as follows:

Simpler Approach to Neighbourhood Planning pilot

- **Middlesbrough Council:** Funding will be used to trial a simpler approach to neighbourhood planning to improve engagement in economically deprived areas.
- **Harborough District Council:** The project will create more neighbourhood planning forums in areas that currently have low take-up and get more communities involved.
- **Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council:** The council will make neighbourhood planning simpler and easier for communities, helping to get more residents involved.
- **London Borough of Tower Hamlets:** The project will trial simpler ways to

get involved in neighbourhood planning which requires less time and resource.

- **South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils:** This joint project will target support at communities that have not currently produced a Neighbourhood Plan.
- **Leeds City Council:** Leeds will trial a new simpler form of neighbourhood planning to increase take up.
- **Bassetlaw District Council:** Bassetlaw will introduce a simpler approach to neighbourhood planning.

Bidding Fund for Local Planning Authorities in Underrepresented Areas

- **Birmingham City Council:** Birmingham will trial a new approach to neighbourhood planning distinguishing between different types of neighbourhoods, allowing residents to develop their own ways of getting involved.
- **Middlesbrough Council:** Funding will be used during the Neighbourhood Plan consultation process to improve community engagement and to establish a neighbourhood planning network. The council will also support communities to produce Neighbourhood Plans through new online resources.
- **St Helens Council:** St Helens will use increase engagement with its new local plan to increase the take-up of neighbourhood planning through a new post within the council dedicated to improving communication around neighbourhood planning.
- **Chorley Council:** Chorley Council will recruit a 'neighbourhood planning champion' and produce new online resources to promote Neighbourhood Plans.

[More leaseholders to own their own](#)

buildings under government proposals

- Government plans to create a fairer system for leaseholders in England and Wales open for consultation today
- Proposals could make it cheaper and easier for leaseholders to buy the freeholds of their homes
- Consultation follows reset of government approach to building safety, and forms part of the biggest reforms to property law in a generation

Leaseholders could find it easier and cheaper to buy the freehold of their building under radical government proposals to create a fairer housing system..

As part of a consultation opening today (11 January 2022), Homeowners and the housing industry are being invited to give their views on proposals from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to allow more leaseholders in mixed-use buildings to take control and ownership of their building.

The consultation follows the Housing Secretary Michael Gove announcing a [major reset of the government's approach to building safety](#) this week, when he told developers they must pay to fix the cladding crisis and that leaseholders must be protected.

Thousands of future leaseholders are already set to benefit from the first of the [government's reforms to the leasehold system](#), expected to take effect later this year, that puts an end to ground rents for most new residential leases and lease extensions.

Leasehold Minister, Lord Stephen Greenhalgh said:

The current leasehold system is outdated, unbalanced and broken and we are determined to fix it.

Our proposals aim to rebalance power and should see more leaseholders than ever before owning the full rights to their homes.

This comes on top of our new approach building safety, which includes decisive action to protect leaseholders

The [consultation](#), running for 6 weeks until 22 February 2022, seeks views on proposals to give more leaseholders the ability to manage or own their properties – in buildings where there is a mixture of homes and other non-residential facilities, such as shops and restaurants.

Under the current system, only some residential leaseholders in England and Wales can choose to buy their building outright through enfranchisement – or take over the management of their building, in what is known as a 'right to

manage'.

If shops and other similar properties take up over 25% of the total floorspace, then leaseholders cannot collectively bid to take control of their building.

New proposals could give these leaseholders the right to manage or buy their building outright, by increasing this limit to 50%, enabling them to have more control over how shared facilities are run and have the final say on building maintenance costs.

Other proposals in the consultation aim to make it cheaper for leaseholders to collectively buy their freehold. A 'mandatory leaseback' would require landlords to keep a lease on some properties in the building. This means reducing the cost of a collective buyout of their building – making it a reality for thousands more leaseholders.

Leaseholders may also see the cost of enfranchisement reduce further with future government proposals, [announced last year](#), such as abolishing 'marriage value' and the introduction of an online calculator with prescribed calculation rates.

Julie James, Welsh Minister for Climate Change, said:

I welcome this consultation as an important step towards implementing the Law Commission's recommendations on leasehold reform, which were jointly commissioned by the Welsh and UK governments. I want us to work together on these important reforms to ensure they reflect the best interests of leaseholders in Wales.

The government is also calling for views on changes to support greater use of commonhold, as an alternative form of homeownership to leasehold – including for those in Shared Ownership schemes in England.

The commonhold model is used in countries across the world and provides a structure for homeowners to collectively own the building their flat is in from the outset – with a greater say on their building's management, shared facilities and related costs.

Consumers and providers of shared ownership homes are now being invited to have their say on how decision-making in commonhold blocks could operate under the new Shared Ownership model, in England.

The government will consider all feedback from the consultation before making final policy decisions. This will help to form the next stage of the government's comprehensive programme of reforms to the leasehold and commonhold systems.

- See [more information on the consultation](#) and how to complete it. The consultation applies to both England and Wales and it will close on 22

February 2022.

- The Law Commission published their report on enfranchisement valuation 'Report on options to reduce the price payable' in January 2020 and their reports on enfranchisement, commonhold and right to manage in July 2020 – which are available on the [Law Commission's website](#).
- The government responded to some of these Law Commission recommendations in [January 2021](#). The government is now consulting on some further recommendations from the Law Commission and will respond to the remaining recommendations in due course.
- Leasehold is a form of home ownership that gives a leaseholder the exclusive right to live in a property for a fixed number of years. The lease is an agreement between the leaseholder and their landlord/freeholder, listing the number of years and any other obligations and responsibilities upon both parties.
- 'Enfranchisement' allows a leaseholder to either: extend their lease; or buy the freehold of their property from their landlord giving them ownership of the property in perpetuity. For the purposes of this consultation 'enfranchisement' refers just to the right to buy the freehold.
- The consultation also includes questions on consequential changes arising from changes to the non-residential limit, such as on voting rights in Right to Manage companies. The 'Right to Manage' allows leaseholders to collectively take over certain management responsibilities for their property from their landlord/freeholder. It is a no fault right – the leaseholders do not need to prove previous poor management. The 'Right to Manage' cannot be used if the immediate landlord is a local housing authority.
- A 'leaseback' refers to the existing practice in which leaseholders who buy their freehold grant the previous landlord a lease of units within the property, for example over commercial units. By granting these 'leasebacks', leaseholders are able to reduce the cost of buying the freehold, as the units that are leased back are not included in the final purchase price. Currently, accepting a 'leaseback' is optional and the landlord can refuse it. The Law Commission have proposed making 'leasebacks' mandatory – meaning the landlord would have to accept a 'leaseback' of certain units, to help make 'enfranchisement' more affordable for leaseholders by reducing the purchase price of their freehold.
- The government is considering proposals by the Law Commission to help

make commonhold a workable alternative to leasehold in as many settings as possible, including ways of incorporating shared ownership within commonhold. Last year, the [government also launched the Commonhold Council](#) -- a panel of experts to advise on preparing the housing market for a more widespread use this type of homeownership. See more information on [commonhold homeownership](#).

Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Bill

- The Ground Rent Bill, currently in Parliament, will put an end to ground rents for most new residential leasehold properties as part of the most significant changes to property law in a generation.
- As well as limiting ground rent to a peppercorn for most new residential leases, provisions in the Ground Rent Bill also mean that when a leaseholder extends their lease using the non-statutory process, the ground rent they pay on the extended term will be limited to a peppercorn

[Ensuring a timely return to constitutional rule and the protection of human rights in Mali.](#)

Thank you Madam President and thank you again to SRSG Wane and to Madam Dicko for your briefing and for everything you are doing in these most difficult of circumstances.

Like other Council members, the UK is seriously concerned about recent developments in Mali. We deeply regret the deaths of eight peacekeepers as a result of hostile acts, since the Council last met to discuss the situation in October. The frequency of these deplorable attacks speaks to the severity of the security challenges facing Mali, with dire consequences for civilians and peacekeepers alike. It underlines the need for concerted efforts by the Malian authorities and international partners to stabilise the country.

These efforts need to be led by a legitimate government focused on meeting the needs of its people. Instead, we have a transitional government focused on extending its time in office. Mali's proposal to delay elections by up to five years is deeply disappointing. It brings into question the transitional authorities' commitment to democracy and the rule of law, despite assurances given to members of this Council during our visit to Bamako last October.

We continue to stand behind ECOWAS mediation efforts. We call on the transitional authorities to prepare for elections without delay so that constitutional order can be restored as soon as possible. Like ECOWAS, we believe that any longer-term reforms should be taken forward by the next democratically elected government. We encourage the transitional authorities to continue engaging with ECOWAS in good faith, so that a credible election timetable can be agreed.

With the conflict in Mali escalating and spreading further south, civilians are in greater need than ever of protection and humanitarian assistance. The confirmed presence of the Wagner Group in Mali risks destabilising the country further. The UK made clear our concerns in the joint statement we co-signed with other international partners on 23 December. We have seen how civilians have had their human rights abused, and how UN peacekeepers have been put at risk, by the presence of unaccountable Wagner forces in the Central African Republic. The deployment of mercenaries will only increase the challenges facing Mali. We urge the Malian authorities to rethink their decision.

The UK remains committed to the Malian people and to helping build long-term stability and development. Through our deployment to MINUSMA, UK troops are making a tangible contribution to mission objectives, including protection of civilians in hard to reach areas. They are also helping UN human rights teams to investigate abuses. Last November the UK's Global Ambassador for Human Rights, Rita French, visited Mali and heard about the declining space for human rights actors in the country and the ongoing barriers to women's involvement in political and peace-building processes. The UK is using programme funding to help amplify women's voices and we welcome the voice and testimony of Ms Dicko here today. As we look toward elections and the re-starting of the Peace Process, we urge the transitional authorities, signatory armed groups and all stakeholders to redouble their efforts to include women and youth.

The UK will continue to monitor the situation in Mali closely, and we believe the Security Council should do the same, keeping all options open with the aim of ensuring a timely return to constitutional rule and the protection of human rights.

Thank you, Madam President.