

# Government to modernise product safety laws to ensure they're fit for 21st century

- Government exploring changes to product safety laws that are over 30 years old to ensure they work for emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence and 3D printing
- call for evidence to also see how e-commerce can be made safer following huge increase in online shopping during pandemic
- now the UK has full control over its laws, we can go even further than the EU to make our product safety regime one of the best in the world, exploring better regulation whilst maintaining high standards

Plans to review and strengthen the UK's product safety laws and ensure they are fit for the 21st century have been set out by Business Minister Paul Scully today (Thursday 11 March).

Much of the UK's product safety regime has been underpinned by EU law and some dates back to 1987. Now the UK has full control of its product safety laws and we can set our own rules in the best interests of British businesses and consumers, the UK government is considering how to ensure our product safety regime reflects recent innovations, new consumer products and cutting-edge technologies like AI and 3D printing.

The [Call for evidence](#) will also explore how the growth of online shopping and new technologies such as internet connected devices like smart watches, artificial intelligence and 3D printing, are making responsibility for product safety more complex – for example, if a smart fridge is operated unsafely following a software upgrade.

Exploring and introducing better regulation will be a key part of making the most of opportunities outside of the EU, stimulating growth, innovation and competition in the UK, whilst attracting new investment, enabling businesses to grow dynamically, and maintaining high standards.

Business Minister Paul Scully said:

Now the UK has the freedom to set our own standards, we are determined to power ahead with a new, modern product safety regime which will unleash the creative potential of our businesses while keeping consumers safe.

Much of the product safety system was devised in 1987 when The Terminator was still out on Betamax. Now we want to make sure artificial intelligence and robotics are working for us and not against by making the UK a world-leader for both safety and cutting-edge innovation.

Through software updates and AI techniques like machine learning, these products and their safety implications can continually change over their lifetimes, while modern manufacturing techniques like 3D printing mean products can be built in consumers' homes.

The call for evidence will help to ensure regulations are kept up-to-date with these technological breakthroughs as well as the transition to Net Zero, and what they mean for consumer safety.

The call for evidence will also explore how product safety can be improved to reflect the needs of everyone in society. Research suggests that some virtual reality headsets can be associated with higher levels of motion sickness in females compared to male users, and there are some examples of voice recognition technologies that do not respond as well to female voices, or facial recognition technologies less able to recognise certain skin tones.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards is the UK government body tasked with ensuring that the public is protected from potentially unsafe products and that businesses understand their obligations.

- The call for evidence opens today and will close in 12 weeks (Thursday 3 June). The government is seeking views from manufacturers, distributors, consumers and the wider public, and intends to publish a summary of responses and evidence paper within 12 weeks of the close of the call for evidence
- the pandemic has accelerated the trend towards online shopping, with the proportion of online sales in August 2020 being 47% higher than February's pre-pandemic levels
- there are expected to be 50 billion devices connected to the internet globally by 2030 – including everything from smartphones to toasters to complex robots – meaning a five-fold increase in such devices in 10 years
- today's announcement is the first step in updating the legal framework for product safety, some of which dates back to the Consumer Protection Act of 1987. The call for evidence explores issues such as the extent to which safety issues arise from new technologies like AI systems and 3D printers and where responsibility for safety should sit.

The Office for Product Safety and Standards, the UK government's product safety body, is seeking views on the longer-term approach to product safety and how to ensure that the framework is fit for the future. Among other issues, it will consider whether our product safety framework:

- takes account of new risks and opportunities, so it delivers both safe outcomes and supports business growth and innovation
- can respond quickly to new and emerging threats and opportunities for product safety, including digital technologies and new ways of supplying products
- supports regulators and business to be open and transparent about product safety so consumers can make informed decisions

[View the UK product safety review: call for evidence](#) and [respond online](#).

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## [UN Human Rights Council 46: Interactive Dialogue with the High Comissioner on Venezuela](#)

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## [Government investment supports M&G Shared Ownership Fund](#)

The Government's housing agency, Homes England, has agreed a £10 million investment with M&G Investments to support the launch of its new Shared Ownership Fund.

Homes England's commitment to the fund is part of its aim to provide investors with greater confidence that housing, including shared ownership, has strong government backing and can play a more prominent part in residential investment strategies.

The recoverable investment from Homes England will help accelerate the delivery of 2,000 affordable homes through M&G's partnership with The Hyde Group. The partnership will provide Hyde with the capital to grow its development ambitions and build additional homes in the areas it serves.

The fund has so far attracted £215m of initial investment from two local authority pensions schemes, Hyde and two M&G client funds. The fund forms part of M&G's established residential platform, alongside the £1 bn UK Residential Property Fund established in 2013.

Homes England is keen to support the growth and evolution of housing in institutional portfolios. This is the second time that the government's housing agency has supported M&G, after it provided funding for the construction of over 500 private rental homes, which were subsequently acquired by M&G's UK Residential Property Fund in 2013. The establishment of funds such as the M&G Shared Ownership Fund provide institutional investors

with the structures they need to invest in affordable housing.

Gordon More, Interim Chief Executive at Homes England, said:  
“Securing new institutional capital to increase the delivery of new affordable homes is a priority for Homes England. Today’s investment is a signal to both domestic and international institutional capital that the government supports sustainable long-term investment in affordable housing to meet the needs of communities across the country.

“M&G has been innovative and successful investing in both market rent and affordable housing. We welcome the opportunity to work with M&G again and to support our Strategic Partner, Hyde. We look forward to seeing the fund grow and provide access to high quality new homes.”

Alex Greaves, Head of Residential Investment at M&G, said: “Well managed shared ownership is a brilliant first step onto the housing ladder for aspirational homeowners. As trusted investors with access to deep pools of client capital, we are fully committed to innovating and improving standards – adding scale and efficiency to the Fund – as we have done in the private rented sector.

“Working in partnership with Homes England is a great example of how the private and public sector can combine forces to make a positive impact on this under-served sector.”

For more information about the fund, please contact:

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Notes to editors:

#### About M&G Investments

M&G Investments is part of M&G plc, a savings and investment business which was formed in 2017 through the merger of Prudential plc’s UK and Europe savings and insurance operation and M&G, its wholly owned international investment manager. M&G plc listed as an independent company on the London Stock Exchange in October 2019 and has £339 billion of assets under management (as at 30 June 2020). M&G plc has over 5 million customers in the UK, Europe, the Americas and Asia, including individual savers and investors, life insurance policy holders and pension scheme members.

For nearly nine decades M&G Investments has been helping its customers to prosper by putting investments to work, which in turn creates jobs, homes and vital infrastructure in the real economy. Its investment solutions span equities, fixed income, multi asset, cash, private debt, infrastructure and real estate.

M&G recognises the importance of responsible investing and is a signatory to the United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment (UNPRI) and is a member of the Climate Bonds Initiative Partners Programme.

M&G plc has committed to achieve net zero carbon emissions on its total book of assets under management and administration by 2050 and committed to reduce operational carbon emissions as a corporate entity to net zero by 2030.

For more information, please visit: <https://global.mandg.com/>

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## **UK sends tough message to abusers in the aid sector and launches new programme of support for survivors**

The UK has today launched a new programme which will help bring perpetrators of sexual abuse, exploitation or sexual harassment in the aid sector to justice and provide vital support for survivors.

The programme will build on the extensive work the UK has done to stamp out abuse in the aid sector. It will strengthen the support available to survivors and make it easier for them to report abuse.

This will include developing a new way of reporting abuse anonymously through an online platform which will be piloted in Zambia. It will connect survivors with organisations who can help them access further support, including taking their case to the police or the perpetrator's employer, if they wish.

New UK aid will also fund investments for local and community based organisations so that they can give a range of direct support to survivors including counselling and psychosocial support, financial help and access to justice.

A new training scheme will also be introduced to improve the quality of safeguarding investigations carried out by NGOs and international bodies like the UN.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

The UK is taking action to ensure the aid sector cannot be a safe haven for the perpetrators of sexual abuse and exploitation of the vulnerable. We have led in driving up safeguarding standards across the aid sector. Our new support will help survivors get the assistance they need and report their abusers without fear.

Since the Safeguarding Summit in October 2018, the UK has taken a number of concerted steps to drive up standards in the delivery of aid around the world. The focus has been led by the need to support survivors, prevent further abuse and bring perpetrators to justice.

Steps taken include a new tougher screening system for aid workers to allow charities and other organisations to share data on staff misconduct and prevent perpetrators from moving job-to-job. This has seen at least 75 people rejected for jobs because of negative or absent data.

The UK Government and ACRO Criminal Record Office has worked with Interpol to improve criminal records checks and promote information sharing between aid and law enforcement agencies. We have launched a Resource and Support hub which is actively supporting aid organisations operating on the ground to improve safeguarding standards and support provided to victims.

The UK is clear all organisations bidding for UK aid must meet the high standards of safeguarding required and do everything in their power to keep the people they work with safe. Today, the Government confirmed that Oxfam GB can once again bid for funding, after the Charity Commission found last month that its approach to safeguarding had been “significantly strengthened” and that the charity should return to standard regulatory oversight.

The report found that the people Oxfam GB helps are now better protected against abuse, exploitation, and other forms of harm, in line with the high standards required of UK aid partners.

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