

## IOM Council: UK statement

Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to begin by congratulating you on your new appointment, and thanking Morten Jesperson for his chairmanship of the Bureau over the past year.

2020 has been a particularly memorable year, and in many senses one that most of us will be glad to end. As the effects of COVID-19 were added to a global record humanitarian need, threats are posed to the lives, livelihoods and well-being of more people than ever. Responding to this has been a huge challenge. An effective, coordinated, capable, visible and accountable IOM is needed now more than ever and, whilst our first thoughts are with those who need IOM assistance, we express our gratitude to the whole team at the IOM for their continuing good work.

Given those challenges it is both remarkable and essential that the IOM is able to continue reforming. As the second largest donor, the United Kingdom stands ready to support the IOM on this journey. The UK would like to reiterate its support to the Director General, the Deputy Director General and IOM staff for continuing to reform the IOM as the organisation, and the importance of its work, continues to expand.

The UK welcomes the creation of the additional Deputy Director General position. This is the right step to recognise the growing size and importance of the organisation and the demands upon the leadership team. The UK is a strong supporter of the Internal Governance Framework, and we keenly welcome the work plan which we know will be treated as a priority and actioned as quickly and efficiently as possible.

We also welcome IOM's efforts to play a full role in a more joined-up international system. Since becoming a UN related organisation in 2016, the IOM's role has grown, and so too has its responsibility – to better coordinate its work with other UN agencies and partners and to take a more outward-facing approach.

Furthermore, although the UK notes the improvement in the staffing and capacity of the Office of the Inspector General, we remain concerned regarding the increased number of allegations the office is receiving and the office's ability to deal with such a growing workload. We appreciate the regular quarterly updates and request these continue. We expect senior management to maintain a clear and specific focus on the OIG – including on its ability to carry out its function in preventing sexual exploitation and abuse. The UK was pleased to be a member of the Audit Oversight and Advisory Committee selection panel, underlining the importance we attach to these issues.

[The UK reaffirms its commitment to the Global Compact on Migration, and is pleased to recognise the UN's hard work since signature to translate GCM principles into action that helps migrants. We believe this work is beginning

to show promising results and we encourage IOM to continue and to strengthen its valuable work in this area. We welcome the progress establishing the Start Up Fund, to which the UK is pleased to contribute, and its first projects being approved. We also welcome the establishment of the UN Migration Network and its associated networks. This month's Review of implementation in Europe and North America was a valuable opportunity to reflect on our own progress and to hear from others. As the GCM begins to mature and the institutional architecture takes shape, we look forward to further progress and encourage IOM to maintain its ambition in this area.]

Finally, I would like to highlight one more key issue. On 2 September, the UK Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, announced a call to action to protect the world's poorest from the increasing threat of famine, and a new £119 million aid package to alleviate extreme hunger. The UK has appointed its first Special Envoy for Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Affairs to work in partnership with other donors, UN agencies, NGOs and foundations to help prevent catastrophic famine.

We look forward to working in partnership with the IOM on all of these issues. Thank you.

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## **Children's Minister keynote address on assistive technology**

Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are benefitting from life changing assistive technology during the pandemic, helping to improve their communication, learning and overall independence.

Speaking at the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Assistive Technology on Tuesday 24 November, Children and Families Minister Vicky Ford announced new research has been published, aimed at helping to bridge the gap between education and employment for young people with SEND. The rapid assessment [review](#) brings together a body of research on assistive technology for the first time, helping schools and colleges better understand how to harness the benefits of existing tools and approaches to raise the outcomes of pupils with SEND.

The Minister praised schools, colleges and the technology sector for their response to the 'historic challenges' during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially for vulnerable students with the most complex needs, but urged companies to make sure all their products and practices are fully inclusive.

Delivering the keynote speech at the APPG, Minister Ford said:

Assistive technology can be life-changing and for many it is vital

to communication, learning and overall independence.

In recent months, the importance of Assistive Technology has been demonstrated like never before. The essential collaboration provided by groups such as this APPG is vital to ensure that we make policy which is informed by as much research and evidence as possible.

Our review will give schools and colleges a helping hand by providing greater transparency in what tools and interventions can improve outcomes of SEND students and bridge the gap from education into employment. It will also support the technology sector in embedding accessibility features – such as text to voice tools – as part of their service development, and policymakers to better embed inclusion into their policies and services. This will lead to real, meaningful differences in the quality of education for children and young people.

This is key, because we need to be clear: accessibility should never be an add on, it should be the norm.

It follows Minister Ford's letter to Google and Microsoft, sent jointly with Minister of State for Digital and Culture Caroline Dinenage earlier this month, calling on them to improve the accessibility of their products by including subtitles as a default setting, aiding teachers delivering education remotely, and by ensuring their comment functions are easy to read and adaptable for those with visual impairments.

She issued a warning to the sector that too often the effective use of technology in education is 'hindered by poor broadband and connectivity' or staff capability, or lack of understanding from parents.

The impact of the pandemic has highlighted the digital divide that exists between disadvantaged pupils and their peers, which the Government has tackled with a significant package of support worth £195 million for remote learning and online social care, including:

- Providing more than 220,000 laptops and tablets and 50,000 4G routers to disadvantaged and vulnerable children during the summer term;
- Making an additional 340,000 devices available to schools this term to help support these children where face-to-face education has been disrupted – with well over 100,000 of these devices delivered since September;
- Working with mobile network providers to provide free data top-ups to disadvantaged students and their families;
- Investing £37 million in Family Fund to help low-income families requiring specialist assistive technology for their children, of which £10 million is to provide home learning support fund for children with SEND, launched earlier this year;
- Providing funding for Oak National Academy to provide video lessons for Reception up to Year 11, creating over 200 hours' worth of lessons and

- resources each week including subtitled and signed videos and a specialist curriculum for pupils with SEND; and
- Expanding our Demonstrator Programme – a peer support network supporting schools and college to improve their use of technology, including how it can remote education strategies.

Earlier this month (Wednesday 4 November) Minister Ford met with staff and pupils at one of the Department for Education's Demonstrator colleges, National Star College in Gloucestershire, during a 'virtual visit'.

Speaking at the APPG about the visit, Minister Ford said:

I saw first-hand how technology can support those with even the most complex needs in the simplest of ways, including text-to-speech functions, how Google and Microsoft platforms can support an accessible curriculum and – crucially – how we can better support parents through the power of technology.

Throughout this meeting the dedication and passion from staff shone through – how well they understand the needs of their students and strive to support them to achieve their potential.

Neil Beck, lead assistive technologist at National Star College, said:

We were delighted to receive the Minister Vicky Ford and appreciated her enthusiasm for the work that National Star are delivering as part of the Ed Tech Demonstrator programme.

We are encouraged by the recognition of the importance assistive technology has in enabling learners with additional learning needs and disabilities to learn and compete with equity.

This acknowledgement and recognition highlights the further need to provide teachers with the skills and knowledge, though the Demonstrator programme, to be able to confidently use assistive technology to support an increasing learner diversity in education today.

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## **Government announces £16.5 million youth covid-19 support fund**

Press release

An emergency funding package to protect the immediate future of grassroots and national youth organisations across the country has been announced by the Government.



The Youth Covid-19 Support Fund, which will be open to grassroots youth clubs, uniformed youth groups, and national youth and umbrella organisations, will help to mitigate the impact of lost income during the winter period due to the coronavirus pandemic, and ensure services providing vital support can remain open.

The funding will be allocated from the Government's unprecedented [£750 million package of support](#) which is benefiting tens of thousands of frontline charities, so they can continue their vital work. More than £60 million of this package has already been provided to organisations working with vulnerable children and young people.

This is on top of a number of other schemes benefitting young people announced in recent months, including:

- £85 million in match funding via the [DCMS Community Match Challenge](#) which benefited organisations including the youth organisations Onside Youth Zones, The Scouts Association, Girlguiding, and UK Youth.
- £90 million released from [dormant accounts](#) to support charities including those tackling youth unemployment
- £200 million Government investment in early intervention and prevention support initiatives to support children and young people at risk of exploitation and involvement in serious violence, through the [Youth Endowment Fund](#).
- Over £2 billion of funding to help young people into employment via the [Kickstart scheme](#).

The youth sector has also had access to hundreds of millions of pounds of support this year through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and other cross economy support schemes.

Wider funding for young people will be confirmed in the Government's Spending Review.

Further details on the Youth Covid-19 Support Fund, including eligibility and how to apply, will be announced in due course.

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## **CMA letter to Hanson UK on breaches of the Cement Market Data Order**

Letter to Hanson UK about 3 breaches of the Cement Market Data Order 2016: data disclosed which could have been a proxy for Individual Cement Market Data.

The CMA wrote to Hanson UK regarding 3 breaches of Article 3.2 of the Order. Hanson made a payment in error to a trade association which involved 3 pieces of information being disclosed:

- a payment relating to subscription fees
- remittance advice related to the above payment
- an invoice related to the above payment

It is the CMA's view that each of these pieces of information falls within the definition specified in the Order as being Individual Cement Market Data, as it is possible to ascertain cement volume data from such information. Article 3.2 of the Order prohibits cement producers such as Hanson from disclosing Individual Cement Market Data except in specified circumstances.

This letter sets out the action Hanson UK is taking to prevent a recurrence.

See the [aggregates, cement and ready-mix concrete market investigation page](#) for information on the Cement Market Data Order.

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## **Charity shop re-seller banned for under-declaring taxes due**

Rajesh Voralia (49), from Kingston Upon Thames in Surrey, will start his directorship disqualification on 24 November 2020.

The charity shop re-seller is banned from acting as a director or directly or indirectly becoming involved, without the permission of the court, in the promotion, formation or management of a company.

RTS Textile Recyclers Limited was incorporated in September 2014 and Rajesh Voralia was appointed as the sole director.

The business bought and sold unwanted items collected from charity shops and operated out of premises in West Drayton, West London.

RTS Textile Recyclers went into administration in October 2017 and a year later went into liquidation before an Insolvency Service investigation uncovered that Rajesh Voralia failed to ensure RTS Textile Recyclers complied with its tax obligations.

Enquiries revealed that VAT returns due from the end of 2014 to the middle of 2017 were either submitted late or not at all and when RTS Textile Recyclers entered into administration, almost £1.2million in unpaid taxes, including penalties, was owed by the company.

Analysis by the Insolvency Service found that more than £16.4million had passed through RTS Textile Recyclers' bank account between March 2015 and December 2017 but less than £80,000 was paid to the tax authorities.

On 3 November 2020, Judge Prentis sitting in the High Court made a disqualification order for 6 years against Rajesh Voralia, as well as costs of almost £5,000.

Rajesh Voralia attended the hearing, where he did not dispute that he had failed to ensure RTS Textile Recyclers complied with its statutory tax obligations.

Lawrence Zussman, Deputy Head of Insolvent Investigations for the Insolvency Service, said:

Rajesh Voralia failed to take his responsibilities as a director seriously and thought he could walk away from his company and its outstanding tax liabilities without consequences.

Thanks to our investigation, he has now been removed from the business environment for a substantial period. This ban should serve as a warning to other directors that if you do not pay correct taxes and comply with the law, you run the risk of being disqualified.

Rajesh Voralia is from Kingston Upon Thames and his date of birth is March 1971.

RTS Textile Recyclers Limited (Company Reg no. 09206816).

Disqualification undertakings are the administrative equivalent of a

disqualification order but do not involve court proceedings. Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of restrictions](#).

[Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct](#).

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on: