

25 Argentine students return from studying in the UK with Chevening

World news story

2019/2020 cohort finished their studies in UK Universities after being awarded a Chevening scholarship.



Every year, the Secretariat organises a Farewell event in London for Chevening Scholars. This is the end-of-year event and a chance for scholars to say goodbye to one another, look back on a year of study, achievements and cultural activities in the UK, and also to open up new opportunities as the scholars become part of the global Chevening Alumni network.

This year the event was held online on August 20 and 21. The Secretariat worked really hard to ensure that the 2019/20 cohort of scholars received an excellent send-off as they ended their award year, despite the circumstances of the past 5 months. They came up with a truly innovative, modern and celebratory package to match the usual face to face Farewell event! The event took place on an exclusive Chevening island powered by the platform VirBELA. Scholars were able to interact in real time as avatars, while enjoying a programme of specially curated speeches and entertainment.

The event featured inspirational keynote speakers, TED-style talks, networking opportunities, regional networking events, a Chevening choir and other fun activities.

Complete list of 2019/2020 cohort

- Milagros Balparda – Building and Urban Design in Development – UCL (University College London)
- Matias Belacin – Public Policy – London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London
- Laura Cécile Eva Buchet – Governance, Development and Public Policy – University of Sussex
- María Luz Casal – Public Policy – King's College London, University of London

- Gabriel Eduardo Cejas – Public Policy – King’s College London, University of London
- Romina Viviana Colman – Media and Communications (Data and Society) – London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London
- Carlos Martin Demaria – Risk, Disaster and Resilience – UCL (University College London)
- Francisco Fernandez Funes – International Communication – University of Leeds
- Francisco Jose Grosso – Law – Queen Mary University of London
- Juan Ignacio Judas – Public Policy and Administration – London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London
- Enzo Leone – Economics and Policy of Energy and the Environment – UCL (University College London)
- Juan Cruz Loureiro – Behavioural Science – London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London
- Patricio Daniel Mendez Montenegro – Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – University of Essex
- Ignacio Odriozola – Migration and Mobility Studies – University of Bristol
- Juliana Outes Velarde – Politics, Big Data and Quantitative Methods – University of Warwick
- Marina Ponce – Global Governance and Ethics – UCL (University College London)
- María Portabales – International Social and Public Policy – London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London
- Agustin Reboursin – Managing Innovation in Creative Organisations – Loughborough University London
- Ariel Ignacio Saban – Criminal Law and Criminal Justice – University of Edinburgh
- Lucila Sarquis – Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship – London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London
- Pablo Javier Sgalla – Public Administration – University of Leeds
- María Eugenia Simhan – Media and Communications – Goldsmiths, University of London
- Laila Sprejer – Applied Social Data Science – London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London
- Maximo Tettamanzi – Emergent Technologies and Design – Architectural Association School of Architecture
- Carolina Ludmila Zaccato – International Relations – London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London

Published 8 September 2020

Jenrick unveils huge £12 billion boost for affordable homes

- Housing Secretary launches billions of pounds of new investment in housing to help the country build back better, including homes for social rent to help the most vulnerable
- Half of the new homes being made available for ownership and revamped Shared Ownership scheme to help the next generation onto the property ladder
- Consultation launched to make all new homes more accessible for older and disabled people

Housing Secretary Robert Jenrick has today (8 September 2020) announced that the prospectus inviting bids for the government's massive investment in affordable housing and new measures to make it easier to get a foot on the property ladder are being launched this week.

In total, the new programme represents the highest single funding commitment to affordable housing in a decade.

The £12.2 billion overall investment in affordable housing was confirmed at Budget, which also includes £700 million on new homes through the 2016 to 2022 programme.

A new £11.5 billion Affordable Homes Programme will be delivered over 5 years from 2021 to 2026, providing up to 180,000 new homes across the country, should economic conditions allow.

The programme will unlock a further £38 billion in public and private investment in affordable housing. New homes will be made available from next year.

Today, the government is announcing that around half of the new homes will be available for affordable home ownership, helping even more people to get a foot on the housing ladder.

In order to support people from all backgrounds, the rest will be made available for discounted rent, including 10% for supported housing – to support those with physical or mental health challenges.

Nearly £7.5 billion will be delivered outside London by Homes England, the government's housing accelerator. This is over £2 billion more than the amount given under the previous Affordable Homes Programme, underlining the government's commitment to levelling up the whole country.

The Greater London Authority has been offered £4 billion and negotiations about what they will deliver with this funding are in progress.

Homes England will publish their Affordable Homes Programme prospectus this

week, inviting councils, housing associations and private providers to start preparing their bids. New homes will be delivered from next year.

Housing Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

Today's announcement represents the highest single funding commitment to affordable housing in a decade and is part of our comprehensive plans to build back better.

This government is helping hard-working families and prospective first-time buyers get their feet on the housing ladder in an affordable way.

Thanks to the range of flexible ownership options being made available, more families across the country will be able to realise their dreams of owning their own home, with half of these homes being made available for ownership.

As well as delivering homes for affordable ownership, the new programme will deliver homes for Affordable and Social Rent. Funding for Social Rent, which is typically 50 to 60% of market prices, will be available to housing providers across the country, providing secure, affordable housing to families who need it most.

Today the Housing Secretary is also announcing a new model for Shared Ownership to help more people onto the property ladder by vastly reducing the minimum initial share, and launching a consultation to ensure new homes deliver the accessibility that families need.

The new Shared Ownership model announced today will:

- reduce the minimum initial share you can buy in a property from 25% to 10%
- allow people to buy additional shares in their home in 1% instalments, with heavily reduced fees
- introduce a 10-year period for new shared owners where the landlord will cover the cost of any repairs and maintenance

A Right to Shared Ownership will be available on the vast majority of rented homes delivered through the new programme, providing tenants with a pathway into ownership by giving them the right to purchase a stake in their home.

Additionally, the Housing Secretary has today launched a consultation to consider how best to raise accessibility standards for all new homes in recognition of the importance of suitable homes for older and disabled people.

Nick Walkley, Chief Executive of Homes England, said:

We welcome the launch of the new Affordable Homes fund, which gives

Homes England a unique opportunity to work on behalf of the government to accelerate the delivery of high-quality, affordable homes.

The fund will support improved productivity in construction and unlock new economic opportunities across the country. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, this long-term funding settlement gives our partners the confidence they need to invest in new homes and the communities they work for.

Today's announcements follow proposals unveiled last month to overhaul the country's outdated planning system, including a new and simpler system of developer contributions to ensure firms play their part in funding affordable homes.

A new Infrastructure Levy has been proposed that would deliver more funding for affordable housing, including at least as many affordable homes as the current system.

More than 1.5 million new homes have been delivered since 2010, including more than 460,000 affordable homes. More than 644,000 households have been helped to purchase a home since spring 2010 through government schemes including Shared Ownership, Help to Buy Equity Loans, Help to Buy ISAs and Right to Buy.

Building the homes the country needs is a priority for the government to ensure everyone can live in a decent, accessible and secure home, and to support our recovery from the impact of coronavirus.

That's why recent government support for the sector includes supporting smaller developers with an extra £450 million through the Home Building Fund, providing £400 million to build new homes on brownfield land and proposing an overhaul of the planning system to streamline the process cut red tape and harness technology to deliver homes faster.

The new announcements today include:

- The amount of funding allocated to Homes England and the amount offered to the Greater London Authority for delivery of the new Affordable Homes Programme
- The publication by Homes England of their Affordable Homes Programme prospectus this week
- The new model of Shared Ownership, including a 10% initial stake, 1% staircasing and the 10 year repair and maintenance period. This is the government's response to a consultation on Shared Ownership launched last year
- The new consultation on making homes more accessible

These changes apply to England only.

The new measures will make it easier for a new generation to realise their dream of home ownership. 87% of people would choose to own given free choice,

however the proportion of people under the age of 35 owning a home has declined from 65% to 27% since the 1990s.

The new model of Shared Ownership will be implemented on all new build Shared Ownership homes delivered through the new Affordable Homes Programme, which will begin in 2021.

We will be publishing a further technical consultation on the implementation of the new model of Shared Ownership in due course.

The majority of rented homes built using the AHP will have the Right to Shared Ownership attached. The Right to Shared Ownership will give many social housing tenants the opportunity to purchase a stake in their home and take their first step into home ownership. The following categories of property will be exempted:

- council homes
- homes in designated protected areas and rural exemption sites
- supported housing
- alms houses
- homes where the landlord is a co-operative housing association
- homes where the landlord or freeholder is a Community Land Trust

Eligibility criteria for the Right to Shared Ownership include:

- being a social tenant for at least 3 years and having lived in the current property for at least 12 months
- not being subject to bankruptcy proceedings
- demonstrating that you can afford and sustain homeownership. All prospective purchaser will need to undertake an affordability assessment having an annual household income of £80,000 or less (£90,000 in London)

The existing minimum standard for accessible housing in England requires 4 main criteria that make it accessible for most people, including wheelchair users: level access to the main entrance, a flush threshold, sufficiently wide doorways and circulation space, and a toilet at entrance level.

This applies as the minimum for all new build homes. Additionally, where there is a material alteration to a building's access, the building cannot be made less compliant than it was.

We are consulting on views on how to raise accessible housing standards further, including the option to raise this minimum standard for all new homes. A higher minimum standard would require additional features including having a living area at entrance level and step-free access to all entrance level rooms and facilities, wider doorways and corridors as well as clear access routes to reach windows.

It would also include further features to make homes more easily adaptable over time to a wide range of occupants, including older people, those with reduced mobility and some wheelchair users, for example sanitary provisions that can be adapted easily for installation of grab rails and stairs designed to allow easy fit of a stair lift.

Public safety boost with more secure accommodation for prison leavers

- 200 more beds means closer supervision of an extra 1,700 prison leavers each year
- extra £10 million on refurbishment to bolster security
- spending on construction and renovation work to directly support local tradespeople
- police back plans to make the public safer

Commonly known as probation hostels, approved premises (APs) provide a temporary, yet vital base for offenders upon release – allowing probation staff to closely monitor and support them in the community and boosting public safety. APs are staffed all day, every day by trained probation staff and offenders living there are subject to night-time curfews and regular drug and alcohol testing.

An extra 200 new bedrooms will be created by extending and reconfiguring existing approved premises – an increase in places of 10 per cent. By providing stable accommodation to prison leavers, APs help lower the risk of reoffending and, in turn, reduce crime rates.

A further £10 million will be spent on refurbishments and security, including upgraded CCTV systems and personal alarms for staff.

The construction and renovations will generate millions of pounds in work this year for tradespeople across England and Wales, from plumbers and electricians to roofers and builders.

Prisons and Probation Minister Lucy Frazer QC MP said:

Approved Premises are vital for monitoring prison leavers – reducing the likelihood of them reoffending and helping to cut crime. They provide a stable base helping them access services, find jobs and start to turn their lives around.

This extra investment in building and renovation, along with the improvements we're already making to prisons and courts, will also put millions of pounds into the pockets of local tradespeople across the country.

The plans have also been welcomed by police chiefs, who work closely with the Probation Service to manage high-risk prison leavers in the community.

National Police Chiefs' Council lead for the Management of Offenders, Chief

Constable Michelle Skeer, said:

The UK has some of the most effective tools in the world to manage offenders when they are initially released from prison. It is a joined up effort across many services and agencies and the police work very closely to reduce risk.

Approved Premises play a vital role in offering stability, support and supervision that helps prevent reoffending, which ultimately keeps the public safer.

In partnership with the local council, we are also building a new, replacement approved premise in Southwark, which will be open in early 2021 and house 24 prison leavers at any given time.

Offenders will have the chance to carry out some of the renovation work through a Handyman Scheme, helping them learn new skills and boost their chances of finding a job. A trial at St Catherine's approved premises in Guildford, saw an offender shadow local builders when they renovated its kitchen, residents' lounge and bedrooms. The project gave him a new-found focus and confidence, and could inspired offenders to seek work in construction.

The scheme follows swiftly on from plans to [recruit 1,000 new probation officers](#) this year to further boost public safety. Probation officer numbers are now approaching a 4 year high.

[Applications open for Care Leavers Internship Scheme 2020](#)

News story

Opportunities at heart of Government open for young people leaving care



Young people leaving care will again be directly offered the opportunity to work at central government departments, as applications today open for this year's [Care Leaver Internship Scheme](#).

More than 500 internship opportunities for care leavers will be available at the heart of Government, including at the Department for Education and Department for Work and Pensions, among almost 20 departments and agencies.

The 12-month paid internships are aimed at helping care leavers to develop skills and competences that support them into long-term jobs. Applications will be open from Monday 7 September to Monday 5 October.

The scheme aims to address statistics that show that care leavers are more than three times more likely than their peers not to be in education, employment or training (NEET).

Children's Minister Vicky Ford said:

At this time of global pandemic we must all intensify our efforts to support the vulnerable, and young people leaving care are among the most vulnerable in our society. Too often they do not have the same opportunities or connections with potential employers as those with stable families, they risk becoming unemployed and left behind.

We cannot let this happen, so as well as increasing support for care leavers as they become adults, Government Departments have worked to create real and practical opportunities to give care leavers a head start with a first job. This year's care leavers internship scheme is more than double that of previous years.

Today, as we open applications to these internships, we are creating new opportunities for these young people and giving them the chance to fulfill their ambitions – no matter the obstacles they have faced.

This year's internship scheme will offer more than 500 places, and follows the first meeting of the cross-Government Care Leaver Covenant Board, co-chaired by Education Secretary Gavin Williamson and Minister for the Cabinet Office Michael Gove, which will continue to look at access to better housing, healthcare and employment opportunities for young people leaving care.

Last year the Education Secretary committed to expanding the Internship Scheme, which has offered more than 250 opportunities to care leavers across Whitehall since 2017.

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Russian ambassador summoned: FCD0 statement

News story

The Russian ambassador to the UK was summoned to the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office today.



A Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office spokesperson said:

Today the Russian Ambassador to the UK was summoned to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. The UK Government registered its deep concern with the Russian Government about the poisoning of Alexey Navalny with a chemical nerve agent from the Novichok group.

The Foreign Secretary has made it clear that it is absolutely unacceptable that a banned chemical weapon has been used, and that violence has again been directed against a leading Russian opposition figure. There is a case here for Russia to answer. This took place on Russian soil, against a Russian citizen. They have international obligations to uphold. This is nothing short of an attack against the rules based international system which keeps our societies safe.

Russia needs to conduct a full, transparent criminal investigation into Mr Navalny's poisoning. We will work with our partners, including through action in the OPCW, to hold the perpetrators to account.

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