

[News story: Will you be ready for GDPR before 25 May?](#)

Data protection regulation is set to change on 25 May this year as part of new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) laws, which could affect how organisations and businesses collect, use and store people's personal data.

Your customers, employees and other individuals need to be able to trust you to look after and use their personal data responsibly and safely. Knowing they can trust you is good for your organisation or business and you may risk a fine if you don't comply.

To help you prepare, you can:

- Take the [Information Commissioner's Office \(ICO\) self-assessment test](#) to see if GDPR affects you
- Follow the [guidance on the ICO's website](#)

Your professional association or trade body can also provide advice.

[Speech: On peacebuilding and sustaining peace](#)

Mr President, Excellencies,

The world today is experiencing greater instability and a wider range of threats to peace than we have seen for a generation.

The scale of violent conflict, and the desperate human suffering it causes, is immense. If we are to truly realise the ambition of the UN Charter, that said "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", then the need for peace, and the real motivation to prevent further conflict, is as great as ever before.

And that is why the UK very much welcomes Secretary General Guterres' vision for peacebuilding and sustaining peace, and particularly the renewed focus on conflict prevention, that is set out in the report.

We also fully endorse the idea that sustaining peace should be a shared priority across the whole United Nations system – from peace and security to development and human rights.

We have summarised the key elements needed to successfully sustain peace into four clear and memorable pillars; the four 'Ds' approach. The first is

diversification; diversification of the tools the UN deploys to promote and sustain peace. Secondly, development; more effective development interventions to address the drivers of conflict; Thirdly, diplomacy active diplomacy to de-escalate crises and create the political conditions for long-term peace; and finally the fourth element which is delivery, efficient delivery in partnership with others.

In this regard, the UK has identified three key priorities:

Firstly, developing a stronger partnership for peace between the UN and the World Bank. Their combined vision, expertise and global presence are essential to ensure that multilateral investments in development tackle the drivers of conflict;

Secondly, encouraging more preventive diplomacy within the UN, because we all know that political agreements are the bedrock of effective conflict prevention and peacebuilding; and,

Thirdly, we need to ensure smoother transitions to and from Peacekeeping missions in country to other UN entities, through earlier and better and more effective planning.

For the United Kingdom, these three priorities are underpinned by our wider commitment to a broader, values-driven, protection agenda.

In that context, the UN's work to tackle Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and in preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, efforts are extremely important, indeed for me personally and for our Prime Minister Mrs. May, as her personal representative on the issue of Preventing Sexual Violence. The UK plays a leading role on these two issues.

And of course sustaining peace is part of the wider UN reform agenda that the United Kingdom also supports.

As we look to the future, we need to be more creative in finding ways to broaden the donor base for peacebuilding, and to deliver more thorough solutions and through the partnerships the UN enjoys with a wide range of organisations.

As a leading contributor to peacebuilding over many years, both politically and financially, the UK stands ready. It stands ready to support the process set out in the UNGA Resolution, so that, together, we can work effectively to sustain peace, and create a world in which future generations are saved from the scourge of war.

Press release: Penny Mordaunt announces UK aid commitment to protect civilians, aid workers and hospitals targeted by the Asad regime

Women and children are evacuated from eastern Ghouta, Syria, March 2018.
Picture: UNICEF/Omar Sanadiki

The UK will provide lifesaving emergency medical support and help protect medical facilities and brave humanitarian workers that are being deliberately targeted with bombs and chemical weapons by the Asad regime, the International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt will say in Brussels today (Wednesday 25 April).

UK aid will help to train thousands of doctors and nurses to deliver trauma care in the most extreme conflict zones and to immediately respond to attacks, including how to remove shrapnel and treat blast injuries, burns and wounds from mortar fire. It will also provide essential medical supplies such as sutures, oxygen, blood and anaesthetics.

UK support aims to keep medical facilities open and we are providing blast proofing materials and sandbags to reinforce underground medical facilities and limit the damage from attacks.

Ms Mordaunt announced that the UK will provide at least £450 million this year to alleviate the extreme suffering in Syria, as well as providing vital support to millions of Syrian refugees sheltering in neighbouring countries.

With at least 30,000 people currently injured every month in Syria, it is expected that around a quarter of this UK aid support in Syria will be spent on healthcare next year.

Speaking at the Brussels conference on 'Supporting the Future of Syria and the region', Ms Mordaunt is expected to say:

It is clear the Syrian Regime and its backers, Russia and Iran, will attempt to block every diplomatic effort to hold the regime accountable for these reprehensible and illegal tactics.

Syria is now one of the most dangerous places on earth for aid workers and medical staff. Medical facilities and schools have been deliberately targeted, aid has been blocked to starve communities into submission, and rape and sexual violence have been deployed as routine weapons of war.

Today's pledge of UK aid support will help keep medical facilities

open in the face of relentless attacks so doctors and nurses can save the lives of innocent Syrians, as well as helping the millions of Syrian refugees sheltering in neighbouring countries. But today can't only be about pledges of money and we cannot allow anyone to turn their backs on the global rules and standards that keep us all safe.

We're calling for an immediate ceasefire and safe access so that brave aid workers and medical staff can do their jobs without fear of attack. This year, we must go beyond commitments. We must see concrete actions, which lead to greater protection for civilians and aid workers and work together to put Syria on a path towards peace.

It is estimated that at least 478 health facilities have been attacked or destroyed and at least 830 health workers have been killed in Syria since the conflict began in 2011.

There has been an increase in the number of health facilities in Syria targeted in the first months of 2018, with 36 facilities attacked in February alone.

Last year UK aid supported more than 175 health facilities, with more than 11,000 trained healthcare workers that delivered 2.2 million consultations.

On top of this, UK support has provided specialist training and equipment to respond to chemical weapons attacks, as well as providing personal protective equipment for frontline aid workers and 20,000 ampules of antidote to treat the effects of some chemical agents.

The UK will continue to use our position as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and on the Human Rights Council to support resolutions that seek to protect civilians and humanitarian workers, as well as calling for existing resolutions to be observed by the regime and its backers.

With 5.6 million Syrian refugees sheltering in neighbouring countries, the UK aid commitment announced today will also provide support in Jordan and Lebanon so that Syrian refugees can remain close to home until they are one day able to return safely. On top of this, the UK will provide additional support for refugees in Turkey.

Notes for Editors

1. The International Development Secretary has committed to provide at least £450 million for Syria and the region in 2018 and £300 million in 2019. This brings the total amount that the UK has committed in humanitarian funding to the Syria region to £2.71 billion, up from £2.46 billion. The UK's pledge for 2018 includes £200 million of new money for the crisis, and our pledge for 2019 includes £50 million of new money.

2. In addition, the International Development Secretary also confirmed that the UK will pay its part of the second round of the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRIT2).
3. The UK is a leading donor in the humanitarian response. To date, we have committed over £2.71 billion in humanitarian funding to the region.
4. UK aid has already delivered over 27 million food rations, 10 million relief packages, 10 million vaccines and 12 million health consultations for those in need in Syria.
5. For security reasons, we cannot disclose the specific areas that our partners work in.
6. For more information on the UK's humanitarian response to the Syria crisis, visit:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/factsheet-the-uks-humanitarian-aid-response-to-the-syria-crisis>

ENDS

News story: Britain bites back in the fight against loan sharks

Britain bites back in the fight against loan sharks

Loan sharks face a fresh crackdown today (25 April), with more funding to tackle unlawful lending, and an increase in the amount of money seized from loan sharks to support those most vulnerable to their nasty tactics.

- over £5.5 million will be spent to fund the fight against loan sharks, helping to investigate and prosecute illegal lenders, and support their victims
- £100,000 of money already seized from loan sharks will also be spent to encourage people in England at risk of being targeted by loan sharks to join a credit union, helping them to access a safer form of finance and get their lives back on track
- and for the first time in Northern Ireland a new education project will be created to raise awareness of the dangers of loan sharks and to support vulnerable communities

John Glen, Economic Secretary to the Treasury said:

These nasty lenders are nothing more than lowlife crooks taking hard-earned cash from the pockets of the most vulnerable. Over 300,000 people are in debt to illegal money lenders in the Britain and they need to know that we're on their side. That's why we're taking the fight to the loan sharks and spending more than ever to support their victims.

In total, £5.67 million of funding will be provided to Britain's Illegal Money Lending Teams (IMLT) and bodies in Northern Ireland to tackle illegal lending – a 16% increase compared to the previous year. The money will be used to investigate and prosecute illegal lenders, and to support those who have been the victim of a loan shark.

Since the Illegal Money Lending Team was established in England in 2004, they've made over 380 prosecutions, leading to 328 years' worth of sentences, and have written off over £73 million of illegal debt, helping over 28,000 people to escape the jaws of the loan sharks. Similar teams operate in Scotland and Wales.

In Northern Ireland, the Consumer Council will lead its first ever education and awareness campaign to help prevent the most vulnerable from being bitten by loan sharks, and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) will get funding for a specialised officer who will lead on illegal lending within the Paramilitary Crime Task Force.

Tony Quigley, Head of the England Illegal Money Lending Team, said:

Loan sharks are a blight on society and prey on vulnerable people who struggle to make ends meet. These criminals use callous methods to enforce repayment and victims are often subjected to threats, intimidation and violence. We will not tolerate this sort of criminal activity in our country and loan sharks who are caught flouting the law will be pursued and prosecuted.

It is important for people to realise that alternatives to borrowing from loan sharks are available if you are in financial difficulty. Loan sharks are never the answer and we strongly support credit unions who can provide a safe and legal alternative. If you have been affected by illegal money lending, please call our confidential hotline on 0300 555 2222.

[Press release: Government champions](#)

innovation in bid to build well-designed homes

- Ministers to call for closer links between government and industry to deliver well-designed homes.
- Industry summit to promote quality design to help deliver new homes and fix the broken housing market.

Ministers will today (25 April 2018) call on industry to embrace the latest innovations to make sure we are building the good quality homes that our country needs.

As part of the government's focus on fixing the broken housing market and its ambition of delivering 300,000 new homes in England by the mid-2020s, it's essential that the quality and design of new housing is addressed. This can help secure support from communities for new homes, and make sure we have good quality homes that people can feel proud living in and next-door to.

Recent research shows that more than 7 out of 10 people would support new residential development if buildings are well-designed and in keeping with their local area.

Action to boost innovative approaches for well-designed new homes include:

£1 billion investment through the Home Building Fund to develop new, modern approaches to design and construction

To date, 8 projects across 11 local authorities, backed by government funding, will use modern methods of construction such as modular homes to build good quality homes, using the latest techniques, whilst helping to speed up housing delivery.

Learning from other countries like Australia, Norway and Sweden where good design is embedded in decision making

For example, based on an Australian model, the government will urge councils to set their own design quality standards, giving communities the ability to better reflect their own unique character in local planning policy.

Embracing new technologies

For example using Virtual Reality (VR) technology to win the confidence of communities before a single brick is laid. By visualising proposed new housing from the neighbour or homebuyer's perspective, communities will be able to see how development can visually contribute to the area from an early stage, even before planning permission has been granted.

Housing Secretary Sajid Javid will say:

Our homes are the making of all of us, which is why today's event on raising the bar on the quality of new homes is so important.

This government is determined to make sure that high quality design is the norm rather than the exception.

Housing Minister Dominic Raab will say:

We are putting high-quality design on the map as never before when it comes to building better homes and stronger communities.

Today's conference marks an important milestone in that journey.

Industry leaders, including local authority planners, developers and design professionals, attending the Design Quality Conference will share their expertise to ensure how homes look becomes just as important as the number delivered.

Ministers will focus on how developers can use better quality design in order to win over both communities and new generations of first-time buyers, who expect the highest quality homes before parting with their hard-earned deposits.

When things go wrong, the government has also proposed strengthening ways for homebuyers to complain when their home hasn't been built satisfactorily – with these new measures recently being subject to a [consultation](#).

The event will build on previous government action to ensure new homes are built using quality materials and design methods, as set out in the recently published [draft National Planning Policy Framework](#).

The document, which is currently out to consultation, outlines requirements for design guides and codes to feature prominently in new Local Plans, significant consideration to be given to existing local character as well as setting out the density of developments that meet the needs and expectations of the community.

The conference will also include speakers from the Royal Institute of British Architects, Stephen Lawrence Trust, The Princes Foundation, Historic England and Homes England as well as other experts with experience in delivering excellent build quality for new and existing communities.

A series of exhibitions and seminar workshops will be held during the day, focusing on a range of issues such as:

- How to use quality methods and materials to create supportive communities.
- New approaches that lead to quality design in practice.
- Using new technologies that support greater community engagement in design, approaches to measuring quality and presentation.

- Training, skills development and latest innovation to ensure the use of good design principals spread across the industry.
- The expectations of consultee organisations such as Historic England, Homes England and the National Infrastructure Commission in designing homes that fit in with their wider setting.

National Planning Policy Framework

In the [revised National Planning Policy Framework](#) it is made clear that the government is committed to ensuring the planning system can deliver high quality buildings and places.

The document sets out that permission should be refused for a development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in local policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development.

Housing white paper

The [housing white paper](#) published in February 2017 also set out the government's ambition to give communities a stronger voice in the design of new housing, and to drive up the quality and character of new development, building on the success of neighbourhood planning.

Home Building Fund

The £3 billion [Home Building Fund](#) provides support for builders using modern methods of construction, custom builders, and new entrants to the market. An additional £1.5 million announced in the Autumn Budget will help small and medium-sized builders who cannot access the finance they need.

Eight projects employing modern methods of construction have been awarded almost £1 billion through the Home Building Fund to date.