

News story: Parliament passes accelerated degree proposals

Parliament has approved legislation to support the expansion of two-year and other accelerated degrees, giving students starting university from September 2019 more choice than ever before.

Legislation has been passed in the House of Lords, following approval from the Commons last week, which means students studying shorter university courses – such as three-year courses condensed into two – would save 20 per cent on tuition fees compared to traditional courses. For example, students who opt for a two-year degree will save at least £5,500 in total tuition costs compared to a standard three-year course. The regulations will now go to the House of Lords for approval.

In addition to a saving on tuition fees, students will also benefit from a year without paying any maintenance costs through an accelerated course, which would allow them to access the workforce quicker.

Universities Minister Chris Skidmore said:

The passing of this legislation is one of the great modern-day milestones for students and breaks the mould of a one-size-fits all system for people wanting to study in higher education.

For thousands of future students wanting a faster pace of learning and a faster route into the workplace at a lower overall cost, two-year degrees will transform their choices.

Accelerated degrees have been a key part of the Government's ambition to maximise choice and flexibility for people wanting to study in higher education, and are expected to remove barriers for a number of underrepresented groups, including mature students.

Accelerated degrees offer the same qualifications and are quality-assured in the same way as a standard degree, but delivered over a shorter, more intensive timespan. For example, a two-year accelerated degree will condense 3-year degrees with 30 weeks' teaching into 2 years with 45 weeks' teaching.

Proposals allow institutions to charge up to 20 per cent more per year for accelerated degrees (in recognition of the increased teaching time required), but the overall tuition fee cost to the student is at least 20 per cent less than the same degree over three years.

The 20 per cent increase per year will allow providers to support higher in-year costs for accelerated provision, such as tuition weeks over the summer and administrative staff pay and capital overheads.

For the taxpayer, it means significantly lower tuition loan outlay, higher rates of repayment and therefore a lower cost to the public purse of higher education. A higher proportion of students on accelerated degrees will also repay their loans in full.

Speech: Global Britain and the economy

AS DELIVERED

As we take this debate into the early hours of tomorrow morning, I hope that we will be able to replicate the good humour, good manners and resilience that the Prime Minister showed during her two hours in front of the House this afternoon.

It is a pleasure to open this debate on “global Britain and the economy” as we consider how to honour the decision made by the British people, in a democratic referendum, to leave the European Union. When Parliament made the decision to hold the referendum it made a contract with the British people that said “we are unable, or unwilling, to make a decision on this constitutional relationship. This will be decided by the British people and Parliament will abide by that decision”.

We have a duty to honour our side of that contract, whether we ourselves voted to remain or leave in the referendum. When we, as members of Parliament, voted in that referendum we did so in the knowledge that our vote carried an equal weight to that of all other citizens of our country.

For Parliament to attempt to block Brexit by any means would be an act of vanity and self-indulgence that would create a breach of trust between Parliament and the people with potentially unknowable consequences.

It is clear that there are three possible outcomes to our deliberations. I want to say at the outset that Members will determine which route they choose, and while we may disagree, I do not doubt either their motives or their patriotism as they choose the course available to this country.

The first is to accept the deal that has been negotiated – and there is no other deal available. The second is to leave the EU with no deal and the third is no Brexit at all.

Before considering the implications of these options I think it important to underline the fundamental strengths that underpin the UK economy, the changing patterns of our trade and the future patterns of global trade.

Mr Speaker, the UK has an excellent economic success story to tell. Since a Conservative-led government came to power in 2010, exports have grown by 38.1%, around 6% per year, driven by an increase in services exports of

54.8%.

We sold some £618 billion worth of goods and services in 2017, up 10.9% on the previous year.

New figures released last week by the ONS revealed exports (of goods and services) in the year to November 2018 were worth £630bn, growing by £13.9bn since the previous year.

There has now been 32 consecutive months of exports growth.

As the UK considers future FTAs with the likes of the USA, Australia, New Zealand and the CPTPP countries, goods exports to these countries continued to boom:

To the, USA: up 6.9% to £54.9bn

To Australia: up 2.9% £5.1bn

To New Zealand: up 3.8% to £869m

To CPTPP: up 4.2% to £28.4bn

With other notable goods exports growth to non-EU markets including Nigeria (up 29.2%), India (up 27.3%), and Thailand (up 18.5%), this news comes as London retained its position as the top tech investment destination in Europe earlier this week. According to Pitchbook and London & Partners, the capital received £1.8bn tech investment in 2018, more than Berlin and Paris combined.

These achievements are no accident but the result of the innovation and hard work of British businesses, large and small, supported by a Conservative government that understands that wealth has to be created and that governments cannot simply promise to spend money without knowing where the income will come from.

It is a matter of fact that the relative importance of the EU as an export market has been declining over the last decade – falling from 48.9% of the total in 2010 to 45.2% in 2017.

Of course, the importance of the UK to EU trade varies from country to country.

Figures compiled by Japanese investment bank Nomura show that Belgium's economy is the most reliant on trade with the UK, with around 8% of Belgian GDP dependant on trade with Britain. That's the highest level within the EU27.

Belgium exports over €30bn of goods to the UK, which is Belgium's fourth largest export market. It sells things like textiles, vehicles, chemicals, and food and beverages to the UK.

Belgium's finance minister has previously called for a quick trade deal with the UK post-Brexit to protect thousands of jobs in the country.

When trade is looked at purely in terms of exports, Ireland is the most exposed. Around 13% of all Irish exports end up in Britain. The Netherlands also has a large reliance on the UK for exports and GDP.

At the same time as the proportion of Britain's exports to the EU has fallen we are trading more with other partners around the world.

We export a huge variety of commodities. For example, we sold £22 billion worth of food, feed and drink abroad in 2017.

In the year to November 2018, we sold £33.7 billion worth of cars, £25.2 billion worth of medicinal and pharmaceutical products, and £24.6 billion worth of mechanical power generator products – from aircraft engines, to gas turbines, steam generators to nuclear reactors. So much for Britain not producing anything anymore.

But we also export a great many services – we are, in fact, the world's second largest services exporter. In the year to September 2018, we sold some £82.4 billion of business services, £60.9 billion of financial services and £37.7 billion of travel services. Here, across the services sectors, the UK has huge comparative advantage. Services account for almost half of all our exports, 42.4% going to the EU, and 57.6% to non-EU countries.

World trade is also at a pivotal moment. We are at the intersection of a series of major global trends – trends so seismic that they have transformed, or will transform, economies and societies across the world.

Services are now a larger part of the world economy than ever before, and more easily traded across borders thanks to the internet and digital telecommunications.

We live in an emerging knowledge transfer-based trading system where an engineering report, a 3D printer design, or new advances in machine learning can be just as valuable as the contents of a cargo container. The transfer of services and expertise in things like product design and software engineering – are becoming ever more important.

A revolution in e-commerce is now underway. It is already a major component of world trade, from some of the world's largest corporations, like Alibaba and Amazon, to the thousands of small companies who have never before been able to trade internationally.

Major new opportunities are arising in the rapidly developing commercial and consumer markets of South East Asia, Africa and Latin America, and it is essential that Britain leverages its unique strengths to realise them.

Britain's consumers have embraced e-commerce, with around 20% of all goods in the UK bought online. At the same time, of goods sold online, the UK is third globally behind only China and the United States. Last year one in seven global online shoppers bought UK goods.

It is therefore essential that we are able to operate an independent trade policy, allowing us to access the EU market which remains hugely important to

us without tying our hands in our ability to access markets in some of the world's fastest-growing economies.

This deal enables us to develop a trade policy that will mean we can make the most of the opportunities of new technologies, and the changing shape of the global economy, striking a balance between protecting the markets we already have and tapping into new and rapidly expanding markets elsewhere.

Mr Speaker, we must have a policy which is flexible and nimble, where we can make the most of the opportunities of new technologies, and the changing shape of the global economy.

We can boost productivity, raise living standards and promote competitiveness. Working with Parliament, business, civil society and the devolved administrations, this deal allows us to have an independent trade policy for the first time in over 40 years.

We have not got everything we wanted in this deal – but neither has the EU. There is give and take in any negotiation, and compromises have had to be made. But today I would just like to emphasise what this agreement and the political declaration do.

They give the United Kingdom the freedom to decide for ourselves who comes here.

How to support our farmers.

Who fishes in our waters.

And it gives us the freedom to open up new markets to world-class British goods and services around the globe.

The Political Declaration sets out a clearly agreed vision for the UK's future relationship with the EU and provides precise instructions to negotiators.

What the Political Declaration does is set out an unprecedented arrangement for UK-EU economic cooperation, ambitious arrangements for services and investment, and ensures that our relationship is far more comprehensive than any other free trade agreement the EU has signed to date.

The Political Declaration will enable both parties to deliver the legal agreements that will give the future relationship effect by the end of 2020, covering an economic partnership; a security partnership; and specific agreements on cross-cutting cooperation.

There has been much speculation as to what the alternative to this agreement is.

Let me be clear: there is no alternative agreement to that which has already been negotiated.

The EU and the UK Government have painstakingly thrashed out this deal. It

has been endorsed by the Prime Minister and the 27 leaders of the other EU Member States.

Failure to accept a negotiated deal will lead us to either no deal or no Brexit.

This government has been clear that it neither wants nor expects a 'no deal' scenario.

Of course the government will continue to do the responsible thing and prepare for all eventualities in case a final agreement cannot be reached.

But the evidence is clear that the best way forward for our businesses, for jobs and for our collective prosperity, is to have a Brexit deal.

Some have suggested that it would be possible under article 24 of the GATT to maintain tariff free trade as an alternative to this negotiated agreement in a no deal scenario. Let me say that there are two immediate problems facing this suggestion. The first is that it would require the agreement of the EU itself and be based on the expectation of a future trade agreement or customs union to be operable.

While it might be argued that this would be in the economic interests of the EU 27, we know from experience that the politics of the EU can take precedence over economic pragmatism. In the political atmosphere of no deal it would be difficult to cultivate the good will necessary for this to proceed.

Secondly, this suggestion would not deal with all of the regulatory issues which are so important to many businesses.

There are of course, Members of this House who want there to be no Brexit at all.

I have to say this would be a democratic disaster. It would be a betrayal of the commitments given by this House to respect the result of the EU referendum and the manifesto commitments on which over 80% of MPs were elected.

Mr Speaker, there are many who say that democracy exists on the understanding that a voter can change their mind.

This is undoubtedly true. But democratic consent by the people is also founded on the understanding that the result of the vote will be carried out.

Failing to do so would undermine the trust of the people. Not only that, but it would be politically unacceptable, a betrayal of our principles and potentially, a seismic and existential threat to our political system. We should not underestimate it. It would be to create a chasm of distrust between the electors and the elected of an unprecedented nature, a wilful destruction of the reputation of Parliament in the eyes of the people.

We should also be under no illusion that the United Kingdom could somehow

retain the status quo of its EU membership.

This is not possible. It wasn't possible even before the referendum was called because the EU itself is changing.

The EU is committed to ever closer union.

Even since the referendum there have been calls to move to qualified majority voting in areas from VAT to common foreign policy. These may, indeed, be right for those who wish to move towards greater integration, but they are not the right course for our country.

Remaining in the European Union would be either to tie the United Kingdom into a more integrationist future or to create ever more tension and friction between ourselves and our European partners.

[Political content redacted]

Let me just say something briefly about two other suggestions. Some members of this House have raised the prospect of a so-called 'Norway' or EEA option.

Re-joining the EEA Agreement would mean that we would have to accept all of the four freedoms of the Single Market, including free movement of people.

It would not on its own be sufficient to enable our commitments to Northern Ireland to be met, including on avoiding a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

We'd be stuck in the Single Market, and if this were also coupled with staying in a Customs Union, as some have suggested, we would also be prevented from pursuing a fully independent trade policy.

It would also leave our financial services industry exposed to a rapidly evolving body of EU regulation over which we would have no influence.

In many ways it would be worse than remaining in the European Union, leaving us with many of the restrictions but, in perpetuity, unable to utilise any of the levers of decision-making.

Mr Speaker, there are also Members of this House who have advocated a second referendum. But there are three substantive problems with this suggestion: on practical grounds, democratic grounds and constitutional grounds.

Firstly, in practical terms, it would take time for this House and the other place, to pass the necessary primary legislation.

The Electoral Commission would also have to fulfil its statutory duty to assess the 'intelligibility' of the question to be posed – a process taking around 10 weeks.

A further 12 weeks would be required between the question being determined and the referendum actually being held.

It is therefore completely impractical to hold such a referendum before the United Kingdom leaves the European Union on 29 March. It is entirely possible to see such a process taking up to a year before it could be completed.

Secondly, there are clear democratic grounds to oppose a second referendum.

This House voted overwhelmingly to hold the referendum – to give the decision on Britain's membership of the European Union to the British people.

A 'People's Vote' has been held already – and it produced a clear, unambiguous instruction from the British electorate for us to leave the European Union. We are honour-bound to respect it.

This House confirmed that it would do so when it voted -again overwhelmingly – to trigger Article 50 and begin the process of negotiations. This was further confirmed by the last General Election, in which the two main parties – comprising over 80% of the total votes cast – promised to respect the referendum result.

Let us imagine, Mr Speaker, that a second referendum were held in which the Remain side won – perhaps with a narrow majority, on a lower turnout.

Leave supporters such as myself could well begin demanding a third referendum – a best-of-three scenario. Where would it end?

This would not settle the issue or heal our divisions – quite the opposite. It would further divide our already fractious country at a time when we need to come together.

There is also the constitutional issue. If we overturn this referendum result, we will be setting a precedent that could be applied to other referenda too.

Furthermore, a second referendum would create prolonged – not diminished – political and economic uncertainty.

Mr Speaker, it is time to consign the divisions of the referendum to the past. This is a time to raise our sights and acknowledge that there is a world beyond Europe and there will be a time beyond Brexit – to build the economic opportunities this country needs to thrive as a truly Global Britain.

This Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration is the way forward to achieve this Global Britain. To bring us together, seize the new opportunities out there in the world economy, and lead our country to a more prosperous, stable and secure future.

Whilst the UK is leaving the EU, we are certainly not leaving Europe, and this agreement provides the foundation on which to build our continued cooperation with our European partners on trading, political and security matters.

It will enable us to play a full and active role on the global stage, working

closely with friends new and old and building an independent trade policy which caters to the strengths and requirements of the UK economy.

This deal allows the United Kingdom to continue to participate in the EU's existing free trade deals during the implementation period.

But crucially, we will also have the benefit of being able to negotiate, sign and ratify new trade agreements and lay the foundations for future relationships with our trading partners across the world.

We need to take a balanced approach, acknowledging the continued importance of our EU partners, whilst taking advantage of opportunities beyond the borders of our continent in the high-growth economies of Africa, Asia, and South America. I believe these will be key to our economic success as a Global Britain.

This deal will give us the freedom to implement our own trade remedies regime, protecting jobs and livelihoods from unfair trade, set our own tariffs, and take up our independent seat at the World Trade Organisation for the first time in over 40 years.

This will be a key opportunity to further our support for the international rules-based trading system, ensures it delivers free and fair trade, and particularly, to pioneer the liberalisation of trade in services.

As I have outlined, there are fundamental changes in the global economy which simply didn't exist when the Uruguay round concluded, and it is right that we position the British economy to take advantage of them.

Even as the information revolution continues to transform our world at a staggering pace, with the system of free and fair international trade which underpins it lifting millions out of poverty, there is still much to do to reduce existing – and emerging – tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade that pose a serious threat to global growth.

And Britain can play a key role in this.

Mr Speaker, we have an abiding duty to do what is right for our country.

This agreement carries out the democratic will of the British people, to leave the European Union, as expressed by the referendum.

It allows the United Kingdom to take back control of our borders, laws and money – and it delivers a close and cooperative partnership with the EU.

Crucially, it delivers for the British economy. No negotiated agreement is likely to deliver everything that anyone wants. Perhaps no agreement could ever do so.

But for our communities, our prosperity and for future generations, I believe this Agreement is the right thing for the United Kingdom.

I commend this deal and this motion to the House.

Speech: Women's Aid Public Policy

Conference: David Gauke speech

Introduction

It's an honour for me to speak at this event. The wealth of knowledge and experience here today is so impressive and I'd like to pay tribute to Katie, and to everyone at Women's Aid for making this conference happen, and thank our hosts and sponsors Freshfields and Lloyds for hosting this event.

The space for discussion and the sharing of best practice it provides, is an opportunity to really influence our approach to domestic abuse and strengthen our response to an abhorrent behaviour that often hides in plain sight and creates a type of suffering that skulks in the shadows.

With an estimated 2 million adults – straight, gay, partners, and parents – affected each year; with between a quarter and a third of children in this country having been exposed to it; with too many people suffering in silence, fearful of consequences for them and their abuser; with families left unable to flourish because of the devastating effects of it; with almost 60 per cent of female offenders in the system having experienced it; and with an estimated economic and social cost of £66 billion each year, it is crucial that we recognise our duty to protect and support the victims of domestic abuse.

That duty is what prompted the government to commit to a new approach on this and to introducing a new draft Domestic Abuse Bill to Parliament.

Draft Domestic Abuse Bill and consultation response

As you know, in March last year we set out our proposals for that Bill and began a period of consultation so that all interested parties, including survivors, as well as support organisations and frontline professionals could contribute to the process.

That includes many of you here today and let me say how grateful I am to all of you who responded and particular thanks go to Women's Aid – not only for responding to the consultation but for keeping up the pressure to ensure that domestic abuse remains at the top of the agenda.

The consultation allowed us to get to this point – harnessing a wealth of knowledge, experience, and expertise – so that we could draft a better Bill and strategy for dealing with domestic abuse.

I realise we only published our response and the new draft Bill on Monday so you will still be digesting its contents. With that in mind, I wanted to take this opportunity to talk you through them.

Promoting awareness

When we started the consultation process we did so with an open mind but with four key objectives.

Our first was promoting awareness. The idea that domestic abuse is something for families to address behind closed doors is now, thankfully, an outdated one. However, you told us that we need to do more to make domestic abuse better understood by everyone – so that victims know that they need not suffer in silence; and professionals – whether that be the police, teachers, GPs, or social workers – know the signs of abuse and are equipped to challenge it.

That means it is crucial that we raise awareness with the public. We recognise that if we want to change attitudes we must engage with children at the earliest opportunity, which is why we will be introducing Relationship Education in all primary schools and Relationship and Sex Education in all secondary schools and recently consulted on draft guidance.

In primary schools, the draft statutory guidance advises schools to teach the foundation knowledge of what constitutes healthy, respectful relationships. At secondary level, teaching will build on the knowledge gained at primary and introduce concepts about healthy intimate relationships, for example laws and concepts of consent, harassment and abuse.

To raise awareness more widely, we are funding projects and helplines that aim to improve community awareness of domestic abuse; and the Department for Work and Pensions is updating its communication materials to better signpost victims to support.

We will also introduce a statutory definition of domestic abuse, capturing the various types of abusive relationships that can exist, including economic abuse. To aid agencies in the way they identify domestic abuse, this definition will be accompanied by statutory guidance. At the same time, we will invest in domestic abuse training to include the police, social workers and probation services – as well as continuing to work alongside NHS England to raise the profile of domestic abuse with professionals throughout the health service. What we want is for victims to recognise that they are being abused and know that when they speak up they will be heard and they will be helped.

Protecting and supporting victims

Our second objective was how we can better protect and support victims.

Clare's Law – the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme – was an important step forward in making information available to potential victims about abusers' history. It is now time that Clare's law becomes law in the very real sense of the word. To do that, we will be able to issue statutory guidance to the police on how the scheme works; and work with them to enable online applications to the scheme – making it easier to access than ever before. When abuse does happen, we must recognise that no two victims are the same.

Last year the government launched our Victims Strategy to improve the experience of a wide range of victims. That includes the many who experience domestic abuse and we allocated £8 million to projects right across the country specifically to support children whose lives have been devastated by it.

We will now increase funding and build capacity for services aimed at disabled, elderly, LGBT+ and male victims; update training and guidance on economic abuse; and introduce a new crisis support system for victims with no recourse to public funds.

We also want to make protective orders simpler and more effective, as well as making them more flexible so that they can better address the specific circumstances of each case. We will therefore legislate for the creation of a new protective order – a Domestic Abuse Protection Order, or DAPO – with a straightforward application process open to the police, the victim or other parties. The Order will also be available in any ongoing family proceeding, certain civil proceedings and in criminal proceedings.

Putting this type of protection in place should mean abuse cannot continue or escalate – keeping victims and their children safe while they consider their options. For the new model to work in practice it will require training for agency professionals and this will accompany the statutory introduction of the DAPO.

I think it's really important that we are alert to the ongoing impact of abuse in the wider justice system. In my opening I mentioned a statistic: sixty per cent of female offenders in the country have experienced domestic abuse. That is a staggering statistic and it demonstrates why our response to abuse and addressing it at the earliest possible opportunity can be so crucial to breaking the cycle of victimisation and offending.

We know that women who are both offenders and victims of abuse can struggle to access support. That's why the Government announced £2 million domestic abuse funding last March to support female offenders. This funding has formed part of a two-year, £5 million investment through our Female Offender Strategy to improve community support for female offenders and women at risk of offending, including to address issues arising from domestic abuse.

I am delighted today to be able to announce the second round of allocations from that fund, including – among others – organisations like Together Women in West Yorkshire who are working on a specialist integrated approach to domestic abuse, housing and support service – to help affected women to find the accommodation that can be the difference between them starting a new life or returning to prison; and Women's Work in the East Midlands who are providing specialist one-to-one domestic abuse support – to help tackle mental ill health, improve self-esteem and provide the kind of training that can help women out of the revolving door of reoffending.

This funding will help agencies responding to domestic abuse to build better links with these organisations and others like them across the country that support female offenders and those at risk of offending.

Making sure potential victims are protected from abusers and doing our best to understand how to help those who are abused are – we believe – two crucial components to stopping abuse and its ongoing effects in their tracks.

Transforming the justice process

Our third objective was how we can transform the justice process for abuse victims. Going through the justice system can be scary and bewildering experience for any victim, let alone one who has experienced domestic abuse. You told us that we should prioritise the safety and wellbeing of victims and their children and offer more support as their cases progress through the system.

This must start at the very beginning of the process and how authorities respond to abuse cases. We know there has been a recent increase in prosecutions for coercive or controlling behaviour – that is encouraging news. But it does not mean that we can take our foot off the gas. We must continue to improve understanding of the offence within statutory agencies so that we can continue to increase prosecutions. As we do that we will also review its effectiveness as an offence to ensure that it continues to disrupt abuse and serves the needs of victims.

The government is also developing national guidance for police officers on serial perpetrators of domestic abuse, improving training so that they can support offenders to change their behaviour; and we are considering the introduction of a best practice toolkit, as well as continuing to test new risk assessment processes and the rollout of the body-worn video.

When cases do go to court, we know that proceedings can be incredibly difficult for victims. We will therefore legislate so that domestic abuse victims are automatically eligible for special measures in criminal proceedings – to mitigate against any further trauma that their involvement in court might cause.

Over the years we have taken several steps to improve the family court process for vulnerable people. We will now legislate to ensure that abusers are prevented from cross-examining victims in person – a practice which can serve as an extension of their abuse.

However, we recognise that we must do more to protect victims in the courts. That's why we have already allocated £1m in funding to Finding Legal Options for Women Survivors (FLOWS), a project providing front-line domestic abuse workers with the legal resources to safeguard women.

We are now allocating £900k of funding to organisations based in a number of family courts – to provide specially trained staff who will offer dedicated emotional and practical support to domestic abuse victims before, during and after hearings. These organisations will also deliver a programme of awareness raising among key family stakeholders and practitioners.

Taken together, we believe these changes can bring about a real step change in the way domestic abuse is investigated and prosecuted or litigated.

Improving performance on domestic abuse

Our fourth and final objective in this process was how we can improve performance. As a government we are committed to using high-quality data to underpin our policy making and following the evidence on what works. We recognise that domestic abuse is an area where we need more data and insightful analysis. So, we will develop means to better collect, report and track domestic abuse data.

We will also look closely at local initiatives, the way agencies respond to abuse, and what the third sector does – so that we can identify the most successful methods and look at how they can work more broadly to effect and bring about change.

Through this commitment we believe we can raise standards throughout the system when it comes to tackling domestic abuse.

Conclusion

This new draft Bill and new approach to domestic abuse is a once-in-a-generation chance to ensure that perpetrators feel the full force of the law. And it is a real opportunity to transform the lives of those affected. I know that you will have concerns about how some of these new measures will affect the wider system.

As with any piece of primary legislation, the Ministry of Justice, working with the Home Office, has presented to parliament a detailed impact assessment that sets out the costs and benefits. We have also agreed to put forward the Bill for pre-legislative scrutiny to give parliamentarians the opportunity to feed in to this landmark piece of legislation and ensure that we get it right.

But I think the prize in this is clear to see – a fundamental shift in the way we as a society look at domestic abuse, so that we can really start to turn the dial on preventing and tackling it.

From raising awareness both amongst victims and those charged with protecting and supporting them, to understanding that different victims require different types of support, to shifting the justice process to work better for victims, collecting and analysing abuse data to drive better performance – we believe that the draft Bill and consultation response we published on Monday can do that.

I cannot thank you enough for the input you've given to us already in creating this new approach. As the legislation enters and makes its way through both Houses of Parliament, we expect the close scrutiny to improve it even further and I look forward to your continued support to inform our thinking as that happens.

Together, we will ensure that perpetrators can no longer hide in plain sight and bring domestic abuse out of the shadows once and for all. In turn, we can end the suffering of millions and ensure that every survivor is free to

flourish.

Thank you.

[Seeking chairs and members for the new disability Regional Stakeholder Network](#)

We are looking for chairs and members for 9 regional groups across England.

We are seeking people that want to make a difference, either as a chair to lead and drive the efforts of their group forward, or a member to share their views and experiences to help government make improvements.

The Regional Stakeholder Network will bring the views of disabled people, local disability organisations, disabled people led organisations, and organisations that represent disabled people closer to government. It will create face-to-face forums and provide a channel for people to share their views about policies and services that affect them.

Announced in December last year by the Minister for Disabled People, Sarah Newton MP, the Regional Stakeholder Network complements existing, ongoing engagement with disabled people and disability organisations across government, and offers an additional channel for organisations across England to contribute their views on government priorities and a wide range of government policies that affect disabled people.

Regional Stakeholder Network's aims and objectives

[Aims and objectives of the Regional Stakeholder Network](#)

Further information is available in the information pack and job descriptions.

Information pack

[Information pack](#) (ODT, 602 KB)

[Easy read: information pack](#) (PDF, 4.32 MB, 23 pages)

[British Sign Language: information pack](#)

Chair job description

[Chair job description](#) (ODT, 7.65 KB)

[Easy read: Chair job description](#) (PDF, 1.59 MB, 7 pages)

Member job description

[Member job description](#) (ODT, 7.45 KB)

[Easy read: Member job description](#) (PDF, 1.54 MB, 6 pages)

Express your interest

If you are interested in this opportunity to be part of your local Regional Stakeholder Network, to represent disabled people's views and work with others in your area and with government, download and complete the chair or member application form:

Chair application form

[Chair application form](#) (ODT, 10.7 KB)

[Easy read: Chair application form you can print and fill in with a pen](#) (PDF, 1.69 MB, 13 pages)

[Easy read: chair application form you can download and fill in on screen, save – then email or print](#) (PDF, 3.41 MB, 13 pages)

Member application form

[Member application form](#) (ODT, 7.94 KB)

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Contact us if you require the information in another format.

[Speech: International Holocaust Remembrance Day 2019: Foreign](#)

Secretary's Speech

Ambassdor, distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I'm incredibly honoured to be here today as we remember those 6 million.

Seventy-four years ago, almost to the day, Soviet soldiers advanced into Poland and liberated Auschwitz.

There, amid heaps of corpses, they discovered about 7,000 men, women and children, emaciated, starving, stricken by disease.

These broken human beings were among the handful of survivors of the 1.3 million people who had passed through the gates of Auschwitz.

One of them, of course, was Primo Levi, who was found by Russian soldiers lying incapacitated with scarlet fever, indelibly tattooed with an identity number that he would bear for the rest of his life: "174517".

In his classic, *If This Is a Man*, he struggled to describe the essence of the crime wrought by the Holocaust. He said, "Language lacks words to express this offence, the demolition of a man.

"In a moment, with almost prophetic intuition, the reality was revealed to us: we had reached the bottom. It is not possible to sink lower than this; no human condition is more miserable than this, nor could it conceivably be so.

"Nothing belongs to us any more: they have taken away our clothes, our shoes, even our hair. If we speak, they will not listen, and if they listen, they will not understand. They have even take away our name, and if we want to keep it, we will have to find in ourselves the strength to do so, to manage somehow so that behind the name, something of us – of us as we were – still remains."

Primo Levi and other remarkable people summoned enough strength to preserve their dignity in defiance of relentless efforts to extinguish the last embers of their humanity.

In 2006, I had the life-changing experience of visiting Auschwitz myself with Holocaust Education Trust. The trip was led by the inspirational Rabbi Barry Marcus, who many of you will know.

Before going into the concentration camp, we visited a museum to commemorate the Poles who had sheltered Jews. The penalty, of course, was death, not just for the individual, but for every member of that individual's family.

More than 5,000 Poles took that risk. Many others across Europe looked away. What would each of us do if history repeated itself?

I'll never forget standing on that railway platform where so many human beings' fate was decided by a simple instruction to turn left or right.

I'll never forget Rabbi Marcus singing in Hebrew as we reflected on the horror of what was around us. Nor will I forget the remarkable Polish guard who never once referred to Jews being killed: she always used the word 'murdered'.

And a question that troubled me as I tried to take all this in is, would I have looked away? Would I have done the right thing?

With three young children that I have now whose lives are just beginning, what would I have done?

So today as Foreign Secretary, it is an incredible privilege to honour some of those who did not look away, and who worked for the Foreign Office, or our sister organisation, the Secret Intelligence Service.

One of them was Captain Frank Foley, whose bust we shall shortly be unveiling.

Frank Foley fought in the trenches during World War One before being recruited by the British Government and dispatched to our Consulate in Berlin.

Ostensibly, he was in charge of passport control; in fact, he was an SIS officer – something that the Government has taken the exceptional step of publicly confirming.

After Hitler came to power in 1933, Foley used his official position to issue visas to thousands of Jews trying to escape Germany.

He applied the rules with what might be called sympathetic flexibility.

British visas could only be given to people with financial guarantees, a requirement that ruled out many Jewish applicants. So Foley invented a variety of ways to get around bureaucracy.

Richard Lachs, a Jewish company administrator, was one of many desperate people with no chance of providing any guarantees.

Penniless and unemployed, he had been hounded out of his job in Cologne and forced to take his family into hiding after the Kristallnacht pogroms.

He sought asylum in the United States, only to be rejected because the quota was full.

So he then applied for British visas for himself, his wife and their two children, with no guarantees – and little hope of success.

Richard Lachs's son, Werner, remembered what happened. "It was a Sunday morning," he said. "A friend was there, and the post produced a letter from the British Passport Control Office in Berlin, requesting that my parents

should send their passports to receive their visas. We just jumped up and down for joy.”

The Lachs family did not know it, but Foley found a way of overlooking the regulations. He appears to have decided that since someone else called Lachs had previously been granted a visa, that person’s guarantee could be taken to cover Richard Lachs and his family as well.

“I am 99 percent certain,” said Werner Lachs, “that but for Mr Foley, I and my family might have become another statistic of the Holocaust”.

Today, Werner Lachs is 92. He has nine grandchildren, four great-grandchildren and he lives in Prestwich. A few months before the outbreak of war in 1939, Foley arranged visas for a 24-year-old Jew called Gunter Powitzer and his infant son, Walter.

Yet, by the time the documents were ready, Powitzer had already been interned in Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

So Foley went to the camp himself and demanded the prisoner’s release, explaining that since Powitzer now held a British visa and was entitled to British protection.

Powitzer, who had recently been flogged, remembered how he was “bandaged, cleaned up and shaved” and presented to a “small man wearing glasses”.

“My name is Foley,” said the visitor. “I am from the British Consulate in Berlin.”

The following day, Powitzer was released from Sachsenhausen, reunited with his son and allowed to reach safety in what was then the British Mandate of Palestine.

Had Foley not acted, Powitzer would have stayed in the camp where 30,000 inmates would be murdered by 1945.

Nearly 70 years later, when a statue was raised to Foley in the Somerset town of his birth, a man called Asher Rubin wrote from Israel, “Frank Foley saved me and my father, Gunter Powitzer. Foley’s efforts are responsible for the lives of our family.”

I hope SIS will forgive me if I add that Foley made good use of what is euphemistically called ‘tradecraft’. He would direct Jews to reliable suppliers of fake passports.

He would place them in touch with SIS contacts who knew exactly how to cross the Swiss frontier. And he kept up a steady barrage of requests to London for more visas and more permits for Jews to settle in Palestine.

Yet, as the Ambassador alluded to, the bleak truth is that not everyone in the British Government of the day possessed the same moral clarity or the will to confront the realities of Hitlerism. The policy of appeasement, no matter how well intentioned, was futile and morally bankrupt.

We should reflect that it was not the state as a whole, but remarkable individuals like Frank Foley who did the right thing, made the correct moral choice, often in defiance of the rules.

So here I ask: what would each of us have done if we had been in his place?

Frank Foley died in 1958 having observed the code of his profession and kept silent about his service. Four decades passed before Michael Smith wrote his biography and he began to receive the posthumous recognition.

In 1999, Yad Vashem decided to honour Foley as one of the Righteous Among Nations.

One of the Jews he saved happens to be the father-in-law of my cabinet colleague, James Brokenshire. Others include the grandparents of an SIS officer who is serving today.

Thanks to Foley, many people were spared the ordeal that Primo Levi endured and chronicled.

But even as we take pride in the memory of Frank Foley, we should never lose sight of the hard truth that when the crucial moment came and the moral test was posed, there were too few people like him.

So today, we draw inspiration from his example, and we hope that those inspired will thus never be the next people to look away in the face of atrocity.

Thank you.