

Press release: New interim chair of Leasehold Advisory Service appointed

A new interim chair has been appointed at the Leasehold Advisory Service, the government has announced today (7 January 2019).

Wanda Goldwag will lead LEASE, an executive body that provides impartial advice to people in leasehold properties and park homes.

She will provide support to the organisation's Chief Executive, Anthony Essien, and its staff for a period of up to 18 months.

Wanda is also currently Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints, the board which controls the legal ombudsman service for England and Wales, and she brings extensive leadership experience and an in-depth knowledge of the legal advice sector to her new role.

Minister for Housing and Homelessness, Heather Wheeler MP, said:

LEASE has an important role in supporting leaseholders and helping them resolve problems, and I am pleased to appoint Wanda Goldwag as chair.

She will bring a level of expertise and knowledge from her previous roles which will be of real benefit to leaseholders.

The government is working hard to reform leasehold practises and ensure that the reality of home ownership can live up to the dream for those who purchase a leasehold home.

Wanda Goldwag said:

I am delighted to be able to help LEASE in this time of renewal of the organisation's aims.

I hope to ensure that LEASE is the first port of call for leaseholders, potential leaseholders and park home owners in England and Wales and that the organisation provides high quality information and initial advice to lay people.

Anthony Essien, Chief Executive of LEASE, said:

It is a testament to the standing of LEASE that someone of Wanda's calibre and experience sought, and has been appointed, to the role of interim Chair. We are all looking forward to working with Wanda as we move forward on the next step of LEASE's journey.

Wanda will lead LEASE over the next year and a half, helping to continue to improve the service provided by the organisation and ensuring effective delivery of leasehold advice to leaseholders.

She will also work with LEASE, as well as the department and ministers, to shape and influence the future agenda for the provision of advice and support to leaseholders, and on the development and implementation of the government's ongoing leasehold reforms.

Wanda has a portfolio of non-executive roles and has held a number of public appointments. She is a lay member of the Queen's Counsels appointments panel, Chair at the Legal Ombudsman, and a non-executive director of the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust, amongst others.

Her previous roles include being a Civil Service Commissioner. She holds a BSc (Econ) from the London School of Economics.

Wanda Goldwag has been appointed for a term of up to 18 months, commencing on 7 January 2019 and ending on 6 July 2020.

A photo of Wanda is available on request.

LEASE is an executive, non-statutory non-departmental public body which provides initial, impartial advice to leaseholders and park homes owners in England and Wales. It has also been given additional responsibilities to assist leaseholders affected by building and fire safety concerns.

It is sponsored and majority-funded by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government although it also receives a small amount of funding from the Welsh government to support the provision of advice to Welsh leaseholders and park home owners.

It provides its services through the internet, by email and letter, by telephone and face-to-face, and by outreach surgeries in the field.

Further information about LEASE is available on its website:

www.lease-advice.org/.

Press release: Preferred Candidate Selected for the role of Comptroller and Auditor General

Gareth Davies has been selected as the Government's preferred candidate to succeed Sir Amyas Morse as the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Gareth is a partner at the international accountancy and advisory firm Mazars LLP, where he leads on audit and advisory work for UK public services. He joined the firm in 2012 from the Audit Commission, where he was Managing Director, Audit Practice. He has 30 years' experience of auditing and advising public bodies including local authorities, NHS organisations and central government agencies.

Gareth is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. He is also currently a trustee and Honorary Treasurer at Save the Children UK and a trustee at the Institute of Development Studies.

As soon as Parliamentary time allows, the Prime Minister will seek to move a motion in the House for an address praying that Her Majesty make the appointment, in accordance with Section 11 of the Budget Responsibility and National Audit Act 2011.

[News story: Fly-tipping: New financial penalties in government fight against waste crime](#)

New financial penalties have come into force to crack down on fly-tipping. The majority of householders already dispose of their waste responsibly, however from today (7 January) any householder who fails to pass their waste to a licensed carrier, and whose waste is found fly-tipped, could face penalties of up to £400.

The government has also [issued guidance](#) to ensure councils use these new powers proportionately, which makes clear penalties should not be used as a means of raising money and should not be issued for minor breaches.

Potential fly-tipping by rogue operators, and the risk of a penalty, can be simply avoided by using certified waste carriers. Householders can search for registered waste carriers quickly and easily on the [Environment Agency's](#) website.

[Latest figures](#) show the government's crackdown on fly-tippers is delivering results, with no increase in the number of incidents for the first time in five years for the 2017/18 year.

To tackle the potential over-zealous enforcement on households, in 2015 the government removed criminal penalties for breaches of household bin requirements in favour of a new civil penalty system.

Councils were urged to use letters or notices on bins to remind people of

appropriate practices. This measured and balanced approach, set out in [further guidance](#), continues to allow councils to focus their efforts on the small minority who cause genuine harm to the local environment through irresponsible behaviour.

The guidance for councils on issuing the fixed penalty notices will continue to ensure they strike the right balance. This guidance also says that local authorities should consider whether the householder is a vulnerable person, for instance due to age related ill-health or a mental or physical disability.

We have also [committed](#) to clarifying charging arrangements for waste disposal in relation to small scale DIY construction activities carried out by ordinary householders, which the government has made clear should not be charged for at Household Waste Recycling Centres.

- We support local partners through the National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group (NFTPG) which has [published a series of fly-tipping prevention guides](#) for householders, businesses and landowners, outlining best practice for the prevention, reporting, investigation and clearance of fly-tipping.
- 88% of [councils agreed](#) a new fixed penalty notice would help tackle fly-tipping.
- We have already given councils the powers to hand out on-the-spot fines to fly-tippers, and made it easier for vehicles suspected of being used for fly-tipping to be stopped, searched and seized.
- Last year [councils issued](#) 69,000 on-the-spot penalties for fly-tipping offences.

[News story: Defence Secretary commends UK peacekeepers in South Sudan](#)

The UK must continue to set an example in the battle to bring equality and stability to the world's most fragile countries, the Defence Secretary has declared.

Gavin Williamson visited the UK's largest contribution to United Nations peacekeeping, the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), where military personnel have been running a hospital and improving infrastructure to keep internally displaced citizens safe.

More than 300 British troops are currently deployed across South Sudan and, with a £40.8million contribution last year, the UK is the third-largest humanitarian donor to the country.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The UK is a nation that leads from the front – promoting security, championing prosperity, and protecting human rights. We stand with the people of South Sudan, particularly those who suffer horrific crimes such as sexual and gender-based violence. We all want Africa's newest country to seek a peaceful and prosperous future.

Last month, UK troops in Bentiu completed upgrades to 15km of roads used to deliver vital food and aid. This means women will no longer be forced to make the long journey by foot each day, exposing them to risk of attack.

During his visit, the Defence Secretary also met with President Salva Kiir Mayardit, to discuss how efforts were going to bring peace to South Sudan following the signing of a peace agreement in October.

He also visited a UN Protection of Civilian (PoC) camp in Malakal to hear the stories of some of those who have been affected by the conflict and spoke with UK-funded aid workers to discuss the challenges they face daily.

Gavin Williamson visiting a UN Protection of Civilian (PoC) camp in Malakal. Crown copyright.

Mr Williamson then went to a UK aid funded female only safe space which has been created for victims of sexual violence to find out what more the UK's military can do to support those who have suffered horrific crimes such as rape and kidnap. He finished the South Sudan leg of the visit by travelling to Bentiu to officially hand over control of a Level 2 Field Hospital, which had been built and run by the UK, to Vietnamese medical staff who are on their first UN deployment.

Gavin Williamson visiting a UK aid funded female only safe space which has been created for victims of sexual violence. Crown copyright.

Following South Sudan, he travelled to Somaliland to meet with President Bihi. The first British Cabinet Minister to visit Somaliland, Mr Williamson discussed the shared priorities of security and economic development as well as counter terrorism and the role UK military plays in mentoring the Somaliland coastguard.

Speech: PM speech at NHS plan launch: 7 January 2019

Thank you Simon for giving us that overview of the NHS Long-Term Plan.

I am delighted to be here with you all on this exciting occasion – because it's one that truly marks a historic moment for patients across the nation.

And I am pleased that this plan is being launched here at Alder Hey – a hospital recognised for delivering world-class care. It's over one hundred years since Alder Hey first opened its doors to treat and improve the lives of our children. And much has changed since then.

Advances in healthcare – from vaccinations through to drug treatments – have dramatically improved young people's health.

But what has not changed is the extraordinary care and compassion of the hospital's staff.

Something I have just seen for myself on the general paediatric ward – where brave young children are treated with outstanding kindness and dedication, and of course first-class medical care.

And today, as we launch the Long-Term Plan here at Alder Hey – we are taking a big step to secure the future of our NHS for our children – and for their children.

Now I have always felt incredibly proud to live in a country with a health service that is there for all of us when we need it most. Free at the point of use. Based on clinical need and not the ability to pay, and there for us at every stage of our lives.

And at the very heart of our health service are its staff. Time and again, our doctors, nurses and other health professionals have demonstrated why the NHS stands shoulder to shoulder with the best in the world.

They are the reason why the NHS is one of this country's greatest institutions. An institution that is consistently what makes the people of this country most proud to be British.

As a government we have always recognised this unique importance of the NHS.

That's why in 2010, when we took office and had to deal with the record peacetime deficit we inherited, we prioritised the NHS with real terms increases in spending every year.

That money has delivered real improvements for patients.

But demand for NHS services continues to grow – and our health service faces increasing challenges from an ageing population with complex health needs. It also needs to transform services and exploit the opportunities provided by new technologies.

NHS leaders told us that making the necessary changes in technology, workforce and infrastructure will take time and careful planning. That's why last year – in its 70th year – I committed to an ambitious funding proposal to help make the NHS fit for the future.

Not a one-off injection of cash. Not money to plug a gap or shore up a problem – but funding to protect the long-term future of the NHS.

Over the next five years – the NHS England budget will increase by £20.5 billion in real terms compared to today.

This commitment is possible because of our strong public finances, and because as we leave the EU and take back control of our money, we will no longer be sending vast annual sums to Brussels.

And crucially we have funded this commitment with no increase to people's taxes.

The NHS is the public's priority, and so I have made it my number one spending priority.

In return for this funding – because this is not just about money – I asked the NHS to draw up a long term plan, one that is clinically led and locally supported, with an absolute focus on cutting waste and ensuring every penny is well spent.

And as we have just heard from Simon – this is a plan that will set the vision for the NHS over the coming decade.

So together – the five-year funding settlement along with the ten-year plan – will provide both the certainty and long-term direction needed to transform patient care and secure the future of our NHS.

Now as Simon has just referenced, last June, I set out six priorities which I wanted to see central to the plan – and which I am pleased to see reflected today.

A more integrated health system that views health holistically – organising care around the physical, mental and social needs of the patient, and centring on what matters most to them.

A health service that focuses much more on prevention and early diagnosis in order to address the needs of an ageing population.

An emphasis on reducing variation between organisations across the NHS so that the world class care available to some reaches all parts of the country.

A service where the workforce are better supported and recognised as the lifeblood of our NHS.

And I wanted to see the NHS make greater use of technology, not only to make healthcare safer and more effective – but to make the most of exciting new possibilities and give you greater control over your own care. That means everything from being able to monitor conditions from the comfort of your home, to accessing your GP via your smartphone.

Finally, I wanted to see the NHS go further than ever before to ensure mental health gets the proper attention it deserves, putting it on a par with physical health.

So we are reshaping the NHS around the changing needs of patients today.

The Long-Term Plan delivers against each of these six priorities – and much more – with actions backed up by record investment.

And precisely because the plan is over 10 years, we can go much further on integrating care and embedding technology than we otherwise would have been able to.

But a plan is only as good as its delivery.

And ensuring its benefits are felt by patients will require strong leadership and front line support.

That means empowering the NHS workforce to deliver – encouraging leaders in each organisation to learn from the best and for the best to help others.

And while many hundreds of people have contributed to the plan's development, over the coming months a broader range of local NHS leaders and front line staff will need to shape how it is implemented across the country.

And I want to thank Baroness Dido Harding for leading on the workforce aspects of this.

Not everything can be done at once – so, as always, there will be some careful choices to make. But delivered effectively our Long-Term Plan for the NHS will secure our health service for generations to come.

Finally, I want to say a huge thank you to Simon Stevens, Ian Dalton, NHS staff, charities, voluntary groups and patients – and all those who have worked so hard, and contributed to this plan – as well as to Matt Hancock and his predecessor, Jeremy Hunt.

This is an historic moment. Our vision is clear. Our commitment is assured. So let's deliver the NHS of the future.