

News story: UK Government holds 'helpful' Brexit talks with First Minister of Wales

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster David Lidington MP is encouraged by the bilateral discussion he had in Cardiff today with the First Minister of Wales Carwyn Jones AM on the UK's preparations for leaving the EU.

Mr Lidington said the talks were helpful and thanked the Welsh Government for their constructive efforts in trying to find an agreed way forward in relation to the EU Withdrawal Bill that is currently going through the UK Parliament.

The talks were also attended by the Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns MP and Welsh Government Minister Mark Drakeford AM.

Speaking after the meeting David Lidington said:

I would like to thank Carwyn and the Welsh Government for their constructive approach on the EU Withdrawal Bill.

We both agree it is absolutely essential that all parts of the UK are ready for the day that we leave the EU. We need to protect the benefits of the UK internal market, making sure that there are no new barriers to living and doing business for people in Wales and other parts of the UK on the day we leave the EU. And as we've always been clear on, we expect that as powers are returned from the EU a substantial number will transfer directly to the Welsh Government.

We want to do all of this in a way that takes account of the concerns that have been expressed by the Welsh Government. We have had a helpful discussion today and I am encouraged that we can make progress in trying to find an agreed way forward on the EU Withdrawal Bill. Ministers and officials from both Governments will continue to work closely on these issues over the coming weeks.'

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

I have always been optimistic that we would be able to work constructively with the Welsh Government to address any concerns about the detail of the EU Withdrawal Bill. That conversation continued today in the most positive spirit.

We will reach an agreed solution that respects the devolution settlements, but moreover that is right for the people of Wales.

Work will now intensify over the days and weeks ahead as we take further positive strides towards achieving that goal.

[News story: Witness appeal: Notting Hill Gate, 31 January 2018](#)

At around 16:05 on Wednesday 31 January 2018, a passenger at Notting Hill Gate Underground station was dragged along the platform after becoming trapped in the doors of a Central Line train.

Did you witness this incident or have any other information you consider relevant? If so, we would like to [hear from you](#).

[News story: Time to Talk about mental health](#)

Approximately 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem at some point in life.

For an organisation as large as Sellafield Ltd, that means that around 4000 employees will encounter issues with their mental health.

To mark 'Time to Talk' Day, Euan Hutton from Sellafield Ltd talked to employees about his experiences.

The culture of silence associated with discussing mental health makes these issues worse and opening up to a colleague or friend is often the first step to recovery.

From now on, I am encouraging everyone to open up to talking about mental health. To managers and team leaders: create the environment for open conversation on this topic and reassure your team that they will not be judged for reaching out. To everyone in the organisation: look out for your team mates; step in if they don't seem themselves or if they are behaving differently and let them know you're there for them.

I'd never ask anyone to do something I wouldn't do myself...so here goes nothing.

In the past I've had issues with one of my kidneys which I've had treatment for. It comes up in conversation sometimes, and I've always been happy to talk about. I've got a bit of arthritis in my ankle which I've openly talked about, it's painful. It is as a result of breaking my ankle playing rugby when I was younger.

These are health issues which aren't exactly public as such, but which I'm certainly comfortable talking about openly.

What I have struggled to talk about openly is that in 2012, not long before I came back to work at Sellafield, I had counselling to help me deal with stress and anxiety.

I had the counselling because I was ill. It was medical treatment for an illness. Just like my kidney and my ankle.

On the face of it I didn't have anything to be anxious about. I was doing okay at work, I'm happily married and have three great kids and a loving family. I'm not unique or special. But I was ill. I needed help and treatment, and I got it, and I got better.

Mental health is the same as physical health. Any one of us can be affected at any time. We don't choose it, it chooses us.

That's why we're encouraging people to talk in the workplace, and directing people to where more help is available.

News story: Education Minister unveils new support for schools

A new service offering schools advice on how to get the best value for money when buying support from businesses has been launched by the Department for Education.

The new scheme – which is being trialled initially in the north-west and south-west – will provide free advice and guidance to schools looking to procure services from local or national businesses. This could include catering, cleaning or technology support.

School Systems Minister Lord Agnew said:

Academic standards are rising, with 1.9million more children now in good or outstanding schools than in 2010 and nine out of ten schools given this rating at their latest inspection. We know that how schools use their money is important in delivering the best outcomes for pupils and this new service will help School Business

Professionals to make better financial decisions. It builds on our wider package of support to help schools to be more cost effective, with the aim of ensuring every child can access a world-class education.

The service is free for schools in the chosen regions to join immediately, with service delivery beginning from today (1 February) offering:

- expert advice and guidance on buying;
- template documentation for buying;
- help with complex contracts, particularly services such as catering, cleaning, premises and technology services;
- promotion of local collaboration, where there is an opportunity to reduce costs on areas such as learning resources and administrative supplies;
- market intelligence; and
- contract management support.

This service will add to the existing range of government tools, information and guidance already available to schools as part of our plans to help them improve their efficiency and save £1bn on non-staff spend in schools by 2019-2020.

It is part of the Department for Education's drive to ensure every child has the opportunity to make the most of their lives, no matter where they live or their background.

The new initiatives build on the work already being done by the department to support schools to improve their financial health and efficiency. This includes:

- a top 10 planning checks for governors. This checklist sets out key metrics for school and academy governors to help make sure schools manage their resources efficiently; and
- team of school efficiency advisors who provide expert support to the schools that need them most.

Interested schools can find out more [here](#)

Schools in other regions around the country are not able to apply currently, but can look for support from their local School Business Professional Network instead. The Networks provide opportunities to share good practice and knowledge and can provide the opportunity to potentially save money, for example joining together to bulk purchase.

Press release: New government backed advisory panel commits to help eradicate rough sleeping

Leading experts from homelessness charities and local government met for the first time today as part of the government's new rough sleeping advisory panel and committed to work together to help eliminate rough sleeping within a decade.

The new panel chaired by Homelessness Minister Heather Wheeler will help develop the national rough sleeping strategy to halve rough sleeping over the course of the Parliament and eliminate it altogether by 2027.

Made up of experts, charities and local government, the panel will draw on their considerable experience and individual successes to support the upcoming Ministerial Taskforce. This will bring together ministers from key departments to provide a cross-government approach to preventing rough sleeping and homelessness.

The panel members agreed key priority areas including what works best in terms of prevention such as housing-led approaches and the most effective ways of intervening with someone already experiencing rough sleeping.

Following the first panel meeting, Heather Wheeler said:

We cannot accept rough sleeping as a stubborn problem that will always be with us.

That's why we are providing over £1 billion of funding, supporting those who are homeless and rough sleeping and bringing in the most ambitious legislation in decades that will mean people get the support they need earlier.

Tackling homelessness is complex, but no one should ever have to sleep rough.

The new panel is clear we need to act swiftly to realise our shared determination to help the most vulnerable in society and eliminate rough sleeping for good.

The panel will meet monthly and will report back to the Taskforce in the summer with a series of recommendations.

Among the key themes the panel will pursue are:

- Prevention activity to stop people from rough sleeping in the first place.

- Programmes and interventions to target both the drivers of rough sleeping and support vulnerable people at risk of rough sleeping.
- Recovery and long-term support to help people maintain sustainable tenancies.
- The role of wider society, business, the voluntary sector and the general public to tackle street culture.
- Better data and clearer accountability to ensure the right structures are in place at the local and national level.

Government action to date on tackling homelessness and rough sleeping

- As part of the £1 billion of funding we are providing £315 million to local authorities for their work on homelessness, and an additional £402 million in Flexible Homelessness Support Grant funding, which local authorities can use to work more strategically to prevent and tackle homelessness pressures in their areas.
- Government has also provided funding for the 'No Second Night Out' approach which identifies new rough sleepers and helps them off the streets immediately. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has funded its national roll-out through the £20 million Homelessness Transition Fund and most local authorities have committed to the programme.
- Announced £28 million for 3 Housing First pilots in Manchester, Liverpool and the West Midlands. The pilots will support long-term rough sleepers off the streets and help them to end their homelessness. Individuals will be provided with stable, affordable accommodation and intensive wrap-around support. This will help them recover from complex health issues, for example substance abuse and mental health difficulties and sustain their tenancies.
- Government is investing £9 billion to build more social housing, including council homes. This government is committed to fixing the broken housing market and our Housing White Paper sets out measures to do just that.

Members of the Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel

Chair

- Heather Wheeler, Minister for Housing and Homelessness, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Homelessness sector

- Jon Sparkes, CEO Crisis
- Polly Neate, CEO Shelter
- Jeremy Swain, CEO Thames Reach
- Howard Sinclair, CEO St Mungos
- Jean Templeton, CEO St Basil's
- Rick Henderson, CEO Homeless Link

Mayors

- Andy Street, Conservative Mayor for West Midlands
- Andy Burnham, Labour Mayor for Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- James Murray, London Deputy Mayor for London Housing and Residential Development

Local government and Housing Federation

- David Orr, CEO National Housing Federation
- Mark Lloyd, CEO Local Government Association
- Mark Meehan, Director of Housing for Croydon and Chair of the London Council Housing Needs group
- Gillian Douglas, Bristol City Council
- Cathy Hadfield, Cornwall Council

International expert

- Peter Fredriksson, advisor on Housing First to the Finnish Government

Sector experts

- Lord John Bird, founder of the Big Issue
- Brooks Newmark, previous Minister for Civil Society

Background

Terms of reference

The government aims to halve rough sleeping over the course of the Parliament and eliminate it altogether by 2027.

The Minister for Housing and Homelessness, Heather Wheeler, will chair the Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel which will support government to produce a national rough sleeping strategy. The strategy will take action to reduce rough sleeping now, and ensure the structures are in place to eliminate rough sleeping by 2027.

Over the coming months the Advisory Panel will:

- meet with the Minister for Housing and Homelessness on a regular basis to advise on how we can reduce the numbers sleeping rough
- support the senior Ministerial Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Reduction Taskforce
- support the rough sleeping team in MHCLG to develop and test policy options
- test approaches, share feedback, best practice and studies from across the sector to inform policy development

Rough Sleeping is a chronic issue and the Advisory Panel will consider a wide range of interventions to ensure we take action now. The Panel will also look at how the government can embed integrated systems in the long term to ensure that no one has to sleep rough. The review will take into account the

experiences and successes of previous interventions, and highlight good practice.

The following lines of inquiry will be pursued:

- Prevention activity to stop people from rough sleeping in the first place.
- Programmes and interventions to target both the drivers of rough sleeping and support vulnerable people at risk of rough sleeping.
- Recovery and long-term support to help people maintain sustainable tenancies.
- The role of wider society, business, the voluntary sector and the general public to tackle street culture.
- Better data and clearer accountability to ensure the right structures are in place at the local and national level.