

Press release: Funding boost for Scottish charity working in Yemen

Yemen continues to be the worst humanitarian crisis in the world with over 22 million people – 75% of the population – in need of humanitarian assistance.

Mercy Corps' new work, funded by the UK government, will help thousands of people who have had to flee from conflict in and around Hodeidah in northern Yemen to the cities of al Mokha and Dhubab.

Mercy Corps will provide these vulnerable people, many of whom now have no access to essential services, with life-saving access to over 73,000 litres of clean water every day. They will also help over 21,000 people buy vital food through cash transfers, which are one of the most effective and direct ways of helping communities facing crisis, like those displaced from Hodeidah.

Cash transfers work by providing a modest amount of cash to vulnerable families so that they can buy essential items such as food, water and medicine. This provides better value for money for UK taxpayers and gives recipients the dignity they deserve, with some research showing that £1 delivered through cash transfers can buy £1.20 worth of traditional aid.

The Minister for International Development, Alistair Burt, made the announcement during a visit to Mercy Corps' offices in central Edinburgh.

Mr Burt said:

It was great to visit Mercy Corps' offices in Edinburgh this morning and hear more about how UK aid is helping their vital work in Yemen and throughout the world.

The UK remains deeply concerned by the humanitarian crisis in Yemen, which is the largest in the world. That's why the UK was the second-largest donor to the UN Humanitarian Appeal last year.

The conflict has forced thousands to leave their homes, jobs and livelihoods. Our support to Mercy Corps will put cash directly in the hands of 21,000 of some of the most vulnerable Yemenis, to make sure that they have enough money to buy the food and other essentials they need to survive.

Ultimately only a political settlement can bring long-term stability to Yemen and end the humanitarian crisis, so peace talks are the top priority. We call upon all parties to join the UK in supporting the efforts being made by the United Nations to find peace for the sake of the Yemeni people and the security of Yemen's neighbours.

Simon O'Connell, Mercy Corps Executive Director said:

At a time of unprecedented need in Yemen, UK Aid plays a vital role in helping Mercy Corps meet the emergency needs of families who have been forced to flee their homes. However, until there is a political solution to the conflict in Yemen, their suffering will not end.

Humanitarian organisations, like Mercy Corps, need to be able to provide life-saving support safely and securely, and we must continue all efforts to protect the humanitarian space.

Notes to Editors

- The UK remains deeply concerned by the humanitarian crisis in Yemen – the largest in the world. Over 22 million people – 75% of the population – are in need of humanitarian assistance. More than 11 million are in need of immediate help to save or sustain life. The UN estimates that 17.8 million people in Yemen do not have reliable access to food and 8.4 million people face extreme food shortages.
 - This is an additional funding allocation of £2.7 million to Mercy Corps for their work in Yemen. Earlier this year the UK announced a total of £170 million in response to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen for the financial year 2018 – 2019. This will meet immediate food needs for 2.5 million Yemenis, and brings the total UK bilateral support to Yemen to over £570 million since 2015.
 - Independent research on a cash transfer programme in Lebanon show it delivered 20% better value for money, so every £1 of UK support delivered through cash transfers delivers £1.20 worth of aid. Evidence shows that digital cash transfers are more accountable and better safeguarded against theft, diversion and corruption.
 - Mercy Corps is a leading global organisation powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, they partner to put bold solutions into action – helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. www.mercycorps.org.uk
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News story: Government launches new, global-leading counter-fraud and economic crime profession

Today, the Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith MP, has announced a new central government Profession to be launched on 9th October for specialists working to fight fraud and economic crime. The Government Counter Fraud Profession (GCFP) will create a new community of counter fraud specialists across government, with benefits for both individuals and organisations.

The GCFP will enhance the structure of the government's counter fraud capability and put the UK Government in a better position to find and fight fraud and economic crime. The launch of the profession represents the culmination of 2 years work, with over 100 organisations having been involved in its development. It will provide counter fraud specialists across government organisations with a common framework of Professional Standards and Competencies. It will also introduce a Professional Skills Platform (PSP), a web-based tool through which members can register their knowledge, skills, and experience, and self-assess against a range of counter fraud roles.

By having common standards, organisations will be able to identify what skills they do, and do not, have and get those skills to the right areas. They will also be provided with the ability to improve access to counter fraud capability and help deliver better quality products, whether fraud investigations, risk assessments or data analytics. Working with a common framework of standards, organisations will also be able to share learning programmes and develop new initiatives together.

The Profession will move beyond a focus on investigation and will look more at preventing and understanding fraud. This is because the GCFP recognises that to build a world-class counter fraud capability in the public sector, the UK needs a professional structure that recognises the complexity of counter fraud activity.

Minister for the Constitution, Chloe Smith, said:

I am pleased to be announcing that the government will launch the new Counter Fraud Profession on the 9th October. The launch of the GCFP will make the UK a global leader in the professionalisation of counter fraud and will give our specialist staff an excellent and well-deserved opportunity for career progression within the discipline.

This government remains committed to tackling fraud in any capacity, including against the public purse, and this new Profession is one way we are enhancing our ability to do so.

In recognition of our global lead in this field, our international partners have already asked us to lead an international working group in this area. The GCFP will continue to be flexible, evolving in line with the needs of its members, and the changing threat posed by fraud and economic crime.

For more information:

[News story: Home Secretary launches and doubles the early intervention youth fund](#)

More projects to steer young people away from serious violence will be supported by the government after the Home Secretary announced the doubling of the [early intervention youth fund](#).

The scheme, which opens for bids today (Monday 30 July), is a key commitment in the Serious Violence Strategy, and will allow communities to intervene early in the lives of more vulnerable young people.

The government will double the funding, which was originally set at £11 million. Now £22 million of Home Office money will be made available to support vital early intervention work in England and Wales over the next two years.

Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) who work in partnership with Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) or the equivalent can bid for funding to deliver projects which steer young people away from violent crime.

It is a prime example of the public health – or multiple strand – approach set out in the strategy, which is aimed at addressing the causes of violence. Robust policing remains very important, but the Home Office is also working in partnership with a range of key sectors, such as education, local government, health and social services, to tackle serious violence.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Intervening early in the lives of vulnerable young people can help focus their talents on positive activities and steer them away from the dangers of serious violence.

This is why we are doubling our Early Intervention Youth Fund to £22 million. The fund will support groups at the heart of our communities who educate and interact with youths – and provide them with an alternative to crime.

We all need to work together to tackle this worrying issue and our Serious Violence Strategy is helping this joined-up approach.

Doubling the funding will allow successful PCCs and local partners to plan their work over the two years and maximise its impact in expanding existing programmes, developing innovative new schemes or drawing in additional funding.

The early intervention youth fund is one of 61 commitments which are already being delivered from the Serious Violence Strategy.

Last week the Home Secretary chaired the third serious violence taskforce, where it was announced that teachers in England would receive anti-knife crime lesson plans as part of the #knifefree campaign to teach young people the dangers of carrying knives.

Another commitment – the Offensive Weapons Bill – is currently passing through Parliament.

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[News story: UK-Australia Trade Working Group joint statement](#)

The Australia-UK Trade Working Group met in London on 25 and 26 July 2018. This was the group's fourth meeting since it was established in September 2016 by the Rt Hon Dr Liam Fox MP, the United Kingdom's Secretary of State for International Trade and President of the Board of Trade and the Hon Steven Ciobo MP, Australia's Minister for Trade, Tourism, and Investment.

Delegations were led by officials from the UK's Department of International Trade (DIT) and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). It was attended by representatives from a range of UK and Australian government departments.

Discussions continued to focus on the UK and Australia's future trade and investment relationship; a recognition of the shared ambition, after the UK leaves the European Union, to start bilateral FTA negotiations. Conversations built upon the previous Trade Working Groups, with officials continuing to develop a deep and shared understanding of each other's domestic systems and trade policy across a number of areas.

The Trade Working Group also provided an opportunity for the UK to set out the work under way to establish its independent trade policy. Officials discussed the recently announced UK consultations on future free trade agreements, of which Australia is one of 3 prospective bilateral deals where the public's views are sought.

Finally, the Working Group affirmed the UK and Australia's shared desire to promote and continue to champion free trade and a robust multilateral trading system.