

[Our phone numbers are changing](#)

News story

From 1 September our phone numbers are changing. Find out how to contact us.



From 1 September 2020 our phone numbers are changing. Our new phone numbers have the prefix 0300 or 0303. Previous phone numbers have been deactivated and you will not be able to reach us on them.

If you need to contact an Official Receiver please [search contact information using our online directory](#). During the Coronavirus outbreak our staff are working at home so it is possible it may take longer to answer your call.

If you have an enquiry about redundancy payments, declaring yourself bankrupt, applying for a Debt Relief Order or putting your company into liquidation, or other insolvency matters [please consult our online guidance about how to contact us](#).

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[Freedom of media concerns in Belarus: UK-Canada joint statement](#)

Mr. Chairperson. I make this statement also on behalf of Canada. Canada and the United Kingdom are extremely concerned by the treatment of journalists and independent media amidst the ongoing situation in Belarus.

There are numerous credible reports by media and civil society organisations of the excessive use of violence by Belarusian authorities against journalists, as well as peaceful protesters, the public, human rights

defenders, political opponents and others since the Presidential election on 9th August.

As co-hosts of last year's Global Conference for Media Freedom, which Belarus attended – and as OSCE participating States – we wish to underline the commitments we – as OSCE participating States – made in Moscow in 1991 that independent media are essential to a free and open society and accountable systems of government and are of particular importance in safeguarding human rights and fundamental freedoms. Journalists in Belarus today are trying to play exactly that important role, for the benefit of the Belarusian people.

Though the strain faced by independent media has been made evident before, during, and after the Presidential elections, in the past week Belarusian authorities have made greater moves to hinder the free press. Over 70 independent news websites have been blocked. On the 27 and 28 August, approximately 50 journalists, including 4 from the BBC, were detained en masse for accreditation checks, despite the credentials of most being on clear display. Some foreign journalists were subsequently deported and banned from Belarus for five years, and four Belarusian journalists were charged with participation in a non-sanctioned event. On 1 September, six more Belarusian journalists were arrested and charged with the same offence.

On 29 August, 17 journalists, including two Belarusian resident correspondents for the BBC Russian Service and four from the Belarusian service of RFERL, had their accreditations revoked. The UK and Canada have raised our concerns directly with the Belarusian Foreign Ministry and we await their response.

Belarus must fully respect the OSCE commitments that we have all freely signed up to, including on media freedom and the working conditions for journalists. This includes the Ministerial Council Decision from 2018 in Milan on the Safety of Journalists. Belarusian authorities must provide space for a free press, stop targeting independent media and cease the suppression of journalists and media reporters.

We continue to support efforts by the OSCE Chair to establish an open and constructive dialogue, supporting the people of Belarus in defending their human rights and right to determine their future. We will continue to call for an independent investigation through the OSCE into the election fraud and abuses of human rights during this period.

Mr Chair – Media freedom is essential to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We believe that people must be able to discuss and debate issues freely, to challenge those in power, and to make informed decisions. This is supported by access to information provided by a strong, robust and independent media.

Repairs carried out to Hampton Bishop flood defences

The work includes the repair of the 3km long flood embankment of the River Lugg. The bank was overtopped by the river in the February floods when the Lugg reached its highest level ever recorded.

Storms Ciara, Dennis and Jorge caused extensive disruption and severe impacts with many areas flooded in February. Two severe flood warnings were in place at Hampton Bishop along the River Wye and River Lugg. The ground was already sodden from last autumn's heavy rains and floods and the area quickly became flooded, with many rivers, including the River Wye at Hampton Bishop reaching the highest ever recorded levels. Despite this, our flood defences protected approximately 150 properties (residential and commercial) in Hampton Bishop, which otherwise would have flooded.

The work at Hampton Bishop also includes repairs to the River Wye embankment, which, whilst it did not overtop in the floods, was damaged by the prolonged high levels of the river. Repairs will also be made to the nearby Mordiford bridge and flood wall to rectify the erosion caused by the February floods.

The Hampton Bishop repair work is one of 41 projects in an £8m flood recovery programme currently in the pipeline across the West Midlands area¹ to repair flood defences damaged in the February floods.

Craig Barker, Project Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

Making sure our flood defences are in a good shape to protect communities is a priority for the Environment Agency. As part of the Hampton Bishop project, work has now started on repairing the flood embankment on the River Lugg to reduce the risk of flooding to the local area. We are expecting to have all of the work we are carrying out in this area completed by November 2020.

Hampton Bishop is on the confluence of the River Wye and River Lugg, which both reached the highest levels ever recorded in February this year. Pressure was put on many of our flood defences caused by the high volume of water in both these rivers.

Since then, whilst adhering to government guidance, we have been inspecting our defences to check for the need for repairs so we can ensure they are ready for any future floods. We have also used drone surveys to help with the process.

Environment Agency teams work around the clock to help protect people from flooding, but flood risk can never be eliminated completely, everyone still has a responsibility to take steps to protect themselves. Check whether you're at risk of flooding, and [sign up](#) to receive our free flood warnings,

or call 0345 988 1188. By registering, you can choose how you'd prefer to be reached – by text, phone call to a mobile or landline, or even email – giving you vital notice to prepare if flooding is expected.

Since the floods in November 2019, the Environment Agency has checked 3,000 flood assets across the West Midlands¹ and identified over 95 individual repairs that are required at a cost of £8m, to protect around 4,000 properties.

The repair works are being carried out by the Environment Agency's contractors, Jackson Civil Engineering.

¹ The Environment Agency's West Midlands' area includes Shropshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Staffordshire, Birmingham and the Black Country.

Notes to editors

In the February floods 48 properties were flooded or impacted in Hampton Bishop.

The Environment Agency worked as part of an operational team alongside emergency response partners including Herefordshire Council, West Mercia Police, Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and health partners to support residents and protect the most vulnerable.

According to Met Office statistics, February 2020 was the wettest February on record for England with double the average monthly rainfall. It was also the 5th wettest of any calendar month since 1862 and some areas experienced a month's worth of rain in 24 hours. In England 154.9mm rainfall fell, 258% of the average rainfall for the month. Some places received over 4 times the average monthly rainfall.

We encourage all those who may be at risk of flooding to take steps to protect themselves by:

Schools begin teaching reformed Early Years Foundation Stage

Reception teachers returning to the classroom at 'early adopter' schools this week will benefit from improved curriculum and assessment as part of the reforms to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework.

As pupils return to school full-time for the new term, some schools who have chosen to be among the first to adopt the revised EYFS reforms will begin delivering the new learning and development requirements to Reception

classes, with a focus on improving outcomes in language, literacy and maths. Teachers will also see a cut to their paperwork meaning that they can spend more time focusing on teaching and interacting with pupils.

The Department for Education has today [Thursday 3 September] published [new guidance](#) called Development Matters which will support more than 2,800 early adopter schools as they deliver the new framework this year.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Getting every pupil back into full-time education is a national priority because of the significant benefits to their academic and social development as well their wellbeing.

These improvements will continue to drive up the standards of early education, strengthening practice while also reducing unnecessary paperwork for staff so that they can spend more time teaching and supporting pupils.

We cannot afford for the youngest children to miss out at this vital time for their development, which is why we have introduced these reforms to the Early Years Foundation Stage and why so many schools are keen to make these important changes from this term.

The reformed Early Years Foundation Stage framework, with its revised educational programmes and early learning goals, was published in July, following a pilot and a consultation which had responses from more than 2,000 early years professionals, organisations and sector bodies. The focus of the revised framework is on improving outcomes for all children, but particularly for disadvantaged children.

All seven areas of learning have been strengthened to support children's holistic learning and development. The changes also ensure all children in Reception year leave their crucial first year of school with a better grasp of language, literacy and maths – the building blocks for success later on in life – as they move into Year 1 and beyond. Other changes include removing the requirement for local authorities to moderate teachers' EYFS profile assessment within schools, freeing teachers from excessive burdens of paperwork, allowing them to spend more time teaching and interacting with children.

Over 2,800 schools who have signed up to be early adopters of the revised EYFS will also be able to use the new curriculum guidance, developed by Dr Julian Grenier, and will change their practice and see the benefits before the revised EYFS becomes statutory for all registered early years providers in September 2021. Those who are not participating in the early adopter year may also choose to refer to the new curriculum guidance from now if they so wish, but they will still need to follow the existing EYFS framework until statutory roll out of the reforms in September 2021.

The reforms to the Early Years Foundation Stage follow the Government's

commitment to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) in response to the Primary Assessment consultation in September 2017.

This builds on an a package of targeted support for the early years including a new multi-million pound 'catch up programme' to boost early language skills in Reception aged children. This will focus on raising outcomes in speaking and language skills among young pupils whose education has been disrupted by Covid-19 at a crucial time for their development.

Iram Siraj, Professor of Child Development and Education at University of Oxford, said:

Although there is a statutory framework for the seven domains of the EYFS this Development Matters is a valuable and important starting point as non-statutory guidance. Importantly it states that 'it guides, but does not replace, professional judgement'. This is critically important in supporting and asserting that professional judgement is central to staff creating a contextually full and relevant curriculum and the right learning, teaching and well-being support for young children.

The document supports the notion that how we support children is important and not just what we teach them. It provides central place to active learning, playing, exploring and developing a young child's thinking capability. There are helpful examples of how practitioners can support children to learn within the context of high-quality care, individual attention, a creative curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. It provides a great foundation for managers, head teachers and pedagogic leaders in the early years to be creative, extend staff professional knowledge and support children by going beyond and above a basic curriculum.

[Applications for the UK Government's Chevening Scholarships open](#)

Applications for Chevening Scholarships to study in the UK are open between 3 September and 3 November 2020, with applications to be submitted via www.chevening.org/apply.

Chevening Scholarships are awarded to individuals who can demonstrate that they have the commitment and skills required to create positive change, and can show how a UK master's degree will help them do that. The scholarship offers full financial support for future leaders to study for any eligible master's degree at any UK university whilst also gaining access to a wide

range of exclusive academic, professional, and cultural experiences.

Since the programme was created in 1983, over 50,000 professionals have had the opportunity to develop in the UK through Chevening. There are more than 1,500 scholarships on offer globally for the 2021/2022 academic year, demonstrating the UK's ongoing commitment towards developing the leaders of tomorrow.□

Head of Scholarships at the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Naomi Rayner, said:

This year more than ever, we have seen how global challenges demand innovation, strong leadership and international collaboration. Chevening seeks to build an international community of people who are committed to those values, and to driving positive change. We do this by bringing together incredible people from around the world and supporting them, through education, to achieve their goals.

In the UK we are proud of our world class universities and we know that our learning environments are enriched by the wide diversity of cultures, experiences and viewpoints represented on our campuses. Chevening scholars make a significant contribution to these communities, as well as becoming an important part of our network of over 50,000 alumni.

Chevening represents the very best of the UK, welcoming people from across the world to study, grow, and thrive. Being a part of the Chevening network instils a strong sense of pride and responsibility. I am consistently inspired by the passion and commitment of those in the Chevening community and I look forward to hearing from this year's applicants.

Chevening's Director, Miranda Thomas, said:

The Chevening experience is so much more than a master's degree. As well as an academically challenging and fulfilling university experience, we'll immerse you in UK culture along with your fellow Chevening Scholars.

We organise an exclusive programme of events and activities, so you can experience Britain's heritage and history, discuss international policy, and interact with thought leaders at a range of academic, cultural, and social events. Previously, scholars have visited the UK prime minister's residence at 10 Downing Street,

hiked up Mount Snowdon in Wales, exhibited art in London galleries, interned at the BBC and sat in the home dressing room at Anfield.

You will learn by interacting with people from all over the world, travelling around the UK and getting involved in the communities you live in. You will be expected to take control of your own learning, show independent thinking and chase new experiences. Those who get the most out of Chevening are the ones who put the most into it.

Your scholarship will last a year, but you will be a part of the Chevening community for life. Our hope is that you will leave the UK inspired, motivated, and better equipped to bring your own ideas to life.

Her Majesty's Ambassador, Daniel Pruce, to the Philippines said:□□

If you are someone who is passionate about driving change, locally or globally; if you want to be the best at what you do and if you have the imagination to inspire others, then a Chevening scholarship could be the perfect opportunity for you.

There is no such thing as a 'typical' scholar. Your age, race, gender, religion and cultural background do not matter to us. We want to see that you have energy, curiosity, a clear vision for your future and the ability to achieve your goals. If this sounds like you, then you are very likely to fit in with our community of over 50,000 alumni worldwide.

Our alumni network is full of dynamic influencers who have shared the same experience that you will. They can offer encouragement, mentorship, advice, and contacts. When you return home after your studies you should feel well-equipped to start making a real difference professionally or socially.

There is a lot to gain from submitting a thoughtful application, so if you have what it takes to be a Chevening Scholar, I would encourage you to apply before the 3 November deadline.

The call for new applicants follows the selection of 16 scholars from the Philippines, who won an award to study at a UK university this year.

Successful applicants have been sharing their stories through the #ChosenForChevening hashtag on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

Visit [Chevening Scholarships](#) for detailed information on the eligibility criteria and scholarship specifications.

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