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Reporting period 1 March - 30 June 2021

*Reporting on intergovernmental working
between the UK government and the devolved
administrations*

21 October 2021

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD	4
<hr/>	
UK-WIDE COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY	6
Offering vaccines to every UK adult	7
Supporting our tourism and hospitality sectors	7
Supporting businesses across the UK	8
Delivering secure elections	8
Working to safely host large-scale events	8
<hr/>	
A GLOBAL UK	9
The UK on the world stage	9
New trading relationships	10
Supporting students in the UK to work and study abroad	11
Lifting the nation with world-class sport	12
<hr/>	
LEVELLING UP THE UK	13
Investing in our nation's future	13
Protecting jobs and creating employment opportunities	14
Stimulating growth and prosperity	15
Creating a safe, fair and prosperous UK	16
<hr/>	
REACHING NET ZERO	17
<hr/>	
IMPROVING HOW WE WORK TOGETHER	19

FOREWORD

Effective joint working between the UK government and the devolved administrations is part of the bedrock of our shared union, helping to make it one of the most successful political and economic partnerships in history. For over 20 years of devolution, citizens and communities in all parts of the United Kingdom have benefited from co-ordinated, joint decisions made on the important issues of the day, as the UK government and devolved administrations work together for the benefit of all.

In my new role as Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations, I remain committed to building on the successes of the UK government's joint working with the devolved administrations and spreading opportunity more equally across the whole UK.

There is no better example of collaboration between the UK government and devolved administrations than the response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Ministers and civil servants in the UK Government and the devolved administrations are in daily contact with each other putting in supreme efforts in the face of shared challenges, unprecedented outside times of war. The success of our UK-wide vaccine rollout and financial support schemes for citizens would not have been possible without our co-ordinated, consistent, and effective joint working. In June this year, the Prime Minister hosted a meeting with the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales and the First and deputy First Ministers of Northern Ireland and agreed that we will carry on working together to secure the UK's COVID-19 recovery. It is through pulling together that we will Build Back Better and ensure that the recovery is felt equally around the United Kingdom – learning from one another to try to achieve the best for all our people.

This quarterly transparency report covers activities between the UK government and devolved administrations from 1 March to 30 June 2021 across many vital programmes of work, including COVID-19 response and recovery, a global UK, Levelling Up the UK and reaching net zero carbon emissions. With new governments in place in Scotland and Wales, and a change of leadership within the Northern Ireland Executive, this report covers an important period of engagement. Since March, following in the Prime Minister's footsteps, I – along with ministers from the majority of UK government departments – have met our colleagues in the devolved administrations, whether they be new or familiar faces, to explore the joint priorities, opportunities and challenges ahead. This period also saw the end of the first Parliamentary session - the phases that a full Parliament is broken down into - where joint working with the devolved administrations led to securing the devolved legislatures' consent 47 times on various bills that benefit multiple parts or, in most cases, the whole of the UK. I am pleased that engagement for legislation during the second session is also well underway.

Outside the scope of this report, there are many more activities through which the UK government and devolved administrations have engaged and will continue to do so. This includes meetings of the British-Irish Council, with colleagues from Ireland, the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey, as well as countless vital and productive discussions between civil servants.

In a similar way, these quarterly reports are only a stepping stone in how we work with the devolved administrations. We are also adding to our growing collection of documents relating to joint working on the new GOV.UK page¹, continuing regular parliamentary engagement

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/intergovernmental-relations>

with select committees, and I will be laying the first annual report on IGR in the UK Parliament in 2022.

The Prime Minister leads the UK government's engagement to ensure we have strong and effective intergovernmental relations across the UK. I am delighted to continue to support him in this role from my new position. On behalf of my colleagues, I am pleased to publish this report on IGR, our second this year, shining a light on the work we are doing together for the good of citizens across the whole United Kingdom.



The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations



"Effective joint working... between the UK government and the devolved administrations is part of the bedrock of our shared union."



UK-WIDE COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

The virus does not respect borders. Over the last 18 months, the UK has faced unprecedented challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We continue to work with devolved administrations on the COVID-19 response and recovery across the UK.

In June, the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, chaired a meeting with the First Minister of Scotland, the Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP, the First Minister of Wales, the Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS, and the former First Minister, the Rt Hon Arlene Foster MLA, and current deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, Michelle O'Neill MLA. This was an important opportunity to consider the UK-wide strategy for COVID-19 recovery and support provided by the UK government, worth around £352 billion for the financial years 2020-21 and 2021-22. As part of this support, 1.7 million jobs in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have been protected through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. This includes the £28.1 billion of additional funding received directly by the devolved administrations since the beginning of the pandemic, on top of their underlying block grants.

Alongside this, the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, supported by ministers from the Northern Ireland Office, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales, continued to hold regular calls with the First Ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, to ensure swift decision-making in the face of new COVID-19 developments and the need for a quick government response. In these meetings, ministers discussed shared priorities, such as international travel, COVID-19 status certification and vaccine-related matters, with a view to securing positive outcomes for citizens in all parts of the UK.

Notwithstanding this expansive engagement, COVID-19 recovery meetings took place between the majority of UK government departments and the devolved administrations, including largely weekly meetings between the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and his counterparts. During the reporting period, the former Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, and the former Minister for COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment, the Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP, engaged regularly with devolved administration colleagues on offering vaccines to every adult in the UK and the status of the vaccine deployment.

The Joint Biosecurity Centre (JBC) was established in 2020 as an integral part of the NHS Test & Trace service within the Department for Health and Social Care. The JBC provides evidence-based, objective analysis to inform local and national decision-making. The JBC worked collaboratively with the devolved administrations to help inform public health responses across the UK, and continues to do so. The JBC ministerial board with UK government and devolved administration representatives meets quarterly to review strategic direction, performance and implementation for citizens across the UK, and during this reporting period met on 22 March.

Underpinning this throughout this period, civil servants across the UK coordinated daily, as they continue to do, including on the joint board for the respective test, trace, contain and protect programmes, and on matters such as therapeutics, population health, European Union and trade policy, adult social care, and supply of medical goods. The UK chief medical officers and their deputies also met frequently to discuss the UK's public health response and the clinical advice they provide on the pandemic, and this engagement is ongoing.

Offering vaccines to every UK adult

The UK government secured early access to more than 500 million doses of the most promising COVID-19 vaccines on behalf of the entire UK, Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories. During the reporting period, the former Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, and the former Minister for COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment, the Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP, engaged regularly with devolved administration colleagues on offering vaccines to every adult in the UK and the status of the vaccine deployment.

Supporting our tourism and hospitality sectors

Tourism showcases the best of the UK to the world, but the tourism industry has been one of the hardest hit sectors by COVID-19. The government is supporting the sector to emerge from the pandemic to become more resilient, more sustainable, more inclusive and more innovative, working with the devolved administrations. This is set out in the Tourism Recovery Plan published earlier this year.²

The Minister for Sports, Heritage and Tourism, Nigel Huddleston MP, met with the Welsh Government's former Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport, and Tourism, Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas MS, on 23 March, and separately on 24 March with the Scottish Government's former

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tourism-recovery-plan>

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism, Fergus Ewing MSP. The meetings discussed COVID-19 tourism recovery and the 2021 Budget announcements on VAT reductions in the tourism and hospitality sectors, to support businesses and protect 2.4 million jobs following the lifting of the COVID-19 restrictions.

Looking ahead, 2022 will be a springboard for promoting the UK at home and abroad. Senior civil servants met on 8 June to discuss COVID-19 sector recovery, UK-wide major events including Festival UK* 2022, and the UK City of Culture.

Supporting businesses across the UK

Throughout the pandemic response, the UK government has been able to take advantage of its economy of scale to support businesses and individuals across the whole UK. The UK government and devolved administrations have been working jointly on supporting businesses and ensuring their safe reopening in the wake of COVID-19.

The joint ministerial forum with the devolved administrations, the Business and Industry Quadrilateral, met twice during the quarter. The UK government was represented by the Minister for Small Business, Consumers and Labour Markets, Paul Scully MP, to consider COVID-19 business support and recovery and issues for business relating to the end of the Brexit transition period on 31 December 2020.

Delivering secure elections

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, ministers across the UK felt strongly that democracy should not be affected. Safe delivery of the May 2021 elections in Scotland, Wales and England was therefore a shared priority. The former Minister for the Constitution and Devolution, Chloe Smith MP, was joined by new ministers from the Welsh and Scottish governments, Mick Antoniw MS and George Adam MSP respectively, at the second meeting of the Interministerial Group (IMG) Elections on 9 June to discuss the successful delivery of COVID-19 secure polls and future priorities in this area, with further meetings taking place after this on elections legislation.

Working to safely host large-scale events

In February 2021, the UK government committed to exploring how large-scale events could return safely with reduced or no social distancing. We saw this put into practice with the successful return of fans to the Championships, Wimbledon 2021.

The Events Research Programme is a world-leading study that is pioneering the return of events in a structured, scientific and ethical manner. The programme involves ongoing fortnightly meetings with civil servants across the devolved administrations (covering tourism, sport, culture, and public health) to share findings and lessons learned, including about any pilots that were being undertaken UK-wide.



A GLOBAL UK

Looking beyond our own borders, the UK seeks to be a force for good across the globe. We demonstrate leadership on the world stage as we share our values, culture, services and products. While the UK government is responsible for international relations, we recognise the importance of engagement with the devolved administrations on matters that affect their responsibilities.

The UK on the world stage

The leading nations of the world came to Cornwall in June, in the form of the Group of 7 (G7) summit. The UK is using its G7 Presidency to improve global health action to beat the COVID-19 pandemic. Ahead of the summit, the former Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, chaired a meeting on 7 June attended by the First Minister of Wales, the Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS, Deputy First Minister of Scotland, John Swinney MSP, and the Northern Ireland Executive Office junior ministers, Gordon Lyons MLA and Declan Kearney MLA, to discuss the UK government's Presidency of the G7 and the policy objectives.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office civil servants and representatives across the whole diplomatic network have worked with the devolved administrations on a

wealth of issues including supporting British nationals overseas, travel advice ahead of and throughout the 2020 UEFA European Football Championship (Euro 2020) and decisions around COVID-19 vaccine supply and COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access. The latter is a central objective of the UK's G7 Presidency, prioritising rapid and equitable distribution of vaccines. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has also kept the devolved administrations updated on the UK government's approach to issues ranging from human rights in Myanmar to the ongoing situations in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, in Belarus, and in Nicaragua.

The Prime Minister's vision for the UK in 2030 sees a stronger, more secure, prosperous and resilient Union, better equipped for a more competitive age, as a problem-solving and burden-sharing nation with a global perspective. The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, announced in September 2020, will define the government's vision for the UK's role in the world over the next decade, covering all aspects of international and national security policy, such as defence, diplomacy, international development and national resilience. The Minister of State, Baroness Goldie DL, had meetings with ministers from Scottish Government, Graeme Day MSP, and Welsh Government, Hannah Blythyn MS, on defence's contribution to the objectives set out in the government's Integrated Review, outlined in the defence command paper published in March. This includes details on how the Ministry of Defence will implement the multi-year settlement it received in 2020 and how it will reform its armed forces to meet the threats of the future.

Our senior military officers across the UK also continued to engage ministers in the devolved administrations on matters relevant to our collective British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. This will continue throughout 2021.

New trading relationships

Following the UK's departure from the EU, for the first time in a generation the UK is free to implement rules that put the UK first – freeing businesses from overbearing bureaucracy and reducing costs for consumers, whilst boosting competition, innovation and growth across the economy.

The relationships with our new trading partners are an important part of UK government activity. In March, the former UK government Minister of State for Trade Policy, the Rt Hon Greg Hands MP, met with devolved administration ministers to discuss the status of trade negotiations with Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America to further understand priorities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Underpinning this, senior civil servants meet regularly to discuss live negotiations and engagement on World Trade Organization matters. The former Minister for Exports, Graham Stuart MP, also discussed trade and investment priorities and the support available to boost exports with the Scottish Government's Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise, Ivan McKee MSP.

The UK government signed the UK-EU trade deal in December 2020 and work is continuing with the devolved administrations to implement it. On 8 June, the Minister of State in the Cabinet Office, the Rt Hon Lord Frost CMG, chaired a meeting with the devolved

administrations and Crown Dependencies ahead of the first UK-EU Partnership Council - the joint council with the EU to oversee implementation of the trade deal. They discussed the Partnership Council agenda, including sanitary and phytosanitary measures and fisheries. On 9 June 2021, the agenda for the eighth Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee was discussed. This is a separate joint committee for matters relating to withdrawing from the EU including the Northern Ireland Protocol and citizens' rights.

The Northern Ireland Office has also engaged regularly with the Northern Ireland Executive on matters relating to the Northern Ireland Protocol. This agreement, between the EU and UK, mandated the free flow of goods between the borders of Northern Ireland and Ireland and certified that there would be no hard border between the countries. The Minister of State for Health, Edward Argar MP, also met twice with the Minister for Health in Northern Ireland, Robin Swann MLA, regarding the implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol.

The Interministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, a regular forum of relevant ministers in the UK government and devolved administrations, continues to meet to discuss issues of mutual importance related to our new relationship with the EU, including priority agriculture and food matters, border arrangements and common frameworks.³ During the reporting quarter, the Interministerial Group met on 22 March and 28 June.

Additionally, between March and June, the former Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland, David Duguid MP, led 6 meetings of the Scottish Seafood Exports Taskforce. Through this taskforce the UK government worked with the Scottish Government and stakeholders in the seafood export industry to identify issues with exports, and develop and recommend practical solutions, ensuring there is effective communication with the industry.

Supporting students in the UK to work and study abroad

Looking to the next generation, thousands of students will be able to study and do work placements across the world through the new £110 million UK-wide Turing scheme that replaces the UK's participation in Erasmus+, the EU student exchange programme.

The Minister of State for Universities, the Rt Hon Michelle Donelan MP, had 3 meetings each with her colleagues in the Scottish Government, Richard Lochhead MSP, and the Welsh Government, Kirsty Williams MS, and 2 meetings with her colleague in the Northern Ireland Executive, Diane Dodds MLA, in March 2021 to discuss the Turing scheme.

They also discussed their shared challenge of how to address the effects of COVID-19 on the higher education sector across the UK.

The government plans to continue this productive discussion and explore further areas of policy exchange and collaboration that can mutually benefit young people across the UK.

³ Common Frameworks act as a mechanism to agree common positions on potential regulatory differences across the UK

Lifting the nation with world-class sport

12

The Euro 2020 showed the power of sport to bring us together, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ahead of the UK and Ireland bid to host the 2030 World Cup, the UK government has announced £25 million to build 700 new pitches all over the country.

There has been considerable ongoing collaboration on the UK and Ireland's FIFA World Cup (FWC) 2030 bid. Senior civil servants have formed the FWC 2030 Government Partnership Group, co-chaired by the UK government and Irish Government, and are meeting every 2 months. The latest meeting was held on 5 May and discussed bid milestones and the further assessment of policing and security costs.

Senior civil servants from the UK government and devolved administrations have also attended the quarterly UK Event Coordination Group on 26 May, co-ordinated by UK Sport to share intelligence and discuss potential opportunities for joint bids to host an event.





LEVELLING UP THE UK

The UK government is working with all its partners to achieve its vision of safety, fairness and prosperity across the Union. This is to ensure that Levelling Up happens in all communities across the UK and that no community is left behind, especially as the UK comes out of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Investing in our nation's future

At the Spring Budget 2021, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, announced an investment-led recovery to spread opportunity across the UK, helping businesses to grow, and improving access to skills, capital and ideas. The former Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the Rt Hon Stephen Barclay MP, met each of the devolved administrations to discuss the budget, including how new funding will be allocated across the UK and to explain any changes to their block grant funding. The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP also met the Northern Ireland Executive Minister of Finance, Conor Murphy MLA, to discuss economic and finance matters relating to Northern Ireland.

The former Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, and former Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government, Luke Hall MP, have also held a series of meetings with ministers from each of the devolved administrations to discuss funding programmes, including the £4.8 billion Levelling Up Fund. The Fund will invest in public infrastructure that improves everyday life for its citizens

across the UK, including improving town centres, high streets and bringing prosperity to communities. This engagement has been supported by other UK government ministers, including ministers from the Northern Ireland Office, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales, to consider successfully implementing these programmes in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Department for Transport has also invited ministers in the devolved administrations to discuss ongoing projects including the £20 million Union Connectivity Development fund to boost connectivity across the UK through improved UK-wide transport infrastructure.

Ensuring prosperity for all regions of the UK is important for the government. This is why the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland has worked to secure investment worth £115 million to the Islands and Borderlands of Scotland. The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Scotland), Iain Stewart MP, signed the Islands and Borderlands Growth Deals jointly with the then Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, Michael Matheson MSP, and local council leaders in March.

Additionally, the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales ministers met with the Welsh Government to discuss critical matters such as transport infrastructure, City and Growth Deals and the steel industry in Wales.

Protecting jobs and creating employment opportunities

The whole of the UK government is protecting, supporting and creating jobs across the country through its Plan for Jobs programme. The programme, worth £33 billion, helps people learn new skills and get back into employment, including those impacted by COVID-19. Its measures include over £2 billion for the Kickstart scheme to support young people into work and £2.9 billion for the Restart scheme to help people who have been unemployed for over 12 months. Other measures will include support to boost work search, skills development and apprenticeships.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the UK government has continued to support people through the Universal Credit system, which has demonstrated its resilience and ability to manage large increases in applications, ensuring financial help is provided to those in need. Over this period, the number of people in need of Universal Credit has doubled and there are now more than 6 million people on the Universal Credit caseload.

Support from the UK government through Universal Credit and the Plan for Jobs programme in Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) operates alongside skills and training offers from the Scottish and Welsh governments, and devolved employment support in Scotland. All Department for Work and Pensions policy areas are transferred to Northern Ireland, but in matters of social security, pensions and child maintenance, Northern Ireland maintains a policy of parity with the UK Government.

Early in the spring, the former Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work, Justin Tomlinson MP, met with the Minister for Communities in the Northern Ireland Executive, Deidre Hargey MLA, to discuss a variety of matters relating to work, health and disability.

As we Build Back Better, the UK government's plan for growth has 3 pillars of investment to act as the foundation on which to build the economic recovery, uniting and Levelling Up the UK: high quality infrastructure, improving skills and boosting research and development.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown all of us the vital importance of science, research and innovation. The former Minister for Science, Research and Innovation, Amanda Solloway MP, met with devolved administration ministers on the research and development places strategy and the Horizon Europe programme (the EU's main funding programme for research and innovation). There were further meetings on the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill that will establish a new agency for conducting, commissioning and supporting ambitious scientific research, and the innovation strategy, which aims to enhance productivity across the economy, and in turn bring jobs, growth, and prosperity to all parts of the UK. The former Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Innovation at the Department of Health and Social Care, Lord Bethell of Romford, also met with ministers from the devolved administrations to discuss a range of issues including on the UK-wide vision for the future of clinical research.

Building on the outcomes of the Integrated Review and the 'Defence in a Competitive Age' command paper, the defence and security industrial strategy also provides the framework for government to work with industry to achieve those ambitions. The strategy stimulates innovation and improvements in productivity to ensure that the UK continues to have competitive, innovative and world-class defence and security industries that underpin our national security and encourages prosperity and growth across all parts of the UK. One example is the national shipbuilding strategy and plans to improve naval shipbuilding in the UK, where the Ministry of Defence will seek to ensure the best possible security and economic benefits for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The Union Connectivity Review, assessing transport connectivity between the nations of the United Kingdom, has also included engagement with the devolved administrations. The chair, Sir Peter Hendy, has met ministers from all the devolved administrations in March and will continue to engage with them throughout the review. Leading up to, and following, the publication of the Interim Report in March, the Secretary of State for Transport, the Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, also held meetings with ministers from all the devolved administrations to discuss the publication of the report.

Ministers from the Northern Ireland Office, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales also continue to support the ambition to realise the benefits of growth and employment in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. For example, the Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart MP, led a meeting of the Scottish Business Growth Group, attended by the Scottish Government, to engage directly with business, employer and employee representative organisations in Scotland, and both governments also attended a meeting of the Inverness Castle Delivery Group, supporting the regeneration of this important site.

Across justice and home affairs, the UK government is working with the devolved administrations to realise its vision for a safe, fair and prosperous UK.

Home Office ministers have had continued discussions with the devolved administrations on many areas, including the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill 2021. This important law will, first, back the police by equipping officers with the powers and tools they need to keep themselves and all citizens safe. Secondly, it will introduce tougher sentencing for the worst offenders and end automatic halfway release from prison for serious crimes. Thirdly, the law will improve the efficiency of the court and tribunal system by modernising existing court processes. Criminal justice is largely devolved in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Therefore, most of the Bill's provisions apply to England and Wales only. However, there are some exceptions and Home Office ministers engaged with all devolved administrations to discuss how certain provisions will apply across the UK.

As a further element of working to keep the public safe, the UK government is preventing fires and reducing their harm so that a tragedy like Grenfell Tower never happens again. Home Office civil servants working on fire policy meet their devolved administration counterparts monthly to discuss future policy, including building safety in all regulated premises where people live, stay or work. The Minister for Building Safety and Communities, Lord Greenhalgh, met his devolved counterparts in June to discuss the fire reform white paper.

Project ADDER (Addiction, Diversion, Disruption, Enforcement and Recovery) is a recently launched programme with a total of £59m investment until March 2023, signalling an intensive approach to reducing drug misuse that combines targeted and tougher policing with enhanced treatment and recovery services. Project ADDER brings together partners including the police, local councils and health services. Following an expansion of the programme announced in July 2021, it will now run in 13 local authorities with some of the highest rates of drug misuse. The Minister for Crime and Policing, the Rt Hon Kit Malthouse MP, opened the launch event, in partnership with Public Health England on 12 May, with civil servants across the UK government and devolved administrations agreeing to form part of the Project ADDER Partnership Network.

There have also been meetings between the former Minister for Immigration Compliance and Justice, Chris Philp MP, and senior Home Office officials with ministers in the devolved administrations to discuss the New Plan for Immigration and invite feedback, building on conversations between civil servants. The outcomes of these meetings will help inform the UK government's next steps.

As the UK government is responsible for the criminal justice system in England and Wales, the UK government works most closely with the Welsh Government on a range of important issues.

We know many women are sent to prison, often for low-level summary offences, where the effect of incarceration on their lives and their families is catastrophic. The Ministry of Justice

is working to ensure there is more effective support for vulnerable women in the criminal justice system.

In March this year, the former Minister for Prisons and Probation, Alex Chalk MP, and the Welsh Government's Minister for Social Justice, Jane Hutt MS, met to discuss analysing the needs and vulnerabilities of women in the criminal justice system and laying out a vision for the future of youth provision in Wales. In particular, ministers discussed the Residential Women's Centre in Wales, the joint Female Offenders and Youth Justice Blueprint programme and COVID-19 recovery. The first Residential Women's Centre in Wales will provide accommodation for vulnerable women with complex needs who would otherwise be sentenced to custody. By prioritising early intervention and prevention, both governments are working to make a crucial difference in the lives of the individuals, their families and their communities.



REACHING NET ZERO

The UK was the first major economy to enshrine in law an obligation to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. This ambitious target requires action from all sectors and all parties in every corner of the UK. The government sees Building Back Better from COVID-19 as the pathway for our green industrial revolution: creating fair deals for consumers, supporting a green recovery and green jobs, and building a cleaner, greener future for our country, our people and our planet.

Working in partnership with the devolved administrations is essential to successfully achieving a greener future, not least because there are unique circumstances to reaching net zero across the UK, but also because many common issues can be best resolved by working together and by sharing learning and expertise. For example, through the UK Research and Innovation's industrial decarbonisation challenge, the UK government has given £170 million of funding to industrial cluster projects in Scotland and south Wales.

The need to work together and share information is part of the reason why the Net Zero Interministerial Group, a joint ministerial forum with the devolved administrations, has met twice in the reporting period, with the former Minister for Energy, Clean Growth and Climate Change, the Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP, representing the UK government. The group agreed next steps for joint working on the industrial decarbonisation strategy, UK government's net zero strategy, the UK government hydrogen strategy and the Emissions Trading Scheme. The former Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Kemi Badenoch MP, also attended one of the Net Zero Interministerial Group meetings to consider the economic aspects.

Of course, successfully achieving 'net zero' cannot be done by one department alone and requires a co-ordinated government effort. Therefore, the Interministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' most recent meeting on 28 June also covered net zero ambitions and an agreement that decarbonising is a shared priority. The Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland has also continued its engagement with the Scottish Government on the North Sea Transition Forum. This group provides senior government and industry leadership for the offshore oil and gas industry and supports priority issues including the important energy transition to a low carbon economy and the role the oil and gas sector has to play to achieve net zero.

The UK's Presidency of the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) is an opportunity to boost global net zero ambitions and define the next decade of counteracting climate change. COP26, hosted in Glasgow from 31 October to 12 November 2021, will seek to inspire and unite the world to build a cleaner, greener future. The conference will be one of the largest conferences the UK has ever hosted.

UK government ministers have met with their devolved counterparts 3 times, including in March and twice in June to discuss preparations. The meetings were chaired by the President-Designate for COP26, the Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP, and discussed the UK's objectives for COP26 (and the G7 climate track), as well as event plans and domestic communications ahead of the event. The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP also met twice with the then Scottish Government's Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, Roseanna Cunningham MSP, to discuss the finer details of operational planning, including how to protect public health. At COP26, the UK government will ask other countries to come forward with 2030 targets that align with reaching net zero by 2050.



The whole of the UK government is regularly reviewing and, when needed, evolving our working arrangements with the devolved administrations, to achieve the best possible outcomes for citizens together. Indeed, all the activity in this report demonstrates how collaboration across the Union is working effectively. In this section, we describe the specific engagement that ensures our constitutional framework continues to operate smoothly.

The New Decade, New Approach deal in Northern Ireland that was reached on 9 January 2020 was a significant moment for all parties. It restored the Executive in Northern Ireland, exactly 3 years after the Northern Ireland Assembly collapsed. This power-sharing deal aims to improve public services and restore the public's confidence in the Northern Ireland Executive for the benefit of all citizens in Northern Ireland and across the UK. There have been regular meetings on its implementation during this quarter. The joint board between the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Brandon Lewis CBE MP, and Northern Ireland Executive ministers plays an important role in providing oversight of the funding arrangements for the improvements in health, education and justice measures. This will ensure that the UK government can support the Northern Ireland Executive to take steps to improve public services and increase the sustainability of Northern Ireland's finances. The joint board met on 3 March, where the Rt Hon Brandon Lewis CBE MP and Northern Ireland Executive ministers discussed the Independent Fiscal Council, which is an oversight body laid out in the deal to advise on financial issues and provide independent monitoring and reporting on the Northern Ireland Executive's performance.

The Minister for Scotland, Iain Stewart MP, also met both the former and current Scottish Government Minister for Parliamentary Business in March and June as part of their regular engagement to discuss the Scotland Act Orders (Orders). These Orders, established in 1998 under the Scotland Act, are used to help manage the settlement.



Across UK government, departments are seeking to improve ways of working with the devolved administrations. Joint discussions are underway in relation to enhancing existing ways of working in the areas of transport, tourism and culture, whilst new forums are being discussed across housing, community and local government, as well as safety, security and migration, justice and finance. The Northern Ireland Office, the Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Office of the Secretary of State for Wales also continue to support discussions in all areas with their nation-specific expertise, and continue to build on their direct relationships with each administration in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

