

[Press release: Final DWP customer telephone lines become free](#)

This follows the [announcement in October 2017](#) that all customer telephone lines would be free to call by the end of the year.

Work and Pensions Secretary of State David Gauke said:

People can access support online and our Jobcentre Plus work coaches can also provide help accessing our benefits and services. But we also understand that at times people may need to speak to someone on the telephone.

We want this process to be as accessible as possible and that's why we have made all DWP customer telephone lines Freephone numbers.

The introduction of Freephone numbers started with Universal Credit helplines on 29 November 2017 and was completed when the final set of numbers were introduced on 21 December 2017.

Press Office

Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

London Press Office (national media and London area enquiries only – not questions about personal claims) 020 3267 5144

Out-of-hours (journalists only) 076 59 108 883

England and Wales (local media enquiries) 029 20 586 then 097 or 098 or 099

Scotland (local media enquiries) 0131 310 1122

Follow DWP on:

News story: Sellafield spreads £75,000 of Christmas cheer

Sellafield Ltd's pledge for Christmas 2017 was to support a range of charities throughout Cumbria and Warrington.

With the support of supply chain companies, a total of £75,000 was raised for the below causes;

- Shoebox appeal for the elderly – 120 shoe boxes full of gifts were delivered to elderly care home residents at Castle Mount, Bethany House, Bethshan, Dentholme and Wyndam House.
- North Lakes Foodbank – 800kg worth of tinned food will make up around 150 food packs for families in need.
- Cash4Kids 'Mission Christmas' – £6,365 cash donations and 52,217 worth of gifts will help 700 children in Cumbria. Courage the Cat's visit to site brought in an extra £2,300.
- Home Start, Warrington – Over 400 bedtime gifts contributed to 61 bedtime hampers for children with an additional cash donation of £323.44.
- Room at the Inn, Warrington – Hundreds of tins and toiletries donated to Room at the Inn. An additional £323.44 cash was raised at Daresbury and an extra £335 came from Christmas Jumper day.
- Families and Wellbeing toy appeal – Hundreds of gifts and pyjamas were donated for families supported by Warrington Borough Council's Neighbourhood team.

Throughout December, employees and supply chain colleagues have been directed to local shops to purchase gifts, toys and food, and asked to take an extra Christmas gift to work – meaning Cumbrian and Warrington businesses have also benefited from the appeal.

The CFM radio charity mascot, Courage the Cat, made his way around the nuclear site to carry out a mass collection of gifts for disabled and disadvantaged children throughout Cumbria.

Hundreds of toys were also donated in the Warrington area by employees.

Barbara Parratt, from the Families and Wellbeing Toy Appeal said:

For us, it's not just a gift to help make a Christmas for the families we support, it's part of us helping and working with a family to ensure they get the support in terms of debt and deprivation.

Jamie Reed, Sellafield Ltd's head of community and development, explained:

We are intrinsically linked to our communities. There is no 'us' and 'them'. When you donate toys for local children there is a good chance that they will end up in houses on your street. When you donate to a food bank it is likely that you have helped a friend of a friend to feed their families.

We have the power to make a real difference to the lives of people in your community, during what can be a very stressful time of the year.

It was great to watch the gifts come pouring in and the cash buckets filling up, which is a reflection of how compassionate and generous our workers and supply chain are.

The campaign was managed by Sellafield Ltd and supported by supply chain companies like ARCO and Mitie, who also helped to transport and store the gifts.

Other companies who supported the campaign include Carillon, Kaefer, Doosan, Jacobs, ATOS, Morgan Sindall, Wood, PacTec, TSP Engineering, Civil Nuclear Constabulary, Canon, Balfour Beatty, Franks Portlock, M+W Group, Hertel, National Nuclear Laboratory and Areva.

[Speech: International Human Rights Day 2017 and the UK's role in promoting human rights](#)

Due to time constraints in the debate, the Minister's speech was curtailed. This is the full version of that speech.

I thank the Rt Hon. Member, the Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd MP) for initiating this debate, and I commend her for her work as Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Human Rights. I am grateful for the contributions of other Hon. Members and I will try to respond to all the points raised.

Why human rights matter

It is perhaps trite simply to observe that human rights matter, but human rights do matter because they – and they alone – are guardians of fairness and opportunity for all. They reflect a widespread belief in freedom, in non-discrimination, and in the innate dignity of every human being.

Human rights are more than simply articles of international law – though that in itself would be reason enough to defend them. They also protect collective opportunities and freedoms that are the key to achieving long-term prosperity and security.

UN Declaration on Human Rights

International Human Rights Day commemorates the adoption of the [UN Declaration on Human Rights](#).

That Declaration was signed threescore and 9 years ago last week, by 48 sovereign states, from Britain to Brazil, Chile to China, and India to Iran. Setting aside widespread cultural and historical differences, these countries came together to pledge their support for universal human rights.

The very diversity of the signatories disproves the notion that these rights are a set of values imposed by one part of the world on another. Instead, the Declaration represents a global consensus on the rights and freedoms that everyone should enjoy, wherever they live in the world.

Today, the UK remains as committed as ever to those universal principles, but the rights and freedoms we enjoy here in the UK are not enjoyed everywhere.

Recent events in Burma are only the most recent but shocking reminder of the gulf that continues to exist between the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration and the everyday reality for millions of our fellow humans.

We continue to urge all states to comply with the commitments they have made, not only by endorsing the UN Declaration on Human Rights – but also by ratifying the many fundamental human rights treaties that have evolved in the decades since the Declaration was first adopted. These treaties have codified the principles of the Declaration into international law and hence carry legal obligations.

Human Rights Day

In recognition of the importance of universal human rights to individuals and societies, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office marks International Human Rights Day on 10 December every year.

On that day we customarily reflect on how far the world has come, but we also remember all those whose human rights are still being violated and abused. We pay tribute to the human rights defenders who stand up for them, often at

great personal risk, and we renew our determination to support them and to fight for universal rights.

Government policy on human rights

That fight is central to this Government's foreign policy. Indeed it would be unthinkable for UK foreign policy not to have human rights at its core. Promoting and defending human rights is integral to the work of our staff in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

We recognise that all rights set out in the UN Declaration on Human Rights, and in international law, are of equal importance, but to achieve maximum impact we prioritise certain issues. Our current priorities are:

- tackling modern slavery
- defending Freedom of Religion or Belief and Freedom of Expression
- ending inequality and discrimination, and
- promoting democracy

I would like to give Hon. Members an insight into some of the FCO's work in each of these key areas.

Tackling modern slavery

Modern slavery is one of the great human rights challenges of our time. It is appalling that it still exists in the 21st Century. Eradicating it, through concerted and coordinated global action is one of our top foreign policy priorities. That is why my Rt. Hon Friend the Prime Minister convened world leaders at the UN General Assembly in September to launch a [call to action to end modern slavery](#). We have also doubled our aid spending on the issue to £150 million, to address the root causes; strengthen law-enforcement capacity in transit countries; and support the victims.

Freedom of religion and belief

Freedom of religion or belief matters – not only because faith guides the daily life of more than 80% of the world's population. It also matters because promoting tolerance and respect for all helps to build inclusive societies that are more stable, more prosperous, and better able to resist extremism.

We promote and defend it in a variety of ways:

- by directly lobbying governments – as I did, for example, during my recent visit to Pakistan
- by maintaining consensus on the issue through working with international partners (in UN, OSCE, EU), and
- by running projects that promote understanding and respect and celebrate diversity

Many of these projects are run in co-operation with civil society groups – we

very much value the role that they and faith leaders play in promoting freedom of religion or belief. My noble Friend, the Minister for Human Rights (Lord Ahmad) and I have stepped up our engagement with them through regular roundtable discussions to seek their views and explore foreign policy issues from different perspectives. We are in close touch with our Embassies and High Commissions about their work to tackle the persecution of Christian, Ahmadiyya and other minorities.

Freedom of expression

The freedom of individuals and organisations to discuss, debate and criticise, or to hold governments to account, is an essential element of a successful society. That is why Freedom of Expression is another universal human right we work hard to uphold. We will be spending [£1 million over the next financial year](#) on projects which promote Freedom of Expression and the work of journalists around the world.

Ending inequality and discrimination

The government believes that all people should be able to live with dignity, free from violence or discrimination, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

At the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, we have renewed our focus on gender, with the [appointment of our first ever Special Envoy on Gender Equality](#). We want to target all forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence in conflict, and we want women to be at the heart of conflict resolution.

Through our work on [Women, Peace and Security](#) we are promoting the involvement of women in decision-making and peace building, and ensuring that military, peacekeeping and humanitarian operations take account of women's needs.

We also promote LGBT equality around the world, and helped set up the Equal Rights Coalition, a group of 35 countries committed to working together on this issue.

People living with disabilities around the world also suffer discrimination. We want to protect their rights and transform their lives. We will be [hosting the first ever Global Disability Summit](#) next year to encourage international action.

Democracy

Last, but by no means least, among our current priorities is the promotion of democracy as the best long term guarantor of stability and prosperity for any society. I am sure our rationale needs no further explanation for this audience.

We work with like-minded partners at home and abroad to support democratic

values and protect civil society. We continue to support the work of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (UK) and the International Parliamentary Union in advancing parliamentary democracy and democratic institutions around the world.

We are delighted that the [Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting](#) that we are hosting next year will offer an opportunity to further promote the shared values of human rights, democracy and inclusion that are enshrined in the [Commonwealth Charter](#).

Conclusion

To conclude: in the seventieth year since its adoption, the UN Declaration on Human Rights remains a powerful statement of hope and aspiration for us all. There has been great progress since 1948, but there is still much more to do.

This government will continue to lead the way on promoting human rights, as it always has done, at home and overseas.

We shall stay the course. Our sincere hope is that one day – one Human Rights Day in the future – we can say, once and for all, that human rights are truly enjoyed equally in every corner of the globe by humankind.

[News story: Birmingham selected as host city for the 2022 Commonwealth Games](#)

Karen Bradley joins Tracey Crouch signing the host city contract for the Commonwealth Games 2022

At a special media conference staged at the Arena Academy school in Birmingham, CGF President Louise Martin CBE applauded the city's ambitious and innovative vision to engage and benefit its local community, showcase the best of global Britain and warmly welcome and inspire athletes and fans from right across the Commonwealth.

Birmingham 2022, which is expected to take place from 27 July to 7 August 2022, marks 20 years since Manchester 2002, the last time the Games were held in England and follows a brilliant Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014.

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Karen Bradley said:

Birmingham will put on a fantastic Commonwealth Games in 2022 and I

am delighted that the Commonwealth Games Federation has awarded us the right to host what will be a sporting spectacular. The Games will also give us a chance to show the best of Britain to the world, give great opportunities to the people and businesses of the West Midlands and beyond while inspiring many to get involved in sport.

I look forward to working with the Commonwealth Games Federation, Commonwealth Games England and Birmingham City Council over the coming years as we prepare for 2022.

Sports Minister Tracey Crouch said:

The UK has a brilliant track record for putting on the biggest sport events in the world and it is a great news that Birmingham has been selected to host the 2022 Commonwealth Games. I am sure that we will put on an event that will make the country proud, leave a strong sporting legacy and strengthen relationships with our friends across the Commonwealth.

Read the [Commonwealth Games Federation's press release](#)

Press release: November 2017

Transaction Data

The transaction data shows HM Land Registry completed 1,774,223 applications in November compared with 1,740,068 in October and 1,644,163 last November, of which:

1. Transaction Data is published on the 15th working day of each month. The December Transaction Data will be published at 11am on Monday 22 January 2018 at [HM Land Registry Monthly Property Transaction Data](#).
2. The monthly Transaction Data showing how many applications for new titles, leases, splitting titles, updating existing titles, official copies of the register and searches were completed, reflects the volume of applications lodged by customers using an HM Land Registry account number on their application form.
3. Completed applications in England and Wales shown by region and by local authority include postal applications as well as those sent electronically.

4. Transaction Data excludes pending applications, withdrawn applications, bankruptcy applications, bulk applications and discharge applications.
5. Transactions for value are applications lodged involving a transfer of ownership for value. Discharge applications remove a charge, for example a mortgage, from the register. For an explanation of other terms used, see [abbreviations used in the transaction data](#).
6. Most searches carried out by a solicitor or conveyancer are to protect the purchase and/or mortgage. For example, a search will give the buyer priority for an application to HM Land Registry to register the purchase of the property. This can give an indication of market activity.
7. Reasonable skill and care is used in the provision of the data. We strive to ensure that the data is as accurate as possible but cannot guarantee that it is free from error. We cannot guarantee our data is fit for your intended purpose or use.
8. Transaction Data is available free of charge for use and re-use under the [Open Government Licence](#) (OGL). The licence allows public bodies to make their data available for re-use.
9. If you use or publish the Transaction Data, you must add the following attribution statement:
Contains HM Land Registry data © Crown copyright and database right 2017.
This data is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.
10. HM Land Registry's mission is to guarantee and protect property rights in England and Wales.
11. HM Land Registry is a government department created in 1862. It operates as an executive agency and a trading fund and its running costs are covered by the fees paid by the users of its services. Its ambition is to become the world's leading land registry for speed, simplicity and an open approach to data.
12. HM Land Registry safeguards land and property ownership worth more than £4 trillion, including more than £1 trillion of mortgages. The Land Register contains more than 25 million titles, which show evidence of ownership, covering more than 85% of the land mass.
13. For further information about HM Land Registry visit www.gov.uk/land-registry
14. Follow us on: