

UK Chancellor announces joint taskforce to solve the delivery of equivalent support to £400 Energy Bill Support Scheme in Northern Ireland

News story

Chancellor Nadhim Zahawi today met with Northern Ireland Executive Ministers and officials to continue to drive progress on the delivery of equivalent support to the £400 Energy Bill Support Scheme in Northern Ireland.



- The Chancellor announced a new joint taskforce comprising of officials from UK and NIE who will be responsible for driving forward a solution over the coming weeks to ensure people of NI get support as soon as possible.
- The scheme will reduce every household's energy bills by £400, to help families with the rising cost of living.
- Attendees agreed the taskforce would look at all ways for the UK Government to deliver this support in Northern Ireland, working with the Executive and Regulator to make sure it arrives as swiftly as possible.
- Attendees agreed a shared objective in getting payments to households as quickly as possible, and the need to work collaboratively on the most effective mechanism.
- They agreed to a regular schedule of meetings until this issue is resolved.

Chancellor Nadhim Zahawi said:

"We need to keep the momentum up to get equivalent energy support to people in Northern Ireland and that's why today I've launched a joint taskforce to present practical delivery options back to Ministers. No option is off the table.

"We've got our noses to the grindstone, we're making progress, and we have a shared objective with Ministers in Northern Ireland to get this off the ground

as soon as possible.”

Further information

The attendees of today’s meeting were:

- UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nadhim Zahawi
- Chief Executive of Utility Regulator, John French
- Northern Ireland’s Minister for the Economy, Gordon Lyons
- Northern Ireland’s Minister for Communities, Deidre Hargey
- Permanent Secretary, Northern Ireland Department of Finance, Neil Gibson
- Officials from both the Northern Ireland Executive and central United Kingdom administrations

Published 15 August 2022

[JCVI publishes advice on COVID-19 vaccines for autumn booster programme](#)

The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) has published its advice on which vaccines should be used in this year’s autumn booster programme.

All of the available boosters provide good protection against severe illness from COVID-19 and the Committee has emphasised that getting a booster in good time before the winter season is more important for those eligible than the type of vaccine that is received.

The vaccines advised for use in the autumn booster programme are:

For adults aged 18 years and above:

- Moderna mRNA (Spikevax) bivalent Omicron BA.1/Original ‘wild-type’ vaccine
- Moderna mRNA (Spikevax) Original ‘wild-type’ vaccine
- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) Original ‘wild-type’ vaccine
- in exceptional circumstances, the Novavax Matrix-M adjuvanted wild-type vaccine (Nuvaxovid) may be used when no alternative clinically suitable UK-approved COVID-19 vaccine is available

For people aged 12 to 17 years:

- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) Original ‘wild-type’ vaccine

For people aged 5 to 11 years:

- Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA (Comirnaty) Original 'wild-type' vaccine paediatric formulation

'Bivalent' vaccines have been developed by global manufacturers since the emergence and dominance of the Omicron variant. These vaccines contain two different antigens (substances that induce an immune response) based on two different COVID-19 strains, or variants. The original mRNA vaccines contain one antigen (monovalent), based on the original 'wild-type' strain.

Studies indicate the Moderna bivalent vaccine produces a marginally higher immune response against some variants than the Moderna mRNA Original 'wild-type' vaccine. The clinical relevance of these small differences is uncertain.

The committee will consider further bivalent vaccines for use in the programme as they are approved by the MHRA.

In its latest advice the JCVI has stated that, where feasible, it would be preferable for a single type of booster vaccine to be offered throughout the duration of the autumn programme for simplicity of deployment.

Professor Wei Shen Lim, Chair of COVID-19 immunisation on the JCVI, said:

All of the available booster vaccines offer very good protection against severe illness from COVID-19. As more vaccines continue to be developed and approved, the JCVI will consider the benefits of including them in the UK programme.

It is important that everyone who is eligible takes up a booster this autumn, whichever vaccine is on offer. This will increase your protection against being severely ill from COVID-19 as we move into winter.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at UKHSA, said:

Although cases of COVID-19 are relatively low at present, we are expecting to see the virus circulating more widely during the winter months.

The booster is being offered to those at higher risk of severe illness and by taking up the booster vaccine this autumn, you will increase your protection ahead of the winter months, when respiratory viruses are typically at their peak.

NHS England will confirm details on how and when eligible people can access the autumn booster vaccine in due course.

Minister for Europe's meeting with Azerbaijani Ambassador, 15 August 2022: statement

News story

The UK Minister for Europe, Graham Stuart met the Azerbaijani Ambassador, Elin Suleymanov, to discuss a security incident at the Azerbaijani Embassy in London.



Following a meeting with Azerbaijani Ambassador to the UK Elin Suleymanov, the Minister for Europe, Graham Stuart said:

Today I spoke to Azerbaijani Ambassador Elin Suleymanov following a serious security incident at the Azerbaijani Embassy in London on 4 August. I emphasised the importance that the UK government attaches to the security of all diplomatic missions in the UK, and expressed my deep regret that the event took place.

The UK has a longstanding tradition of support for the right to freedom of expression, but this must be exercised through peaceful and lawful demonstration.

Published 15 August 2022

An expansion of the truce is in the interests of all parties and the Yemeni people

Thank you President and thanks to Special Envoy Grundberg and Ms Mudawi for their briefings.

On behalf of the United Kingdom, I would like to pay tribute to Mr Grundberg's continued leadership, which has been critical to securing this two-month extension to the truce, a significant achievement by the UN and the parties. For the Yemeni people, it means an additional two months of relative peace, and the chance to keep benefitting from the confidence building measures.

Fuel prices for ordinary Yemenis have been seriously eased thanks to the delivery of 720 thousand metric tons of oil into Hodeidah Port during the last four months. Yemenis have been accorded renewed freedom of movement thanks to the commercial round-trip flights out from Sana'a.

While the extension of the truce is welcome, we recognise and we've heard about today the challenge of the two months ahead. We urge the parties to continue their constructive engagement with the UN Special Envoy and to abide by their commitments. Continued cooperation and an expansion of the truce is in the interests of all parties, and the Yemeni people.

Only peace will solve the humanitarian crisis. Despite the truce's tangible benefits to Yemeni civilians, rising global commodity prices and a dearth of humanitarian funding has meant continued suffering for Yemenis. World Food Programme analysis in June showed some of the highest levels of inadequate food consumption ever recorded in Yemen. This cycle, shortage of funding will lead to 3 million fewer Yemenis receiving the rations they need. The funding deficit is undermining the humanitarian response and, without further disbursement of funds from donors, the crisis will only deepen and undermine the benefits of the truce. And, indeed, without humanitarian access, no amount of funding can serve those in need. The people of Yemen deserve to live peacefully, without the looming threat of famine.

While we welcome the progress associated with the truce, the threat of a spill from the FSO SAFER continues to loom over Yemen and the region. Action must be immediate, as non-intervention will result in environmental and humanitarian catastrophe. The UK was pleased to announce on July 18th a further £2 million pledge to the UN operation, but we urge colleagues to urgently bridge the £20 million gap and commit funding immediately before it is too late.

Thank you.

Competition opens to deliver new training and support programme for social housing residents

- £500,000 government grant will provide training for social housing residents to speak up and raise issues with their landlord
- Applications now open for organisations with relevant social housing sector experience to deliver the programme
- Part of wider reforms to ensure social housing residents are heard by their landlord

Social housing residents will be able to get training and support to speak up and raise issues with their landlord, the government has announced today (15 August 2022).

A £500,000 government grant to provide training, boost confidence and offer toolkits for residents on a range of social housing issues has today opened for bids.

The Resident Opportunities and Empowerment programme will run from Autumn 2022 to Spring 2025 and will empower social housing residents across England to hold their landlord to account.

It includes opportunities for residents to learn how to influence landlord decisions that affect tenants and their community. For example, guidance on how to form a residents panel will help residents in engaging with their landlords where services, such as repairs and maintenance, do not meet required standards.

The announcement is a key part of the government's commitment to re-balancing the relationship between tenants and landlords, set out in the Social Housing White Paper.

Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing Eddie Hughes MP said:

Tenants have a right for their voices to be heard – and we want to ensure they have the tools and resources to do this.

We committed to rebalancing the relationship between social housing tenants and landlords as part of our Social Housing White Paper.

This new grant will enable an organisation with expertise in the sector to help tenants take an active role in how their home is managed.”

The £500,000 grant is open to bids from organisations or partnerships in England with relevant expertise in the social housing sector and an understanding of the importance of resident empowerment.

Applicants should have experience in:

- providing training, capacity building and access to independent information, within the social housing sector;
- working collaboratively with landlords to deliver outcomes beneficial to residents and their communities;
- establishing significant and appropriate sector links and networks, to reach social housing residents, including underrepresented demographics and new audiences
- delivering an offer which supports and adds value to the measures set out in the '[Social Housing White Paper, The Charter for Social Housing Residents](#)'; and
- delivering projects that provide value for money.

The application window is open now for 7 weeks until 2 October 2022.

Further information on the Resident Opportunities and Empowerment Grant is available in the [prospectus](#) and [frequently asked questions](#).

If you have any questions on the grant or your application, please contact the Department on SHWPPM0@levellingup.gov.uk.

Find more information on the [Social Housing White Paper](#).