

Statement following NDNA Implementation Review Meeting

News story

Statement by the Secretary of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs and leaders of the Democratic Unionist Party, Sinn Féin, Social Democratic and Labour Party and the Alliance Party, following the NDNA Implementation Review Meeting.



The first Implementation Review Meeting of the New Decade, New Approach agreement was held today by video conference, with the participation of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon Brandon Lewis CBE MP, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney TD, and the leaders of the parties to the Northern Ireland Executive.

On the anniversary of the restoration of the Northern Ireland Executive, the participants discussed the progress that has been made over the past year by the Northern Ireland Executive and Assembly and in the North/South Ministerial Council and the British Irish Council.

The participants also discussed the context of the unprecedented challenge for the entire Executive, as well as for the UK and Irish Governments, in responding to a global pandemic and both its public health and economic impacts. In light of these challenges, the participants reaffirmed their shared commitment to ensuring the sustainable and effective operation of all the devolved institutions to ensure that the interests of the people of Northern Ireland are served by their democratically elected leaders, and committed themselves to the ongoing implementation of the New Decade, New Approach agreement.

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CCO commitment to confidentiality

News story

Retailer CCO commitment to give suppliers more confidence that their issues will remain confidential.



Retailers' Code Compliance Officers have formally confirmed to the Groceries Code Adjudicator that they will treat any discussions with suppliers in the strictest of confidence.

The CCOs have also agreed that it will be up to the supplier to determine whether they can disclose any details about the subject matter of their Code-related discussion within their designated.

GCA Mark White said: "In practice this is how CCOs have operated, maintaining confidentiality in discussions. But the problem is that nowhere has this been clearly stated and many suppliers have been unclear about the position.

"I asked all the retailers to make a formal commitment to confidentiality so that I could publish it on my website and dispel any concerns of suppliers that directly raising an issue with a retailer might lead to retaliation."

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Vacancies for Inspectors of Marine Accidents (Engineering or Nautical) at MAIB, Southampton

News story

We have two exciting opportunities to join our team of Accident Investigators.



Your responsibilities will include but not be limited to:

- deploying to accident sites and leading investigations
- collecting evidence and interviewing witnesses
- conducting detailed analysis in order to identify safety issues and draft recommendations
- writing investigation reports and safety bulletins
- giving evidence at inquests and fatal accident inquiries

You will have either:

- STCW95 A-III/2 (Engineering) Certificate of Competency; or equivalent level electro-technical/systems engineering maritime qualifications; or equivalent Royal Navy qualifications.

or

- STCW 95 A-II/2 (Deck) Unlimited; or STCW Deck Officer (Fishing Vessel) Class 1 Certificate of Competency; or Royal Navy equivalent qualification – RN STCW II/2.

You will need a full driver's licence valid in the UK and must be prepared to travel throughout the UK, as well as overseas.

For further information about these posts and how to apply, go to Civil Service Jobs:

Closing date: Friday 29 January 2021.

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Inspection Report Published: An inspection of the Home Office Presenting Officer function

Certain decisions by the Home Office attract a right of appeal to the First-tier Tribunal Immigration and Asylum Chamber (FTTIAC). The Home Secretary is represented in the FTTIAC by Home Office Presenting Officers (POs) and in the Upper Tribunal by Senior Presenting Officers. This inspection examined the PO function, focusing on staffing, the training, guidance and support available to POs, and Home Office learning from appeals, including feedback to decision-making and policy areas to avert decisions that are likely to result in allowed appeals.

The number of appeals reached a peak of 205,891 in 2008-09. Between 2013 and 2015 the government removed the right of appeal for most types of immigration decision, providing instead an ability to reapply and provide further information or to seek an administrative review – see [An inspection of Administrative Reviews](#)

While the number of appeals fell significantly it has remained high. Since 2017-18, there have been 40-50,000 a year. Figures published by the Ministry of Justice showed that between January and March 2020 the FTTIAC received 10,000 appeals (while the Upper Tribunal received a further 1,500). These large volumes create resource and logistical challenges. Inspectors looked at how the Home Office was managing these challenges, including its involvement in Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service's "Reform Programme", which was aiming to transform the way in which Tribunals worked, primarily through technology-enabled smarter working.

Meanwhile, the composition of the appeals caseload has shifted, with relatively simple entry clearance and family visit visa appeals removed and a larger proportion of more complex cases involving human rights issues and protection claims. The inspection looked at the implications for PO training, support and case preparation time.

Inspectors also looked at stakeholder engagement. There are obvious stakeholders: internally, the Secretary of State and the department need the PO function to be efficient and effective; externally, the same is true of HMCTS and of Tribunal Judges. Appellants and their representatives may be more ambivalent about POs' effectiveness insofar as this translates into upheld decisions, but still need the PO function to work well. More generally, there is the question of public confidence in the integrity of the UK's immigration system, in which an efficient and effective appeals process has to be a key component.

Ultimately, it is in everyone's interests that the PO function is properly resourced and supported, with well-trained, professional staff and reliable ways of working.

The inspection showed that, although the Home Office was making efforts to improve the PO function and the wider appeals process, there was more that it could be doing to professionalise POs, to connect up its processes, and to position itself with its key external stakeholders.

The report was sent to the Home Secretary on 29 October 2020. It contained six recommendations and I encouraged the Home Office to press ahead with implementing them rather than be tempted to defer some actions until further progress had been made with the Reform Programme. I am therefore pleased that the department has not only accepted all of the recommendations but has set out a clear timetable for their implementation.

New partnership pledges clear and consistent evidence-based guidance on medicines for pregnant and breastfeeding women

A major new initiative to ensure pregnant and breastfeeding women can make informed decisions about their healthcare was announced today by health minister, Nadine Dorries.

[The Safer Medicines in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Consortium](#) brings together 16 leading organisations under a common pledge to meet the information needs of pregnant and breastfeeding women and healthcare professionals, through accessible, clear and consistent advice.

The partnership spans the NHS, regulators, and leading third sector and charitable organisations. Together, this group will develop a long-term programme of work to improve information provision on medicines for women who are thinking about becoming pregnant, are pregnant, or are breastfeeding.

In the UK, hundreds of thousands of babies are born each year, and more than 50% of expectant mums will need to take a medicine of some description when pregnant. However, more needs to be known about the effects of taking medicines in pregnancy.

Work on this is already underway. [A report published by the Commission on Human Medicines \(CHM\) Expert Working Group on Optimising Data on Medicines used During Pregnancy](#) has today provided recommendations on ways in which data on medicines used in pregnancy and breastfeeding can be better collected and made available for analysis. This will enable more robust evidence to be generated through research and will be important in helping to develop clear and consistent advice about medicines used during pregnancy and breastfeeding – the main aim of the Consortium.

Recommendations of the report include the better capture and linking of existing data, exploring new ways to collect relevant information on exposure to medicines during pregnancy and breastfeeding, and improving access to and quality of data to further enable research. The Consortium welcomes the recommendations of the report.

To support the aims of the Consortium, the MHRA has developed [a webpage](#) to assist users in finding information and projects related to medicines use in pregnancy and breastfeeding. This webpage includes links to Consortium members' websites, which also contain important information.

Healthcare professionals are asked to report important inconsistencies in UK advice on use on individual or classes of medicines in pregnancy or breastfeeding to [the Consortium](#).

Anyone can report suspected side effects with medicines or adverse events with medical devices, including those experienced by the mother or baby during pregnancy or breast feeding, to the [Yellow Card scheme](#).

Nadine Dorries, Minister of State for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health, said:

"It is vitally important women are empowered to make informed decisions about their healthcare during pregnancy and this means accessing timely information and answers about any medicines they consider taking while pregnant or breastfeeding.

"I am delighted so many of the health system's main information providers are working closely together to address this and I look forward to seeing positive results from this new collaboration."

Dr June Raine, MHRA Chief Executive and Chair of the Consortium, said:

"We know that in many cases the information on taking medicines when pregnant or breastfeeding can be improved. I would encourage healthcare professionals to report any important inconsistencies you find on our webpage.

"There is vital work to be done, as started by the EWG report published today and continued by our new Consortium, which is addressing the issue head on. Today is an important step, and we are proud to have brought this partnership together."

Notes to editors

The Safer Medicines in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Information Consortium was set up following the [Commission for Human Medicines report on Hormone Pregnancy Tests](#), published in 2017.

Its launch was announced as part of a statement setting out the government's response to the recommendations in the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review.

The Consortium will focus on delivering recommendation 11 of the report: "The

MHRA should work with the key information providers to ensure healthcare professionals and patients receive the best available information, and are empowered to make informed decisions and ask questions about any medicines they may be prescribed in pregnancy.”

First level advice for women who are thinking about getting pregnant, are pregnant or breastfeeding, on taking medicines prescribed or bought over the counter, can be found on the NHS websites’ pregnancy and baby guide.

The Commission on Human Medicines (CHM) Expert Working Group on Optimising Data on Medicines used During Pregnancy was set up to identify ways in which data on medicines used during pregnancy and breastfeeding can be better collected and processed.

[A new valproate registry](#) was launched on 11 February 2021, spearheaded by the MHRA in partnership with NHS Digital, that will help prevent pregnancy in women taking valproate and make it easier for healthcare professionals to monitor the issue.

Members of the Safer Medicines in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Information Consortium: