

Shared Ownership and Affordable Homes funding helps Solon South West Housing Association deliver supported living scheme for young care leavers

Woodleaze is a supported living scheme designed for care leavers and 16-25 year olds at risk of homelessness. With the new occupants moving in, we take a look at the impact this project is having for young people in the community.

Solon South West is a small, Bristol-based charitable housing association with big ambitions, dedicated to supporting the communities it serves.

Last year, with the help of £630,000 in grant funding from Homes England, Solon South West was able to refurbish a disused care home in Yate, South Gloucestershire, to create Woodleaze – 18 high quality, self-contained studio flats.

These flats have been tailored to meet the needs of disadvantaged young people in the area; half of the units are specifically designed for young care leavers, providing the support they need to transition to independent living, and the other half are available to young people from a range of backgrounds, particularly those at risk of homelessness. The development includes fully accessible communal spaces, giving residents a space to socialise.

As well as working with Homes England, Solon South West Housing Association partnered with 1625 Independent People, a young persons charity, to deliver tailored support and skills training for all those living at Woodleaze.

The vision is “for the young people to thrive and become a key asset in our communities and for the community to contribute, through opportunities and support, to the success of the project.” 1625 Independent People will support this by providing residents with access to training and employment opportunities.

The work at Woodleaze is particularly impactful for South Gloucestershire Council who see the provision of additional support for care leavers as a key priority.

Woodleaze in South Gloucestershire

Anna Klimczak, Chief Executive of Solon South West, said: “We are driven by the goal of providing excellent homes and housing services for all and so the opening of the new Woodleaze accommodation is important to us because it will directly help care leavers and young people at risk of homelessness.

“We are really proud to have been involved in the transformation of an old fashioned and unloved care home into high-quality modern accommodation that will provide much needed support for 18 young people. Without the funding from Homes England, we wouldn’t have been able to do this.”

If you are interested in affordable homes funding for your scheme, [take a look at our Affordable Homes Programme.](#)

[Slots waiver extended in boost to UK airlines](#)

News story

Move provides aviation sector with much-needed flexibility and protects environment as airlines will not have to operate carbon-inefficient ‘ghost flights’ to retain their slots.



The government has today (26 February 2021) introduced legislation to extend the airports slot allocation waiver, further supporting the aviation industry through the upcoming summer months.

Acting on calls for relief from the aviation sector, the legislation will support the industry through a period where air travel is likely to be lower than other years – protecting future connectivity and preventing airlines from operating high-cost carbon-inefficient ‘ghost flights’ to retain historic rights to slots.

Due to expire in spring, the legislation to extend the waiver will come into force from 26 March 2021 – 2 days before the start of the summer slot season. This will provide much needed flexibility, ensuring that airlines do not have to operate flights at least 80% of the time to retain their slots.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

I want to restart international travel as soon as it is safe and the slots waiver is a critical part of making that happen.

With airlines flying a smaller proportion of their usual schedules, the waiver means carriers can reserve their finances, reduce the need for environmentally damaging 'ghost flights' and allow normal services to immediately restart when the pandemic allows.

This is the latest initiative introduced by the government to support the industry and follows last month's launch of the [Airport and Ground Operations Support Scheme](#), offering up to £8 million of support for commercial airports and ground handlers.

It also comes as the Prime Minister this week announced that the relaunched [Global Travel Taskforce](#) will deliver a report on 12 April 2021 outlining a framework to restart international travel, as wider restrictions are lifted over the coming months.

Following this, the government will issue further guidance on when international travel should resume.

Published 26 February 2021

[UK's global fintech leadership bolstered by new review](#)

- independent review led by Ron Kalifa sets out strategy to put UK at the top of the global fintech league table
- recommendations include a new fintech scale-up visa stream, a 'scale box' for growing firms and changes to UK listings rules
- support for sector will create jobs and deliver better outcomes for people and businesses across the UK

The UK has more than 10 per cent of the global market share in fintech and the sector is now worth more than £11 billion a year to the UK economy.

The independent review, led by Ron Kalifa OBE, finds the UK is at a pivotal moment and presents a wide-ranging strategy and delivery model to build on its existing attractiveness to start-ups firms and become the best place for a fintech business to reach global scale.

It marks an important step in the Chancellor Rishi Sunak's plan to make the UK the most open and dynamic place in the world to operate a financial services business. The government will now examine the recommendations and respond in due course.

The review highlights the opportunity to create highly skilled jobs across the UK, boost trade and extend a competitive edge over other leading fintech hubs. Recommendations include:

- introducing a new 'fintech scale up' visa route for specialists from around the world
- implementing a 'scale box' to provide regulatory support for growing firms
- improving UK listings rules with free float reduction and dual class shares
- creating a £1 billion-pound fintech 'growth fund' to help firms grow independently
- establishing a private sector-led Centre for Finance, Innovation and Technology to support national coordination and growth in fintech across the UK

Rishi Sunak, Chancellor of the Exchequer, said:

Fintech is one of the UK's great success stories and will help us seize new opportunities around the world.

We must now build on our global reputation for fostering innovative start-ups and ensure firms can access the talent, finance and support they need to scale up here in the UK.

This review will make an important contribution to our plan to retain the UK's fintech crown, create more skilled jobs, and deliver better financial services for people and businesses.

Ron Kalifa OBE said:

Fintech has the power to change lives, both in terms of job creation and better wages that are so essential to our recovery; and making financial services more accessible and relevant to people's lives.

Britain has a proud record of starting-up and scaling-up some of the best known fintech products, but we cannot rest on our laurels. The next powerhouses will not be created by accident.

We must continue to nurture our start-up culture, but crucially we must also give our high growth firms the support to become global giants.

With the right reforms that encourage entrepreneurialism,

investment and make it easy to attract and invest in talent, Britain can usher in a period of dominance that can help us build back better from Covid-19.

Further information

- The [independent review's full report](#) can be read here.
- In 2020, investment into UK fintech stood at \$4.1 billion in 2020 – more than the next 4 European countries combined.
- The strategic review produces a five-point plan to help mitigate risks and take advantage of the opportunities in the global economy:
- Policy and Regulation – dynamic leadership that protects consumers yet enables fintech activity and encourages competition
- Skills – ensuring fintech has the right supply of domestic and international talent and the means to train and upskill our current and future workforce
- Investment – completing the funding ladder from start-ups right through to IPO
- International – a targeted approach to exports and inward investment
- National connectivity – leveraging the output of fintechs across the UK and facilitating connectivity amongst them.
- The Review secretariat was provided by Innovate Finance and City of London Corporation.
- Catherine McGuinness, Policy Chair of the City of London Corporation:

This is a pivotal moment for the UK. There are significant opportunities offered by fintech – an area in which London already has unmatched global appeal. But for the UK to retain its position as world leader and continue to attract investment into the sector, it is vital to offer an environment which supports innovation. The Kalifa review offers a roadmap to achieving this. We welcome the review's recommendations, including its call to maintain access to the global talent that is so essential to fintech's success in the UK, and urge government to support its recommendations and help turbocharge this vibrant sector.

- Innovate Finance's CEO Charlotte Crosswell, said:

Innovate Finance welcomes the timely contribution of the Kalifa Review. This is a vital intervention that has the potential to set the strategic direction of UK fintech for decades to come. The sector has seen incredible growth, and fintech firms across the UK are ambitious in building, developing and scaling their businesses. The way that consumers and businesses are interfacing with financial services is rapidly evolving. We must respond to this

changing dynamic and ensure we look to the fintech sector to advance these solutions. This will result in the creation of new digital jobs, inspire a next generation of entrepreneurs, and in turn enable the growth of global champions. The UK attracts the founders behind some of the world's most innovative businesses, so we must show that we remain an ambitious partner in a sector where we have been at the forefront of global thought leadership. We look forward to supporting the implementation of Ron Kalifa's recommendations and strategy over the coming months.

- Stakeholders welcoming the review included:

- Guillaume Pousaz, Checkout.com Founder and CEO:

I founded Checkout.com in the UK a decade ago because of its forward-thinking approach to financial technology. Since then, our business has grown to become the UK's largest fintech, employing 1000 people globally, and powering market-leading eCommerce brands and fintechs the world over. The Fintech Strategic Review sets out a clear vision to keep the UK at the forefront of global fintech, and support the recovery by embracing the digital economy.

- Kristo Käärman, Wise CEO:

It's great to see the Treasury seeking to support and improve the UK's position on the world stage as a growth platform for tech companies in financial services. This review, conducted by Ron Kalifa, is a brilliant opportunity to keep modernising the regulatory environment. This should lead to even more competitive products and better services for consumers, both here in the UK and beyond the borders.

At Monzo, we are proud to be part of an industry that is always working to change finance for the better and give consumers more options. It is why we are supportive of these recommendations which would help the next generation of financial technology companies get off the ground, while enabling established companies, like Monzo, to take it to the next level.

- Lisa Jacobs, Funding Circle Europe Managing Director:

The pandemic has accelerated the adoption of online lending and shown how critical FinTech lenders are in supporting SMEs. We

believe this shift is permanent, and the sector will have a vital role to play in the UK's national recovery. We welcome this timely and important strategic review, and look forward to working with Ron Kalifa, and HM Treasury to ensure UK fintech continues to transform the customer experience.

[Government sets out plans to protect public places from terrorist attacks](#)

The government has today (26 February) set out its proposals on a new Protect Duty; a legal requirement for public places to ensure preparedness for and protection from terrorist attacks.

The Protect Duty delivers on a manifesto commitment to improve the safety and security of public venues and spaces, drawing on lessons learned from previous terrorist incidents.

The proposals have been championed by victims' groups, including the Martyn's Law campaign which was established by Figen Murray, who tragically lost her son, Martyn, in the Manchester Arena attack in 2017.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

I have heard first hand from those who have sadly lost loved ones in horrific terror attacks, and thank them for their tireless work to ensure others do not share their tragedy.

This Government has already taken significant steps to amend our powers and strengthen the tools for dealing with the developing terrorist threats we face, and we will always take the strongest possible action to protect our national security.

That is why we want all organisations responsible for public venues and spaces to put public safety and security first.

Figen Murray, the mother of Martyn Hett, one of the 22 victims of the Manchester Arena attack said:

Today is a major stride towards making our country safer from terror attacks. I want to thank the government for taking this step. To make Martyn's Law a reality is of huge relief and I look forward to making a lasting difference with all of those who have supported it.

A spokesperson on behalf of the Counter Terrorism Policing Business Independent Advisory Group and Counter Terrorism Business Information Exchange said:

The Counter Terrorism Policing Business Independent Advisory Group and Counter Terrorism Business Information Exchange welcome this consultation initiative.

It is in the public interest for the Government and business to work together to ensure people are as protected as possible when visiting venues, retail areas and other publicly accessible spaces. This initiative gives us an opportunity to make sure that we are doing all we can to keep people safe.

We look forward to collaborating with the Government, in order to provide the public with the best possible protection against those who wish us harm.

The consultation will run for 18 weeks and will seek the views on:

- who the Duty should apply to;
- what it will require stakeholders to do;
- how compliance should work; and
- how the Government can support those in scope.

Whilst subject to consultation, the intention is that the Duty would apply to specified owners and operators of public venues, large organisations and those responsible for public spaces.

It would require those in scope to consider terrorist threats, and consider and implement appropriate and proportionate protective security and organisational preparedness measures.

The government also continues to engage with a range of businesses and industries to encourage them to adopt best practice, as well as working alongside Counter Terrorism Police and the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) to extend the reach of appropriate advice, guidance and training across all sectors.

View [the full consultation](#).

[Government updates on identifying and tackling COVID-19 disparities](#)

- As Government publishes second report on COVID-19 disparities, Minister

for Equalities emphasises the importance of vaccines and calls for people to take them when offered.

- Disparities for some ethnic groups have improved from the first wave but not for others – particularly Pakistanis and Bangladeshis.
- Government is working with 50+ ethnic minority titles across 10 different languages, 43 ethnic minority TV channels within a combined reach of 9 million, and 14 community radio stations that broadcast in 13 different languages.

Comparing first and early second wave data, disparities have improved for some ethnic groups including Black Africans, Black Caribbean, Chinese and Indians but have worsened for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis.

Last week, following a recommendation by the Minister for Equalities in her first COVID-19 disparities report, the Department of Health updated the list of people shielding, using a new predictive risk model which combines factors including underlying conditions, age, sex, ethnicity, body mass index and the postcode where people live and its link with deprivation.

As more at-risk groups are identified, the government's vaccine rollout has continued, with over 18 million receiving their first dose. Research highlighted in the report shows that though people are positive about the vaccine, some ethnic minority people held negative feelings, influenced by media narratives and other misinformation, and stated that they were hesitant to take the jab. According to the ONS, from early December 2020 to early January 2021, less than half (49%) of Black or Black British adults reported that they were likely to have the vaccine. The latest OpenSAFELY data reports that approximately 60% of black people over 70 have been vaccinated compared to 75% for South Asians and 90% of white people.

Whilst the evidence and data collected gives a better understanding of the leading risk factors, today the Minister will call for everyone to get vaccinated, and in the report sets out how the government is taking action, including:

- Working with 50+ ethnic minority titles across 10 different languages, and 43 ethnic minority TV channels within a combined reach of 9 million and 14 community radio stations that broadcast in 13 different languages.
- Working with the BBC World Service to produce videos on key questions from South Asian groups in Urdu, Punjabi, Tamil, Gujarati, and Sylheti.
- Working with over 90 faith, healthcare provider networks, influencers and experts from a range of communities to address people's concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Vaccines confidence messaging to run on 42 multicultural stations in 12 languages.
- Using local, Government-funded Community Champions to act as trusted voices in their communities to promote vaccine uptake.
- A cross-government Counter Disinformation Unit to mythbust false information about COVID-19 and the vaccine.

Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch, said:

“Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, this Government has done everything it can to protect everyone in this country.

“The latest data shows that this is not a one-size-fits-all situation. Outcomes have improved for some ethnic minority groups since the first wave, but we know some communities are still particularly vulnerable. Our response will continue to be driven by the latest evidence and data and targeted at those who are most at risk.

“There is light at the end of the tunnel, and as the vaccine rollout continues, I urge everyone who is offered one to take the opportunity, to protect themselves, their family, and their community.”

A review of steps taken in towns and cities across the countries to share vaccine and public health information will also shortly be shared, to share good practice by local authorities who know best what works for the people in their area. Highlights from this include:

- Birmingham City Council establishing 645 Champions across the 69 wards in the City, and establishing a system of 19 community partners to support wider dissemination of accessible information and engagement with specific minority communities.
- Pilots of community-led, localised, asymptomatic testing at places of worship in ethnically diverse areas such as Brent and Wolverhampton, with the aim of removing some of the key identified barriers to engaging with Test & Trace, including trust and access.
- The Al-Abbas Islamic Centre in Birmingham becoming the first Mosque to open as a vaccination centre, which is helping to build trust within the local community and encourage vaccine uptake among groups more at risk from COVID-19.

Dr Jenny Harries OBE, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, said:

“This report is another important step in shaping our understanding of the disproportionate impact COVID-19 has on certain communities, and the drivers behind this.

“It is vital that we recognise the breadth of diversity within the UK and the multitude of different risk variables. Different groups have experienced different outcomes during both waves of the virus for a variety of reasons.

“As we leave lockdown we must ensure that we continue with a supportive, sensitive, evidenced and data-driven approach, working in partnership with communities.”

Professor Nita Forouhi, Programme Leader and MRC Investigator, Epidemiologist and Professor of Population Health and Nutrition, MRC Epidemiology Unit, University of Cambridge School of Clinical Medicine, said:

“The differences in COVID-19 deaths between ethnic groups in the early second wave compared with the first highlight the changing trajectories of ethnic disparities, suggesting different factors are at play and it is unhelpful to consider ethnic groups in a single category of ‘BAME’. The lower COVID-19

death rates in the early second wave in some groups shows that ethnic inequalities are not fixed but are mainly driven by risk of infection and amenable to change. The persistent COVID-19 impact in South Asians, particularly Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, is alarming and needs targeted research and bold public health and policy action. This important work has begun, but there is much more to do, and the report sets out a roadmap.”

Dr Vanessa Apea, Consultant Physician at the Barts Health NHS Trust and Honorary Senior Lecturer, Queen Mary University of London, said:

“It is promising to see the progress made in response to the first report’s recommendations, but the work does not end there. The positive impact of community based organisations is made clear in this report. It is crucial that they continue to be engaged and resourced to support all communities.

“Capturing the lived experience of affected communities to inform change is imperative, so I am pleased to see ethnographic research in this report. Our own ongoing community based research in East London is providing insights into local need, with a focus on co-creating solutions to move towards achieving health equity. This approach helps address the structural factors that have exacerbated the pandemic’s impact on some ethnic minorities and should inform the government’s strategy on health.”

Dr Krishnan Bhaskaran, Professor of Statistical Epidemiology, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and joint statistical lead for OpenSAFELY, said:

“This report brings together a range of work being done to monitor and tackle ethnic disparities that have emerged during the pandemic, and outlines important progress made to date.

“In the coming months it will be vital to continue and extend this work to address continuing raised risks of poor COVID-19 outcomes in some ethnic minority groups, and emerging evidence of ethnic differences in vaccine uptake.”

Further Information:

To date, the government has taken unprecedented measures to combat the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Black and ethnic minority individuals, this includes:

- Working with 50+ ethnic minority titles across 10 different languages, and partnering with 43 ethnic minority TV channels within a combined reach of 9 million and 14 community radio stations that broadcast in 13 different languages and reach 881,000 ethnic minority people every week.
- Working with the BBC World Service who support COVID-19 communications by producing videos on key questions from South Asian communities in Urdu, Punjabi, Tamil, Gujarati, and Sylheti.
- £23.75m in funding to local authorities under the Community Champions scheme, which provides funding to enhance existing communication strategies in the most at risk places, and funds work with grassroots

advocates from impacted communities. The scheme also provides funding for voluntary and community groups who specialise in working with communities most at risk from COVID-19.

- £8.8m total funding from UK Research and Innovation to invest in research projects looking at the health, social, cultural and economic impacts of COVID-19 on ethnic minority groups.
- Unprecedented levels of economic support worth over £280 billion has provided a much-needed lifeline for those working in closed sectors such as retail and hospitality, the workforces in which are disproportionately young, female and from an ethnic minority background.
- Including transportation workers, a significant proportion of whom are from an ethnic minority background, in mass testing pilots which are now being rolled out more widely.
- New guidance issued to private hire vehicle and taxi drivers on how to protect themselves from COVID-19. 53% of such drivers are from an ethnic minority group and 98% are men.
- Providing additional funding to the Public Health England Better Health Campaign in order to target Black African, Black Caribbean, Indian, Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups. This campaign, which will run until March, aims to reduce obesity and other comorbidities within these groups, which are associated with worse COVID-19 outcomes.
- Improving outcomes for pregnant women from ethnic minority backgrounds during COVID-19.
- A rapid review of key actions taken by local authorities – including targeted communications, data mapping, and working with faith and voluntary organisations – to be shared across the country as best practice.
- Pilots of community-led, localised, asymptomatic testing at places of worship in areas such as Brent and Wolverhampton, with the aim of removing some of the key identified barriers to engaging with Test & Trace, including trust and access. For example the pilot at a Gurdwara in Wolverhampton overcame mistrust in the local community through the use of local volunteers. This drove up testing rates.
- Birmingham City Council establishing 645 Champions across the 69 wards in the City, and establishing a system of 19 community partners to support wider dissemination of accessible information and engagement with specific minority communities. The government will share with local authorities examples of good practice.

The report sets out the following next steps:

Central and local government interventions

- Departments to consider further policy interventions to address COVID-19 disparities, with a particular focus on those groups most disproportionately impacted by the second wave.
- MHCLG to share with local authorities examples of good practice from the review of local authority activity.

- MHCLG to share with local authorities the findings from the initial, one-month review of returns from Community Champions.

Vaccination programme

- Minister for Equalities to write to the JCVI summarising the latest data and evidence set out in this report, to inform vaccine roll out.
- The government will continue to monitor data on vaccine uptake among ethnic minority groups and, if necessary, take further steps to address any barriers and vaccine hesitancy among these groups.

Data and evidence

- The RDU will continue to share the findings from the qualitative research into people's personal experiences of COVID-19 across government, particularly in relation to the stigmatisation felt by a number of participants in relation to being singled out as 'BAME'.
- Departments and other agencies should publish a statement on GOV.UK outlining their plans to move their data collections to the Government Statistical Service's (GSS) harmonised standard. Harmonisation is hugely important as it allows analysts to gain deeper insight and value from data.
- DHSC and others should publish a quarterly report on progress in improving the recording of ethnicity in health care records.
- Departments should provide updates to datasets on COVID-19 risk factors and secondary impacts for publication on the Ethnicity facts and figures website. This provides transparency of process to users – promoting trust and authority – as well as informing them when the most up-to-date data will be made available.

Engagement

- The Minister for Equalities, the government advisers on COVID-19 and ethnicity, and the RDU will continue a programme of engagement over the next quarter. This will include work to promote vaccine uptake, alongside the engagement led by the Minister for COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment.

Communications

- The government will continue to tailor its communications strategy on vaccine roll out to reflect the latest evidence on vaccine uptake among ethnic minority groups.
- The government will work closely with the new Community Champions to disseminate key public health messages, promote uptake of vaccine and tackle misinformation.
- Government communications will reflect the findings of the qualitative research into people's personal experiences of COVID-19 and will ensure that ethnic minorities are not treated as a single group and that public health messaging is not stigmatising.