

Press release: PM hosts Business Advisory Council meeting: 15 March

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

“This afternoon the Prime Minister hosted a further meeting of her Business Advisory Council at Downing Street.

“The Prime Minister opened the roundtable with a summary of key moments in the past few weeks, including progress in the Brexit negotiations, the Chancellor’s Spring Statement and the Industrial Strategy.

“On the UK’s withdrawal from the EU, the Prime Minister spoke about the need to reach agreement with the EU on the terms of the implementation period ahead of the March European Council next week, which the attendees agreed would be vital in providing certainty to businesses and people across the UK.

“She then reiterated the themes from her Mansion House Speech which set out an ambitious partnership with the EU, one driven by principled practicality rather than ideology. The business leaders welcomed the detail provided in the speech and gave their support.

“The Prime Minister and business leaders also discussed the government’s Industrial Strategy, agreeing on the importance for government and business to work together on all aspects of the plan, particularly investing in the infrastructure and skills needed to support UK productivity growth and the ambition of the government’s “Grand Challenges”.

“The meeting was also attended by the Chancellor of the Exchequer who provided an update on the Spring Statement, the Business Secretary, Greg Clark, who discussed the Industrial Strategy and Brexit Minister, Suella Fernandes, who spoke about Ministerial engagement with European Member States.”

Ivan Menezes, CEO, Diageo

Constantin Cotzias, Director of Bloomberg Europe, Bloomberg

António Horta-Osório, CEO, Lloyds Banking Group

Jan du Plessis, Chairman, BT

Moya Greene, CEO, Royal Mail

Sir Charlie Mayfield, CEO, John Lewis Partnership

Ian Davis, Chairman, Rolls Royce

Mike Cherry OBE, National Chairman, FSB

Dr Adam Marshall, DG, BCC

Stephen Phipson CBE, DG, EEF

Carolyn Fairbairn, DG, CBI

Jayne-Anne Gadhia CBE, CEO, Virgin Money plc

Dame Helena, Head of Personal Investing, Legal & General Group plc

Oliver Benzecry, Chairman and Senior Managing Director, Accenture, UK and Ireland

Dame Carolyn McCall, CEO, ITV

News story: New alliance to boost confidence in reporting child abuse

A new phase in a campaign to tackle child abuse and neglect has been launched today (Thursday 15 March), as new research reveals the extent of public confidence in reporting child abuse or neglect.

According to [new analysis](#) from YouGov, more than a quarter (26 per cent) of adults surveyed said they had worried about the welfare, neglect or abuse of a child, of which over two-fifths (42 per cent) did not report their suspicions to someone with child protection responsibilities.

Minister for Children and Families Nadhim Zahawi said:

Keeping children safe from harm is everyone's responsibility. It is important people voice their concerns, no matter how small they think they are.

I hope that through the launch of this campaign, we improve people's confidence in spotting the signs of abuse or neglect, so that they feel empowered to report them. Any information passed on to professionals could be the difference between a child living a happy life, or facing the trauma of abuse or neglect.

The campaign is being delivered with the support of the Local Government Association and many participating local councils, as well as police forces, community organisations and the voluntary sector across the country.

Among parents of under 16s questioned by YouGov, almost a third (31 per cent) had worried about a child's welfare, or about abuse or neglect of a child in

their local area, but just over half (57 per cent) went on to take any action to raise their concerns.

Overall, 24 per cent of those parents who had concerns and took action had tackled the situation directly, 69 per cent had sought advice and 16 per cent had reported their concerns to a professional, suggesting there is more to be done to help build public confidence in knowing when and how to report a case of suspected abuse.

Isabelle Trowler, Chief Social Worker, said:

The public may be nervous about reporting suspected child abuse or neglect, but people don't have to be absolutely certain about whether a child is being abused. If you have a feeling that something's not right, talk to the local children's social care team who will look into it.

Information is usually gathered from many sources, and any individual's report would form one part of a bigger picture – but the public, especially parents, can provide vital information we can act on.

The launch of the campaign is being supported by LBC radio, through a series of daily broadcasts featuring different voices discussing child protection. On Friday 16 March, Minister Zahawi will round up the week of interviews by discussing the campaign and its aims.

- Inform the public about the different types of child abuse and neglect;
- Educate people on how to spot the signs; and
- Reassure people on how the reporting process works as well as supporting them through it.

In 2016/17, more than [400,000 children](#) in England were supported because someone noticed they needed help – and in around half of these cases related specifically to abuse and neglect.

If members of the public are worried about a child they can visit a new dedicated campaign page: [tacklechildabuse](#) to get the contact number for their local council, the NSPCC Helpline number 0808 800 5000 or the Police.

Barnardo's Chief Executive Javed Khan said:

Keeping children safe from harm is at the heart of Barnardo's work – last year alone, our child sexual exploitation services saw a 38 per cent increase in referrals for support. But actually it's everybody's business which is why the Department for Education's 'Together we can tackle child abuse' campaign is so important in raising awareness.

Children may not disclose their own abuse so it's vital that adults

– including parents, family members, carers and teachers – are vigilant and take action if they suspect a child may be being harmed.

Our UK-wide specialist workers see first-hand how sexual abuse damages young lives. The charity's Be Safe guide is a useful tool to help spot the signs of grooming and sexual exploitation but you don't have to be certain to report any concerns. Don't worry about being wrong; if you think a child might be in danger, please tell someone.

Matthew Reed, Chief Executive at The Children's Society, said:

No child, whether they are in their teenage years or of pre-school age should have to suffer the pain of abuse or neglect.

The Children's Society's research has found that young people experiencing neglect are more likely to be dissatisfied with their lives, pessimistic about their futures and lacking in confidence in their abilities.

Spotting the signs that something is wrong isn't just a matter for professionals who work with the children, it's everyone's responsibility. It is better for anyone to report concerns that eventually prove to be unfounded than to fail to speak out when a child may be at risk.

David Derbyshire, Director of Safeguarding at Action for Children, said:

The safeguarding of children is really everyone's business; the challenge for all communities is to have the courage to speak up and speak out whenever we are worried a child might be abused or neglected.

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the Local Government Association's Children and Young People Board, said:

Child abuse is an appalling crime, and helping to protect vulnerable children is one of the most important challenges that councils tackle every day.

We will always encourage people to refer any concerns about children to their local authority as soon as possible, so that the situation can be investigated, and support or immediate protection put in place where necessary.

Councils have a child referred to them every 49 seconds on a daily basis, but councils too often only hear about problems once they've become serious. We would urge people to pick up the phone whenever they suspect a child may need support or protection, so that councils can help that child or family access the support they need as soon as possible.

[News story: Schools Minister launches programme to boost leadership](#)

Support for future school leaders and development opportunities for talented teachers were on the agenda as School Standards Minister Nick Gibb visited Greater Manchester for the launch of a government funded programme to help schools in areas of greatest need.

The Schools Minister attended All Saints Catholic College in Dukinfield, Greater Manchester, for the formal launch of Teach First's two-year 'Leading Together' programme – which is funded through the Department for Education's £75 million [Teaching & Leadership Innovation Fund](#).

The announcement is part of the government's drive to support teachers' development and attract the best and brightest recruits into the teaching profession.

Following the launch, the Schools Minister took part in a roundtable discussion on the benefits of leadership opportunities in schools with local headteachers and Russell Hobby, Chief Executive of Teach First.

Thanks to a hardworking and incredibly talented generation of teachers, alongside the government's bold reforms, there are now 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

There are now a record number of teachers in our schools – 15,500 more than in 2010 – but we want to build on this and help schools attract and keep the best and brightest people working in our schools.

Last week the Education Secretary announced a strategy to drive recruitment and boost retention of teachers, working with the unions and professional bodies, and we've been consulting on how to improve development opportunities for teachers, whether they decide to move into a leadership role or want to continue teaching in the

classroom.

This programme from Teach First is one of thousands of new training opportunities that we have created through our £75 million Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund, supporting schools in the areas of greatest need to help nurture the leaders of tomorrow. It was a pleasure to hear school leaders speak so enthusiastically about our plans to raise the status of the teaching profession.

Teach First's programme is designed to offer staff at schools in areas of disadvantage the skills and support they need to succeed and deliver improvements for pupils' education – at no cost to the school.

Teach First CEO Russell Hobby said:

I'm pleased that we launched the Leading Together programme with the Schools Minister at All Saints Catholic College today. We heard from headteachers at the event about the importance of effective leadership for good schools.

Too often schools in disadvantaged areas miss out on the support they need to build their leadership teams. Thanks to generous support from the Department for Education we're working in partnership with exactly these schools to help them succeed.

The programme was among those earmarked last year to receive a share of the £75 million Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund. These projects will help provide tailored training opportunities for teachers on both managing challenging pupil behaviour and developing leadership, so they can make the most of their talent in the classroom.

Today's ministerial visit follows the recent confirmation of a number of other government measures to improve development opportunities for great teachers, whether they decide to move into a leadership role or want to continue teaching in the classroom. These include:

- The commitment to invest £42 million in a Teacher Development Premium pilot to enable teachers and leaders working in areas of greatest need to access high quality professional development, and drive school improvement; and
- The introduction of the new, strengthened national professional qualifications, as well as a £10 million fund to support teachers in the areas that need it most.

These measures will be boosted by the Education Secretary's recent announcement of a strategy to drive recruitment and boost retention of teachers, working with the unions and professional bodies.

Speech: Salisbury Nerve Agent Attack: UK OSCE Permanent Council Statement

Mr. Chairman,

It is with great regret that I take the floor today to inform the Permanent Council of deeply concerning events that have taken place in the UK over the past days.

On the afternoon of Sunday 4 March, in the beautiful cathedral city of Salisbury in Wiltshire, a father and his daughter, Sergey and Julia Skripal, were taken gravely ill whilst walking through the city centre. Both remain critically ill. A British police officer who was among members of the emergency services responding to the incident also fell seriously ill and has spent the past days in hospital in intensive care. More than 30 other people have also sought medical treatment. As the nature of the Skripals' illness became clear, a major police-led operation sought to identify the poison, locate its source and decontaminate the affected locations and ensure the safety of the public. That operation, and those investigations are ongoing.

As the Prime Minister told the British Parliament, it is clear that Mr. Skripal and his daughter had been poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent. I repeat, a military-grade nerve agent.

This agent has been identified by our experts at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, Porton Down, as a type developed in Russia, part of a group of agents known as Novichok. On Monday, my Prime Minister told Parliament that it was highly likely that Russia, a participating State of the OSCE, was responsible.

Either as a direct act – or because Russia had lost control of a catastrophically damaging military-grade nerve agent.

This assessment was based not only on the positive identification of the nerve agent and our knowledge that the Russian Federation has previously produced this agent and still has the capability to do so, but also on the Russian state's record of state sponsored assassinations, and indeed, public statements indicating that defectors may be seen as legitimate targets.

The British Government sought an urgent explanation from Russia, asking Moscow for immediate and full disclosure of the Novichok programme to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. Russia's response so far has demonstrated complete disdain for the gravity of these events. There has been no explanation of how this nerve agent came to be used in the UK. And no explanation as to why Russia, a participating State of the OSCE, has an undeclared Chemical Weapon programme – in clear contravention of international law. There is no alternative conclusion other than that the

Russian state was culpable for this heinous act. This represents an unlawful use of force by the Russian Federation in the UK.

Mr. Chairman, I need hardly remind the Permanent Council that no state party which has committed to the Chemical Weapons Convention should in any way be linked to, or responsible for, the use of Chemical Weapons. Indeed, only one week ago, Russia reported in the FSC the destruction of historic Chemical Weapon stocks. Events of the last week cast significant doubt on that statement.

The Chemical Weapons Convention is not the only international commitment brought into question by this attack, the first offensive use of nerve agent of any sort on European Territory since the Second World War.

This was a grotesque crime, that not only targeted individuals in a particularly barbaric way, but which was perpetrated without regard to the safety of the British emergency services or indeed to local residents and visitors going about their ordinary lives on a Sunday afternoon. I repeat Mr. Chairman, this was an unlawful use of force against the UK.

But it is not simply a bilateral matter. This crime violates the letter and spirit of the Helsinki Final Act. It damages the concept of confidence building this organisation strives to develop. And it undermines the principles on which this organisation is founded.

No participating State of the OSCE should feel comfortable with what happened on the streets of Salisbury. No participating State.

Mr. Chairman, police investigations are ongoing, decontamination operations are ongoing and medical care for the victims of this attack is ongoing.

For now, allow me to express my thanks for the many messages of support from friends, allies and partners around this table and for the strong expressions of solidarity from many capitals represented here.

I will close echoing the words of my Prime Minister. This is an affront to the prohibition on the use of chemical weapons. And an affront to the rules-based system on which we depend. We will work with our allies and partners to confront such actions wherever they threaten our security, at home and abroad.

Mr. Chairman, please attach this statement to the journal of the day.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Press release: Celeb-led travel trends prompt FCO warning this Easter

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is warning young Brits following in the footsteps of globe-trotting celebs not to fall foul of lesser-known local laws and customs, which could land them in serious trouble.

New research from the FCO shows that one third of 18 – 24 year olds (33%) will be influenced by celebrities when preparing for their holiday this Easter, with nearly one in three (30%) saying stars inspire their travel destination.

However, many of these destinations have more unusual and surprising rules than UK travellers are used to.

As most young Brits don't have A-listers' concierge support when planning trips abroad, the FCO is urging British people to be aware of local laws and customs in the destinations they are travelling to by reading up on Travel Advice – something that fewer than two fifths of young people (38%) currently do – if they want to avoid getting into trouble abroad.

FCO analysis of ONS data has found a significant increase in Brits travelling further afield than the traditional European trips, often to popular celebrity destinations that have stricter laws and customs than the UK. Visits to Sri Lanka are up more than a fifth (22%) and the UAE up more than a sixth (17%).

Jack White, celeb content director at Now magazine said:

We've all felt the pang of envy that comes from scrolling through a celebrity's luxury holiday snaps on social media, but if you're ever lucky enough to end up in Dubai or St Lucia it's worth remembering different countries have different rules – and sometimes even the stars seem unaware of this.

It's easy to get caught up the moment on holiday, so it's worth researching the local laws beforehand to make sure your dream trip doesn't end in disaster. After all, there's definitely nothing glamorous about ending up behind bars!

The FCO recommends Brits making trips abroad this Easter join the 16 million people a year who check its Travel Advice before they travel. All sorts of local laws and customs are covered in the travel advice, including the 10 listed below:

1. UAE: Swearing and making rude gestures (including online) are considered obscene acts and offenders can be jailed or deported.

2. Thailand: You can't bring vaporisers, such as e-cigarettes, e-baraku or refills into Thailand. These items are likely to be confiscated and you could be fined or sent to prison for up to ten years if convicted.
3. Greece: Indecent behaviour, including mooning, isn't tolerated and could result in arrest and a fine or a prison sentence.
4. Sri Lanka: The mistreatment of Buddhist images and artefacts is a serious offence and tourists have been convicted for this. British nationals have been refused entry to Sri Lanka or faced deportation for having visible tattoos of Buddha. Don't pose for photographs standing in front of a statue of Buddha.
5. Japan: The use or possession of some medicines like Vicks Inhalers or painkillers containing Codeine is banned in Japan and can result in detention and deportation
6. Turkey: It is an offence to insult the Turkish nation or the national flag, or to deface or tear up currency. If you are convicted of any of these offences, you could face a prison sentence of between six months and three years.
7. Caribbean: Many Caribbean countries, such as Barbados, St. Vincent, and St. Lucia ban the wearing of camouflage clothing, including by children.
8. Spain: Causing a forest fire is treated as a criminal offence in Spain even if unintentional.
9. Australia: Australia has strict quarantine rules to keep out pests and diseases that could affect plant, animal and human health. Breaches of quarantine regulations can result in large fines.
10. Ukraine: Smoking and drinking alcoholic drinks in public places (including transport, bus stops, underground crossings, sports and government establishments, playgrounds and parks) is officially banned.

Julia Longbottom, FCO Consular Director said:

It's great to see the British people being inspired to travel to new and exciting places. This makes it all the more important to follow our Travel Advice and respect local laws and customs to avoid unnecessary trouble. For instance, e-cigarettes are banned in Thailand and can result in a prison sentence of up to ten years.

Even in places closer to home, disrespecting local laws can have serious consequences – in Greece indecent behaviour, such as mooning, can be punishable with a fine or even a prison sentence. We see many cases each year of people breaking local laws and customs.

It is important that our travellers understand that the UK Government can't give legal advice or get them out of prison. Instead, we want to do all we can to help British people stay safe when they are travelling, and avoid ending up in these difficult situations.

For more information and to find out about local laws and customs in destinations around the world, visit the [FCO's travel advice pages](#).

Further information