

Change of Her Majesty's Ambassador to Slovakia: August 2020

Press release

Mr Nigel Baker OBE MVO has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Slovak Republic in succession to Mr Andrew Garth.



Mr Nigel Baker OBE MVO has been appointed Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Slovak Republic in succession to Mr Andrew Garth who will be transferring to another Diplomatic Service appointment. Mr Baker will take up his appointment during August 2020.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Full name: Nigel Marcus Baker

Married to: Alexandra (Sasha) Baker

Children: One son

2016 to 2019 FCO, Head – Latin America Department, Americas Directorate

2011 to 2016 Holy See, Her Majesty's Ambassador

2007 to 2011 La Paz, Her Majesty's Ambassador

2003 to 2006 Havana, Deputy Head of Mission

2000 to 2003 Assistant Private Secretary to HRH The Prince of Wales

1998 to 2000 FCO, Head of European Defence Section, Security Policy Department

1998 FCO, First Secretary, Protocol Directorate (UK EU Presidency)

1996 to 1997 Academic sabbatical (Italy)

1993 to 1996 Bratislava, Deputy Head of Mission

1992 to 1993 Prague, Second Secretary (Economic)

1990 to 1991 FCO, Desk Officer, Near East and North Africa Department

1989 Joined FCO

Further information

Published 22 May 2020

GCA achieves highest rate of retailer compliance in final survey

According to the seventh GCA annual groceries sector survey, the 13 UK supermarkets regulated by the Groceries Code Adjudicator have demonstrated a very high level of Code-compliant behaviour in their relationships with their groceries suppliers.

From the very first survey in 2014, suppliers have scored their perceptions of retailers' compliance with the Code for the retailers they supply. In 2020 almost 1,500 direct suppliers responded to the survey and the results are extremely tight at the top.

Only three retailers were rated below 90% for complying consistently well or mostly with the Code – which was the best score in 2014; nine are between 92% and 94%; the highest is 96% and the lowest is 81%. In 2014 the percentage reported as complying with the Code consistently well and mostly ranged from 58% to 90%.

In common with every annual survey carried out by YouGov on behalf of the GCA, Aldi is the highest performer – rated with 96% compliance – but the major riser in 2020 is Co-operative Group Limited (Co-op), which is ranked joint second on 94%. This is a massive improvement from its tenth place in 2019 when the GCA found it had breached the Code on two counts. Co-op also takes top place on the “most improved” table.

Bottom-placed retailer on overall compliance was Iceland on 81% followed by B&M on 86% and Marks & Spencer on 89%. TJ Morris – trading as Home Bargains – achieved a 92% rating in its first year as a regulated retailer

Christine Tacon said:

This squeezing of performance into significantly higher levels of compliance is testament to the effectiveness and impact of my collaborative approach.

Aldi should be particularly congratulated for having held the top spot every year for seven consecutive years, but the survey shows the considerable efforts to improve made by all retailers, which are clearly represented in this striking graphic.

Supplier assessment of retailer overall compliance with the Code.

These record compliance ratings are in line with the other headline results of the survey. Early analysis recently reported showed the lowest-ever number of direct suppliers – 36% – had experienced a Code-related issue at any point in the past 12 months, compared to 79% in 2014, and that suppliers had recognised improvements across every issue covered by the Code.

Ms Tacon added:

I am delighted to see how much progress Co-op has made. Last year I spent eight months working with the retailer as it implemented the recommendations made as a result of my investigation.

It has demonstrated a huge amount of progress in embedding the Code and I have enjoyed working with the Co-op team to ensure that they understood the issues and implemented actions that would prevent the same or similar problems recurring in future.

Each retailer will now receive company-specific analysis of the survey broken down by sector and Code issue to help them identify and understand areas for further improvement.

Ms Tacon said:

This is my final survey as GCA as I will be stepping down later in 2020 after seven years in office. I was encouraged to conduct the survey by the retailers even though I was not going to be in office to prioritise or make progress on areas of concern.

The retailers have recognised the survey's immense value: they want to know that suppliers are experiencing progress on areas where they have focused and to identify areas where they may need to do more.

[Help with mortgages to continue for homeowners affected by Coronavirus](#)

- ongoing mortgage support for homeowners still struggling with impact of Coronavirus
- application period for a mortgage holiday also extended
- lenders will contact their customers to discuss options

The availability of a three month mortgage holiday was first announced in March as part of an unprecedented package of support for individuals, businesses and the economy. Over 1.8 million mortgage payment holidays were taken up, and the first of these will be coming to an end in June. So to give people the certainty they need, they will be contacted by their lender to discuss a way forward. Where consumers can afford to re-start mortgage payments, it is in their best interest to do so. However, if people are still struggling and need help, a full extension of the mortgage holiday for a further three months will be available as one of the options open to them.

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has published new draft guidance today for lenders which will set out the expectations for firms and the options available to their customers. This includes extending the application period for a mortgage holiday until 31 October so customers that have not yet had a payment holiday and are experiencing financial difficulty will be able to request one. The current ban on repossessions of homes will be continued to the same date.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury, John Glen said:

We're doing everything we can to help people with their finances at this difficult time, and that includes making sure people get the support they need with their mortgages. That's why we're working with the banks and lenders to extend payment holidays if people need them.

Everyone's circumstances will be different, so when homeowners can pay some or all of their mortgage, they should work with their lender on a plan; but if they are still struggling, I want them to know that help is there.

Christopher Woolard, Interim Chief Executive at the FCA, said:

Our expectations are clear – anyone who continues to need help should get help from their lender. We expect firms to work with customers on the best options available for them, paying particular attention to the needs of their vulnerable customers, and to provide information on where to access help and advice.

Where consumers can afford to re-start mortgage payments, it is in their best interests to do so. But where they can't, a range of further support will be available. People who are struggling and have not had a mortgage payment holiday, will also continue to be able to apply until 31 October.

When the guidance comes into force, following a short consultation, lenders will be expected to contact their customers whose mortgage holiday is coming to an end. Some may be able to resume their full monthly payments, others may be able to pay a proportion of their monthly payment, or temporarily switch

to an interest only mortgage, and others will opt to extend their mortgage payment holiday.

Borrowers that resume with their mortgage payments will be given options on how best to do so, such as the opportunity to extend the term of their mortgage in order to leave their monthly payments at around the same level as they were prior to their mortgage holiday.

Notes

Full details have been published by the FCA – for more information see <https://www.fca.org.uk/publications/guidance-consultations/mortgages-coronavirus-updated-draft-guidance-firms>

The guidance sets out that:

- Customers who can afford to return to full repayment should do so. At the end of a payment holiday, firms should contact their customers to find out if they can resume payments and if so, agree a plan on how the missed payments will be repaid.
- anyone who continues to need help gets help – lenders should continue to support customers who have already had a payment holiday where they need further help, including a further three month deferral
- keeping the scheme available to people who are impacted at a later date – customers that have not yet had a payment holiday and experiencing financial difficulty will be able to request one
- keeping a roof over people's head during a public health crisis – the current ban on repossessions of homes will be continued to 31 October 2020
- payment holidays and partial payment holidays offered under this guidance should not have a negative impact on credit files

The FCA welcomes comments on these proposals until 5pm on Tuesday 26 May and expects to finalise the guidance shortly afterwards.

[Taiwan travel during coronavirus](#)

(COVID-19): information about available flights and routes

Following the statement of Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, on 23 March, we are strongly urging UK travellers overseas to return home where and while there are still commercial routes to do so. Around the world, more airlines are suspending flights and more airports are closing, some without any notice.

Please note the flight fares now are exceptionally high, and could continue to rise.

Below we provide:

- Information about available flights and routes out of Taiwan
- English-language travel agents

The following information is correct as of Wednesday 17 June, 10:00 (Taiwan time). This will be the final time we publish this information because flight routes out of Taiwan to the UK are increasing. We will continue to monitor the situation and if necessary re-start this tracker.

Summary: available flights and routes in the next two weeks

Our search found flights available from Taipei to London on 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30 June.

Available flights and routes

Emirates

Destination	Days of the week	Website
TPE via Dubai (DXB) to London Heathrow (LHR)	Regular flights from 17 June onwards (every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday)	www.emirates.com

Cathay Pacific

Destination	Days of the week	Website
TPE via HKG to London Heathrow (LHR)	19, 23, 25, 30 June. Operating regular flights from Taipei to London from July onwards (every Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday)	www.cathaypacific.com

KLM

Destination	Days of the week	Website
TPE via Amsterdam (AMS) to London Heathrow (LHR)	Bookings available from 3 August onwards	www.klm.com
TPE via Amsterdam (AMS) via Paris-Charles de Gaulle (CDG) to London Heathrow (LHR)	Bookings available from 3 August onwards	www.klm.com

Air France

Destination	Days of the week	Website
TPE via Hong Kong(HKG) via Paris-Charles de Gaulle (CDG) to London Heathrow (LHR)	Bookings available from 1 August onwards	www.airfrance.com
TPE via Amsterdam (AMS) to London Heathrow (LHR)	Bookings available from 1 August onwards	www.airfrance.com
TPE via Amsterdam (AMS) via Paris-Charles de Gaulle (CDG) to London Heathrow (LHR)	Bookings available from 1 August onwards	www.airfrance.com

Korean Air

Destination	Days of the week	Website
TPE via Seoul Incheon(ICN) to London Heathrow (LHR)	TPE to ICN 13:20-16:50 Tuesdays/Thursdays, connecting to ICN to LHR 13:30-17:25 Wednesdays/Fridays. Note: this is an overnight layover. There are flights from TPE to ICN on other days, but all require more than 24hrs layover in ICN.	www.koreanair.com

China Airlines

Destination	Days of the week	Website
UK airports via Amsterdam (AMS)	26 June. Bookings available from 3 July onwards. One flight per week on Fridays	www.china-airlines.com
UK airports via Frankfurt (FRA). Onwards tickets to the UK may need to be booked separately	19, 25 June. Bookings available from 3 July onwards. One flight per week on Fridays	www.china-airlines.com
London Heathrow (LHR) direct	No flights in June. 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 July. China Airlines aim to inform passengers of cancelations 20 days before the date of travel.	www.china-airlines.com

EVA Airways

Destination	Days of the week	Website
TPE via Paris-Charles de Gaulle (CDG) to London Heathrow (LHR)	19, 26 June. Operating regular flights from July onwards (every Friday and Sunday)	www.evaair.com
TPE to London Heathrow (LHR) direct	One direct flight on 24 June	www.evaair.com
TPE via Bangkok (BKK) to London Heathrow (LHR)	Bookings available for flights on 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12 July. (Note: International passenger flights to Thailand are currently suspended until 30 June)	www.evaair.com
TPE via Hong Kong (HKG) to London Heathrow (LHR)	Operating regular flights from July onwards (every Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday)	www.evaair.com

Transits

Transits in Seoul:

Transiting South Korea is possible if you go through the same airport and do not go through immigration. Transit passengers receive a temperature check on arrival in Korea. Travellers who do not show symptoms may continue on their journey. All passengers entering South Korea are subject to a 14-day mandatory quarantine. This means that passengers who leave the airport and stay in a hotel for a connecting flight on a different day would need to complete mandatory quarantine for 14 days. For more information please check the [South Korea travel advice](#)

Transits in Japan:

Transiting Japan is possible if you go through the same airport and do not go through immigration. However note that from 3 April, Japan has denied entry to Japan for any non-Japanese nationals who have been in the UK or Taiwan—among other places—in the past 14 days. This means that transiting through Japan using different airports (e.g. flying into Tokyo via Narita Airport and out of Tokyo via Haneda Airport), or staying in a hotel overnight for a connecting flight on the next day, is no longer possible. For more information please check the [Japan travel advice](#)

No transits are currently permitted:

Bangkok, Singapore, UAE, Bahrain, the Philippines or China. For more information on travel restrictions, visit the [IATA website](#)

Transits in Hong Kong:

From 1 June 2020, air transit services at Hong Kong International Airport will resume in phases. Passengers travelling with Cathay Pacific and Cathay Dragon will be able to transit in Hong Kong if:

1. Their itinerary is contained in a single booking and
2. The connection time to their next Cathay Pacific or Cathay Dragon

operated flight is within 8 hours.

Travel Agencies with English-speaking staff

[LION Travel](#)

No.151, Shitan Rd., Neihu Dist., Taipei City 114, Taiwan

Hours: 9:00 to 18:00 Monday through Friday

English customer service team contact:

Tel: +886 2 8793 5466

E-mail: International_service@liontravel.com

World Express Inc.

4F, No.90 Sec. 2 Jianguo N. Rd., Zhongshan Dist., Taipei City 104, Taiwan

Hours: 8:30 to 17:30 Monday through Friday

Tel: +886 2 2505 3030

Email: orange@sitatravel.com.tw

[£22 million awarded to life-saving health charities during virus outbreak](#)

- Health and care charities awarded funding to continue providing life-changing support services
- £22 million in cash grants awarded to mental health, ambulance and other public health charities
- Package part of £750 million unveiled by Chancellor in response to COVID-19

Mental health, ambulance, social care, learning disabilities, autism and dementia charities are among those set to receive millions of pounds in government funding, Health Minister Nadine Dorries has announced today.

Over £22 million in cash grants will be awarded to charities providing vital services to ensure they can meet increased demand as a result of COVID-19, while continuing their day-to-day activities to help those in need.

Coming as the nation marks Mental Health Awareness Week, a total of £4.2 million will be awarded to mental health charities, such as Samaritans, Young Minds and Bipolar UK, to continue to support people experiencing mental health challenges throughout the outbreak. This builds on the £5 million

already made available to Mind and the Mental Health Consortia.

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

Mental health, learning disabilities and autism charities are providing vital support and advice during this public health crisis, working tirelessly alongside NHS and social care services to help people affected in many different ways.

This epidemic has had huge consequences for us all, but for some it has been especially difficult, leading to loneliness, anxiety and other mental health challenges.

The funding we are providing today – alongside £5 million already awarded to mental health charities – will help to give these organisations a much-needed boost during this outbreak so that they can keep doing what they do best.

St John Ambulance and Air Ambulances UK will each receive over £6 million to continue to provide life-saving services throughout the outbreak.

The funding will also provide cash grants to charities supporting people with cancer and dementia, carers and to support the adult social care and community healthcare systems.

Ed Argar, Minister of State for Health, said:

Every day, charities perform amazing work for our communities – whether that's providing air ambulances during accidents and emergencies, or much-needed support and advice to people suffering from illness or just needing help and a friendly ear. During this COVID-19 pandemic, these services are more important than ever to many people.

Therefore, I am pleased that today's funding awards to health and social care charities will help these fantastic organisations to continue with their vital work.

Other recipients of the funding include charities supporting unpaid carers, people with learning disability and autism, pregnant women, those affected by stillbirth or neonatal death and older people.

The money is part of a UK-wide £750 million package of support for the voluntary sector announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in April. £360 million of this will be directly allocated by government departments to charities providing key services and supporting vulnerable people during the crisis.

The Department of Health and Social Care has worked to ensure that funding reaches where it is needed most as soon as possible, with the aim for charities to receive money later this month.

The funding will include:

- £4.2m to support mental health charities including Samaritans, Young Minds, Place2Be, Beat, Mental Health UK, Bipolar UK, CALM and charities within the National Bereavement Alliance
- Up to £6.8 million to support St John Ambulance
- £6 million to support Air Ambulances
- £6 million to support various charities, including those working with people with learning disabilities, autism and complex needs (National Autistic Society, British Institute for Learning Disabilities, MENCAP, Learning Disability England, Contact, Respond, The Challenging Behaviour Foundation), those working to support people with cancer (Anthony Nolan Trust, Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust, Blood Cancer UK) and stroke and dementia charities, and those that support the adult social care system (Carers UK, Alzheimer's Society, Race Equality Foundation, Royal Osteoporosis Society, Stroke Association)

This funding will also go to charities supporting pregnant women, babies in neonatal intensive care and those affected by stillbirth and neonatal deaths (Tommy's, Bliss and Sands) and support for specialist addiction and recovery charities.

Air ambulance critical emergency services are not funded by the NHS. Although they receive some support from NHS ambulance services which provide them with clinical staff and equipment, vital charitable donations from the public cover the costs of keeping services running.

Examples of the type of projects this money will fund include:

Blood Cancer UK

- Targeted symptom campaign encouraging people with undiagnosed blood cancer to seek diagnosis and treatment in line with the latest NHS messaging on the most appropriate pathways for accessing non-COVID services – directly addressing 'fear factor' amongst prospective patients.
- Boosting the resilience of the growing NHS workforce: a telephone Listening and Welfare Service to support UK haematology healthcare professionals delivered by counsellors and psychologists.

Anthony Nolan

- Setting up a 24-hour emergency hub at Heathrow Airport to ensure continued delivery of stem cells to hospitals and patients.

Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust

- Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

through supporting women directly with several open support systems, and providing insight and expertise to organisations such as NHS England and Public Health England.

- Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust has is running outreach teams across the country, and a front-line service in hospitals. Carers UK
- This funding will enable Carers UK to extend their helpline, information and advice services so unpaid carers are able to access trusted information and advice.