

UK Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Girls' Education visits Uganda

Helen Grant MP, visited Uganda from 24 to 26 March to see first-hand the work the UK is doing to help girls access and benefit from quality education in Uganda to build back better together from coronavirus. Her visit included a meeting with the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, the Honourable Janet Museveni.

Uganda was the Special Envoy's first overseas visit since her appointment, highlighting the importance the UK places on girls' education in Uganda and beyond.

Mrs. Grant was appointed Special Envoy for Girls' Education by UK Prime Minister, Boris Johnson in January 2021 as part of the UK Government's global commitment to stand up for the right of every girl to 12 years of quality education. She is a passionate advocate for the rights of women and girls and before entering the UK Parliament, was a solicitor specialising in protecting women and children from domestic abuse.

78% of Uganda's population is under 25, and it is estimated that there will be around 40 million young people in Uganda by 2050. This generation could power the country's development, prosperity and bring the country to middle income status. Education is therefore both the biggest single challenge and opportunity for growth facing the country. More than half of children drop out before completing primary school. Sadly, only one-quarter of girls complete secondary school, facing barriers to completing their schooling including:

- financial barriers
- early marriage
- teenage pregnancy
- gender-based violence

Girls' education is not only vital to women and girls, it creates healthier and safer communities, with a child of a mother who can read 50% more likely to live beyond the age of five and 50% more likely to be immunised from deadly diseases.

Reflecting on her visit, Helen Grant said:

Uganda is an incredible country and I was blown away by the warm welcome I received and the ambition and potential in the young women and girls I met. Educating girls is one of the smartest investments we can make to grow economies, save lives and build back better from COVID-19. I am heartened by the progress being made with the UK's support in Uganda, to get girls learning.

But we're not there yet. The UK has set out ambitious global

targets of getting 40 million more girls in school, and a third more girls reading by the age of 10 by 2025, in low- and middle-income countries. I look forward to working with Uganda ahead of the Global Education Summit: Financing GPE 2021-2025 in July to urge countries to invest in education and improve access for girls.

Mrs Grant's visit was an important opportunity to reinforce the UK's message on the need to continue to get girls learning in Uganda. COVID-19 has made girls' education an even more urgent priority in Uganda and across the world, with 1.6 billion children and young people out of education around the world at the height of school closures. Mrs Grant was clear that we mustn't avoid setting back decades of progress. Girls' education is vital to how we build back better from the pandemic.

Despite the challenges brought about by COVID-19, the UK has continued to support children in Uganda to learn by adapting programming to reach them at home and support their return to school when it is safe to do so. Mrs Grant met with young girls aged 6 to 10 in Vurra sub-county, Arua, who are attending catch-up classes, to prepare for their return to school in June. She also watched the recording of a radio lesson. Backed by UK aid, nearly 6,000 lessons have aired since schools closed, reaching an estimated half a million children in 11 local languages.

Mrs Grant also visited Rhino Camp, a refugee settlement in Arua, where she saw first-hand the challenges faced by refugee children in accessing quality education. The UK is the largest donor to the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) global fund, which supports UNCHR and an NGO Consortium led by Save the Children to deliver education to refugees and host communities in Uganda.

The Special Envoy also met the Minister for Education and Sports, First Lady Janet Museveni. Mrs Grant reiterated the UK's determination to prioritise girls' education and youth inclusion worldwide and congratulated the First Lady on the re-opening of Ugandan schools.

They discussed how to address the learning losses due to COVID-19 and the need to focus on learning in lower primary education, to ensure that children have the skills and abilities needed to progress onto secondary education. Following concerns expressed by the UK Government after a challenging election period, Mrs Grant also raised the need to champion rights for young people to ensure an empowered youth who are included in Uganda's political system.

Empowering women and girls through education has been a long-standing priority for the UK and is at the heart of the UK's G7 Presidency. The UK will also co-host the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) summit with Kenya in the UK later this year, bringing governments, business and civil society together to channel investment and action into getting children, especially girls, around the world into school and learning.

The UK has been a major bilateral donor to education in Uganda, including through our contribution to Strengthening Education Systems for Improved

Learning (SESil) and the Girls Education Challenge (GEC).

- the UK is partnering with Kenya and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to co-host the Global Education Summit: Financing GPE 2021-2025 in London in July, urging world leaders to invest in education and improve access for girls
- GPE is seeking up to \$5bn over five years to give 175 million children the opportunity to learn. A strong collective pledge from G7 countries would go a long way to achieving this.
- Uganda is the first country Helen has visited since her appointment in January 2021
- more information on Helen and her role can be found [here](#)

[UK sends life-saving medical equipment to India](#)

UK sends life-saving medical equipment to India to help fight Covid-19

- Ventilators and oxygen concentrator devices due to leave UK today
- The support follows a request from India and PM pledge for the UK to do all it can
- First package due to arrive in Delhi early on Tuesday, with further shipments later this week

More than 600 pieces of vital medical equipment will be sent to India to support the country in its fight against Covid-19, the UK Government has announced.

The assistance package, funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, includes ventilators and oxygen concentrators from surplus stocks. It will be used by the Government of India to provide vital medical treatment to those suffering from Covid-19 in India.

The Department of Health and Social Care have worked closely with the NHS, as well as suppliers and manufacturers in the UK to identify reserve life-saving equipment that can be sent to India.

India has this week reported its highest numbers of new daily cases and deaths since the pandemic began and is facing severe shortages of oxygen.

Following discussions with the Government of India, the first shipment of equipment will leave the UK today, arriving in New Delhi in the early hours of Tuesday morning. Further shipments are due to follow later this week.

In total, nine airline container loads of supplies, including 495 oxygen concentrators, 120 non-invasive ventilators and 20 manual ventilators, will

be sent to the country this week. This equipment will be crucial in helping to save the lives of the most vulnerable in India. The oxygen concentrators, for example, can extract oxygen from the air in the atmosphere so that it can be provided to patients, taking the strain off hospital oxygen systems and allowing oxygen to be provided in situations where hospital oxygen supplies have run out.

The UK is working closely with the Government of India to identify further assistance it can provide in the coming days.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

We stand side by side with India as a friend and partner during what is a deeply concerning time in the fight against COVID-19.

Vital medical equipment, including hundreds of oxygen concentrators and ventilators, is now on its way from the UK to India to support efforts to prevent the tragic loss of life from this terrible virus.

We will continue to work closely with the Indian government during this difficult time and I'm determined to make sure that the UK does everything it can to support the international community in the global fight against the pandemic.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

We are supporting our Indian friends with vital medical equipment at a difficult time for them in this pandemic.

We have all got to work together to tackle Covid-19. India is a very important partner to us, so we're providing oxygen concentrators and ventilators to help save the lives of the most vulnerable. We will be following up on this first delivery with further support, based on our ongoing discussions with the Indian Government.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

The heart-breaking scenes in India show once again how awful this terrible disease is. We are determined to support the people of India through this very difficult time, and I am hugely grateful to those who have worked hard to make this initial delivery happen.

This first delivery of life saving equipment will provide much needed assistance and we stand ready to do more. The global

pandemic has challenged health systems all across the world and the best way to overcome adversity is to unite and defeat this dreadful disease together.

This is the just the latest example of UK-India collaboration throughout this pandemic, to the benefit of both countries and the world.

[Stunning photographs show the people behind the national vaccination effort](#)

- Working with the NHS, photojournalists have captured the monumental collective effort of the largest vaccination programme in British history in a series of poignant, never-before-seen photographs
- Images show intimate moments across the UK, including in Salisbury Cathedral, the Royal Welsh Showground in mid-Wales and on Rathlin Island in Northern Ireland
- The new photo montage comes as over 45.5 million jabs in total have been administered across the UK in over 2,800 vaccination sites

From care homes to cathedrals and museums to stadiums, photojournalists Jude Palmer, Glenn Edward and Liam McBurney toured the UK over the past few months capturing intimate moments during the monumental national effort to vaccinate the British population and end the (coronavirus) COVID-19 pandemic.

A series of unseen photographs capturing the size and scale of the UK-wide vaccination programme have been published by the UK government today ahead of a new campaign urging under-50s to get the jab. Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

These incredible photographs show the heroic efforts of thousands of vaccinators and volunteers in every corner of the UK who have given so much to protect the most vulnerable in our society against this cruel virus.

While there is much to celebrate with over 45 million COVID-19 vaccine doses administered so far, the battle is not yet over. I urge everyone to do their bit – when you get the call, get the jab.

Photographs include smiling portraits of vaccinators and volunteers, a bird's eye view of socially distanced patients awaiting their jabs in Salisbury Cathedral, and an elderly couple holding hands at a vaccination site in Ulverston, Cumbria.

Jude Palmer, photojournalist, said:

While the pandemic has been an incredibly difficult time in our history, it had to be documented. It's been an honour to witness the incredible roll out of the life-saving vaccine first-hand and document this in a meaningful, compassionate way.

The photography project tells many genuine stories of people involved in the vaccine programme and those that have come forward to have their vaccine already – from their smiles, laughs, nerves, and sighs of relief as we get one step closer to a more normal way of life.

The government has already hit its target of offering everybody in cohorts 1 to 9 – those aged 50 and over, the clinically vulnerable and health and social care workers – and is on track to offer a jab to all adults in the UK by the end of July.

Over 33.5 million people have now received a first dose of a vaccine – over 63.5% of the UK adult population – with 12 million receiving their second dose. This means over 22.8% of the UK adult population have now received both doses of a vaccine – giving them the strongest possible protection from this virus, with over 45.5 million vaccines administered overall.

Throughout February and March, Palmer, Edward and McBurney visited the Science Museum in London, Salisbury Cathedral, the Royal Welsh Showground in mid-Wales and Rathlin Island in Northern Ireland, as well as hospitals, mobile vaccination units, care homes and pop-up vaccination sites.

These never-before-seen images, which illustrate the monumental and collective effort of NHS teams, volunteers and members of the public, have been compiled into a video montage to mark the success of the vaccine programme to date.

They provide an opportunity for people to look back on the programme, reflecting on the heroic efforts to protect those most vulnerable to COVID-19 and look ahead to the second phase of the vaccination programme, which will see all adults offered a first dose by the end of July.

A major new campaign marking the second phase of the national vaccination rollout will be launched tomorrow to encourage people aged 50 and under to get their jab when their turn comes.

Alice Tooley, 25, a Volunteer Service Co-Ordinator at refugee charity RETAS in Leeds, who is featured in the photography said:

I was invited to get the vaccine because of my frontline work with vulnerable adults. Getting the vaccine was important to me as it meant I could continue my work with asylum seekers and refugees feeling confidence that I wasn't putting them or myself at risk of the virus.

As younger people my age get called for theirs, I hope they jump at

it the way I did so, as a collective, we all play our part in getting back to a more normal way of life.

Dr Gavin Chestnutt, 42, GP Partner at Ballycastle Medical Practice and part-time farmer, is seen vaccinating a 92 year-old man in his front garden overlooking the Rathlin Island coastline, Northern Ireland. He said:

It's been a real honour to play such a central part in the vaccine roll out programme and witness people's physical relief as they get their first and second jabs. To save elderly people travelling to the clinic through snow and frosty conditions, I've been travelling round on boats and by car to reach the most remote corners of Northern Ireland.

Most overwhelming has been to see how grateful everyone has been for getting their vaccine and finally seeing some light at the end of the tunnel.

The AstraZeneca, Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 vaccines have met the independent Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency's strict standards of safety, effectiveness and quality.

In England, approved vaccines are available from over 270 hospital hubs, 1,000 GP-led sites, 160 vaccination centres and 300 pharmacies in England. Around 98% of people live within 10 miles of a vaccination centre in England and vaccinations are taking place at sites including mosques, community centres and football stadiums.

Notes to editors

Photographs and videos are available to download with captions and credits on [WeTransfer](#) and Vimeo:

Main photography dates and locations:

- Aston Villa Football Club, Birmingham. February 2021
- Salisbury Cathedral, Salisbury. February 2021.
- Gibson Lane Medical Centre, Leeds. February 2021.
- Salt Hill Activity Centre, Slough. February 2021
- Priory Medical Centre, Leeds. February 2021.
- Herne Bay Community Centre, Kent. March 2021
- Wetherby Medical Centre, Leeds. March 2021
- Vaccination Bus Leeds. March 2021
- Newbury Racecourse, Newbury. March 2021
- The Royal Welsh Showground, Builth Wells, Wales. March 2021
- Rathlin Island, Northern Ireland. March 2021

Spokespeople available for interview

For interview requests with the spokespeople quoted in the release, please

email: vaccineconfidence@freuds.com or call Becky Merchant on 07895 847950.

Over £150 million funding to kickstart self building revolution

- New £150 million 'Help to Build' scheme to make it easier and more affordable for people to build their own homes
- New homes can be made to order or built from scratch, and will benefit small building firms as part of the government's Plan for Jobs
- £2.1 million additional funding to help communities decide where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built and what they should look like

New plans supported by over £150 million in new government funding will make it easier and more affordable for people to build their own homes, the Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick has announced today (24 April 2021).

The 'Help to Build' scheme will ensure that self and custom home building can become a realistic option to get onto the housing ladder through lower deposit mortgages.

Lowering the required deposit will free up capital, so people can build the home that they want and need whether it's a commissioned, made to order home, or a new design from scratch. The scheme will provide an equity loan on the completed home, similar to the Help to Buy scheme.

Made to order homes allow people to customise the home they want based on existing designs. This could include more office space, or a particular design to support a family's requirements including for disabled or older people.

Self and custom build could deliver 30-40,000 new homes a year: a significant contribution to the country's housebuilding ambitions.

The scheme is part of the government's wider [Plan for Jobs](#) as the new plans will also benefit small building firms. SME builders account for 1 in 10 new homes and the scheme will help scale up the number of self and custom build homes built every year.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Building your own home shouldn't be the preserve of a small number of people, but a mainstream, realistic and affordable option for people across the country. That's why we are making it easier and more affordable – backed by over £150 million new funding from the

government.

The scheme we have launched today will help the thousands of people who'd like to build their own home but who've not yet considered it or previously ruled it out.

Our plans will help get more people on to the housing ladder, ensure homes suit people's needs like home working or caring for relatives, whilst providing an important boost to small builders and businesses too.

The Prime Minister has [commissioned Richard Bacon MP](#) to lead a review on how we can scale up the delivery of self and custom build homes. The review will report its findings and recommendations in the summer.

This follows the news that major lenders have signed up to the government's new 95% mortgage guarantee scheme to help more people than ever on to the housing ladder. Lloyds, Santander, Barclays, HSBC and Natwest are launching mortgages under the scheme today with Virgin Money following next month.

The government has also announced [£2.1 million in funding](#) to help communities have a greater say in how their local area is developed. The fund will boost neighbourhood planning by giving additional support to local authorities in under-represented areas.

Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. Communities are able to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built, have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be provided, and grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead.

A further £330,000 is also available to councils wishing to pilot this approach to neighbourhood planning.

Andrew Baddeley-Chappell, CEO, National Custom and Self Build Association said:

The Help to Build scheme is an important step towards greater customer choice for those with ambition, sound plans and smaller deposits.

Custom and self build is about the homeowner having control over the design and specification of their project – enabling them to create the home they want, rather than the one someone else believes they would like.

This scheme is all about delivering more and better homes, that more people aspire to live in and that communities are happier to see built.

The [Self and custom build action plan](#) has also been published today, which sets out government measures to support the sector.

This includes the next steps in the review of the Right to Build legislation, to assess whether further reforms are needed and confirmation of further funding for the Right to Build Task Force which will help local authorities, community groups and other organisations help deliver self and custom build housing projects across the UK.

The National Association of Custom and Self Build's '[Right to Build Task Force](#)' was established to help local authorities, community groups and other organisations help deliver self and custom build housing projects across the UK. Initially funded by the Nationwide Foundation, since 2020 it has been funded by government to provide expertise and support to local authorities on the implementation of the Right to Build and how to secure self and custom build delivery.

Visit www.selfbuildportal.org.uk for help and advice.

In developing the scheme with Homes England we have used the model proposed by the National Custom and Self Build Association (NaCSBA) as a starting point. We will continue to involve NaCSBA as we develop the scheme, as well as engaging with lenders, brokers and insurers. Further details of the scheme, including how to apply, will be available in the summer.

Over 1,000 communities have now progressed through the neighbourhood planning process and have a 'made' Plan or Order in place, and more than 2,740 communities have started the process.

The 3-year, £8.5 million Neighbourhood Planning pilot announced in 2018, to support neighbourhood planning groups to deliver affordable housing for sale, will continue next year for its third year.

The pilot seeks to test whether additional support will help neighbourhood planning groups to bring forward affordable homes for sale through neighbourhood plans and/or granting planning permissions through a neighbourhood development order.

In line with the launch of First Homes, neighbourhood planning groups who are developing policies to implement the flexibility afforded to them under the First Homes policy, will be eligible for support under the pilot. This support includes access to technical support packages and up to £28,000 of grant. The pilot will also continue to help communities to bring forward other forms of affordable housing for sale beyond First Homes.

As set out in the [Planning for the future white paper](#), the government remains committed to retaining neighbourhood planning as part of the planning system. Furthermore, it is currently considering how to further increase the spread and uptake of neighbourhood planning in towns and cities.

Ensuring access to food and sexual and reproductive health services

Thank you Chair, Excellencies,

I am honoured to join you today as we conclude the 54th Session on the Commission on Population and Development. Today, Member States agreed to adopt a timely, and much needed resolution. Not only has it been 5 years since the last outcome of the commission, but this resolution demonstrates that the international community can come together and prioritise taking action to protect women, adolescents, girls and marginalised populations.

We know that COVID-19 has had a profound impact on food security, the access to safe, nutritious and affordable food, and limited access to sexual and reproductive health services. Women and girls bare the brunt of this impact. While women produce 50% of the food worldwide, they account for 70% of the world's hungry. There have been significant disruptions to essential sexual and reproductive health services including family planning, HIV testing and treatment, and safe abortions.

Therefore, we welcome the timely commitments in the resolution to: * Prevent and eliminate sexual and gender based violence * Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights * Mitigate the impact of COVID-19 related school closures on girls, which puts them at greater risk of harmful practices such as early, child and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. * Stress the urgent need to build resilience to address the adverse impacts of climate change * Ensure access to social protection programmes for women * Close the gender gap in access to productive resources in agriculture, with a view to ensure equal access to property rights * Take a multisectoral approach to address the nutritional needs of pregnant and lactating women, women of a productive age, adolescents, infants and young children. * And, remove barriers to health facing youth and adolescents, including measures supporting the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases.

Importantly, the resolution reaffirms the critical role that UNFPA has in supporting member states to deliver upon the commitments made in this resolution and to ensure the full and effective implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Declaration.

Member States have not only come together to agree to a resolution, but have worked toward tangible process on the realisation of sexual and reproductive health and rights, the development of more sustainable food systems, and improved nutrition.

We regret that the text does not include vital references to sexual rights

and essential components such as comprehensive sexuality education. We lament that the text does not contain a stronger focus on the impact of food insecurity and COVID-19 on marginalised communities, and those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

We know that COVID-19 is likely to exacerbate and reinforce the position of vulnerable and marginalised groups in society, including people living with HIV, LGBT+, sex workers, and refugees. These groups are facing increased risk of stigma, discrimination, sexual and gender based violence, loss of income and further restrictions to accessing essential supports and services. A survey conducted in nearly 140 countries on the impact of COVID-19 on LGBT communities found that 21% said their access to HIV treatment had been limited or complicated. The international community must come together to take timely action to prevent further marginalisation of these populations.

As we set out in our national statement delivered earlier this week, we hope the conversations here are carried forward throughout the remainder of the year during discussions at the Food Systems Summit and COP 26. We will champion inclusivity throughout our COP Presidency. We will use our position to amplify the voices and solutions of women, adolescents and girls and those most marginalised, empowering them as decision-makers, advocates and leaders.

We are immensely grateful to the work of the co-facilitators, Lebanon and Romania, UNFPA and DESA for the technical expertise, and the Chair, Burkina Faso for all their diligent work helping us reach this point. We look forward to reconvening next year as we discuss "Population and Sustainable Development, in particular sustained and inclusive economic growth."