

[Debbie Abrahams responds to Government's 'Fuller Working Lives' strategy](#)

Debbie Abrahams MP, Labour's Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, commenting on the Government's 'Fuller Working Lives' strategy, said:

"It's right that the Government is taking steps to boost employment for older people.

"However, more than half a million workers aged over 50 rely on in-work support – and that support is at risk of being rolled back through Universal Credit.

"That's why Labour is calling on the Tories to reverse cuts to Universal Credit, which could see some older workers worse off by £2,600 a year."

[News story: UK scales up humanitarian relief efforts in Somalia](#)

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Millions of people are living in desperate conditions in Somalia as extreme drought is threatening the lives and stability of a country vital to regional and UK security.

Ms Patel led a roundtable with humanitarian partners during her visit, to hear about the drought situation on the ground, how they are responding to it, and to discuss how the UK and international community can work together to save lives and prevent a catastrophic famine.

The 2015/16 El Nino is one of the strongest on record and has severely impacted Africa. In Somalia, conditions are worsening with daily reports of rivers drying up, crops failing, and people and livestock dying. As many as 3.9 million people need urgent assistance and 320,000 children are severely malnourished.

In the face of these famine-like conditions Ms Patel announced a UK package of support, which will provide:

- food for 60,000 people;
- urgent nutrition support for 240,000 children and pregnant women;
- safe water for 180,000 people;
- access to health service for 75,000 people; and
- vaccinations for 3 million animals.

Priti Patel said:

Millions of people are living in desperate conditions as extreme drought threatens the lives and stability of a country vital to regional and UK security.

I urge our international partners to join forces with Global Britain and provide immediate support for the relief effort.

Building a secure, stable and prosperous Somalia is a top priority for the UK and while great progress has been made, significant challenges remain. Together in partnership we can meet those challenges.

Ms Patel also sought the humanitarian partners' commitment to the London Somalia Conference objectives and to agree to work together to ensure it will address the drought response and deliver the international support needed to resolve Somalia's protracted crises.

The UK is playing a leading role in the wider international response to the ongoing drought in East Africa – where people desperately need the UK's support.

After visiting Somalia, Ms Patel attended a humanitarian panel discussion in Ethiopia with the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, and the Ethiopian Deputy Prime Minister, Demeke Mekonnen.

Ms Patel highlighted that humanitarian reform is one of the top priorities for the UK and that she is committed to making the international system more effective at responding to global challenges that pose risks to both Africa and the UK. This is to ensure support is maximised to those affected by crisis and guaranteeing value for money.

The International Development Secretary also emphasised her concerns for people suffering from the Horn of Africa drought in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya and urged humanitarian partners to accelerate joint efforts for an early response that will save lives.

Ms Patel outlined that increased UK support is helping 800,000 people in Ethiopia including:

- emergency nutrition treatment for 25,000 malnourished children;
- clean water for 100,000 people; and
- vaccination and treatment for 600,000 cattle.

[News story: Sir Mark Walport will lead UK Research and Innovation](#)

In this role Sir Mark will lead the establishment of UKRI and ensure it plays a central role at the heart of the Industrial Strategy.

Subject to the passage of the [Higher Education and Research Bill](#) through parliament, UKRI will be established as a single, strategic body that will bring together the 7 Research Councils, Innovate UK and the research and knowledge exchange functions of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

The Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation Jo Johnson said:

I am delighted that Mark has agreed to take on this pivotal role. With his experience of running a large scale research organisation, collaboration with businesses in all sectors and his work at the heart of government, Mark is uniquely placed to lead the establishment of UKRI and ensure the organisation becomes a major voice for UK research and innovation.

Following his appointment Mark will now work closely with the UKRI Chair Sir John Kingman and the research and innovation communities across the UK to shape the new organisation over the coming months, delivering on the Industrial Strategy proposals for investing in science, research and innovation in the UK.

UKRI Chief Executive Designate Prof Sir Mark Walport said:

I am honoured to be appointed as the first Chief Executive of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). My ambition is to make UKRI the world's leading research and innovation public funding agency.

I look forward to working closely with the Research Councils, Innovate UK and Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) as we work together to create UKRI. I also look forward to working closely with all of our research and innovation communities to provide a strong and coherent voice for UK science and innovation.

UKRI Non-Executive Chair Sir John Kingman said:

I have worked closely with Mark over many years; he is a superb scientific leader who believes passionately in the potential for great science and innovation to make a profound difference to society and to the economy. He is the ideal first leader for UKRI.

Science, research and innovation are key strengths of the UK; vital underpinning elements of our economy and national wellbeing. The UK research and innovation system is world-leading, but there is an opportunity to make it even more effective.

The purpose of Part 3 of the Higher Education and Research Bill is to put in place the legal powers and safeguards that will enable government to protect the UK's status as a full-spectrum scientific power in the future. The proposals before parliament are to create UKRI, a strong, agile and joined up funder of research and innovation for the UK.

Through UKRI, we are implementing the recommendations of Nobel Prize winning scientist Sir Paul Nurse, who the government asked to lead a review of the UK's research landscape. In his report, published in November 2015, Sir Paul called on government to "support the Research Councils to collectively make up more than the sum of their parts", and develop a "smoother pathway to more applied research".

Subject to the passage of the Higher Education and Research Bill through parliament, UKRI will include the 7 Research Councils, Innovate UK and the research and knowledge exchange functions of HEFCE. This will create a single strategic research and innovation funding body, which will build on and protect the strengths and values of the current system.

UKRI will deliver a strengthened strategic approach to future challenges and a maximisation of the value and benefit from government's investment of over £6 billion per annum in research and innovation. It will provide a greater focus on cross-cutting issues that are outside the core remits of the current funding bodies, such as multi- and inter-disciplinary research, enabling the system to respond rapidly and effectively to current and future challenges. It will be a strengthened, unified voice for the UK's research and innovation funding system, facilitating the dialogue with government and partners on the global stage. Furthermore, it will create a smoother pathway for innovation, enabling improved collaboration between businesses and researchers and better alignment of research outputs with business needs.

[Proposed changes to supply teaching in Wales published](#)

The Welsh Government established the Ministerial Supply Model Taskforce in

June 2016 to consider issues around supply teachers. They considered the complexities and variations in how supply teachers are employed.

Their report offers a range of recommendations, including considering cost efficiencies, highlighting safeguarding responsibilities, accurate data collection, proposals for pay and conditions, and supporting newly qualified teachers and professional learning opportunities.

Recommendations include:

- Improving the data collected on supply teachers so it is more accurate.
- Undertake a full cost analysis to measure the true cost of supply teaching.
- Consider the terms and conditions of supply teachers as part of broader proposals to devolve teachers' pay and conditions to Wales.
- Raise awareness with employers to the responsibilities placed upon them in relation to safeguarding and update workforce guidance.
- Consider regulating the quality of commercial supply agencies by introducing a set of accredited minimum quality standards that all commercial agencies providing teachers to maintained schools should meet.

The Welsh Government has accepted the majority of the report's recommendations. However, further detailed policy and legal work will be carried out to establish whether all of the recommendations can be delivered, including the recommendations around quality standards and regional collaborative working.

Education Secretary Kirsty Williams said:

"Supply teachers are an important part of the teacher workforce and I want to make sure they have the opportunity for professional development and are able to support our wider education reforms.

"As the report concludes, there is clear room for improvement in the way we currently employ, manage and support the delivery of supply teachers. While I accept the report's recommendations at this time, some of them raise complex legal issues which we will need to look into further. We will now begin this process, working closely with councils, schools, the teaching workforce, unions and others.

"Any changes must fit with our national mission to raise standards and extend opportunities for all our young people."

Statement to Parliament: Exiting the European Union: Ministerial statement 2 February 2017

With permission, Mr Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the government's plans for exiting the European Union.

Today we are publishing a government White Paper on the UK's exit from, and new partnership with, the European Union.

The government has made clear that it will honour the choice made by the people of the UK on 23 June 2016 to leave the European Union.

This House is currently considering a straightforward Bill that will give the Prime Minister the authority to trigger Article 50 of the Treaty of the European Union and begin the negotiation over our exit.

That is not a Bill about whether or not we leave the EU, or even how we do so, but about implementing a decision already taken by the people of the UK in last year's referendum.

But we have always said we would detail our strategic aims for the negotiation, and seek to build a national consensus wherever possible.

This White Paper sets out those aims and the thinking behind them.

It confirms the Prime Minister's vision of an independent, truly global UK and an ambitious future relationship with the EU.

This is based on the 12 principles that will guide the government in fulfilling the democratic will of the people of the UK. These are:

- providing certainty and clarity where we can as we approach the negotiations
- taking control of our own laws and statute book
- strengthening the Union by securing a deal that works for the whole of the UK
- maintaining the common travel area and protecting our strong historic ties with Ireland
- controlling immigration from the European Union
- securing the rights for European Union citizens already living in the UK and the rights of UK nationals living in the European Union
- protecting and enhancing existing workers' rights

- ensuring free trade with European markets, forging a new strategic partnership with the EU including a bold and ambitious free trade agreement and mutually beneficial new customs agreement
- forging ambitious free trade agreements with other countries across the world
- ensuring the United Kingdom remains the best place for science and innovation
- co-operating in the fight against crime and terrorism
- and, finally, delivering a smooth, orderly exit from the European Union

These 12 objectives amount to one goal: a new, positive and constructive partnership between Britain and the European Union, that works in our mutual interest.

All of them are key. But let me highlight some of the specific issues in the White Paper.

It reiterates our firm view that it is in the UK's interest for the European Union to succeed politically and economically. I can't say too firmly, we want the EU to succeed politically and economically.

And so we approach the negotiation to come in a spirit of goodwill and working to an outcome in our mutual benefit.

We recognise the EU's principle of the 4 freedoms, and so the UK will leave the single market.

Instead we seek a new strategic partnership. A bold and ambitious free trade and customs agreement that should ensure the most free and frictionless trade in goods and services that is possible.

That will be to our mutual benefit. As the White Paper notes, we export £230 billion worth of goods and services to the EU, while importing £290 billion worth of goods and services from the EU every year.

It also sets out how after we leave the European Union, the UK will look to significantly increase its trade with the fastest growing export markets in the world.

While we cannot sign new trade deals while still members, we can and are preparing the ground for them. This means updating the terms of our membership of the World Trade Organisation, of which the UK was a founding member – as GAC in the first instance.

Modern free trade agreements require mechanisms to resolve disputes and to provide certainty for businesses on both sides. So the White Paper examines precedents in this area, and makes clear that we will negotiate an arrangement that respects UK sovereignty.

In terms of clarity and certainty, we recognise the need to provide it wherever we can during a period when some uncertainty is inevitable.

So we will bring forward another White Paper, on the Great Repeal Bill, which will lay out our approach in detail.

This legislation will mean the repeal of the European Communities Act and end the authority of EU law and convert it into domestic law at the point of exit.

That means that the position we start from, a common regulatory framework with the EU Single Market, is unprecedented.

The negotiation will not be about bringing together 2 divergent systems. It is about finding the best way for the benefits of the common systems and frameworks that currently enable the UK and EU businesses to trade with and operate in each other's markets to continue when we leave the EU.

The White Paper also sets out that we will take control of our own laws, so that they are made in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast, and ensure that we can control the number of people coming to the UK from the European Union.

And the jurisdiction of the Court of Justice of the European Union in the UK will come to an end.

It will be for Parliament and the devolved legislatures to determine significant changes to reflect our new position.

I have said at this dispatch box before that there will be any number of votes on substantive policy choices. To that end, the White Paper makes clear that we expect to bring forward separate legislation in areas such as customs and immigration.

Delivering a smooth, mutually beneficial exit, avoiding a disruptive cliff-edge, will be the key.

A never-ending transitional status is emphatically not what we seek. But a phased process of implementation of new arrangements – whether immigration controls, customs systems, the way we cooperate on criminal and civil justice matters, or future regulatory and legal frameworks for business – will be necessary for both sides.

As the White Paper says, the time needed to phase in new arrangements in different areas may vary.

As one of the most important actors in global affairs, we will continue to work with the EU to preserve UK and European security, fight crime and terrorism and uphold justice. We must work more closely, not less, in these areas.

We will continue to seek to build a national consensus around our negotiating position.

So we are talking all the time to business, civil society, the public sector, representatives of the regions.

We have engaged the devolved administrations in this process and, while no part of the UK can have a veto, are determined to deliver an outcome that works for the whole of our country.

We continue to analyse the impact of our exit across the breadth of the UK economy, covering more than 50 sectors, 58 at last count, to shape our negotiating position.

To conclude, the referendum result was not a vote to turn our back on Europe. It was a vote of confidence in the UK's ability to succeed in the world and an expression of optimism that our best days are still to come.

Whatever the outcome of our negotiations, we seek a more open, outward-looking, confident and fairer UK that works for everyone.

The White Paper is available on the government website. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

[Read the White Paper.](#)