

Press release: PM visit to Saudi Arabia: 29 November 2017

The Prime Minister held bilateral talks with King Salman of Saudi Arabia and the Crown Prince, Mohamed bin Salman, in Riyadh earlier this evening.

They discussed regional security and stability, noting in particular the good progress that had been made in Iraq in the fight against Daesh.

They discussed Iran, where the Prime Minister noted that we shared Saudi Arabia's concerns about Iran's destabilising regional behaviour, and where they agreed that more work needed to be done to bring the international community together to counter it.

They discussed Yemen, where the Prime Minister made clear that the flow of commercial supplies on which the country depends must be resumed if we are to avert a humanitarian catastrophe. They agreed that steps needed to be taken as a matter of urgency to address this and that they would take forward more detailed discussions on how this could be achieved.

They agreed the relationship between the UK and Saudi Arabia was strong and would endure. They discussed "Vision 2030", Saudi's ambitious blueprint for internal reform which aims to deliver greater inclusivity for all Saudi citizens, which they agreed was essential to Saudi Arabia's long-term stability and success.

News story: Justine Greening hosts first ever DfE Skills Summit

At the first Skills Summit held at the DfE in Whitehall today (30 November), Justine Greening will tell Britain's top businesses that enlisting their support in training the next generation of highly skilled British workers is the key to creating a country fit for the future, ready to seize the opportunities of Brexit.

The Skills Summit, supported by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), will bring together leading employers representing over 3.5 million UK employees, to help spearhead a major skills reform programme.

In a speech to an audience that is expected to include companies like Amazon, Google, Capgemini, Rolls Royce, Fujitsu, KPMG, Barclays, Tarmac, EDF and Deloitte, the Education Secretary will urge businesses to work in a new partnership with government to deliver a skills revolution, and sign up to a

statement of action with government.

Outlining the government's ambitions on skills to employers, the Education Secretary, Justine Greening is expected to say:

This government is investing in developing our homegrown talent so British business has the skills it needs and so that young people can get the opportunities they want.

We are determined to work in partnership with business to provide them opportunities to match the talent across the country. That is why this government is investing billions in technical education and why today I am calling on employers to bring their innovation, creativity and commitment to technical education reform. Only employers can provide the work placements and apprenticeships that make these reforms a success.

Eliminating the UK's skills gap will have a transformative impact on people's lives and the wider economy. With around 20% of our productivity gap with Germany and France due to lower skill levels, tackling this deficit will ensure Britain is ready to take advantage of the opportunities provided by Brexit.

The Education Secretary will also launch new Institutes of Technology (IoTs) with applicants able to bid for £170million of funding. IoTs will be collaborations by employers, HE and FE colleges, and specialise in science, technology, engineering and maths, providing students with prestigious qualifications that are highly sought after by local employers. By bridging local skills gaps, IoTs will drive growth and widen opportunity.

In a further announcement, £10m will be invested in new Career Learning pilots across the UK. This funding will be used to support local growth and productivity by testing how best to get adults to return to learning.

Further reforms to be announced at the summit will include:

- A consultation on the design of T levels seeking views on how to work with businesses to deliver work placements as part of the govt reforms to deliver T Levels
- The roll out of the first seven Skills Advisory Panels in regions across England to help identify the skills needs and employer demands at a local level
- The full list of panel members to help create the content for the new T levels, which will begin rolling out in 2020

Speaking at the summit today CBI Director General Carolyn Fairbairn said:

There has never been a more important time to move beyond saying skills matter and deliver real change. Government and business must work together to ensure people have access to great careers and the

needs of our economy are met.

Immediate priorities include adapting the apprenticeship system and making the new T-levels a success. Today is an important milestone in enabling firms to shape training and the Department for Education to hear their views directly – the start of a renewed partnership.

Today's announcement builds on the Budget (22 November) which set out significant investment in skills, including an extra £20m for colleges to build the workforce to deliver new T level qualifications. The government has already signalled its determination to invest in technical education by committing £500million to T levels once all routes are up and running.

The first 7 Skills Advisory Panel areas are Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Leeds, Greater Lincolnshire, Thames Valley Berkshire, Cornwall & Isles of Scilly.

[Press release: Reception – a missed opportunity for too many children](#)

[Bold beginnings](#), a new report by Ofsted, shows that a third of all 5 year olds are being failed by their reception experience. The picture for disadvantaged children is even worse, with nearly half of them failing to meet expected levels of development at this unique and important stage. Today's report highlights missed opportunities and the painful consequences of falling behind.

This failure is not inevitable. The best schools show that it does not have to be the case. Headteachers in these schools ensure that all children, whatever their background, make great strides in their learning, particularly in reading, writing and using numbers.

Ofsted is recommending that headteachers put reading at the heart of the reception curriculum. Reception teachers should focus on developing children's spoken language and teaching them to read using systematic synthetic phonics. Schools should also make sure that children sit at tables when they learn to write.

HM Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman said:

Reading should be at the heart of the Reception Year. It is important that in the Reception classroom young children hear new vocabulary and have the opportunity to practise new words and

phrases.

The best schools know how to design their curriculum so that children's learning and development sets them up well for the rest of their schooling.

Reception should not just be a repeat of what children learned in their nursery or pre-school, or with their childminder. They deserve better than facing years of catching up.

In the best schools children:

- learn to read quickly and easily
- enjoy listening to stories as the highlight of the day
- learn poems and rhymes by heart
- learn about numbers through practical activities and formal, written recording
- develop their personal, social and emotional skills through play

In addition, headteachers commented that:

- the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is placing an unnecessary burden on teachers
- newly qualified teachers are not well prepared to teach reading, writing or numbers in Reception

Ofsted is also recommending that the Department for Education:

- reviews the Early Years Foundation Stage to make sure that it provides sufficient clarity for the effective teaching of reading, writing and numbers
- streamlines the EYFSP in order to reduce teachers' workload
- raises the profile of early mathematics teaching, and makes a similar investment to that made in teaching phonics

Gill Jones, Ofsted Early Education Deputy Director, said:

Reception is essential. For many children, it is their first experience of full-time education, when teachers set the routines and expectations that will serve children well for the rest of their school life.

So schools need to get Reception right.

Reading lots of stories, poems and rhymes out loud to children, and encouraging them to join in and learn them by heart, will introduce them to new vocabulary, language structures and ideas. Providing children with the right reading books to practise what they have been taught in their phonics lessons will make sure they master the alphabetic code so they can read by themselves. This is the essential knowledge that children need to open up the rest of the

curriculum.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector commissioned this thematic survey as part of a wider review of the curriculum in England.

During the summer term 2017, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) visited 41 successful primary schools in which children, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds¹, achieved well.

Press release: New research shows desperate dieters in danger – the secret world of online slimming pills

Online sellers of potentially dangerous slimming pills containing withdrawn pharmaceutical ingredients are putting desperate dieters' health at serious risk by seducing them with the promise of quick-fix weight loss and discreet deliveries that bypass discussions with their GP and pharmacist, new research reveals.

One in three slimmers have tried slimming pills purchased online, according to the joint #FakeMeds survey of 1,805 slimmers by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and Slimming World. Since April 2013, the Agency has seized nearly £4 million worth of dodgy weight loss pills.

Three quarters of slimmers (77%) were enticed by promises of rapid weight loss, more than half were attracted to being able to order discreetly (57%) and more than four in ten (44%) ordered online because they didn't want to speak to a GP or pharmacist, the survey revealed.

However, almost two-in-three (63%) suffered unpleasant side effects after taking slimming pills bought online. These side effects included diarrhoea, bleeding that wouldn't stop, blurred vision and heart problems. Worryingly, four out of five (81%) didn't report these side effects to anyone.

The potentially dangerous products seized by the Agency are not tested for safety and have been found stored in dirty, rat-infested warehouses and garden sheds. In 2016, MHRA seized more than 4.6 million fake medical products and closed more than 5,000 websites selling medicines illegally.

Four out of 10 respondents said they had used the slimming pills knowing there were health risks, with more than six out of ten (62%) doing so because they were 'desperate to lose weight'.

Sarah-Jayne Walker, who became obsessed with slimming pills bought online

before quitting her habit and eventually joining Slimming World, said: “I used to spend hours searching the web for what I thought were the right diet pills, ones that said they would work straight away and that had the best reviews. My mind became consumed with those pills...

“However, after suffering heart palpitations, IBS, sickness, light headedness and even fainting, I knew I had to get a grip and sort my mind out. I joined Slimming World at the end of May and it has been a revelation. I don’t have to punish myself or feel guilty for eating anymore and I’ve lost just over two stone. The support has been amazing and I can’t tell you how proud I feel of myself.”

The majority of diet products are regulated as foods, however the MHRA regularly seizes products that contain withdrawn pharmaceutical ingredients due to risks of heart attacks and strokes.

MHRA Senior Policy Manager, Lynda Scammell, said:

Quick fixes for losing weight may have serious health consequences in the short or long term, including organ failure and death.

It’s essential you know what you’re buying online and what the risks are. If you don’t, your weight could end up being the least of your worries!

If you’re looking to buy medicines online, check if the seller is registered by using our easy online checking system, www.gov.uk/fakemedts or check if they display the Distance Selling logo.

If you think you’ve bought fake medical products, please let us know via www.gov.uk/fakemedts. This way we can use the information to continue to seize these products and close websites that are putting public health at risk.

There are reputable groups out there that can support you to lose weight through healthy lifestyle changes. Your GP or healthcare professional will be able to advise you on finding the right option for you.

Jenny Caven, Slimming World’s Head of External Affairs, said: “It’s easy to see how quick fix promises made by the sellers of online slimming pills could seem tempting to people who are desperately struggling with their weight.

Buying slimming pills online can be incredibly risky though. The sellers are often unregulated and taking the pills puts people at

risk of dangerous side effects. Learning to make changes to the way you shop, cook and eat and getting support to develop new healthy habits really is the best way to lose weight. Not only is it safer, it's also far more satisfying and has the added benefit that newfound habits can be passed on to the people around you too. Getting support makes your new habits more likely to stick in the longer term and you won't suffer any nasty side effects.

The #FakeMeds survey highlights how easy it is for people to buy potentially dangerous slimming pills online. Therefore, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is working in partnership with Slimming World as part of the Agency's #FakeMeds Campaign to encourage those wanting to lose weight to turn to safe, legitimate and appropriate routes.

The #FakeMeds campaign website has a range of easy and quick top tips to keep yourself safe online. www.gov.uk/fakemeds

If you would like to hear more about the healthy weight loss support that Sarah-Jayne experienced please visit www.slimmingworld.co.uk

[Press release: Regions say improved connectivity key to improving productivity](#)

Drawing on evidence from over 100 employers, local authorities and universities, HS2: Getting the best out of Britain, highlights the regional strengths of highly skilled manufacturing clusters, universities and research centres, and cutting edge technology entrepreneurs, but warns that more needs to be done to draw them together and realise their full potential in the modern economy.

David Higgins, Chairman of High Speed Two (HS2) Ltd, said:

This report is the evidence that HS2 will boost productivity in the North and Midlands. This is a once in a generation opportunity to join up and amplify the many centres of excellence around the country, as we prepare to exit the European Union.

By improving the connectivity between our major population centres, HS2 will give businesses access to the skills, labour and services they need to change the economic geography of the country.

The report shows that world-leading skills and research in the north and midlands can match that of London and the South-East. Cities and regions in the North and Midlands account for 32% of the UK's research staff working in universities with high quality research, compared to 35% in London and the South-East, and high quality universities produce thousands of graduates every year.

Despite this, employers in the North are still held back by a lack of access to skills, with 30% of businesses in Manchester citing lack of skills as a barrier to growth. At the same time London continues to attract graduates from around the country with nearly half of its population at NVQ4 qualification level or above, compared to a UK average of 37%.

The report, to be launched at an event in Nottingham today, demonstrates that by joining up the major conurbations around the country, HS2 will enable a greater pooling of people and capital around the regions of the UK. This connectivity will enable businesses in the North and Midlands to gain better access to new markets, investments, and become more globally attractive.

Chris Grayling MP, Secretary of State for Transport, said:

This study clearly shows transport investment is crucial to a strong and resilient economy. That's why we are investing in all forms of transport including the biggest rail modernisation programme for over a century to improve services for passengers, providing faster and better trains with more seats.

As Britain's new railway, HS2 will deliver vital links between some of our country's biggest cities, driving economic growth and productivity and helping to deliver the government's Industrial Strategy.

By bringing our major cities, regions and communities closer together we are encouraging business and innovation and building a Britain that is fit for the future with a stronger economy and fairer society.

In addition, the study finds that by bringing major cities closer together, HS2 would further support the distribution of the business and professional services market around the whole country, which makes up over 10% of the UK economy. With office costs up to 80% cheaper in the North compare to London, and salaries up to 40% lower, huge efficiency savings can be made. It is estimated that relocating a 50 person skilled legal back office from the City of London to Liverpool could achieve annual savings of £1 million.

Comparing London's highly-efficient transport network with the connectivity that exists within and between city regions in the North and Midlands, the study argues that there is a direct link between productivity and connectivity.

Sir John Peace, Chairman of Midlands Engine and Midlands Connect, said:

The Midlands economy is built on a strong advanced manufacturing base and is enhanced by a wide range of sectoral strengths, universities and research centres. Midlands Connect and Midlands Engine are seizing on the once in a generation opportunity HS2 brings to drive growth for the region, through improved connectivity within the region as well as beyond. We will create a thriving environment for businesses to flourish and HS2 is critical for us to do that.

HS2 is arguably the greatest business opportunity to hit the Midlands in decades, benefitting both the East and West Midlands and collectively we need to be HS2-ready.

Richard Wright, Executive Director Sheffield Chamber of Commerce & Industry, said:

Sheffield, and the region around it, has a strong tradition as suppliers of products to manufacturers in other parts of the country, who produce export goods that the country relies on heavily. We are being held back by poor rail connectivity and capacity on routes to London, Leeds and Manchester in particular. HS2, properly integrated with the plans of Transport for the North, helps us address those issues.

Professor Clive Roberts, Director of the Birmingham Centre for Railway Research and Education, University of Birmingham, said:

High Speed Rail has the potential to transform the regions and cities it interconnects. Lines in Taiwan, Korea and France have helped to distribute economic growth by attracting and helping to create new high value jobs through improved transport opportunities. The plans being put in place by HS2, local authorities and business communities will help ensure that similar success is achieved in Britain.

HS2 will serve around 30 million people and directly serve 25 stations, joining up the dots between where we are now, and where we could get to as a country. A combination of more capacity and better connectivity will improve accessibility, and, therefore, productivity in the North and Midlands at the same time as easing the pressure on London.