

Prime Minister to chair new council with devolved governments

- Landmark agreement on how UK government and devolved governments will continue to work together has been reached
- New ways of working agreed by the UK government, Northern Ireland Executive, Scottish Government and Welsh Government
- Reaffirmed principles agreed by all includes mutual respect, maintaining trust and positive working
- Agreement formalises a PM led council, overseeing strengthened working

A landmark agreement setting out how the UK and devolved governments will work closely together to deliver for people across the whole of the United Kingdom has been published today (13 January 2022).

The [Intergovernmental Relations \(IGR\) Review](#) sets out new structures as to how the UK government, Northern Ireland Executive, Scottish Government and Welsh Government will work to deliver for people across the UK – based upon on the existing values of mutual respect, maintaining trust and positive working.

The new system will be a three-tiered structure and will formalise a new council, chaired by the Prime Minister, made up of Heads of the Devolved Governments.

The Prime Minister-led council and Ministerial groups will oversee and strengthen relations between all of the UK's governments. They will discuss issues that affect people across the UK, particularly where they cut across reserved and devolved policy – or are of shared responsibility.

Strong working and close co-operation has been vital in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including coordinating the response to new variants and the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine. Other examples of joined-up work include investment through Growth Deals and the Afghanistan resettlement programme.

The new structures will be supported by an independent secretariat made up of civil servants seconded from all four governments and will serve the UK government and devolved governments equally.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

When team UK pulls together in common cause, spirit and endeavour we will always be at our very best.

We've shown time and time again the combined strength we have in facing off the shared challenges before us, while also seizing the opportunities ahead for the benefit of the whole United Kingdom.

Today's announcements build upon that strength as we all continue to work together to deliver for the British people.

Minister for Intergovernmental Relations Michael Gove said:

Devolution has empowered communities and resulted in huge benefits across the United Kingdom.

Today's landmark agreement will build on the incredible amount of collaboration already taking place between the UK government and the devolved administrations.

By working together even more effectively, we can better overcome the challenges we face, create greater opportunities and improve people's lives for the better.

The new structures are based on a three tier levels for ministerial engagement – alongside a new mechanism for avoiding, escalating and resolving disputes; supported by joint or independent secretariats and based upon consensus.

Below the Prime Minister chaired council, the second tier will consist of two Interministerial Standing Committees, one chaired by the Minister for Intergovernmental Relations and one on finance. There will also be the option of time limited committees agreed by consensus to deal with specific issues as required.

The third tier will be made up of Interministerial Groups (IMG) led by individual departments, which will cover a wide range of policy issues within a given minister's or department's portfolio.

These will include regular meetings between devolved and UK government ministers on issues such as Health, Transport and Education.

The new structures and processes announced today are underpinned by a reaffirmed set of principles for collaborative working.

These are:

- Maintaining positive and constructive relations, based on mutual respect for the responsibilities of the governments and their shared role in governance of the UK
- Building and maintaining trust, based on effective communication
- Sharing information and respecting confidentiality
- Promoting understanding of, and accountability for, their intergovernmental activity
- Resolving disputes according to a clear and agreed process

The new structures create a more equal, transparent and accountable system to support collaboration and information sharing between the UK government and

the devolved governments and continue to deliver for citizens across the UK.

Secretary of State for Wales Simon Hart said:

People in Wales want to see politicians working together to defeat the pandemic and focus on our recovery and throughout the past two years the UK government has worked with the Welsh Government more closely and productively than ever.

This agreement will strengthen these relationships still further as we work together to deliver the priorities of the people of Wales like jobs, prosperity and economic recovery

Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

Scotland has two governments, and people want to see them continue to work together to tackle covid and drive our recovery.

Throughout the pandemic, the Scottish and UK governments have worked closely together, to keep people safe, protect public services, and support businesses and jobs in Scotland.

This important agreement will build on that and help strengthen cooperation further – as we work together to deliver the priorities of people in Scotland on jobs, prosperity and economic recovery.

It also reflects the increased powers of the Scottish Parliament since 2016 and the UK's vote to leave the EU.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Brandon Lewis said:

Today's agreement will enhance the positive working relationship between the UK government and the Northern Ireland Executive, to the benefit of everyone in Northern Ireland.

By ensuring that we work together in the best way possible, we will build on the fantastic collaboration which has stood us in good stead as we continue to deliver together for local people.

Please see the [written ministerial statement](#)