

[Press release: Shorter hopes for a symbolic year for women in Lebanon](#)



Ambassador Shorter meets Lebanese Forces leader Geagea

British Ambassador to Lebanon Hugo Shorter met with the leader of the Lebanese Forces Party Samir Geagea.

After the meeting Ambassador Shorter said:

I had a good meeting today with the head of the Lebanese Forces Party, Samir Geagea. Our discussions covered a range of issues including the upcoming parliamentary elections in May. I am hopeful that the Lebanese Forces are considering positively the inclusion of more female candidates on electoral lists.

It is a symbolic year for women in the UK with the celebration of 100 years of women suffrage. I hope it will be a symbolic year for women in Lebanon, with the elections representing an important opportunity to boost inclusion and representation of women.

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[News story: National Apprenticeship Week 2018 – as it happens](#)

Secretary of State for Education Damian Hinds MP and Sue Husband, Director of the National Apprenticeship Service at the NAW 2018 launch event at BBC Broadcasting House.

The 11th National Apprenticeship Week (#NAW2018) will bring together employers and apprentices from across England to showcase the success of apprenticeships whilst encouraging even more people to choose apprenticeships as a pathway to a great career.

Monday, 5 March

National Apprenticeship Week 2018 commenced with an event at the BBC and the [announcement of a new ground-breaking apprenticeship programme](#).

With speakers including Secretary of State for Education Damian Hinds MP, Claire Paul, the BBC's Director of Leadership Development and New Talent, Sue Husband, Director of the National Apprenticeship and hosted by BBC Home Affairs Editor Mark Easton, the event showcased why apprenticeships work and people should choose an apprenticeship as a pathway to a great career.

Apprentices addressing the audience included Rachel Coburn and Jonathan Chappell-Seetayah, both from the BBC; Katherine Sweeting, Andrew Fuller, Prem Lama, Roseanne Mills and Martina Tredgett from the RAF; Jamala Osman from Barclays; and Caitlin Stuart from Troup Bywater + Anders.

Apprenticeship & Skills Minister Anne Milton shared breakfast this morning with apprentices from Kelloggs, based in Manchester. The visit gave the Minister an insight into the apprenticeship programme delivered by Kelloggs. The Minister then visited St Ambrose RC High School where she attended a 10K Talk before chairing a roundtable with young people to discuss their views and their perceptions of apprenticeships.

Apprenticeship and Skills Minister Anne Milton sharing breakfast with apprentices from Kelloggs

Northern Saints Church of England Primary School in Sunderland gave the thumbs up to a shop floor visit at Unipres UK – on day one of National Apprenticeship Week. These potential future apprentices received a tour of the shop floor from apprentices, before witnessing fanuc robots in action too.

Our hashtag #NAW2018 and National Apprenticeship Week were both trending on Twitter throughout launch day.

Get involved

Full details of the events happening across England can be found on the [events map](#).

Events and activities for the week will be shared on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) over the week, and event images will also be made available on [Flickr](#).

News story: 2018 Groceries Code Adjudicator annual sector survey

Take part in the survey on the [YouGov website](#)

The Groceries Code Adjudicator (the GCA) has launched her fifth annual survey of the groceries sector. The annual survey allows the GCA to collect the most comprehensive set of views on current Code-related issues facing suppliers.

The GCA is seeking experiences and views from suppliers and others in the sector on how the 10 regulated retailers are complying with the Groceries Supply Code of Practice.

The survey will be an important source of information for the GCA about current retailer practices and changes over the past twelve months. The information provided will help the Adjudicator focus her attention for the year ahead.

All the information you provide is treated in strict confidence.

All answers are collated and analysed by YouGov and respondents are not identified to the GCA without their prior consent.

The results will be presented at the GCA Conference on 25 June 2018.

The survey will be open from 5 March 2017 to 22 April 2018.

Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on Syrian ceasefire

I am deeply concerned by the continued military campaign against the civilians of Eastern Ghouta and credible reports that Russian aircraft are actively participating alongside the Asad regime, contrary to the Security Council's demand in UNSCR 2401 for a 30-day ceasefire in Syria. The areas suffering from bombardments are civilian populated areas.

There are reports of a death toll of more than 600 civilians in the last two weeks, including 200 airstrikes and over 100 killed since Russia voted in favour of the ceasefire. All this in an area that, lest we forget, Russia itself announced as a de-escalation zone through the Astana Process.

The main Opposition armed groups on the ground are involved in the UN-led Geneva process and Russia's own Astana process and have clearly committed to full implementation of the UNSCR. These groups are not terrorists – they

support a negotiated political solution to the crisis in Syria. Having voted for UNSCR 2401 less than a week ago, Russia has a responsibility to ensure implementation of the ceasefire.

The people of Eastern Ghouta have endured enough, among broken promises of ceasefires and humanitarian pauses. We demand that Russia and the regime cease hostilities immediately and ensure the sustained delivery of humanitarian aid to Eastern Ghouta and medical evacuations, as called for by the UN Human Rights Council this morning in a UK-proposed Resolution. The people of Eastern Ghouta can wait no longer.

[News story: Government outlines strengthened plans to tackle child abuse](#)

The Government has today (5 March) set out plans to strengthen information sharing between police, social workers and healthcare professionals to tackle child abuse and neglect, and to improve joint working and decision-making.

Building on the ambitious programme of reform to the children's social care system, the Home Office and Department for Education have responded to a joint consultation, 'Reporting and acting on child abuse and neglect', which sought views on how to best protect vulnerable children from abuse and neglect in all its forms.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerabilities, Victoria Atkins said:

Child sexual exploitation and abuse are sickening crimes which this Government has done more than any other to tackle. In the past we have seen vulnerable children let down by the very people who should have protected them from harm. We are clear that this must never be repeated.

We have set a clear expectation on the police by giving child sexual abuse the status of a national threat, set up joint inspections of health, police, and children's social care, and introduced a national whistleblowing helpline with the NSPCC for any employee who wants to raise a concern about how their organisation is dealing with a concern about a child.

The consultation sought views on issues relating to the child protection system, specifically proposals to introduce additional legal duties for professionals and organisations working to protect young people. These

proposed changes to the law included mandatory reporting of any concern relating to child abuse by practitioners, and a duty to act, whereby individuals could face professional or criminal sanctions for failing to take appropriate action where child abuse was known or suspected. The consultation received a response of more than 760 responses from social workers, police officers, local government, children's charities, educators and health professionals, victim support groups, and other members of the public.

Of these responses, the majority disagreed with introducing new statutory requirements. Nearly 70% felt mandatory reporting could have an adverse impact on the child protection system and 85% said it would not in itself lead to appropriate action being taken to protect children. Only 25% were in favour of a duty to act, and less than half that number (12%) supported introducing mandatory reporting.

The evidence received does not demonstrate that either of the proposals would sufficiently improve outcomes for children. Rather, feedback suggests that these additional measures could risk creating unnecessary burdens, divert attention from the most serious cases, hamper professional judgement, and potentially jeopardise the vital relationships between social workers and vulnerable families in their care.

England already has a higher rate of reporting than countries where such duties are in place, and the evidence from serious case reviews, Ofsted inspections and the consultation responses does not suggest there is a systemic problem.

Instead, the majority of respondents (63%) were in favour of allowing the Government's existing programme of child protection reforms time to embed before considering additional statutory measures. Reflecting on considering the current child protection system, respondents called for better joint working between different local agencies, further work to encourage new and innovative practice, and better training for practitioners.

Children and Families Minister, Nadhim Zahawi, said:

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the social workers and other professionals who support the most vulnerable in our society, especially those who have been victims of abuse.

The response to this consultation shows the strength of feeling among the sector on this extremely important issue, and it's vital that we work directly with people on the ground, supporting them to carry out their work sensitively and efficiently.

Decisions we make as a government should be with the ambition of improving outcomes for as many in society as possible, which is why we must listen to the views and experience of the sector as we progress further with our reform agenda.

National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Child Protection, Chief Constable

Simon Bailey said:

I'm pleased that the Government has listened to the views of frontline professionals by promising to work with us to improve coordination between agencies as they work to tackle child sexual abuse.

Teachers, social workers and other professionals can and do play a vital role in keeping children safe from harm but our research suggests imposing additional legal requirements on them could be counterintuitive – with forces finding themselves inundated with reports that shouldn't ever have been made.

Key to tackling this horrendous crime is ensuring these dedicated professionals are well trained in how to spot the signs of abuse and act on them, and that agencies are truly coordinated.

Chief Social Worker for Children and Families, Isabelle Trowler, said:

The Government has listened to the views of social work leaders who know the system best and understand the unintended consequences that introducing mandatory reporting could produce.

Our focus should be to continue building public confidence in our first-class child protection system which holds a door wide open for vulnerable children and also provides support for families.

In direct response to sector feedback, the Government has today confirmed that it will:

- prove coordination between agencies involved in keeping children safe through better information sharing – implementing stronger safeguarding arrangements locally, as well as clearer, stronger national statutory guidance;
- publish revised Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance to make clear the roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved in protecting children from abuse and neglect;
- build on its successful campaign, [Together, we can tackle child abuse](#), a new phase of which launched in February 2018;
- continue to boost the professional development of social workers and practitioners by improving training, accreditation and regulation, supporting them to better protect children and promote their welfare; and
- consider the current legal framework to assess whether it is sufficiently robust in terms of criminal offences for concealing child abuse and neglect.

The government's consultation is the latest in an active and broad reform agenda, which includes a £200 million investment in innovation, legislation

and cross-governmental working.