

News story: Fundraising Event to End Polio in Afghanistan

To mark World Polio Day, and to raise money for this worthy cause, the UK Humanitarian Team and The Rotary Club held a cultural event at the British Embassy.

The slogan of this year's Polio Eradication Campaign is "We are so close to eradicating Polio forever"

Speaking at the event, the Afghan Minister of Public Health Dr. Ferozuddin Feroz said:

We have worked very hard to reach every child, wherever he or she lives. I would like to thank my frontline workers and our partners, who have worked tirelessly to eradicate this cruel disease.

The money collected by The Rotary Club of Kabul City will help vaccinate as many as 32,000 children in Afghanistan and will also assist with Polio Awareness Campaigns which will be launched across the country to raise awareness of the measures needed to tackle this horrendous disease in remote districts and villages.

Afghan Handicrafts

Afghan Artwork

The British Ambassador, Sir Nicholas Kay said:

The UK is donating £400 million of support, for eradicating polio in the final three countries where this disease is present – Nigeria, Pakistan and of course Afghanistan. I'm extremely pleased that today's event is focused on such an important challenge of our time – eradicating the cruel disease of polio, that just has no place in the 21st century.

There are still seven cases of Polio in Afghanistan, reduced from 13 in 2016.

Press release: Clampdown on child maintenance cheats

New powers to stop parents avoiding paying child maintenance that they owe have been announced.

If a parent owes child maintenance, deductions to recover that debt can currently only be made from a bank or building society account held solely by them. So a small minority of parents are cheating their way out of supporting their children by putting their money into a joint account with a partner.

New laws will be brought in to allow deductions to be made from joint accounts in order to recover child maintenance arrears.

It is believed closing this loophole could stop a number of parents getting away with not paying their child maintenance each year – leading to more than £390,000 additional child maintenance being collected.

Minister for Family Support, Housing and Child Maintenance Caroline Dinenage said:

Our priority is for children to get the support they need. Only a small minority of parents try to cheat their way out of paying towards their children and this new power will be another tool to tackle those who do.

The government's response to a public consultation on joint account deductions has been published today. This sets out how deduction orders against joint accounts will work and the safeguards that will be in place to protect the other holder of the joint account.

These include:

- a deduction order only being imposed on a joint account when the paying parent does not have their own account, or there is not enough money in their own account
- only funds belonging to the paying parent being targeted, as before a deduction order is made on a joint account, data on that bank account will be collected and bank statements examined to establish which money in the account belongs to the paying parent
- existing safeguards already in place for deduction orders for child maintenance will apply to this new power, including the maximum deduction rate on regular orders being set at 40% of the paying parent's weekly income
- both account holders will be given the right to make their case before a deduction order is made

The new power will come into effect early next year.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5130

Follow DWP on:

[News story: Prime Minister announces new drive to end the gender pay gap](#)

The Prime Minister announces new drive to improve workplace equality – calling on more companies to report their gender pay gap and take action to close it.

New figures [published this week by the ONS](#) show the UK's overall gender pay gap rising marginally to 18.4%, but the gap for full-time workers falling to a record low – from 9.4% in 2016 to 9.1% in 2017.

To close the gender pay gap further, the Prime Minister is calling on companies to:

- improve the pipeline to ensure progress on female representation at senior levels, including supporting women to progress to middle management and offering return to work schemes
- publish their gender pay gap data, including companies with fewer than 250 employees
- make flexible working a reality for all employees by advertising all jobs as flexible from Day 1, unless there are solid business reasons not to

As part of the commitment to drive forward workplace equality, the Women's Business Council which the Prime Minister established as Home Secretary in 2012, will be advising her on progress and good practice in business. The council will also be providing recommendations in key areas including middle management, flexible working, working parents and return-to-work schemes.

The Prime Minister said:

Tackling injustices like the gender pay gap is part of building a country that works for everyone.

Already many of the UK's top companies are leading the way in making sure everyone's contributions to the workplace are valued equally, and it is encouraging news that the gap has fallen this year for full-time workers.

But the gender pay gap isn't going to close on its own – we all

need to be taking sustained action to make sure we address this.

We need to see a real step-change in the number of companies publishing their gender pay data and offering progression and flexibility for all employees.

That's why today I am calling on more businesses, both small and large, to take action to make sure the gender pay gap is eliminated once and for all.

The government introduced a legal requirement for all employers with over 250 employees to publish their gender pay and bonus data by April 2018.

Top companies including Weetabix, Fujitsu, TSB, Virgin Media and SSE have already reported their gender pay gap and have said how they will take action to close it. The Prime Minister is now calling on more employers to follow their lead, including encouraging businesses with fewer than 250 employees to voluntarily publish their pay gap too.

Minister for Women and Equalities Justine Greening said:

It is simply good business sense to recognise the enormous potential of women and to take action to nurture and progress female talent.

That is why we have introduced a legal requirement for all large employers to publish their gender pay and bonus data by April 2018. Employers now need to get on with publishing their pay gap. By shining a light on where there are gaps, they can take action and make sure that we are harnessing the talents and skills of men and women.

The gender pay gap in the UK has come down from 21.9% in 2007 and 27.5% of FTSE100 board members are now women, up from 12.5% in 2011.

The UK is already a world leader in this field and today's announcement builds on:

- the work to get 33 per cent of women on boards by 2020 and eliminate all-male boards in the FTSE 350
- the system of shared parental leave introduced in April 2015, under which mothers can choose to end their maternity leave early and working parents can then decide how they want to share the remaining leave
- the rules on flexible working introduced in June 2014, which extend the right to request flexible working to all employees and place a duty on employers to consider all requests for flexible working in a reasonable manner.

By closing gender pay gaps in work McKinsey estimates that we would add £150 billion to the UK economy by 2025.

Background information

Find out [more about the government's drive to close the gender pay gap](#) including the requirement for all employers with more than 250 to publish their gender pay and bonus data.

The ONS figures show the gender pay gap for all employees has marginally increased from 18.2% in 2016 to 18.4% in 2017. This is the net impact of both the full-time and part-time gender pay gaps moving closer to zero, together with [an increase in the proportion of employees working full-time versus part-time](#).

The full-time gender pay gap was 9.1% and the part-time GPG was -5.1%. These compare to 9.4% and -6.1% respectively for 2016. Similar year-on-year increases have occurred in previous years, for example, in 2013 and 2015, but the longer-term trend is downward, from 27.5% in 1997 and 21.9% in 2007. All figures were calculated from a snapshot taken in April of the relevant year.

[Press release: Statement on UDI made by Catalan regional parliament: 27 October 2017](#)

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The UK does not and will not recognise the Unilateral Declaration of Independence made by the Catalan regional parliament. It is based on a vote that was declared illegal by the Spanish courts. We continue to want to see the rule of law upheld, the Spanish Constitution respected, and Spanish unity preserved.

[Press release: Just a few days left to have your say on Southampton improvements](#)

Residents and businesses in Southampton are being encouraged to ensure their voice is heard as a public consultation on improvements to the eastern

approach to the city enters its final few days.

The six week public consultation, which began on 19 September 2017 runs until 31 October, is seeking views on plans for a major upgrade to junction 8 of the M27 and the A3024 to Southampton city centre.

The plans will increase capacity at junction 8 of the M27 and Windhover roundabout, as well as upgrade 25 junctions along the A3024. Improved safety, upgrades to two railway bridges and better facilities for pedestrians and cyclists are also part of the proposals.

Highways England Project Manager Adriana Chirovici said:

I would like to thank everyone who has been to see the team at an exhibition or have submitted their feedback through the website. These are ambitious plans and there is still time for people who haven't yet had their say on the proposals to do so before the consultation ends on Tuesday 31 October.

The plans include:

- M27 junction 8 and Windhover roundabout: All approaches to the junctions will be widened, with improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists
- A3024 corridor: Improvements at all 25 junctions along this four and a half mile stretch, including to the cycling and walking facilities along the corridor and for crossings and junction widening at key junctions. This will also help buses run more reliably
- Northam Road rail bridge: Replacement of this single carriageway bridge that crosses the main South Western railway lines near to St Marys Stadium. The new bridge will include two lanes in each direction with improvements to pedestrian and cycle facilities
- Bitterne rail bridge: This bridge, a wide single carriageway bridge on the A3024 Bitterne Road West at Bitterne train station will be upgraded to include new separated adjacent pedestrian and cycle facilities with wider footpaths

Highways England held eight information exhibitions at venues across Southampton so that people could see the proposals and put any questions directly to the project team. While the events have now finished, there is still time for people to collect consultation material at various locations in and around Southampton, and also have their say via the website.

Details on the proposals and feedback forms will be available online until 11:45pm on 31 October 2017. For more information, [go to the scheme website.](#)

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.