

# Over 100 organisations '#PledgeforProgress' towards gender equality

A collective of 114 organisations – spanning government, business, and civil society – committed to taking practical steps to tackle gender inequality and be the change to catalyse further action.

Gender equality is a shared global challenge and people of all genders have an important role to play to advance a gender-equal society. Women and girls represent half the world's potential yet continue to be paid less, have fewer rights and only make up 24% of representatives in national parliaments. The International Labour Organisation estimates that at the current rate of progress it will take 75 years to make the principle of 'equal pay for equal work' a reality.

The Pledge for Progress aims to empower organisations and individuals to break down prevailing gender norms and, together, build a gender-equal society. Signatories to the Pledge have all committed to champion five key commitments:

- Lead: using our platforms to amplify the voices of women leaders, within our organisations and beyond.
- Represent: seeking gender diverse representation when hosting and participating in panels and round tables.
- Embed: striving to include gender analysis in the design, implementation and evaluation of our activities.
- Include: making our organisations great places for people of all genders to work and ensuring our internal policies fulfil that aim.
- Mobilise: working as a collective of gender equality champions, and developing and sharing best practice to together implement this Pledge.

Some examples of commitments made under the Pledge for Progress include:

- The Confederation of British Industry will 'lead' by empowering women business leaders through the UK-India Women's Leadership Network
- The University of Birmingham's India Institute will ensure 'representation' for women researchers and scientists through fellowships
- Fortis Healthcare will 'embed' policies to build a diverse talent pipeline
- Vistara will 'include' through staff sensitisation programmes to create

an inclusive workplace and work culture.

The British High Commission will 'mobilise' by convening this collective of like-minded partners to share best practice and amplify each other's positive initiatives. In the coming months, the campaign will convene partners to identify key gender equality challenges and review actions partners are undertaking to foster gender-equal practices. Other partners of the Pledge include HCL Technologies, ActionAid India, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and Australian High Commission and the High Commission of Canada in India.

**Jan Thompson, Acting High Commissioner to India, said:**

Achieving true gender equality is a priority for us all – in the UK, India, and the world over. Real progress can take time, but it starts with small, practical steps. I am hugely excited to see what we can accomplish by bringing together the best of British, Indian and global expertise under this humble initiative. This is just the start, and I hope that this group of like-minded partners committing to be the change and implementing tangible measures in their own organisations will together deliver truly transformative results.

**Professor Rajendra Srivastava, Dean, Indian School of Business (ISB), said:**

Gender Equality is critical to bring out the full potential of any society and also ensure sustainable development. This is one of the core values that ISB cherishes and attributes its success story to. With nearly 40% women in our flagship Post Graduate Programme in Management and a similar percentage amongst employees, we are getting there. Most recently, we have launched 'ISB Women' – a development programme targeted at our women alumni. I congratulate and support the British High Commission's initiative of Pledge for Progress and hope that through such advocacy initiatives backed by real action, we can build an equitable society.

**Samir Saran, President, Observer Research Foundation (ORF), said:**

ORF supports the Pledge for Progress. It is essential for all organisations, governments and communities to catalyse a gender-first approach across professions and public life. Our forums, research endeavours and teams are designed for and sensitive to this objective. Gender-positivity is crucial to our common future and for a sustainable, inclusive and just world.

The Pledge for Progress forms part of wider UK-India work on gender equality.

The UK in India network works with state governments, law enforcement agencies, education authorities and businesses in India to empower women as leaders and trailblazers, build better and more economic opportunities for women, and promote girls' education and positive gender roles in schools.

### **Further information**

The Pledge for Progress campaign was launched with a virtual event on 5 November where various signatories shared how they are striving to fulfil the commitments in the Pledge. The event also included an interactive discussion among the signatory organisations exploring ways to collaborate as partners for change on gender equality.

The Pledge for Progress and full list of signatories can be found [here](#).

The UK in India network comprises the British High Commission New Delhi and 9 Deputy High Commissions, trade and consular offices across India. It is the UK's largest overseas network anywhere in the world.

### **UK and India gender equality work**

The UK and India are working together to help ensure women and girls can reach their full potential. Examples of ongoing programmes include:

- Working with the Ministry of Rural Development to strengthen resilience to the impacts of climate change and promote livelihood security among women in rural communities, as part of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.
- Empowering adolescent girls from socio-economically marginalised communities to develop their English, digital and leadership skills.
- Supporting financial inclusion programmes focusing on financial and digital literacy, which have given 12 million Indian women access to credit to build livelihoods. Projects have helped set up or scale 10,000 women-owned micro businesses, created 6,000 jobs, and supported over 270 micro-entrepreneurs.

### **Media**

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# CMA launches consultation on updated merger guidance

Press release

The CMA has today launched a consultation on updates to 2 of its merger guidance documents.



The guidance has been updated in preparation for the end of the Transition Period following the UK's departure from the European Union. [The updates to the guidance](#) also reflect the consolidation of a series of changes in UK merger control over recent years, as the CMA's practice has developed and the UK Courts have clarified various aspects of the legislative framework.

The first document to be updated is the CMA's jurisdictional and procedural guidance ([CMA2](#)). This is the core document that sets out the CMA's procedures in operating the merger control regime and includes guidance on when the CMA will have jurisdiction to review mergers.

The updated guidance provides an overview of the CMA's practice across all aspects of its phase 1 and phase 2 merger investigations. In light of the higher number of 'multi-jurisdictional' merger cases that the CMA is likely to investigate following the end of the Transition period, new guidance is provided on the steps that the CMA can take to facilitate cooperation with other competition authorities.

The second document to be updated ([CMA56](#)) explains the operation of the CMA's mergers intelligence function.

The updated guidance provides more information on how the CMA carries out these functions in practice and explains how the mergers intelligence process will operate in relation to multi-jurisdictional mergers.

Further detail on all proposed revisions to both documents can be found in the [Consultation Document](#).

The CMA now welcomes views on the revised guidance documents from businesses, their legal and other advisers, and other interested parties by 4 December 2020. The CMA expects to have the final updated guidance in place by the end of 2020 to coincide with the end of the Transition Period.

The CMA also proposes to consult on updates to its merger assessment guidelines ([CC2/0FT1254](#)) and will issue a separate consultation on these updates later this month.

### **Notes to editors:**

1. Media queries should be directed to [press@cma.gov.uk](mailto:press@cma.gov.uk) or 020 3738 6460
2. The CMA's [consultation document can be read here](#).
3. Responses to the consultation document should be provided to [MergersProceduralGuidance@cma.gov.uk](mailto:MergersProceduralGuidance@cma.gov.uk) by no later than 17:00 on 4 December 2020.
4. Following the consultation, the CMA will assess submissions before deciding whether to make the proposed changes, or whether any further changes are needed to either document. A summary of the responses received during the consultation will be made available on our website.

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## **Smaller Housing Associations**

### **Introduction**

Thank you for that warm introduction, Kate.

It is a pleasure to be addressing you this morning on the second day of the National Smaller Housing Associations Conference.

I would like to begin by thanking the National Housing Federation for their tireless work over the last few months on behalf of their 800 housing association members.

There is no shying away from the fact that it has been – and remains – an incredibly challenging year for housing associations and social housing tenants across the country.

COVID-19 has created unimaginable difficulties few of us have faced in our lifetimes which have also affected how and where we work and every sector of the economy.

However, in the face of this adversity, you should also be proud of what you have achieved.

You have shown incredible professionalism and commitment in utilising your expertise and providing support to the tenants that rely on you.

And, in turn, the government has sought to play its part to support tenants facing uncertainty and financial difficulties.

That includes an unprecedented support package to help tenants meet their living costs through the Job Retention Scheme, over £9 billion of additional support through the welfare system, and an increase of the Local Housing Allowance rate to the 30th percentile.

This year we have also made available £180 million in Discretionary Housing Payments for local authorities to help both private and social renters pay their bills.

It is abundantly clear from our return to a national lockdown that this battle against COVID-19 is far from over.

We must continue to do all we can, as we near Christmas and the long winter months, to ensure that as many people as possible have a roof over their head which is safe and secure.

As many of you know, in March of this year, the government took unprecedented action to support renters by banning evictions for 6 months.

The stay on possession proceedings has now lifted and the government, working with the judiciary, has put in place new court arrangements that seek to balance the needs of landlords and tenants.

We have extended notice periods so that landlords now need to provide tenants with 6 months' notice in almost all circumstances, apart from the most serious cases such as incidents of anti-social behaviour or egregious rent arrears.

But we know there is more to do.

My department is working closely with Public Health England, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and the Health and Safety Executive, to continue refining our landlord and tenant guidance.

It is important that we work together on providing up-to-date advice which reflects the realities on the ground so that essential gas safety work, repair requests and planned maintenance can go ahead.

I am very grateful to the National Housing Federation for the joint workshops you delivered with us in September which examined many of these issues with

landlords themselves.

They provided really encouraging and positive feedback on our published landlord and tenant guidance, especially on repairs and maintenance, which shows that we are on the right track and are delivering the clarity the sector needs.

This government is steadfast in its determination to help communities pull through what remains an extremely challenging time.

However, it is also right that we act now to lay the foundations for our long-term recovery from this pandemic.

We are committed to helping our economy and our society to not just build back over the coming months but to build back better.

And it is you, the small and medium sized housing associations joining us here today, who are fundamental to making that recovery a success.

That means delivering on 3 shared priorities.

## **Delivering more affordable homes**

The first is delivering more affordable homes as part of our unwavering ambition to build a million new houses within the term of this Parliament.

We are investing £12.2 billion in affordable housing from 2021 to 2026.

It is the highest single funding commitment to affordable housing in over a decade.

And it includes our newly launched Affordable Homes Programme which, providing economic conditions allow, will deliver 180,000 new affordable homes by 2026.

Government wants to work closely with housing associations on using this investment to unleash development in places where there is clear support for growth. Even relatively small-scale development has a positive effect in local places – providing work for smaller builders and SME businesses.

Nowhere is this more the case than in the rural parts of our country.

Between April 2015 and March 2019, 11% of new build additional affordable homes have been delivered in villages with a population of fewer than 3,000; that underscores the importance of these settlements not just to ramping up housing supply but to spurring economic growth at a local level.

To smaller housing associations, I say that this is where we need your initiative.

We know there is untapped potential out there, and our delivery partners are ready to welcome your proposals to help deliver our new Affordable Homes Programme.

## **Climate change and net zero**

Our second priority is building the cleaner, greener more energy efficient homes of tomorrow.

Housing accounts for around 15% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions through their use of oil and gas for heating and hot water.

Our working together to cut the carbon footprint of social homes will help significantly reduce these emissions, helping us meet the UK's commitment to net-zero by 2050.

But, better insulated, more energy efficient homes deliver so many other benefits too, not least, reducing residents' energy bills and lifting them out of fuel poverty.

Now I recognise that delivering more technologically sophisticated social housing while better insulating existing homes is not easy.

And the government knows that the sector cannot do this alone.

That is why we have made our Green Homes Grant for 2020/21 available for social landlords so they can access up to £5,000 to upgrade the energy performance of their homes.

At the Chancellor's summer economic update, the government also announced a £50 million demonstrator project to start the decarbonisation of social housing over 2020/21.

This will encourage innovation and help inform the design of our £3.8 billion future Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund which will completely change the game for green investment in social homes right across the country.

## **Planning for the future and social housing**

But we also want to create healthier and better-designed neighbourhoods outside the home so that we can improve the quality of life as well as the quality of housing for social tenants.

And that brings me to our third shared priority – ensuring that our proposed planning reforms work for everyone...

...That they encourage local authorities and developers to not just build the homes this country needs but also create greener, more sustainable neighbourhoods which are built to last, and which will stand the test of time.

The reforms we have set out in Planning for the Future leave an inheritance of environmental improvement to the generation that comes after us...

One in which environmental assets are protected...



more parks, playing fields and green spaces are provided...

all new streets are tree-lined...

and new neighbourhoods can become the heritage of the future, built closer to where people want to live and work so we can reduce our reliance on carbon-intensive modes of transport.

Through the Environment Bill, we are also ensuring that biodiversity net gains are mandatory, and that new residential development contributes to ecological recovery while enriching the quality of local green spaces.

As many of you know, a key part of our reforms is a radical shake-up of developer contributions so that we can simplify the process time and ensure development pays its way.

Developer contributions currently deliver around half of all affordable housing, most of which is delivered on-site.

It is therefore vital that our approach will continue to deliver on-site affordable housing not just at present levels but, potentially, even beyond them. Our new levy will ensure this can happen.

We are also exploring giving councils more power to determine how developer contributions are used.

In addition, the new levy captures changes of use which do not require planning permission.

This further increases the levy base, delivers more affordable housing and ensures that communities see the vital infrastructure improvements they need: not just road and rail, but schools, playgrounds and clinics too.

## **Social housing white paper**

As we enter this second lockdown, we are all reminded that the roof over our head, and the neighbourhood in which we live, have such a strong bearing on our physical and mental health.

It is for these reasons that we intend to publish our social housing white paper soon.

It will empower social housing tenants, provide greater redress, improve the quality of social housing and support the continued supply of social homes for generations to come.

## **Conclusion**

And I want to continue working with housing associations, the National Housing Federation, local authorities and partners from across the housing sector to make sure our white paper and the host of reforms I have outlined today deliver real improvements for social housing tenants throughout the

country.

As we dare to imagine a post-Covid world, I believe we have a unique opportunity to go much further and faster than ever before in building the right homes in the right places for the people who need them the most.

We have an opportunity to create greener, healthier and happier communities for this generation and the next.

Together, let us seize that opportunity with both hands, safe in the knowledge that once we are past this pandemic, a brighter future lies ahead for all of us.

Thank you.

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## [36th Universal Periodic Review: UK statement on Bulgaria](#)

World news story

The UK delivers statement on Bulgaria at the 36th Session of Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on 6 November, sharing recommendations to improve their human rights record.



The Universal Periodic Review takes place in Geneva.

Thank you, Madam President,

The United Kingdom thanks Bulgaria for its engagement in the UPR process and we recognise the progress made since the last review. We welcome the ongoing efforts of the Bulgarian Government to address overcrowding of prisons and recognise the steps taken to better address gender-based violence under criminal law.

However the UK is concerned to see that changes to the scope of sexual assault offences, to bring the definition in accordance with international standards, have not yet been made.

We recommend Bulgaria:

1. Improve the support available to victims of Modern Slavery, facilitating their reintegration into society through provision of appropriate health care, legal and financial support, and paying particular attention to support for child victims, including children in care institutions, Roma children and unaccompanied foreign minors.
2. Adopt an open, merit-based process when selecting national candidates for UN Treaty Body elections.
3. Amend the Criminal Code to widen the scope of the definition of hate crimes and speech, to include sexual orientation.

Thank you, Madam President.

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## [New Ofsted report highlights need to get matching right](#)

While recruiting enough foster carers to meet demand is vital, more could be done to make sure matches with children are successful, new Ofsted research finds.

The shortage of foster carers is one of the most significant challenges in making successful matches for children, the report shows, particularly when finding homes for groups of brothers and sisters, disabled children and teenagers. Local authorities and fostering agencies often have a limited choice, balancing what is ideal for a child with what is available.

[Ofsted's study highlights the importance of getting foster matches right for children's futures](#), as well as keeping foster carers in the system. When matches fail, they cause more distress for children who have already faced trauma and disruption in their lives. Placement breakdowns can also lead to foster carers taking a break or deciding to stop fostering altogether.

Today's report finds room for improvement beyond recruitment. While

researchers saw examples of good work to match children with the right foster carers, there was little in the way of wider organisational learning from successful matches.

Chemistry lies at the heart of a good match, but researchers found that this isn't down to luck. This 'magic' can be built through good practice that encourages relationships to flourish.

The best matches happen when a child's individual needs, as well as the skills and experience of foster carers, are properly understood. Taking children's wishes into account and making them feel part of the process is vital. While matches are often made in emergencies, there is more that professionals can do to give placements the best chance of success.

Today's report sets out the elements of a good match, including:

- Making sure children feel 'heard': children told researchers that they don't always feel involved in decisions and plans about where they are going to live. When they can say what they want, they don't always believe that their views make a difference to what happens.
- Good information sharing: giving children the information they need about potential carers is vital, as is making sure that foster carers know everything that they need to know about a child. The best referrals give full and balanced descriptions of children and represent their wishes and feelings.
- Involving birth families and previous carers: professionals recognised that more could be done to involve birth families in matching decisions. Similarly, more could be done to involve previous foster carers and to support their lasting relationships with children.
- Recognising foster carers as professionals: foster carers who felt empowered and confident in their role as part of a wider professional team are typically more likely to ask for additional information about children than carers who feel undervalued or less confident.

Yvette Stanley, Ofsted's National Director for Social Care, said:

Successful matches aren't down to chance. Our research shows that chemistry isn't always about luck – it's something that can be developed through strong practice. When a match is built on solid foundations, it has more chance of succeeding and giving children the love, stability and future that they deserve.

Above all, children need to feel as though they have a say in what

is happening to them. Going to live with people are who are often complete strangers is an enormous step for any child. Their needs and wishes should – as much as possible – be at the heart of decision-making.

Ofsted researchers visited 4 local authorities and spoke to children, foster carers and social workers. They spoke to representatives from independent fostering agencies (IFAs), birth parents, as well as carrying out national online surveys of children in care, care leavers and current foster carers.