

COP26 President Alok Sharma at UK-Bangladesh Climate Partnership Forum

Good evening. It is a pleasure to join you all. I'm currently in Paris, I've had a number of very good meetings on climate issues and I'll be returning to London shortly.

I really want to thank the British High Commission Dhaka, the High Commissioner and the whole team, for organising this brilliant series of events. I think they add an enormous amount to our understanding and our close cooperation together.

And it is very much an example of the strength of the relationship between our two nations when it comes to tackling climate change.

And there's a whole range of collaborations that we have. Some of that is the UK Met Office and Bangladesh's Meteorological Department doing work on projecting sea level rises.

Or our governments working together on the transition to clean energy, and of course to develop the new Adaptation Action Coalition.

I do believe that our partnership on climate change has never been stronger.

As COP26 President, I want to build on this relationship.

And I want to work with our friends in Bangladesh, and other countries most vulnerable to climate change, to make progress on the critical challenges we face.

And I'm really looking forward to visiting Bangladesh, to coming back in person as soon as possible.

Because I am very well aware of the leadership that you, your Government are showing when it comes to climate action. And of course what's also vital and important is your ability to influence and inspire others.

From your extraordinary success in early-warning systems and disaster-risk reduction, as we witnessed in your response to Cyclone Amphan.

To your powerful and longstanding advocacy from Bangladesh on international finance.

The UK COP26 Presidency wants to amplify that leadership.

And we want to work together to find practical solutions on vital issues.

Issues like finance, which is one of our top priorities for our COP26 Presidency.

Because unless we get finance flowing, we cannot and will not see the action we need, to reduce emissions, to adapt, and to rise to the growing challenges of loss and damage.

We have listened to what those countries most vulnerable to climate change have told us about the challenges they face. And I continue to do that in my travels as well as in my virtual discussions.

And we know that three of the critical issues we must address are:

Firstly, getting finance flowing.

Secondly, improving the quality of that finance, and increasing sums for adaptation.

And thirdly, making finance more accessible.

Critically, we need donor countries to step up, honour their commitments on international climate finance, and deliver on the pledge that has been made.

I hope to be frank with you. I am under no illusion about how important it is that this happens.

It is a matter of trust.

It is a matter of need.

And also in terms of our commitment to solving the crisis before us.

Climate change is a global problem and it requires a global response.

So it is imperative that as well as taking action at home, developed countries support others to do the same.

For our part, the UK Government has doubled its international finance commitment to £11.6 billion over the next five years.

And I am being very clear and very direct with our fellow donor countries that they must follow suit. They need to play their part in collectively meeting the \$100 billion a year target.

And to be clear and ambitious about their post-2020 financial commitments, so that countries can plan for the future.

Let me assure you I will be pushing for action through the UK's G7 Presidency this year too.

And I am calling on multilateral development banks and development finance institutions to play their part in delivering the \$100 billion goal.

As well as urging these institutions to support a green, inclusive and resilient recovery from Covid-19.

And to ensure that their portfolios are fully aligned with the goals of the

Paris Agreement.

Of course as well as the public finance, we also need to get the private finance flowing if we are to raise the trillions of dollars needed to make the Paris Agreement goals a reality.

So the UK COP26 Presidency is taking action.

We are encouraging governments to follow the UK's lead. To mandate climate risk disclosure in line with the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosure, as one example of the work we're doing.

And of course I'm also urging every financial institution to commit to net zero by 2050.

But as I say, we need to improve the quality of the public finance that is available.

And to get it going to the right places.

At the moment, too little is gender-responsive. Too little is provided in the form of grants. And too little is making its way to adaptation, or indeed to tackling loss and damage.

So, again, the UK COP26 Presidency is working with development banks and donor countries, including through the G7.

To increase the proportion of grant-based financing. To improve gender-responsiveness. And to get more funding to adaptation which is so critical.

We are also working with the Coalition for Climate Resilient Investment, to drive private money to adaptation.

Which, for too long, has been seen as the poor cousin of mitigation.

It has been a personal mission of mine to bring about this change.

As UK Secretary of State for International Development, I launched the Call to Action on Adaptation and Resilience in 2019, with support from good friends like Bangladesh.

And established the International Development Infrastructure Commission, to drive investment to green, sustainable infrastructure.

And now, as COP26 President, I am putting the issue centre stage.

As climate impacts intensify, the cause only becomes more pressing.

And of course, you in Bangladesh knows this all too well.

From mudslides to cyclones, you are disproportionately suffering the effects of our changing climate.

And, despite the success of your adaptation work, loss and damage is

escalating as a result.

We know that the world must do more to avert, minimise, and address loss and damage.

And agreeing the structure and form of the Santiago Network will be vital.

So the UK's COP Presidency is working with Chile, as well as with our moderator today, Professor Huq, to get the Network operating.

Finally, a major concern on finance is improving accessibility.

We have heard very clearly what developing countries have told us.

That application processes are too bureaucratic.

They are arduous.

They are variable.

And they are complex.

An indicator of the current state of affairs is the low level of finance making its way to the most vulnerable nations.

In 2018, the least developed countries and small island states received just 14 percent and 2 percent respectively of total public climate finance.

As I say, the UK COP26 Presidency wants to work in partnership with countries most vulnerable to climate change to address this and other finance issues.

That is why, at the end of this month, we will hold a Climate and Development Ministerial.

This will bring together Ministers. As well as multilateral and regional development banks, and the UN.

We will look at four vital issues:

Access to finance; quantity, quality and composition of climate finance; response to impacts; and fiscal space and debt.

With issues like gender and social justice cross-cutting our discussions.

And together, we will plan how to make progress in each of these areas, through events such as the G7, the UN, the Spring Meetings of the international financial institutes, and COP26 itself.

I very much hope Bangladesh will join us for the event.

Continuing the strong partnership between our countries on climate change.

So that, together, we make real progress on finance ahead of COP26.

Thank you.

Further information

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[New specialised support to help those living with obesity to lose weight](#)

- £100m to support children, adults and families achieve and maintain a healthier weight
- Sir Keith Mills appointed to advise on a new incentives and reward approach to encourage healthy behaviours
- Measures part of landmark obesity strategy published by the Prime Minister last July

Over £70 million will be invested into weight management services – made available through the NHS and councils – enabling up to 700,000 adults to have access to support that can help them to lose weight, from access to digital apps, weight management groups or individual coaches, to specialist clinical support.

The remaining £30 million will fund initiatives to help people maintain a healthy weight, including access to the free NHS 12 week weight loss plan app and continuing the successful Better Health marketing campaign to motivate people to make healthier choices.

Part of the funding from the 30m pot will also go towards upskilling healthcare professionals to support those in early years and childhood with intervention and enhanced training packages, helping up to 6,000 children and families to lead healthy lives.

Sir Keith Mills, who has pioneered reward programmes through Airmiles and Nectar points, has been appointed to advise on developing a new “fit miles” approach that will use incentives and rewards to support people to eat better and move more.

Sir Keith will support the Government to develop innovative approaches with public and private partners that use incentives to help people make healthier choices.

This will draw on best practice from around the world, such as the national step challenge in Singapore, a nation-wide physical activity programme aimed at encouraging Singaporeans to do more physical activity as part of their daily lives with financial incentives.

The plans announced today will prioritise helping those who need the most support to achieve a healthier lifestyle, including people living in some of the most deprived areas of the country.

Living with excess weight puts people at greater risk of serious illness or death from COVID-19, with risk growing substantially as body mass index (BMI) increases.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the impact that living with obesity can have on people’s health and it is more important than ever to make it easier for people to move towards a healthier weight.

Evidence suggests weight management services can help people to adopt healthier behaviours, lose weight and improve their general wellbeing. This funding will support GPs and other health professionals to help make weight management an integral part of routine care. It will encourage clinicians to have conversations about weight with their patients and enable them to refer patients to new services.

Obesity is one of the biggest health crises the country faces. Almost two-thirds (63%) of adults in England are overweight or living with obesity – and 1 in 3 children leave primary school overweight or obese, with obesity-related illnesses costing the NHS £6 billion a year.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson, said:

Losing weight is hard, but making small changes can make a big difference.

Being overweight increases the risk of becoming ill with covid. If we all do our bit, we can reduce our own health risks – but also help take pressure off the NHS.

This funding will give extra support to people across the country who want to lose weight too.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Helping people to achieve or maintain a healthier weight is complex and can be a very hard task. We want to make it easier for people to lose weight, which is why our funding set out today ensures those across all ages have the right level of support and tools they need to make healthier lifestyle choices.

These measures will allow us to work with local authorities and optimise different areas of our healthcare services to encourage healthy behaviours for all. The urgency of tackling obesity has been brought to the fore by evidence of the link to an increased risk from COVID-19, so it's vital we take action on obesity to protect the NHS and improve our nation's health.

Professor Jonathan Valabhji, National Clinical Director for Diabetes and Obesity, said:

Obesity is associated with higher risks of type 2 diabetes, heart attacks, strokes, many of the common cancers and is now linked with more severe covid-19 outcomes, so there does indeed need to be wider action to support people to lose weight.

Dr Alison Tedstone, Chief Nutritionist at Public Health England said:

Living with obesity can have a devastating impact on people's health and wellbeing in so many ways, not least its link this year to the increased risk from Covid.

This investment will greatly boost services for adults struggling with their weight and raising the profile of our Better Health campaign will help to support more people to make healthier choices.

The £30 million will be used to fund different a range of different initiatives which aim to support people to maintain a healthy weight:

- Encouraging millions of adults to reduce their risk of a number of serious diseases by achieving and maintaining a healthy weight through the Better Health campaign. This will motivate people to adopt healthier habits and signpost to the free NHS 12 week weight loss plan app. The campaign will also reach families with children, especially those most at risk of obesity, to adopt 'whole family' healthier lifestyle behaviour changes.
- Expanding behavioural weight management services for children and families to offer them extra support they need to reach a healthy weight.
- Upskilling health care professionals in the early years to confidently assess needs, offer family advice and interventions, create advanced training packages and normalise conversations about achieving healthy

growth to ensure every child gets the best start in life.

- Laying the foundations to make child height and weight measurement data collected through the National Child Measurement Programme available to health professionals through Digital Child Health records, and parents and carers through digital personal child health record.

Final findings from February COVID-19 REACT-1 study published

- 165,456 volunteers tested in England between 4 and 23 of February 2021 as part of one of the largest COVID-19 studies
- The rate of decline in infections has slowed since the interim findings were published in February, showing it is critical everyone continues to follow the rules to help bring down infections

The final findings from the ninth report of REACT-1, one of the country's largest studies into COVID-19 infections in England, have been published today by Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI. It follows the [interim findings published in February](#).

The data shows infections in England have fallen by two-thirds since the last REACT report published in January.

Over 165,400 volunteers were tested in England between 4 and 23 of February to examine the levels of infection in the general population.

While there has been another fall in the number of cases in England, the speed of this decline is slowing. When compared to the interim findings published in February, there has been no change in prevalence in Yorkshire and The Humber and prevalence has risen slightly in London, the South East, East Midlands and West Midlands but has fallen in all other regions.

While the vaccination programme continues at pace, it is critical everyone continues to follow the rules, stays at home, reduces contact with others and maintains social distancing – remembering hands, face, space.

The main findings from the ninth REACT study show:

- national prevalence fell by two-thirds from 1.57% to 0.49%, or 49 per 10,000 people infected, compared to the last REACT report from 6-22 January
- a halving time of 31 days for prevalence and an R number of 0.86
- when comparing the first half of the reporting period (4 to 12 February) to the second half (13 to 23 February) there were apparent falls in: North East from 0.80% to 0.58%, North West from 0.89% to 0.48%, East of England from 0.53% to 0.40% and South West from 0.27% to 0.19%, and no

- apparent change in Yorkshire and The Humber. There were apparent rises in London from 0.53% to 0.66%, South East from 0.33% to 0.39%, East Midlands from 0.50% to 0.69% and West Midlands from 0.34% to 0.39%
- prevalence fell by 50% across all age groups compared to the REACT report for 6 to 22 January
 - a substantial reduction in prevalence, compared to the last REACT report from 6 to 22 January, among those who work in health and social care and among those with public-facing roles, including delivery, transport and hospitality. It was higher among those who worked in education, school, nursery or childcare at 0.73% compared to 0.46% in those who did not
 - prevalence was highest among Pakistani participants at 2.1% compared to white participants at 0.45% and Black participants at 0.83%

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

It is encouraging to see continued evidence of cases falling overall, and I want to thank everyone for sticking to the rules and supporting each other through this pandemic.

There is some cause for concern that our hard-won progress may be slowing down, and even reversing in some regions so it is important we remain vigilant – this is on all of us.

We have set out a cautious, but irreversible approach to easing restrictions but until we reach each milestone, we must all remember the virus is still here, and still dangerous. Please continue to stay at home – practice hands, face, space – and get your jab when you receive your invite so we can bring down infections further.

The vaccine programme continues to expand to protect as many people as possible, with over 20 million people vaccinated across the country. We are already seeing a significant impact of the vaccination programme on reducing hospitalisations and deaths, and it is vital people come forward for their vaccine when invited.

Professor Paul Elliott, director of the REACT programme from Imperial's School of Public Health, said:

The fall in infections our study has observed since January demonstrates that national public health measures are working. But these new findings showing that some areas are experiencing apparent growth reinforce the need for everyone to continue to stick to the rules and help keep infections down.

At this critical time, with lockdown soon to be eased, we need to make sure that our behaviours don't risk a rise in infections which could prolong restrictions, which we all want to avoid.

Kelly Beaver, Managing Director, Public Affairs at Ipsos MORI, said:

The 50% prevalence reduction across all age groups is very welcome and shows that we are making progress in fighting this pandemic. The potential shallowing of the decline though reinforces the message that all of us must continue to stick to the measures which are in place for as long as is necessary so that we can stay on the path set out in the Prime Minister's roadmap.

Over the coming weeks and months as we hope to progress through the roadmap milestones, the REACT study will continue to be a critical data source aiding government understanding of the virus. Thanks to those participating in the study for their important contribution.

This report is the latest from the REACT study which was commissioned by the Department for Health and Social Care and carried out by a world-class team of scientists, clinicians and researchers at Imperial College London, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust and Ipsos MORI.

Getting children back to school has been the top priority and is crucial to their education and wellbeing. While the report demonstrates prevalence is highest among those aged 13 to 17, there are generally low levels of transmission between younger aged children and overall, the risk of the virus to children is low. As schools open, the most vulnerable adults will have received the first dose of the vaccine and developed the necessary protection from it.

With about a third of individuals with the virus showing no symptoms and potentially spreading it without knowing, targeted, regular testing of secondary school age children will mean more positive cases within households are found and prevented from entering schools and colleges, helping to keep educational settings safe.

The findings provide further evidence that COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted BAME communities. Vaccines are the best way to protect people from the virus and the government is working with faith and community leaders to provide advice and information about the benefits of vaccination and how their communities can get a vaccine. Targeted communications campaigns have helped reach BAME communities, with messaging published in over 600 publications, including those that have high proportions of ethnic minority readers, and in 13 languages, such as Punjabi and Urdu.

See [REACT-1 study results on GOV.UK](#)

This study falls under pillar 4 of the Covid-19 National Testing Programme, which focuses on mass surveillance in the general population.

Jeff Halliwell appointed Chair of the Coal Authority

News story

Jeff has a varied Chair and non-executive portfolio across private, public, and third sector organisations.



Jeff Halliwell has been appointed as Chair of the Coal Authority, a partner organisation of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, from 1 April 2021 replacing Stephen Dingle who has been in the role for 8 years.

The Coal Authority works to make a better future for people and the environment in mining areas. Across Great Britain it protects the public, drinking water and the environment in coal mining areas and seeks opportunity from our coal mining legacy. The Coal Authority is an operational delivery body and operates a 24/7 incident response.

As well as managing the effects of past coal mining the Coal Authority uses its information and expertise to help people make informed decisions, support the housing market, and provide skilled services to others. It is also working to make a significant contribution to delivering government policy on net-zero carbon through its innovative approach to decarbonising heat using mine water and mine assets.

This appointment has been made in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

Jeff's executive experience is in CEO roles with consumer-facing businesses such as Fox's Biscuits / Northern Foods, First Milk, and Bernard Matthews. His background is in international marketing and commercial roles with blue-chip businesses such as Mars and Colgate. He also ran a private equity backed tech SME.

Jeff now has a varied Chair and non-executive portfolio across private, public, and third sector organisations, particularly supporting organisations

with a social purpose. Amongst other roles, he has been Chair of Cafedirect plc, and of Airport Coordination Ltd, and a Non-Executive Director of Working Links Ltd and of Natures Menu pet food. He has served as a Trustee of Shaw Trust and of Homestart Leicester, as a NED in a number of NHS organisations, and has sat on the Boards of 2 universities. He is currently the Chair of Transport Focus (the transport watchdog), and chairs the Customer Engagement Group in respect of Electricity North West.

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[£30 million investment to provide Changing Places toilets](#)

- £30 million available from government to install life-enhancing Changing Places toilets in existing buildings in England
- Changing Places toilets are a lifeline for more than a quarter of a million disabled people across the UK
- Government working in partnership with Muscular Dystrophy UK (MDUK) as co-chair of the Changing Places Consortium to provide support to councils
- Local authorities will soon be invited to “opt in” to receive a proportion of this funding, based on need, to install facilities in their communities

More than 250,000 disabled people in the country will benefit from greater access to life-enhancing Changing Places toilets, as the government announces a new £30 million fund to increase the number of facilities across England.

Announced today (4 March 2021) by Regional Growth Minister Luke Hall, the move follows laws that came into effect from January 2021 that made the provision of Changing Places toilets compulsory in certain new buildings.

Changing Places toilets are larger accessible toilets for people who cannot use standard disabled toilets, with equipment such as hoists, curtains, adult-sized changing benches and space for carers.

Over 250,000 people in the country need these facilities to enable them to get out and about and enjoy the day-to-day activities many of us take for granted.

The combination of the change in the law and today’s investment for existing buildings means thousands of people with complex needs will have greater access to public places.

Regional Growth Minister Luke Hall MP said:

For too long, the lack of suitable toilet facilities has meant disabled people have faced major difficulties when they shop, go out, or travel and this should not be the case.

That's why the provision of Changing Places toilets is so important for people who cannot use standard accessible toilets.

This programme is a significant investment from government that will help bring major, life enhancing freedoms to those people who have specific needs.

Kerry Thompson, Changing Places campaigner, said:

The biggest challenge I face when going anywhere outside my home is locating a Changing Places facility. They really do make a world of difference when planning days out so today's announcement will open up a whole new world for the hundreds of thousands of people who rely on them. This wouldn't have been possible without support from Muscular Dystrophy UK, co-chairs of the Changing Places Consortium.

Knowing I have access to a Changing Places toilet lets me enjoy myself without having to worry about finding an accessible facility that can accommodate my needs. The additional funding from the government to improve facilities in existing buildings across England will give me and my husband the freedom that so many disabled people are desperate for.

This programme will be delivered in partnership with the charity Muscular Dystrophy UK, co-chairs of the Changing Places Consortium, who will provide advice to support councils in their delivery.

Muscular Dystrophy UK, in partnership with MHCLG and the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers, will also be undertaking a call for evidence with users in England to help develop an understanding of user needs and priorities.

Robert Burley, Director of Campaigns, Care and Support at Muscular Dystrophy UK, said:

Today's announcement of £30 million worth of funding to improve facilities in existing buildings is fantastic news for disabled people across England who need Changing Places toilets.

Everyone has the right to use a public toilet when they need to, and these accessible toilets vastly improve a person's independence and make planning days out much easier.

This is a big step towards tackling the exclusion that many disabled people, including those with muscle-wasting conditions, experience when they are out and about.

Today's announcement would not have been achieved without everyone working together, and Muscular Dystrophy UK is particularly grateful to the hard work of our extraordinary campaigners and the members of the Changing Places Consortium.

Councils will be invited to "opt in" to bid for a proportion of the £30 million funding so they can install facilities in their communities and boost the number of Changing Place toilets in existing buildings, for example leisure and sports, cinemas, and arts and tourism venues.

This will improve the geographical spread across England and ensure more disabled people can take part in everyday activities that have the greatest impact on their quality of life.

You can find your nearest registered Changing Places toilet in the UK by going to the Changing Places website and using the [location map](#).

The government has recently closed a consultation of a review of provision of toilets for men and women in municipal and private sector locations in England.

Further information

There are currently around 1,200 registered Changing Places toilets in England but provision needs to increase quickly to improve access for people who cannot use standard accessible toilets and their carers.

In the absence of Changing Places facilities, disabled people and/or carers face:

- limiting what they drink to avoid needing the toilet when they are out – risking dehydration and urinary tract infections
- sitting in soiled clothing or dirty nappies until a suitable toilet is found or they return home
- having to change a loved one on a dirty toilet floor
- manually lifting someone out of their wheelchair – risking safety
- reducing their time out of the house – restricting their social lives

Details for local authorities

District and unitary authorities will receive full details of how they can access this funding soon. Authorities will be invited to complete a short expression of interest to receive a proportion of this funding. Local authorities are encouraged to consider where Changing Places toilets are most needed in their communities, and are encouraged to work in partnership with other organisations to deliver these facilities, including securing match

funding wherever possible.

Details for organisations interested in installing Changing Places toilets

As funding will be distributed through Local Authorities, we recommend getting in touch with your relevant local authority to register your interest in working in partnership with them to deliver a Changing Places toilet in your venue/ building.

Biggest consultation to date with Changing Places users

To register an interest in participating in Muscular Dystrophy UK's consultation or focus groups please email changingplaces@muscular dystrophyuk.org

The Changing Places Consortium launched its campaign in 2006 on behalf of the over 250,000 people across the UK who cannot use standard accessible toilets. This includes people with muscle-wasting conditions, profound and multiple learning disabilities, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, as well as older people.

There are 13.9 million disabled people in the UK. People with profound and multiple learning disabilities, as well as people with other physical disabilities often need equipment and space to allow them to use the toilets safely and comfortably. With a lack of Changing Places toilets, many people are effectively excluded from being able to do all of the things that they want to.

Regulations (from 1 Jan 2021) now require that Changing Places toilets must be provided in certain new public buildings. This will improve the long-term situation by an estimated 150 Changing Places Toilets per year, but there is no legal requirement to retrospectively fit existing buildings. The combination of building rule changes for new buildings and £30 million investment for existing buildings will substantially increase the availability of Changing Places toilets, meaning thousands of people who cannot use standard accessible toilets will have greater access to public places.

See GOV.UK for the above mentioned [changes in building rules in England](#) to help add larger accessible toilets in new buildings.

Evidence suggests social isolation and loneliness amongst disabled people can increase the risk of a variety of physical and mental conditions. Research has linked social isolation and loneliness to higher risks for: high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, a weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline, and Alzheimer's disease. Greater social participation arising from a greater availability of Changing Places toilets has the potential to generate some health benefits.

There is potential for the construction of the facilities to be part of the economic recovery from Covid as we expect some of the experts involved in their constructions will be small and medium enterprises (subject to local procurement decisions).