

[Press release: PM statement on Lord Ashdown](#)



Prime Minister Theresa May said:

It is with great sadness that I have learned of the passing of Lord Ashdown.

Paddy Ashdown served his country with distinction from his career in the Royal Marines and intelligence services, as Member of Parliament for Yeovil, Leader of the Liberal Democrats and later as High Representative of the International Community and EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

He dedicated his life to public service and he will be sorely missed. My thoughts and condolences are with his family and friends at this difficult time.

Published 22 December 2018

[News story: Defence Secretary reaffirms support to Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression](#)

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson reaffirmed the United Kingdom's commitment to working closely with Ukraine in the face of shared threats when he met Ukrainian Defence Minister Stepan Poltorak on a visit to Odesa.

Mr Williamson visited Royal Navy vessel HMS ECHO, whose planned deployment to

the Black Sea and Ukraine he accelerated. This is a clear demonstration of the UK's unwavering support both to Ukraine's territorial sovereignty and freedom of navigation. This followed the latest in a pattern of Russian hostile acts, the illegal seizure of Ukrainian vessels and 24 servicemen by Russia last month.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The UK is a steadfast partner to Ukraine as it faces continued illegal acts of aggression against its sovereignty.

HMS Echo's deployment is a further demonstration of our resolute support and commitment to cooperate with the Ukrainian military.

While in Odesa the Defence Secretary also gained an insight into the personal cost Russia's actions have wreaked on the people of Ukraine when he met with families of the detained servicemen.

He reaffirmed that the UK stood shoulder-to-shoulder alongside the international community in calling for their immediate release.

In conversations with Mr Poltorak the Defence Secretary discussed the progress being made on the UK's military training mission to Ukraine Operation Orbital, which he announced would be extended until 2020 on his last visit in September.

Further to the deployment of HMS Echo – whose passage through the Black Sea was notified to regional authorities through the Montreux Convention – the UK will also be offering support and mentoring to the Ukrainian Navy and deploying training teams made up from the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and the Army in January and March 2019.

The UK and Ukrainian Armed Forces will also gain further opportunities to develop capability and share expertise by committing to bilateral exercises next year.

Since the start of 2015, British personnel have trained over 9,500 of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

[Press release: South Sudan: Harassment of East African Monitoring Group](#)



The Troika (United States, Norway, and the UK) join IGAD in condemning the harassment and abuse of monitors from the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mission (CTSAMVM) on Tuesday 18 December. We are deeply concerned at reports that the attack on the monitors was carried out by the South Sudanese National Security Service. It is imperative that the Government of South Sudan investigate and hold accountable those found responsible. Any action that compromises the safety, integrity, and free movement of the CTSAMVM mission is unacceptable and a breach of the September 12 peace agreement, to which the Government of South Sudan is a party. CTSAMVM's verification mission is essential to ensuring accountability for actions that undermine peace. In doing so, it plays an essential role in building the confidence needed if a lasting peace in South Sudan is to be realised.

Further information

Published 22 December 2018

[Press release: £11.5 million fund to tackle loneliness across England](#)

- Tens of thousands of people experiencing loneliness to benefit from new £11.5m fund
- Building Connections Fund to be invested in organisations throughout England
- 126 organisations to receive funding to expand programmes

Tens of thousands of people will be given greater access to befriending services, community arts groups and support schemes through a new £11.5 million fund to tackle loneliness in England, Minister for Loneliness Mims

Davies announced.

The 126 organisations to benefit from the new funding include new community transport links to support those most at risk of isolation, innovative digital solutions that enable elderly people and young care leavers to connect with their peers and one to one support for LGBT+ people suffering from loneliness.

The Building Connections Fund is the first ever Government fund dedicated to reducing loneliness in England and will target people from all age groups and backgrounds.

Funding will also go to expanding existing programmes that harness sport, arts or music as a way to encourage people to establish lasting and meaningful friendships with those who have similar hobbies and interests.

Minister for Loneliness, Mims Davies, said:

There is no one cause of loneliness and therefore no one solution. That is why we are working alongside a broad range of businesses, voluntary organisations and local councils to ensure that those who feel alone are best supported.

From new digital communities, to sports classes that bring people together, this fund will go a long way to achieving that goal. I am committed to encouraging open conversations around this sensitive topic to reduce the stigma and create an environment where everyone is better connected.

The fund was created earlier this year in partnership between the government, Big Lottery Fund and the Co-op Foundation.

Dawn Austwick, Chief Executive of the Big Lottery Fund, said:

Loneliness can affect anyone, young or old. Across the country, this money will enable organisations to deliver activities ranging from rural rambling groups and community cafes, to walking football sessions and a social media platform for care leavers. Whatever the focus of the project, they all aim to help people make new connections that boost wellbeing and help to reduce feelings of loneliness.

We're proud to work with DCMS and the Co-op Foundation to support this important work. It's wonderful to see funding raised by National Lottery players supporting a wide range of community-led activity that will reduce social isolation.

Jamie Ward-Smith, Chair of the Co-op Foundation, the leading funder of projects tackling youth loneliness in the country, said:

By partnering with government on the youth strand of the Building Connections Fund, Co-op Foundation is supporting groups of young people most affected by loneliness to strengthen their connections and sense of belonging.

Our funding will support young people, including young carers and those with experience of care and bereavement, to find innovative solutions to loneliness so they can build their confidence and skills.

We look forward to working with our new partners over the coming years, helping them to tackle youth loneliness at a community level and boosting our joint understanding of loneliness.

The grantee announcement is supported the Government's first ever loneliness strategy, launched by the Prime Minister in October, which provided a powerful vision to reduce loneliness in the long term.

Grants from the Building Connections Fund for successful applicants will run until March 2021.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- For further information – contact the DCMS press office on: 0207 211 2210.
- Full list of [grantees](#) (PDF, 231KB, 28 pages)
- New Philanthropy Capital has been appointed by DCMS, Big Lottery Fund and Co-op Foundation as the evaluation and learning partner to capture learning on the impact of the Fund and support capability building of grant-holders. New Philanthropy Capital will be working in partnership with the Centre for Youth Impact, the What Works Centre for Wellbeing, Brunel University and Bryson Purdon Social Research.
- Co-op Foundation funding will be used by organisations to explore youth loneliness in greater depth, test youth-led innovations within their existing provision, and share their learning as part of its national Belong network.

About the Building Connections Fund Youth strand

- 22 projects have received funding from the Building Connections Fund Youth strand – a £2m partnership between government and the Co-op Foundation.
- Funding of up to £80,000, to be spent by March 2021, was available for projects that supported any groups of young people within the most deprived 30% areas of England or that mainly benefited young people with any one or more of the following circumstances:
- Being a carer
- Being unemployed or precariously employed

- Experiencing bereavement
- Having a disability or long-term health condition
- Having been in the care system.

About Co-op Foundation

- Co-op Foundation is the Co-op's charity, set up to help communities UK-wide work together to make things better.
 - Co-op Foundation is the leading funder of projects tackling youth loneliness in the UK. Its 'Belong' programme aims to connect and empower at least 5,000 young people while also strengthening youth services and tackling stigma associated with loneliness.
 - The Foundation provides interest-free loans and grants to eligible organisations looking to grow sustainably-funded community spaces.
 - Co-op Foundation is a working name of Co-operative Community Investment Foundation, a charity registered in England and Wales (1093028) and Scotland (SC048102).
 - www.coopfoundation.org.uk
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[Press release: Foreign Secretary welcomes adoption of new UN Security Council resolution on Yemen peace process](#)

Today the United Nations Security Council voted unanimously to adopt Security Council Resolution 2451, a UK-led resolution to bolster the UN Yemen peace process.

The new resolution, the first to be passed on the conflict in Yemen since 2016, is designed to build on the momentum generated by UN peace talks in Stockholm last week.

The resolution calls for a ceasefire in Hodeidah governorate as agreed in Stockholm and support for the work of the UN Special Envoy Martin Griffiths.

The resolution will also authorise the UN to take on the monitoring and other tasks it has committed to doing in Stockholm.

The UK first circulated a draft resolution on 19 November, following Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt's visits to Saudi Arabia, UAE and Iran where he encouraged all parties to accelerate efforts to resolve the Yemen crisis.

Following representations made to the UK, the UK decided to delay tabling the resolution to allow it to reflect developments made during the peace talks.

Last week the Foreign Secretary travelled to Stockholm to attend the Yemen peace talks and met with leaders of the delegations of both parties, becoming the first UK Minister to meet with the Houthis.

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

This Resolution is an important step along Yemen's peace process. The unequivocal backing from the UN Security Council proves without a doubt that the international community fully endorses a political solution to the conflict.

We must now focus all our efforts on addressing the urgent humanitarian needs of the people of Yemen and locking-in the historic agreements made by the parties in Stockholm. The world has an opportunity to prevent further devastation in Yemen, and the UK will continue to use all the diplomatic and humanitarian tools at our command to bring this terrible conflict to an end.

Further information