

A Plan for Jobs speech

Mr Speaker,

I stood here in March saying I knew people were worried.

And I know they're worried still.

We have taken decisive action to protect our economy.

But people are anxious about losing their job, about unemployment rising.

We're not just going to accept this.

People need to know we will do all we can to give everyone the opportunity of good and secure work.

People need to know that although hardship lies ahead, no one will be left without hope.

So, today, we act, with a Plan for Jobs.

Our plan has a clear goal: to protect, support and create jobs.

It will give businesses the confidence to retain and hire.

To create jobs in every part of our country.

To give young people a better start.

To give people everywhere the opportunity of a fresh start.

Where problems emerge, we will confront them.

Where support is justified, we will provide it.

Where challenges arise, we will overcome them.

We entered this crisis unencumbered by dogma and we continue in this spirit, driven always by the simple desire to do what is right.

Mr Speaker,

Before I turn to our Plan for Jobs, let me first outline the nature of the challenge.

Our economic response to coronavirus is moving through three phases.

In the first phase, beginning in March, the government announced social distancing measures and ordered businesses to close, halting the spread of the disease.

We put in place one of the largest and most comprehensive economic responses

in the world.

Our £160 billion plan protects people's jobs, incomes and businesses:

- we supported more than 11 million people and jobs through the job retention and self-employment schemes, alongside billions of pounds for the most vulnerable
- we supported over a million businesses to protect jobs, through tax cuts, tax deferrals, direct cash grants, and over a million government-backed loans
- and we supported public services, with new funding for the NHS, schools, public transport, and local authorities

In total, we have now provided £49 billion to support public services since this crisis began.

Analysis I'm publishing today shows our interventions significantly protected people's incomes, with the least well off in society supported the most.

And this crisis has highlighted the special bond which holds our country together.

Millions of people in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have been protected by the UK government's economic interventions – and they will be supported by today's Plan for Jobs.

No nationalist can ignore the undeniable truth: this help has only been possible because we are a United Kingdom.

Mr Speaker,

Four months on, as we carefully reopen our economy, we are entering the second phase of our economic response.

Despite the extraordinary support we've already provided, we face profound economic challenges:

- world economic activity has slowed, with the IMF expecting the deepest global recession since records began
- household consumption – the biggest component of our economy – has fallen steeply
- businesses have stopped trading and stopped hiring

- taken together, in just two months our economy contracted by 25% – the same amount it grew in the previous eighteen years.

And the independent Office for Budget Responsibility and Bank of England are both projecting significant job losses – the most urgent challenge we now face.

I want every person in this House and in the country to know that I will never accept unemployment as an unavoidable outcome.

We haven't done everything we have so far just to step back now and say, 'job done'. In truth, the job has only just begun.

Mr Speaker,

If the first phase of our economic response was about protection...

...and the second phase – the phase we are addressing today – is about jobs...

...there will come a third phase, where we will rebuild.

My Right Honourable Friend the Prime Minister has set out our vision to level up, unite the country, spread opportunity, and repair and heal the wounds exposed through this crisis.

I can tell the House we will produce a Budget and Spending Review in the autumn.

And, we will deal too, with the challenges facing our public finances.

Over the medium-term, we must, and we will, put our public finances back on a sustainable footing.

In other words, our Plan for Jobs will not be the last action – it is merely the next – in our fight to recover and rebuild after coronavirus.

Mr Speaker,

Let me now turn to the detail of our plan for jobs.

Central to our economic response has been the Jobs Retention Scheme.

Furlough has been a lifeline for millions, supporting people and businesses to protect jobs.

But it cannot and should not go on forever.

I know that when furlough ends it will be a difficult moment.

I'm also sure that if I say the scheme must end in October, critics will say it should end in November.

If I say it should end in November, critics will just say December.

But the truth is: calling for endless extensions to the furlough is just as irresponsible as it would have been, back in June, to end the scheme overnight.

We have to be honest.

Leaving the furlough scheme open forever gives people false hope that it will always be possible to return to the jobs they had before.

And the longer people are on furlough, the more likely it is their skills could fade, and they will find it harder to get new opportunities.

It is in no-one's long term interests for the scheme to continue forever...

...least of all those trapped in a job that can only exist because of a government subsidy.

So the furlough will wind down, flexibly and gradually, supporting businesses and people through to October.

But while we can't protect every job, one of the most important things we can do to prevent unemployment...

...is to get as many people as possible from furlough back to their jobs.

So, today, we're introducing a new policy to reward and incentivise employers who successfully bring furloughed staff back – a new Jobs Retention Bonus.

If you're an employer and you bring someone back who was furloughed – and you continuously employ them through to January – we will pay you a £1,000 bonus per employee.

It is vital people aren't just returning for the sake of it – they need to be doing decent work.

So for businesses to get this bonus, the employee must be paid at least £520 on average, in each month from November to January...

...the equivalent of the lower earnings limit in National Insurance.

The House should understand the significance of this policy.

We will pay the bonus for all furloughed employees.

So if employers bring back all nine million people who have been furloughed, this would be a £9 billion policy to retain people in work.

Our message to business is clear: if you stand by your workers, we will stand by you.

Mr Speaker,

The furlough was the right policy to support people through the first phase of this crisis.

But now, in this new phase, we need to evolve our approach.

Today, I want to set out for the House a new three-point plan for jobs. We need to:

Mr Speaker,

Let me start with supporting jobs, and in particular the help we want to provide for those who will be hardest hit by this crisis: younger people.

Over 700,000 people are leaving education this year.

Many more are just starting out in their careers.

Coronavirus has hit them hard – under 25s are two and a half times as likely to work in a sector that has been closed.

We cannot lose this generation, so today, I am announcing the Kickstart Scheme:

A new programme to give hundreds of thousands of young people, in every region and nation of Britain, the best possible chance of getting on and getting a job.

The Kickstart Scheme will directly pay employers to create new jobs for any 16 to 24-year-old at risk of long-term unemployment.

These will be new jobs – with the funding conditional on the firm proving these jobs are additional.

These will be decent jobs – with a minimum of 25 hours per week paid at least the National Minimum Wage.

And they will be good quality jobs – with employers providing Kickstarters with training and support to find a permanent job.

If employers meet these conditions, we will pay young people's wages for six months, plus an amount to cover overheads.

That means, for a 24-year-old, the grant will be around £6,500.

Employers can apply to be part of the scheme from next month, with the first Kickstarters in their new jobs this autumn.

And I urge every employer, big or small, national or local, to hire as many Kickstarters as possible.

Today, I'm making available an initial £2 billion; enough to fund hundreds of thousands of jobs.

And I commit today: there will be no cap on the number of places available.

We can do more for young people:

- traineeships are a proven scheme to get young people ready for work. We know they work, so for the first time ever we will pay employers £1,000 to take on new trainees, with triple the number of places
- to support 18-19-year olds leaving school or college to find work in high-demand sectors like engineering, construction and social care, we'll provide £100 million to create more places on Level 2 and 3 courses
- and the evidence says careers advice works, so we will fund it, with enough new careers advisers to support over a quarter of a million more people.

We will also expand our universal skills offer:

Sector-Based Work Academies provide training, work placements, and a guaranteed job interview in high-demand sectors.

The evidence shows they work, so we will expand them – tripling the number of places.

And we know apprenticeships work, too – 91% of apprentices stay in work or do further training afterwards.

So for the next six months, we're going to pay employers to create new apprenticeships.

We will pay businesses to hire young apprentices, with a new payment of £2,000 per apprentice.

And we will introduce a brand-new bonus for businesses to hire apprentices aged 25 and over, with a payment of £1,500.

And let me thank my Right Honourable Friend the Education Secretary for his support and commitment in developing these measures.

Mr Speaker,

We know the longer someone is out of work, the harder it is to return.

Millions of people are moving onto Universal Credit – they need urgent support to get back to work.

So, we are:

- doubling the number of Work Coaches in Job Centres
- increasing the Flexible Support Fund

- extending the Rapid Response Service
- expanding the Work and Health Programme
- and developing a new scheme to support the long-term unemployed

The academic and economic evidence tells us these are among the most effective things we can do.

So I'm investing an extra billion pounds in DWP, to support millions of people back to work.

And I'm grateful for everything my Right Honourable Friend the Work and Pensions secretary, and her incredible team, have done.

£1 billion of support for the unemployed; more money for skills, traineeships, and apprenticeships; and a new, good quality job for hundreds of thousands of new Kickstarters – the first part of our plan for jobs.

Mr Speaker,

The second part of our plan is to support job creation.

That begins with historic investment in infrastructure – creating jobs in every region and nation of the UK.

At Budget, I announced £88 billion of capital funding this year; and last week the Prime Minister announced our plans to accelerate £5 billion of additional investment projects.

We are doubling down on our ambition to level up...

...with better roads, better schools, better hospitals, better high streets, creating jobs in all four corners of our country.

Mr Speaker,

As well as investing in infrastructure, we want to create green jobs.

This is going to be a green recovery with concern for our environment at its heart.

As part of that, I'm announcing today a new, £2 billion Green Homes Grant.

From September, homeowners and landlords will be able to apply for vouchers to make their homes more energy efficient and create local jobs.

The grants will cover at least two thirds of the cost, up to £5,000 per household.

And for low income households, we'll go even further with vouchers covering

the full cost – up to £10,000.

On top of the £2 billion voucher scheme, I am releasing £1 billion of funding to improve the energy efficiency of public sector buildings...

...alongside a £50 million fund to pilot the right approach to decarbonise social housing.

Taken together, we expect these measures to:

- make over 650,000 homes more energy efficient
- save households up to £300 a year on their bills
- cut carbon by more than half a mega tonne per year, equivalent to taking 270,000 cars off the road
- and, most importantly right now, support around 140,000 green jobs

A £3 billion green jobs plan to save money; cut carbon; and create jobs.

Mr Speaker,

One of the most important sectors for job creation is housing.

The construction sector adds £39 billion a year to the UK economy;

House building alone supports nearly three quarter of a million jobs;

With millions more relying on the availability of housing to find work.

But property transactions fell by 50% in May.

House prices have fallen for the first time in eight years.

And uncertainty abounds in the market – a market we need to be thriving.

We need people feeling confident – confident to buy, sell, renovate, move and improve.

That will drive growth. That will create jobs.

So to catalyse the housing market and boost confidence, I have decided today to cut stamp duty.

Right now, there is no stamp duty on transactions below £125,000.

Today, I am increasing the threshold to half a million pounds.

This will be a temporary cut running until 31st March next year.

And, as is always the case, these changes to stamp duty will take effect immediately.

The average stamp duty bill will fall by £4,500.

And nearly nine out of ten people buying a main home this year, will pay no stamp duty at all.

Stamp duty cuts; A £5,000 Green Homes Grant; And tens of billions of pounds of new capital projects.

We are creating jobs, the second part of our Plan for Jobs.

Mr Speaker,

The final part of our plan will protect jobs that already exist by helping some of our highest-employing but hardest-hit sectors: hospitality and tourism.

Our economy relies on consumption, especially social consumption:

The pubs, cafes, restaurants, hotels and B&Bs that bring life to our villages, towns and cities.

Taken together these sectors employ over 2 million people disproportionately younger, women and people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

And many rural and coastal communities rely on these industries.

80% of hospitality firms temporarily stopped trading in April and 1.4 million workers have been furloughed, the highest proportions of any sector.

So the best jobs programme we can do is to restart these sectors and get our pubs, restaurants, cafés and B&Bs bustling again.

I know people are cautious about going out.

But we wouldn't have lifted the restrictions if we didn't think we could do so safely.

And I've seen in the last few weeks how hard businesses are working to make their premises safe.

And if we follow the guidance, and respect what they ask us to do, we can all enjoy summer safely.

In turn, we need to give these businesses the confidence to know that if they open up, invest in making their premises safe, and protect jobs, demand will be there, and be there quickly.

So today, I'm announcing two new measures to get these sectors moving and protect jobs.

First, at the moment, VAT on hospitality and tourism is charged at 20%.

So I've decided, for the next six months, to cut VAT on food, accommodation and attractions.

Eat-in or hot takeaway food from restaurants, cafes and pubs;

Accommodation in hotels, B&Bs, campsites and caravan sites;

Attractions like cinemas, theme parks and zoos;

All these and more will see VAT reduced from next Wednesday until January 12th, from 20% to 5%.

This is a £4 billion catalyst for the hospitality and tourism sectors, benefiting over 150,000 businesses, and consumers everywhere – all helping to protect 2.4 million jobs.

But, Mr Speaker, we will go further.

The final measure I'm announcing today has never been tried in the UK before.

This moment is unique. We need to be creative.

So, to get customers back into restaurants, cafes and pubs, and protect the 1.8 million people who work in them...

...I can announce today that, for the month of August, we will give everyone in the country an Eat Out to Help Out discount.

Meals eaten at any participating business, Monday to Wednesday, will be 50% off, up to a maximum discount of £10 per head for everyone, including children.

Businesses will need to register, and can do so through a simple website, open next Monday.

Each week in August, businesses can then claim the money back, with the funds in their bank account within 5 working days.

1.8 million people work in this industry. They need our support and with this measure we can all eat out to help out.

A VAT cut to 5%;

And a first-of-its-kind government-backed discount for all;

That's the third part of our Plan for Jobs.

So, Mr Speaker,

A £1,000 Jobs Retention Bonus.

New, high quality jobs for hundreds of thousands of young Kickstarters.

£1bn to double the number of work coaches and support the unemployed.

More apprenticeships; more traineeships; more skills funding.

Billions of pounds for new, job creation projects around the country.

A £3 billion plan to support 140,000 green jobs.

And in this vital period, as we get going again:

VAT cut.

Stamp duty cut.

Meals out cut.

Mr Speaker, all part of our Plan for Jobs worth up to £30 billion.

Mr Speaker,

Governments, much less people, rarely get to choose the moments that define them. What choice there is comes in how we respond.

For me, this has never just been a question of economics, but of values:

I believe in the nobility of work.

I believe in the inspiring power of opportunity.

I believe in the British people's fortitude and endurance.

And it is that value, endurance, more than any other, we need to embody now.

A patience to live with the uncertainty of the moment...

...to find that new balance between safety and normality.

We will not be defined by this crisis, but by our response to it.

It is an unambiguous choice to make this moment meaningful for our country in a way that transcends the frustration and loss of recent months.

It is a plan to turn our national recovery into millions of stories of personal renewal.

Mr Speaker, it is our Plan for Jobs and I commend it to this House.

[Rishi's Plan for Jobs will help](#)

Britain bounce back

Delivering his Summer Economic Update in Parliament, the Chancellor announced a package of measures to support jobs in every part of the country, give businesses the confidence to retain and hire, and provide people with the tools they need to get better jobs.

The plan for jobs is the second part of a three-phase plan to secure the UK's economic recovery from coronavirus. Throughout the pandemic, the UK Government has acted with speed to protect lives and safeguard jobs.

The first stage was a £160 billion support package, which included £49 billion of extra funding for the country's vital public services including the NHS, paying the wages of nearly 12 million people and supporting over a million businesses through grants, loans and rates cuts.

As the UK enters the second phase in its recovery, the Chancellor's plan is designed to support jobs by focussing on skills and young people, create jobs with investment in shovel-ready projects and greening our infrastructure, and protect jobs through a VAT cut for the hospitality sector and a landmark Eat Out to Help Out discount scheme for diners.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak said:

Throughout this crisis I have never been the prisoner of ideology. For me, this has never just been a question of economics, but of values.

We believe in the nobility of work. We believe in the inspiring power of opportunity. We believe in the British people's fortitude and endurance.

Our plan has a clear goal: to protect, support and create jobs. It will give businesses the confidence to retain and hire. To create jobs in every part of our country. To give young people a better start. To give people everywhere the opportunity of a fresh start.

The Chancellor said that following this second phase focusing on jobs, there will be a third phase focusing on rebuilding, with a Budget and Spending Review in the autumn.

Supporting jobs

As part of the plan to support jobs, a Job Retention Bonus will be introduced to help firms keep furloughed workers. UK Employers will receive a one-off bonus of £1,000 for each furloughed employee who is still employed as of 31 January 2021.

A new £2 billion Kickstart Scheme will also be launched to create hundreds of

thousands of new, fully subsidised jobs for young people across the country. Those aged 16-24, claiming Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment, will be eligible. Funding available for each six-month job placement will cover 100% of the National Minimum Wage for 25 hours a week – and employers will be able to top this wage up.

A total of £1.6 billion will be invested in scaling up employment support schemes, training and apprenticeships to help people looking for a job. Young people, who are amongst the worst hit by the crisis, will benefit from this. This includes:

- Businesses will be given £2,000 for each new apprentice they hire under the age of 25. This is in addition to the existing £1,000 payment the Government already provides for new 16-18-year-old apprentices and those aged under 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- A £111 million investment to triple the scale of traineeships in 2020-21 ensuring more young people have access to high quality training.
- £17 million of funding to triple the number of sector-based work academy placements in 2020-21
- Nearly £900 million to double the number of work coaches to 27,000;
- Over a quarter of a million more young people to benefit from an extra £32 million investment in the National Careers Service.

Creating jobs

The plan will also create tens of thousands of jobs through bringing forward work on £8.8 billion of new infrastructure, decarbonisation and maintenance projects.

This includes a £3 billion green investment package that could help support around 140,000 green jobs and upgrade buildings and reduce emissions.

As part of this package homeowners and landlords in England will be able to apply for vouchers from a £2 billion Green Homes Grant scheme this year to pay for green improvements such as loft, wall and floor insulation that could save some households hundreds of pounds a year on their energy bills while creating thousands of jobs for tradespeople.

And a £1 billion programme will make public buildings, including schools and hospitals, greener, helping the country meet its ambitions of achieving Net Zero by 2050, whilst investing in our future prosperity.

In addition, £5.8 billion will be spent on shovel-ready construction projects to get Britain building. This includes:

- £1.5 billion for hospital maintenance and upgrades
- £100 million for our local roads network
- over £1 billion to start to rebuild schools in the worst condition in England, plus £760 million this year for key maintenance work on schools and FE colleges
- £1 billion for local projects to boost local economic recovery in the places that need it most

- £142 million for court maintenance to repair around 100 courts across England.

Protecting jobs

The plan will also protect jobs. The tourism and hospitality sectors are massive employers in the UK and have been severely impacted by the pandemic due to necessary closures to protect public health. 80% of hospitality firms stopped trading in April and 1.4 million hospitality workers have been furloughed – the highest proportions of any sector.

Ensuring there is enough demand as businesses reopen is key to helping these businesses recover and have the confidence to protect jobs and rehire. Therefore, to encourage people to safely return to eating out at restaurants the Government's new Eat Out to Help Out discount scheme will provide a 50% reduction for sit-down meals in cafes, restaurants and pubs across the UK from Monday to Wednesday every week throughout August 2020.

The rate of VAT applied on most tourism and hospitality-related activities will also be cut from 20% to 5%. This will save households around £160 per year on average and, together with the Eat Out to Help Out Scheme, will support over 2.4 million staff at over 150,000 businesses, helping them recover and reopen after the Covid-19 lockdown. This will give these businesses the confidence to maintain their staff, as more people get through the door and business activity kick-starts again.

We want people to feel confident to move, to buy, to sell, to renovate, and to improve their homes. So we're introducing a temporary increase to the Nil Rate Band of Residential SDLT (Stamp Duty) from £125,000 to £500,000 until 31 March 2021. In England and Northern Ireland nearly 9 out of 10 people getting on or moving up the property ladder will pay no Stamp Duty at all. This will drive growth and support jobs across the housebuilding and property sectors.

More than 10,000 fish released into the Great Ouse

A total of 10,000 fry (fish that are just a few weeks old) and 100 one-year-old barbel were released into the river at Felmersham and Harrold Country Park and the river Ivel at Biggleswade.

The fish were collected from the Environment Agency Fish Farm at Calverton in Nottingham and carefully transported using specialist equipment.

The restocking took place on Monday, July 6th and was completed within a few hours while observing social distancing rules.

A total of 10,100 fish were released into the Great Ouse.

Kye Jerrom, Environment Agency fisheries specialist in East Anglia, said: "We've been carrying out habitat improvements and research into barbel on the Great Ouse for 14 years now. This project is a very important part of the outcome of that work.

"We restocked in these locations as we know the conditions for young fish are ideal.

"Most of our efforts to conserve barbel are to ensure that the habitat of the Ouse and its smaller tributaries like the Ivel, allow the species to become self-supporting."

Research has shown that the reduction in barbel on the Ouse was due to poor fry survival rate and reduced spawning success and opportunities.

Studies reveal that the survival of young barbel was being affected by the lack of clean spawning beds due to sediment build up and predation on barbel eggs, both caused by invasive signal crayfish.

The Environment Agency and partners have been working with angling clubs, landowners and the Wildlife Trust to make a number of improvements to tackle these issues.

These include the construction of several refuge zones for fry and juvenile fish, which provide cover from predators and offer protection during extreme weather.

The fish restocking was done while observing social distancing rules.

Kye added: "One of the three stocking locations is Harrold Country Park, where we installed structures to halt bank erosion, and provide refuge for small fish during flood events.

"In other parts of the catchment we've added flow deflectors, and narrowed the river channel, which helps ease sediment build up on important spawning gravels.

"Our ultimate aim is to restore the river and the barbel fishery to a level where it supports itself.

"We feel that we are getting close to that scenario, which is great news, and it confirms the investments we are making are working."

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Chief Executive's blog – Parole Board Covid-19 recovery plan

In March 2020 it was clear that the spread of Covid-19 made face to face hearings impossible and the Board was forced to progress cases in other ways.

Whilst there have been some inevitable challenges, since then, the Board has demonstrated some flexibility and imagination to progress cases fairly and safely by progressing hearings remotely. The numbers are positive.

Since Covid hit:

- 7,603 Parole Board decisions have been made
- There have been 1,029 directions for release
- 1,594 hearings have taken place via video or telephone.
- Far from a backlog building; the number of cases waiting for a hearing date has reduced by 46%.

Whilst this is positive, it is clear that we are some way away from normality. The Board has therefore published its COVID 19 recovery Strategy.

The Board has set four objectives to guide its recovery and ensure we can achieve the following aims.

We will:

1. Keep people safe and well
2. Manage our resources effectively
3. Maintain flexibility
4. Keep things simple and consistent

Under our strategy we will:

- Continue to pay close regard to Government advice.
- Continue to work remotely until it is safe to make changes.
- Ensure vulnerable members or staff will not undertake face-to-face oral hearings or return to the office until it is safe for them to do so.
- Allow our people to continue to work remotely for extended periods, limiting the need for public transport.
- Continue to schedule remote hearings until prisons are open for a sustained period (either regionally or nationally).
- Communicate and consult as our plans flex and change.

The Board sees 3 phases to our recovery plan (we are currently emerging from Phase 1):

Phase 1 – Access: May – June 2020

- Presume remote working
- Only essential access to PB site
- No access to prisons
- Limit use of public transport

Phase 2 – Mixed Economy: July – November 2020

- Consider re-starting small number of face-to-face hearings for those cases where it is essential for fairness and safe socially distanced hearings can be undertaken
- Scale up video hearings and increase number of remote rooms
- Teams start to return to 10SC in small numbers
- Some member recruitment starts
- Some access to prisons may be possible
- Some face-to-face events if can be managed safely with social distancing

Phase 3 – New Normal: December 2020 onwards

- Greater use of remote hearings and remote working where appropriate
- Increase in levels of face-to-face hearings if safe
- Different pathways for different types of cases
- Enough remote video rooms to meet demand
- Office reopened and more staff able to work from the PB office safely again, or with social distancing in place

We will only return to routine face-to-face oral hearings when it is safe to do so and will continue listing hearings but be ready to convert them to remote on a rolling basis to manage any potential extensions to, or rolling or local lockdowns.

Alongside this, The Board will ensure that its ongoing paper assessment process (the Member Case Assessment “MCA” process) matches the interim policy for remote hearings and include an extra step at MCA to support decision making on the papers.

Whilst face-to-face hearings must happen for some prisoners, we have found that for the majority remote hearings are fair and effective and allow us to operate in a period of ongoing uncertainty where further lockdowns are predicted for years to come.

For those cases that do require a face-to-face hearing, we will agree a way with HMPPS for how face-to-face hearings can take place safely in prisons with social distancing measures remaining in place. Where face-to-face hearings remain the most appropriate way forward, resuming them will depend upon prison access and a full risk assessment.

Video hearings are being scaled up and will be used in the majority of cases where it is important for panels to see each other and those attending. Telephone hearings will continue to be used when the facts of the case allow, making for speedier reviews, with much shorter time frames than an oral hearing. Telephone hearings will be used for determinate recall cases and to

ensure adjourned cases progress appropriately.

The Parole Board now has eight virtual video meeting rooms which are allowing us to hold hundreds of video hearings each month. This number is set to double in the next few weeks and we plan to increase this in the coming weeks to up to 25 advanced video rooms that will allow side conversations and recording in the future.

Despite the significant challenges, prisoners, Prisoners' legal representatives and other participants (including victims) have been supportive and shown considerable patience and forbearance amidst the disruption caused by COVID 19. We are very grateful for their support and will continue to work with them to ensure cases are concluded fairly and safely in the future.

[New sanctions regime among push to boost protection for persecuted religious groups](#)

The review, published in July 2019, made 22 recommendations to improve the lives of persecuted members of all faiths, beliefs, and those of no belief. Implementation has already begun on half the recommendations, while work is ongoing to deliver the rest

Rehman Chishti MP, the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief, leads on the implementation of the Truro review and championing freedom of religion or belief for the Government internationally.

One of the main recommendations of the Truro review was in relation to sanctions, with the report suggesting the Government needed to be prepared to impose sanctions against perpetrators of freedom of religion or belief abuses.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab announced on Monday that the first wave of designations under the UK's new, ground-breaking Global Human Rights sanctions regime will sanction those involved in religious persecution, including two Myanmar generals, Min Aung Hlaing and Soe Win.

The pair were designated for their involvement in the systematic killing, rape, sexual violence and enforced labour against the Rohingya people in Myanmar.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said:

Everyone, no matter their faith or belief, deserves to be able to live a free and safe life, wherever they are in the world.

Our new global human rights regime will allow the UK to protect people of all religions, faiths and no belief against serious human rights violations and abuses, and ensure the perpetrators are sent a clear message that the UK will not tolerate their atrocious actions.

Rehman Chishti MP, who was appointed the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief in September 2019 as a result of the recommendations, this week reinforced the Foreign Office's commitment to implementing all of the recommendations of the Truro review.

Mr Chishti said:

This Government aspires to be the global champion for freedom of religion or belief for all. I want every citizen around the world to enjoy this basic right. The freedom to practice faith or belief without discrimination is one of the foundations of a free society.

During my time in office, I have taken forward 11 of the 22 Truro review recommendations, including overseeing the UK joining the International Religious Freedom Alliance, which allows like-minded member states to work together to promote freedom of religion or belief internationally, reinforcing the UK's commitment to be a global leader in championing freedom of religion or belief.

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister of State for Human Rights at the FCO and DFID, added:

There is a critical intersection of religious rights with broader security issues like gender-based violence, including trafficking and forced marriage.

We know that free societies are more stable, more prosperous and more resilient against violent extremism, and our work on freedom of religion or belief, alongside our ongoing human rights work, is key to improving the livelihoods of millions across the world.

Last year, the Bishop of Truro, Rt. Rev. Philip Mounstephen published his final report of his independent review of the Foreign Office's support to persecuted Christians around the world, incorporating 22 recommendations for the FCO's consideration.

In line with the Foreign Office's longstanding policy on Freedom of Religion or Belief, the vast majority of recommendations supported members of all faiths, beliefs, and no belief, not just Christians.

Since the review, the Foreign Office has continued to work with international partners, including through the International Religious Freedom Alliance, to reduce religious persecution worldwide.

As well as the implementation of freedom of religion or belief-related sanctions, the Foreign Office last year launched the John Bunyan Fund for Freedom of Religion or Belief. The £200,000 fund was made available to those with an interest in exploring the best ways that the UK Government can tackle the problem of persecution as it affects particular countries or groups.

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