

Speech: Deputy High Commissioner Tom Hartley's Speech at the MOU Signing between British Council and the Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Foundation

Your Majesty / Lady Julia Osei Tutu / Honorable Ministers / Members of Parliament

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Guests

Niimeɪ, Naameɪ, Nananom, Torgbewo, Mamawo

All protocols observed.

“Maakye, 3tes3n?” [Good morning, how are you?]

I am ‘Kojo’ Hartley.

I am delighted to have been invited to speak here today on behalf of the British High Commissioner and the UK Government. I hope my participation at today's momentous MoU signing ceremony between the British Council and the Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Charity Foundation is testament to the British High Commission and the British Council's share in the development of Kumasi and the Ashanti Kingdom.

First, allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate His Majesty the Asantehene on the 20th Anniversary of his enstoolment and his 69th birthday. I wish him many more years of peace and prosperity upon The Golden Stool.

The ties between the UK and the Ashanti Kingdom have been strong for generations. I was delighted to have witnessed, a historic moment for the region when, last November, Their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall met His Majesty Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, the Asantehene (the King of the Ashanti) and his wife, Lady Julia Osei Tutu and the Queen Mothers, at Manhyia Palace. They felt the warm welcome of the Ashanti people during the ‘Akwasidae’ Grand Durbar, and experienced the richness of Ashanti culture in the company of HM the Asantehene, Lady Julia, The Queen Mothers, local Chiefs, religious leaders and guests throughout the Ashanti kingdom.

And I am proud of the strong Anglo-Ashanti connection which is so much more than warm words.

Just last week, a British company, Contracta UK, cut the sod on the second Phase of the Kejetia Market Project in the presence of the British High Commissioner, His Majesty the Asantehene and His Excellency The President Nana Akufo-Addo. This development, backed by UK Export Finance, will modernise Kejetia Market and ensure that Kumasi remains a vital trading hub in West Africa, and that Ghana's famed second city continues to be recognised

across the region as the place to do business.

And we are also backing the completion of Bekwai Hospital, through UKEF's guarantee of a £17 million loan that will deliver 120 new beds, an Emergency Department, a Maternity Ward and an Operating Theatre.

These are tangible examples of our investment in the development of the Ashanti Kingdom and the strong bonds of friendship with Manhyia Palace.

I am delighted that British Council's work in Kumasi is another leading example of our commitment to the Ashanti Kingdom. In Ghana, Kumasi is the only other city, outside of Accra, where the British Council has an office (Nigeria is the only other West African country that has a regional British Council presence). A clear demonstration of our commitment to supporting the educational development of the Ashanti people.

The British Council offer is diverse and world-class.

Through its pioneering work, the British Council is delivering programmes that extend across a range of cultural, technical and educational sectors:

- In Education, we are enabling teachers to deliver core skills training; foster new education and research partnerships; and support scholarship programmes that enable opportunities to study at the UK's best tertiary institutions.
- In Exams, we are giving young people access to leading international qualifications needed to further their careers.
- In Skills and Entrepreneurship, they are supporting the Government of Ghana's efforts to meet the employment needs of a growing, young population.
- Our Social Enterprise programme provides an enabling environment for innovators to develop profitable business solutions to many of today's social and environmental challenges.
- Our Arts programme engages the influential UK-Ghana Diaspora and supports Ghanaian entrepreneurs working within the creative industries.

A great example of the British Council's work in Kumasi is the Jobs for Youth Project where BC is working with two tech and enterprise Hubs in Kumasi to train, incubate and accelerate Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in order to generate employment for young people. This work is training a total of 3200 young people in Kumasi and beyond. This is essential as no country can truly flourish if parts of the population are left behind, or excluded. Inclusivity is a necessary part of Ghana's vision for moving 'Beyond Aid' and underpins Ghana's reputation as a bastion of stability in the region.

Since its creation in 2009, I am proud that the Otumfuo Osei Tutu II Charity Foundation has supported this vision through its important work – at the community level – in support of Ghana’s education and health outcomes, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

And I hope the British Council and the Foundation’s new partnership will become a force for positive change. I hope that some of those with ties to the Ashanti Region, such as fashion designer Ozwald Boateng and broadcaster June Sarpong, will join us and help us spark action on that will benefit all of Ghana.

On behalf of the British Council and the entire UK Government, I am delighted to witness the signing of this MoU today. The MoU will cement strong collaboration, particularly in four areas of mutual interest: art & culture; Education; enhancing the Asantehene’s 20th Anniversary Celebrations; and joint participation in events that support community level development in the Ashanti Kingdom.

At the same time, it provides a framework for how the British Council can deepen the relationship with the Foundation on culture, sports, Diaspora and other shared priorities. I am confident that it will raise the bar for the UK’s partnership in the Ashanti Region. And it is another sign of the UK’s commitment to the development of the Ashanti Kingdom, and Ghana.

Medaase [Thank you]

[Press release: Government unveils new support for survivors of domestic abuse](#)

Thousands of survivors fleeing abusive and violent relationships will receive greater protection thanks to a new package of support.

[Press release: Government unveils new support for survivors of domestic](#)

abuse

- For first time ever legal duty placed on local authorities to deliver support to survivors of domestic abuse in accommodation-based services backed by funding to place services on a sustainable footing
- This new requirement will end the variation across the country in support for those fleeing domestic abuse
- Consultation part of wider government drive to bolster protection for survivors of domestic abuse, including landmark [Domestic Abuse Bill](#)

Thousands of survivors fleeing abusive and violent relationships will receive greater protection thanks to a new package of support, confirmed today (13 May 2019) by Prime Minister, Theresa May.

For the first time ever, councils across the country will be legally required to provide vital life-saving support in secure accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse and their children – ensuring need in their local area is met.

Domestic abuse is a devastating crime which shatters the lives of over 2 million survivors and their families every year.

While many local authorities are already providing tailored support to those fleeing violent relationships, more needs to be done to end the variation across the country in support and ensure a consistent approach across the country so all families are able to recover and overcome their experiences.

Local authorities will also be required to work together with neighbouring councils to ensure domestic abuse services reflects the needs of local people – including targeted, specialist support for BAME, LGBT and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller survivors.

Today's [consultation](#) complements wider work across government, including a landmark Domestic Abuse Bill which will introduce the first ever statutory government definition of domestic abuse to specifically include economic abuse and controlling and manipulative non-physical abuse. The Bill will also establish a new Domestic Abuse Commissioner and prohibit the cross-examination of victims by their abusers in the family courts.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

I've always vowed to leave no stone unturned in tackling domestic abuse – this abhorrent crime has no place in our country.

And today we are ending the postcode lottery by placing on local authorities a legal duty to deliver support, including secure housing, to survivors of domestic abuse and their children.

Whoever you are, wherever you live and whatever the abuse you face, you will have access to the services you need to be safe.

Communities Secretary, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP, said:

Domestic abuse destroys lives and I am determined to drive the change necessary to ensure families never have to endure the pain of domestic abuse in silence.

For the first time ever, local authorities will have to legally assess level of support needed in their local area and match that need with vital, life-saving services – helping untold numbers of families to safely rebuild their lives, free from the threat of pernicious abuse.

These important measures will help us shape the future of the invaluable support survivors of domestic abuse and their children receive.

For the first time, local authorities will also be required to develop and publish strategies which set out in detail the range of support services available for survivors and their children – including refuge accommodation and specialist support from safety through to independence.

Funding will also be provided to place these vital services on a long-term, sustainable footing. The exact level of funding will be determined with stakeholders as part of the consultation process.

Through the consultation, ministers want to hear from victims and survivors, service and housing providers, local authorities, police and prime commissioners and other public agencies, as well as other professionals who support victims and their children every day.

In November last year, ministers awarded a further £22 million for domestic abuse projects across the country – ensuring thousands more survivors have access to the help they need as they move towards a safe and healthy future, free from domestic abuse. Funding will help to provide over 2,200 new beds in refuges and other safe accommodation, as well as access to education and tailored employment and life skills guidance.

Minister for Housing and Homelessness Heather Wheeler MP said:

It is our duty to ensure survivors of domestic abuse can access the support they need to restart their lives – we owe it to everyone who has experience of this terrible abuse.

I know from meeting with brave survivors when I recently visited a newly opened refuge the worth of such facilities and the important work they do. That's why the measures announced today are so crucial and will help ensure that survivors are supported right across the country.

Sandra Horley, CBE, Chief Executive of Refuge, said:

Refuge is delighted by the government's decision to place a legal duty on local authorities to provide funding for accommodation based support for survivors of domestic abuse.

This has the potential to end the postcode lottery for refuge places and could put these life-saving services on a secure financial footing for the first time.

It could provide vital protection to tens of thousands of women and children who experience violence and intimidation in the home. Women and children deserve and need to live in safety.

Nicki Norman, Acting co-Chief Executive of Women's Aid, said:

We warmly welcome this announcement which shows the government's commitment to the long-term funding of lifesaving refuges.

At Women's Aid we have been campaigning since 2014 with our SOS campaign to protect and fund the national network of refuges, and with many of our member services delivering services on a shoestring budget, a move to consistent, dedicated funding is desperately needed.

Safeguards to ensure that experienced women's services – including smaller specialist organisations led by and for black and minority ethnic women – are sustainably funded through a new statutory system will be vital.

Key to this is seeing quality standards, such as those developed by Women's Aid and Imkaan, at the heart of implementation – alongside real national oversight to end the postcode lottery and ensure no survivor is turned away from the support they need.

We look forward to working with the government to ensure that this important move to fund refuges is safe, sustainable and delivers the resources that services urgently require to support all women and children fleeing domestic abuse.

Suzanne Jacob, Chief Executive of SafeLives, said:

No one harmed by domestic abuse should have to leave their home. We have long called for victims and their families to have the broadest range of housing options so they can choose to stay where they are and for it to be safe to do so.

We welcome this consultation and call for the fullest range of support to be considered, including sanctuary schemes and

specialist community support alongside refuges. A new duty, properly funded, would be a welcome step and could help make the case for change at local level.

We want to see adoption of the standards devised by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance which set out best practice for public, private and social landlords and for councils to accept the need to house people from outside their own area so survivors can be sure they are far from harm's way.

The [consultation](#) will last for 12 weeks. The government will set out its response in due course.

In November 2018, Minister Wheeler confirmed that 63 projects across England were to share £22 million to help domestic abuse survivors. Find [more information](#).

Funding will help to provide tailored support to more than 25,000 survivors and their families – including over 2,200 additional beds in refuges and other safe accommodation.

The funding builds on other actions being taken by the government to end domestic abuse, support survivors and ensure offenders are prosecuted. Such as:

- a new domestic abuse offence to capture coercive and controlling behaviour, the criminalisation of forced marriage and the introduction of new stalking laws
- a national roll-out of domestic violence protection orders and the domestic violence disclosure scheme
- the £15 million 3-year Violence Against Women and Girls Service Transformation Fund

[News story: VMD web services currently unavailable](#)

Web services, such as the Special Imports System are unavailable due to an unscheduled power shut-down.

News story: VMD web services currently unavailable: Update 14:20pm 13 May

The issues with our online systems have now been resolved and they are back up and running. Thank you for your patience.

The following online application services are unavailable:

- Special Import Certificates
- Special Treatment Certificates

In urgent cases you may purchase and use an imported veterinary medicine prior to obtaining a certificate from the VMD. This is a special dispensation which only applies to the VMD online system whilst this service is unavailable. You should obtain an import certificate retrospectively as soon as possible.

- Research Import Certificates
- Export Certificates
- Microchip Adverse Event Reporting
- Animal Adverse Reaction Reporting
- Human Adverse Reaction Reporting

The following online information services are also unavailable:

- Product Information Database
- Register of SQP Retailer Premises
- Register of SQPs
- List of Accredited Internet Retailers
- Register of Specific Manufacturing Authorisations

We are working on the problem and this notice will be updated once we know more or the services have been restored.

If you have any urgent issues contact postmaster@vmd.defra.gsi.gov.uk

The VMD apologises for any inconvenience.