

# Prime Minister appoints Dr. Alex George as Youth Mental Health Ambassador

- During Children's Mental Health week, the PM has appointed Dr. Alex George as Youth Mental Health Ambassador
- He will play an important role in shaping children's mental health education and support in schools
- Part of government plans to build back fairer from the pandemic and ensure all children and young people are supported with their mental health and wellbeing

The Prime Minister has today appointed Dr. Alex George as a Youth Mental Health Ambassador to advise government and raise the profile of mental health education and wellbeing in schools.

Dr. Alex is an A&E doctor and has been a passionate online campaigner for children's mental health since he tragically lost his brother to suicide last year.

As Youth Mental Health Ambassador, he will use his clinical expertise and personal experience to champion government's work on children's mental health and shape policy on improving support for young people in schools, colleges and universities.

Thanks to his huge social media following among young people, Dr. Alex is well placed to signpost the support that is already available, as well as provide input and feedback to government on what more can be done.

He will also sit on the new Mental Health in Education Action Group, chaired by Children's Minister Vicky Ford and Universities Minister Michelle Donelan – which will look specifically at how we support young people with their wellbeing as they return to school and university after this difficult year.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

Children and young people have heroically adapted to save lives and protect our NHS. This has understandably had a huge impact on their mental health, so I want to shine a spotlight on this vital issue ahead of their return to school. I'm delighted that Dr. Alex George will be working with us as we do everything in our power to improve people's mental wellbeing.

Dr. Alex George said:

The last year has been unimaginably difficult for all of us, but

particularly for young people who have sacrificed so much.

I am honoured to be appointed for this role where I'll be working closely with government to make mental health an absolute priority and hope to have a positive impact on the lives of young people and their education for good.

Right now young people need a voice in government, and I hope that through this role I can advocate for meaningful change in this area.

Dr. Alex will also provide input on the issues being faced by children and young people and how this can be reflected in the tools and support teachers will need in order to provide high-quality advice and care to their students who need it, and what more could be done to ensure the mental health curriculum meets the standard children need.

His appointment comes on top of the existing support government is providing to ensure children's mental health is a priority – including the Wellbeing for Education Return project, which provides funding to councils so they can offer training and advice from mental health experts to schools and colleges on how best to support their pupils.

The NHS, in collaboration with the Department for Education, has also overseen the introduction of over 180 Mental Health Support Teams in England, with more currently in training.

These teams provide counselling for students, and also assist with training parents and teachers to help children and young people improve their mental wellbeing. During lockdown these teams have continued to work virtually.

Claire Murdoch, Mental Health Director, NHS England and NHS Improvement, said:

I welcome the appointment of Dr Alex George as a Youth Mental Health Ambassador, and look forward working closely with him on this important issue.

I met Dr Alex recently and was struck by his commitment to the NHS and to the mental health of our nation.

Children's Mental Health Week couldn't be a more important time to come together and help our youth improve their wellbeing.

It has been a tough year, but the NHS is here for children's mental health, and with the help of Dr Alex and our partners in health, education and charities, we will keep working hard to make sure every child in this country get the mental health support that they deserve.

Dr. Alex will start his role immediately, and will work within the Department for Education. He will remain independent of government and it is an unpaid position.

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## [Condemning the coup in Myanmar: G7 Foreign Ministers' statement](#)

News story

The Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, and the US and the High Representative of the European Union have issued a statement condemning the coup in Myanmar.



We, the G7 Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and the High Representative of the European Union, are united in condemning the coup in Myanmar.

We are deeply concerned by the detention of political leaders and civil society activists, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint, and targeting of the media. We call upon the military to immediately end the state of emergency, restore power to the democratically-elected government, to release all those unjustly detained and to respect human rights and the rule of law. The November election results must be respected and Parliament should be convened at the earliest opportunity.

The military's restrictions on information flows are deeply concerning. Civilians, including civil society and the media, must not be subject to

reprisals in any form. We also call for unrestricted humanitarian access to support the most vulnerable.

G7 Foreign Ministers recall their 2019 communique in which we restated our commitment to Myanmar's democratic transition, peace and accountability for human rights violations and abuses.

We stand with the people of Myanmar who want to see a democratic future.

Published 3 February 2021

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## [Digital job surgeries launched to help 160,000 Brits get back into work](#)

- New Job Finding Support service launched to benefit 160,000 people over the next year
- Support ranges from job searches and interview practice to advice on how to switch careers
- Service to run in parallel to existing support available in jobcentres and by work coaches, as part of UK Government's Plan for Jobs

A new team of 325 Job Search Advisers are now available online or over the phone, to support those recently unemployed who already have the skills and experience needed to move into a new career, but might not be sure where to start.

Over the next 12 months, an expected 160,000 jobseekers will receive digital support and advice, as part of a new Job Finding Support (JFS) service in a further boost to the Government's Plan for Jobs.

The quick-fire support, which takes place across four one-to-one sessions and aims to be completed in a matter of weeks, offers mock interviews, help to identify transferable skills and advice on how to switch industries, as well as online group sessions to improve job search techniques.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Therese Coffey said:

Job Finding Support will help jobseekers brush up on interview skills and advice, giving them a helping hand to move back into work quickly.

Our Plan for Jobs is helping us build back better and fairer, getting job support to people who need it right across Britain and

levelling up opportunity.

The service is completely voluntary to all jobseekers who have been unemployed for less than 13 weeks and are claiming benefits. Participants are referred to the scheme through their Work Coach.

As the Department for Work and Pensions drives forward the Plan for Jobs, it has supported over 40,000 people to retrain and upskill on the Sector-based Work Academy Programme; and recruited 8,500 new Work Coaches to spearhead efforts to get Britain working again.

Chief Executive of ERSA, Elizabeth Taylor, said:

The government's Plan for Jobs package of labour market initiatives is helping people to provide for their families throughout the pandemic, and Job Finding Support is another important step in helping jobseekers in these difficult times.

Job Finding Support will run in parallel to existing support that is available in jobcentres, and will complement the role of Work Coaches who provide more intensive support for jobseekers, including anyone facing specific difficulties returning to work. This service will also free up frontline staff as they continue to help people access the financial support they need through the welfare safety net.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

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## **Broadband speed boost sees home values jump by £3,500**

- UK-wide superfast programme pushed broadband speeds up a gear for 5.5 million homes
- £2.7 billion of economic benefits created by rollout including 17,600 jobs, says new report
- Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden: "Our mission to level up the country with faster broadband is delivering much more than quicker downloads"

The £2.6 billion government scheme to roll out superfast broadband to 'commercially unviable' parts of the UK sparked a surge in home values of up to £3,500, according to a new report.

More than 96% of homes and businesses can now access superfast broadband,

which provides a minimum of 30 megabits per second and fast enough to allow multiple people to hold video calls, watch high-definition movies and enjoy online gaming at the same time.

But as the government prepares to kick off its new £5 billion programme to roll out even faster gigabit broadband, Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden highlights that 11 million – or two in five – homes are yet to upgrade to superfast despite it being available in their area.

The [independent review](#) of the Superfast Broadband Programme, which secured faster connections for 5.5 million homes and businesses, found it had created £2.7 billion in economic benefits since starting in 2012, including:

- A surge in the value of homes sold in programme areas between 2012 and 2019 by up to £3,500, a rise of 1.16% worth £1.52 billion
- 17,600 more jobs in programme areas, including 2,100 lifted from long-term unemployment creating an increase in gross value added (GVA) by £125 million
- £1.1 billion gained in GVA through increased workplace productivity

The availability of faster coverage also helped power businesses and sparked a £1.9 billion increase in total annual turnover for firms based in areas upgraded through the programme.

The report, conducted by Ipsos MORI, concludes the programme's value for money is continuing to rise. For every £1 invested by the government in the programme, an additional £2.70-£3.80 of economic and social benefits has been created in the UK economy.

Digital Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

Our mission to level up the country with faster broadband is delivering much more than just quicker downloads. It's boosting the value of homes and businesses while helping to create thousands of jobs and keep the economy moving.

96% of us can now access superfast broadband, but 11 million homes are still missing out on faster speeds available in their area. I encourage anyone fed up with slow loading times or shaky video calls to check with their provider or an online switching service and see if they can join the superfast lane.

The programme saw the UK government join forces with councils and devolved administrations to invest more than £2.6 billion to ensure superfast speeds were rolled out to areas across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland where no plans for commercial build were in place.

Gareth Williams, CEO at Gigaclear, said:

The Superfast Broadband Programme has extended fast, reliable

connectivity to areas that would have otherwise been left on the wrong side of the digital divide.

For our part, 2020 saw us extend our network footprint to over 150,000 premises, all served with 'full fibre' gigabit capable connectivity. A large part of that has been delivered through the Superfast Broadband Programme, connecting areas that, without the support of the programme, would be unlikely to receive this service due to the high cost to connect them.

We are proud of the role we have played in this programme and look forward to working with DCMS, BDUK and local authorities in extending gigabit capable connectivity across the UK as quickly as possible.

Openreach CEO, Clive Selley, said:

It's great to see how the UK is reaping the benefits of superfast broadband connectivity and we should recognise the huge contribution of an army of Openreach engineers and planners, who have helped build this new network throughout the country over the last decade. But technology never stands still and we're now busy future-proofing the UK with the next generation of ultrafast, ultra-reliable Full Fibre broadband.

Great connectivity's more important than ever to our economic and social wellbeing – and it's going to be critical to building back better and greener, post-pandemic.

These research findings chime with a detailed study from the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) which found that nationwide Full Fibre broadband would boost UK productivity by £59 billion by 2025 – and updated modelling suggests it could enable nearly one million more people to access employment including over 300,000 carers, nearly 250,000 older workers and 400,000 parents.

UK Government Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart said:

Joint working between the UK Government, devolved administrations and councils to invest more than £1.9 billion in superfast broadband is delivering real results for millions of homeowners and businesses.

It has improved connectivity in many remote areas – which is more welcome than ever as the coronavirus pandemic has forced us to work, learn and socialise online from home – and it's also seen an increase in property prices, according to new research.

There is still more to be done and that's why the UK Government

will soon be launching a new £5 billion programme for even faster connections as part of the commitment to level up every part of the country.

The Government is now focused on delivering even faster 'gigabit' connections to all homes and businesses through a new [£5 billion rollout programme](#). More details on the first areas to benefit from the scheme will be announced shortly.

One in three premises already have access to gigabit speeds which are capable of delivering 1,000 megabits per second. These allow people to enjoy next-generation technologies such as 4K and virtual reality streaming.

The UK is on track to connect 4.5 million premises per year, a higher build rate than most comparable countries, and by the end of this year more than half the country will have access to gigabit-capable networks.

In response to Covid-19, the government and Ofcom agreed a set of commitments with the UK's major broadband and mobile operators to support vulnerable consumers during the pandemic.

Providers committed to working with customers who are finding it difficult to pay their bill as a result of Covid-19 to ensure that they were treated fairly and appropriately supported, in addition to providing new and generous landline and mobile offers, such as free or low cost mobile data boosts.

The government is investing over £400 million to support access to remote education and online social care services, including securing 1.3 million laptops and tablets for disadvantaged children and young people.

The major mobile network operators are also supporting a government project enabling schools to request an uplift in mobile data caps for disadvantaged children who rely on mobile data to access remote education. Furthermore, a number of websites, including the NHS and educational websites, have been zero-rated.

The government is closely monitoring the situation, and will work with communication providers if further additional support options are required to ensure consumers get the connectivity they need.

**ENDS**

Notes to editors

- The Ipsos MORI report, 'Superfast Broadband Programme: State Aid Evaluation 2020', is available to view and [download here](#)
- A summary of the report's key findings can be [accessed here](#)
- Since the report was completed a further £640m of contracts have been taken forward as part of the Superfast Broadband Programme, bringing the total spent on the programme from £1.9bn (as published in the report) to £2.6bn.

More details on the '11 million'

- According to figures from Ofcom calculated for its Connected Nations 2020 report, 11 million households are currently able to access superfast speeds if they choose to upgrade or switch provider, but have not yet done so.
- A household which has taken a fibre package but is unable to get superfast speeds (30Mbit/s) because of distance to the cabinet is not included in this figure.
- However, if the household was also able to access coverage via another provider which could supply 30Mbps or more they would be included in the 11 million as they could get super/ultrafast broadband speed by switching.

More details about the benefits:

Reducing the digital divide and providing public value The findings suggested that the programme led to an increase in house prices of between £1,700 and £3,500, 0.56% and 1.16% uplift in prices respectively. At a programme level, land value uplifts have contributed to between £742m and £1.52bn.

This estimate represents how much house buyers valued access to a superfast broadband connection, accounting for many of the programme's indirect effects such as enabling greater remote working and reducing commuting times.

Driving growth in the economy Overall net economic benefits of the programme from 2012-2019 are estimated between £1.9bn and £2.7bn. This is broken down into the following benefits:

- Gross Value Added (GVA) increase through productivity gains: £1.1bn
- GVA increase through reduction in long term unemployed: £125m
- Land value uplift: low scenario of £742m and high scenario £1.52bn

Targeted areas have benefited from higher employment and wage growth and businesses have increased turnover.

The evaluation evidence suggests that the programme's value for money is improving over time as more evidence emerges: for every £1 invested by the Government in the programme, an additional £2.7-£3.8 of economic and social welfare has been created in the UK economy.

Stimulating the broadband market Government subsidies for broadband have provided a necessary 'incentive effect' for network providers to invest in their expansion of their networks. The Programme has also had the effect of increasing competition in the telecommunications market in areas where smaller providers have won contracts.

As a result of higher than expected take-up of superfast broadband services, network providers are expected to return over £860 million to the public sector in 'clawback' clauses.

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# Business Secretary sets out new subsidies system that works for the UK

- UK to create a new subsidy control system that empowers local authorities and devolved administrations
- new system will be a clear departure from inflexible and bureaucratic EU state aid regime, and tailored to better support start-ups, small businesses and new industries
- consultation on plans will ensure new approach works for the UK and supports businesses and jobs in every part of the country

A new UK-wide system for providing more flexible and tailored financial support to businesses has been set out under plans by the Business Secretary today (Wednesday 3 February), taking advantage of the UK's newfound freedoms as an independent trading nation.

The new subsidy control system, which will be the long-term replacement for the EU's prescriptive state aid regime, will allow the UK to be more dynamic in providing support to businesses, including in innovative, R&D-focused industries, to encourage job creation and growth across all parts of the UK.

Previously, public authorities had to follow a bureaucratic, detailed set of EU controls – and may have needed prior approval from the European Commission before providing vital funds to viable businesses or pursuing key domestic policy objectives.

Under the proposed UK system, local authorities, public bodies and the devolved administrations in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast will be empowered to decide if they can issue taxpayer subsidies by following a set of UK-wide principles. These principles will ensure subsidies are designed in such a way that they deliver strong benefits and good value for money for the UK taxpayer, while being awarded in a timely and effective way.

The new system will be designed to be more flexible, agile and tailored to support business growth and innovation as well as maintain a competitive market economy and protect the UK internal market. At the same time, it will help protect against wasteful spending.

The system would also better enable the government to deliver on key priorities such as levelling up economic growth in the regions, tackling climate change, as well as supporting our economic recovery as we build back better from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said:

This is a significant milestone on our historic journey as an

independent, sovereign nation.

Our new, more flexible system will empower public authorities and devolved administrations, and ensure fair competition for businesses across the UK.

Now we have taken back control of our money and laws from the EU, we want to use our newfound freedoms to propel the UK to the forefront of innovation and help create the jobs of the future, while also making the UK the best place to start and grow a business.

With a modern, tailored approach to supporting businesses, we will also be able to press ahead with our long-term ambitions to tackle climate change and to level up opportunity as we build back better from the pandemic.

The system will ensure the UK honours its international obligations under World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules, the [UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement](#) and other free trade agreements, and will not be a return to the 1970s approach of government trying to run the economy or bailing out unsustainable companies.

The consultation will seek views from businesses and public authorities on a number of areas, including:

- whether the UK should apply its own additional principles on subsidy control, as well as those set out in the UK-EU Trade and Co-operation Agreement
- how best to ensure transparency across the system
- the possible roles and responsibilities of the independent body that will oversee the new system
- how this independent body could have some role in supporting enforcement of the principles, alongside normal judicial review standards
- how the system could seek to introduce exemptions consistent with our international obligations, such as ensuring subsidies of low value, those given to support natural disaster relief or in response to global economic emergencies

The government has committed to consulting closely with the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, so that all 4 parts of the UK can take advantage of the greater flexibility afforded by leaving the EU.

A UK-wide subsidy control regime will ensure that subsidies do not unduly distort competition within the UK's internal market. For example, it will ensure that a Welsh firm is not unfairly undercut or disadvantaged by a subsidy decision in England, and vice-versa. It will also mean that big companies cannot play off the regions, nations, towns, and cities of the UK against each other in a competition to benefit from taxpayer subsidy – protecting the dynamic and competitive market economy across the UK.

The government has always been clear that the regulation on subsidy control is a reserved matter. The UK Internal Market Act 2020 clarifies that the UK Parliament alone should legislate for the regulation of subsidies. The Act also helps to ensure that there is no confusion or ambiguity in law about the interpretation of the State aid elements in the Northern Ireland Protocol.

As set out in the UK Internal Market (UKIM) Act 2020, the Business Secretary will provide a draft of the proposed response to this consultation to devolved authorities and consider any representations they may have before a final response is published.

The consultation will run for a minimum of 8 weeks. Subject to the outcomes of this consultation, the government will bring forward primary legislation to establish in domestic law a system of subsidy control that works for the entirety of the UK.

The government has previously published guidance for public authorities on the [UK's subsidy control international commitments](#). This covers the relevant commitments in Free Trade Agreements, including the UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the World Trade Organisation rules on subsidies and the Northern Ireland Protocol.

The Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland, part of the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement, contains provisions relating to subsidy control. Article 10 of the Protocol provides that the EU State aid rules will continue to apply in the limited circumstances where the subsidies affect trade in goods or wholesale electricity between Northern Ireland and the EU. The EU's declaration in the Joint Committee has clarified that subsidies granted in Great Britain are only in scope of Article 10 where there is a genuine, direct link between the subsidy and companies in Northern Ireland.