



### **e-UPDATE #100 - 28.07.2021**

Welcome to this 100th update. It feels like quite a milestone, and I hope you continue to find them useful.

I hope too that you are well, and enjoying the brilliant achievements of Team GB in the Tokyo Olympics.

It's been a really busy time. On top of getting 'pinged', I have held **talks with my Albanian Justice Minister counterpart**, after agreeing a prisoner transfer agreement. Albania has the highest number of foreign nationals in our prisons, and negotiating this agreement will help to free up capacity and save money for the British taxpayer.

I have also had a **one-on-one meeting with the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak**, to discuss economic support for Cheltenham and the work of the Ministry of Justice. As I have said to the Prime Minister, and now the Chancellor, I have nothing against 'levelling up' the North of England - it's just essential that Cheltenham is not left behind. There are significant areas of need locally here too, and they need continued attention.

The Government has provided over £350m in COVID support for Cheltenham alone, plus nearly £750m of investment support is in the pipeline (for the Air Balloon scheme, Junction 10, Cyber Park, new Leckhampton school etc). I stressed that those projects are essential to generate the opportunities that will allow local people from all backgrounds to go as far as their talents will take them.

There are updates too on everything from the planned **£20m green transformation of Arle Court park and ride** to the opening of new almshouses in Cheltenham. Do check out too the launch of the exciting **Community Ownership Fund** which will help communities step in to save assets and amenities at risk of closure.

In my ministerial capacity I have announced plans to [modernise the power of attorney system](#) as well as meeting with Police and Crime Commissioners to [discuss plans to revamp Community Payback](#).

Finally, the fantastic team at Cheltenham East Fire Station is running a [drop-in](#)

[vaccination clinic](#) **TODAY** (5pm - 7pm) for anyone aged 18+ who are awaiting their first dose.

Thank you for reading.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alex Chalk".

**Alex Chalk MP**

PS I am taking a short break with the family, so my apologies if I am not able to respond as promptly as normal. My office remain on hand to deal with enquiries.

*In line with data protection regulations, Alex Chalk's office processes constituents' data for policy and casework purposes under the lawful basis of public task. In instances where this lawful basis is not sufficient and explicit consent is required, a member of staff will get in touch with you to establish consent. You can find the full privacy notice on Alex's website [HERE](#)*



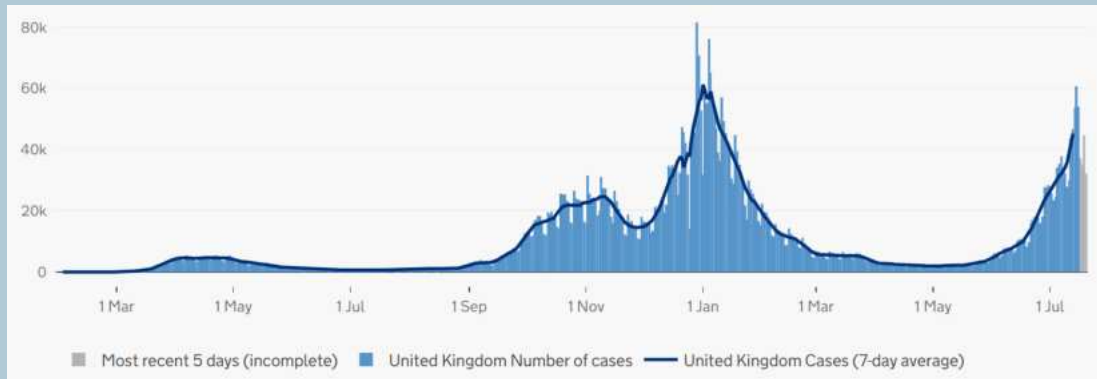
[Gloucestershire's flag flying in Parliament square on 22

July]

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**COVID UPDATE**

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[Overview of the 7-day rate of cases per 100,000 in Cheltenham from February to present. Source: DHSC.]

### **COVID Hospital Patients:**

As at 20 July, there were 19 COVID-positive patients in Cheltenham General and Gloucestershire Royal hospitals, with none on a ventilator.

### **Cases in CHELTENHAM (as at 23 July):**

- Cases in last 7 days: 408
- Rate per 100,000 in last 7 days: 336.2
- Total cases: 4,988

### **Cases in GLOUCESTERSHIRE (as at 23 July):**

- Cases in last 7 days: 2,544
- Rate per 100,000 in last 7 days: 399.3
- Total cases: 28,485

### **Gloucestershire Death Registrations Mentioning COVID-19:**

1 in last 7 days (as at 23 July).

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**VACCINATION UPDATE:**



## GLoucestershire Vaccines Update

Up to and including the 20 July 2021 there have been a total of **824,270** vaccinations in Gloucestershire (first and second doses)

Counting the number of PATIENTS (without double count)						
JCVI Priority Group	JCVI Priority Group Description	First Dose Only	First and Second Dose	Total Group Size	Remaining	Uptake
1	Care Home Residents (excl. Residential Care Workers)	370	2,826	3,266	70	97.9%
2	80+ & Health and Social Care Workers	1,628	48,697	52,101	1,776	96.6%
3	75-79	418	26,972	28,089	699	97.5%
4	70-74 & CEV	758	48,880	51,531	1,893	96.3%
5	65-69	407	31,801	33,891	1,683	95.0%
6	At Risk	3,860	63,975	75,289	7,454	90.1%
7	60-64	415	22,586	24,713	1,712	93.1%
8	55-59	692	28,356	31,328	2,280	92.7%
9	50-54	982	29,416	33,252	2,854	91.4%
10	40-49	6,522	46,172	61,074	8,380	86.3%
11	30-39	28,965	22,180	67,400	16,255	75.9%
12	18-29	45,891	8,357	78,253	24,005	69.3%
JCVI Priority Groups 1-9 Total		9,530	303,509	333,460	20,421	93.9%
JCVI Priority Groups 1-12 Total		90,908	380,218	540,187	69,061	87.2%

[Table from Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group briefing]

Gloucestershire hit the target of offering a vaccination to all O18s by 19 July and offering the second jab to all O50s by the same date.

Take-up amongst 18-29 year olds continues to be lower than for other age groups, but steps are being taken locally to boost demand - see further below.

Thanks, as ever, go to the team at Cheltenham East Fire Station.

## DROP-IN VACCINE CLINIC UPDATE:



**Wednesday 28 July – 5pm to 7pm**



**Cheltenham COVID-19 drop-in vaccination service**

**Anyone 18 years and over**

**Cheltenham East Fire Station, Keynsham Road, Cheltenham, GL53 7PX**

### **DROP-IN VACCINE CLINIC AT CHELTENHAM EAST FIRE STATION**

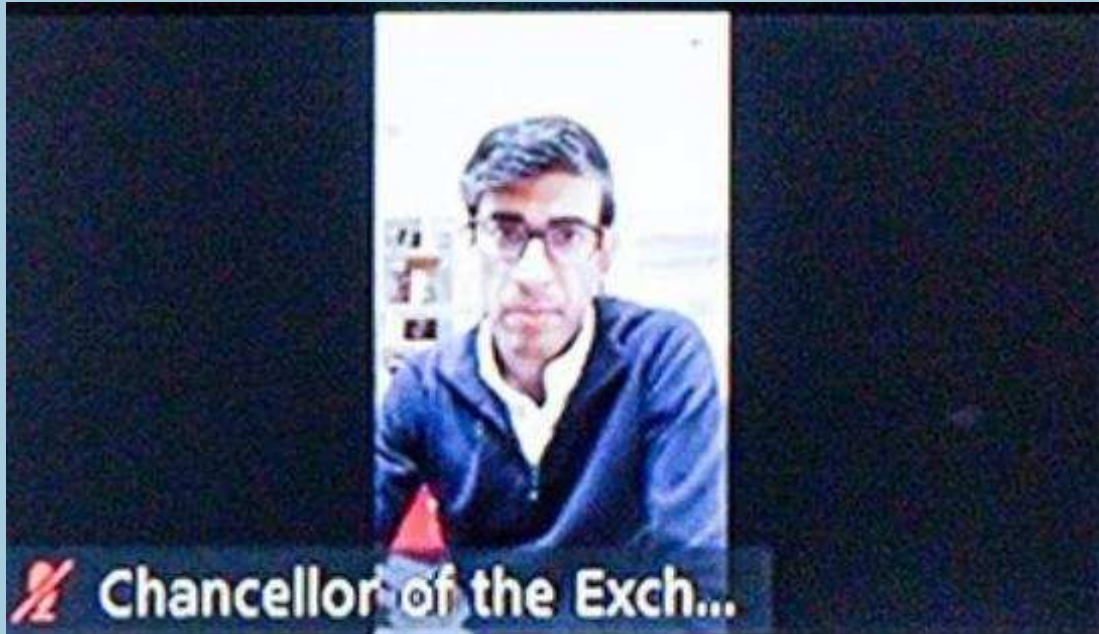
Cheltenham responded so brilliantly to the last walk-in clinic (900 jabs in four hours) that Sarah G and her fantastic team at Cheltenham East Fire Station are putting on another session.

It will be **TODAY (Wednesday 28 July) - 5pm to 7pm**. First jabs only (Pfizer) and open to all over 18s. No need to book.

Let's smash the 900 record!

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## TOP STORIES



### ONE-ON-ONE TALKS WITH CHANCELLOR TO DISCUSS CHELTENHAM SUPPORT AND WORK OF MOJ

Alex had a one-on-one meeting with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, this fortnight via Zoom.

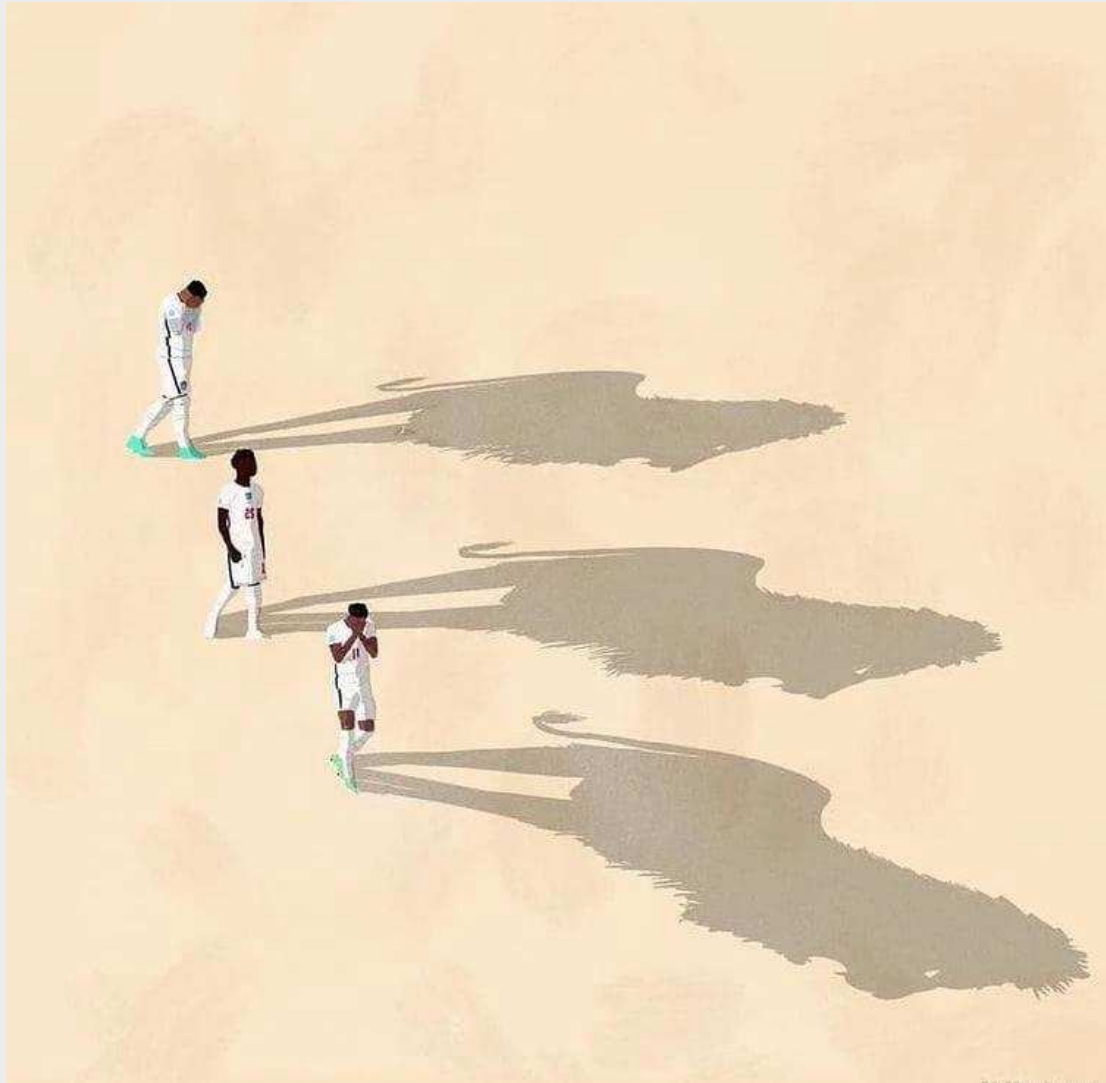
During the pandemic, Cheltenham has received over £350m in Government financial help, through furlough, grants to businesses, business rates discounts, Cheltenham Festivals, the Everyman, the Playhouse and much else besides.

During the meeting, Alex reiterated the points he had recently made to the Prime Minister - namely that several of the neighbourhoods in Cheltenham are in the bottom ten percent of income per head anywhere in the country

Alex stressed that turning that around requires further investment in **education** and **job creation** and opportunities for young people close to home.

Alex said: *"I have nothing against boosting the North of the country, and I am in favour of 'levelling up'. But we have our own priorities and challenges in Cheltenham too.*

*"It's continued Government investment, in projects such as Cheltenham's cyber park, that will empower the next generation to go as far as their talents will take them. Really important to keep banging the drum!"*



### **ALEX CONDEMNS RACIST ABUSE AIMED AT ENGLAND'S FOOTBALLERS**

In an article for the Gloucestershire Echo, Alex condemned the racist abuse aimed at England's footballers. Writing in the local paper, Alex said:

*'Some people believe football is a matter of life and death. It is much more important than that'. The great Liverpool FC manager Bill Shankly may never have actually uttered those words, but the line is much quoted anyway.*

*It resonates because sport – particularly our national game – reaches far beyond actions on the pitch.*

*For those 90 minutes, those who wear the national shirt represent our nation. In a way, they represent its values too. I have always wanted us to be a country that competes bravely – that tackles hard, and shows guts – but plays fair. Diving, also known as cheating, should not be for us.*

*And in this Euro 2020, the England team has done us proud. On top of their skills on the pitch, they have conducted themselves with dignity and decency. And Gareth Southgate has been so impressive – a calm and measured guiding presence.*



*Contrast that with the racist abuse that we have witnessed on social media from so-called fans, directed at Marcus Rashford, Jadon Sancho, and Bukayo Saka. Some of it, as the manager indicated, may be from abroad. But we can't deny that there are those in our own country who are prepared to degrade and humiliate people on account of their race.*

*It's obscene, and they must never be allowed to define our country. So I want to see a robust and uncompromising response. First, they should not be welcome as England fans, and there should be life bans from entering grounds. Second, the Metropolitan Police should make arrests if laws have been broken. And third, social media giants need finally to pull their collective finger out and act more promptly to stamp out abuse and ban users.*

*In Parliament, I am helping as Cheltenham's MP to implement the Lammy Review, to address racial disparities in the criminal justice system. It is a duty I take extremely seriously, and we have made great strides.*

*But sport matters too. And let the lasting legacy of Euro 2020 be this: we recommit ourselves to the values of courage, determination and fair play. And we reject with one voice the prejudice of racists."*



[Click the image above to watch Alex's interview on Politics Live]

### **ALEX INTERVIEWED ON POLITICS LIVE**

Alex was interviewed on Politics Live following Prime Minister's Questions.

During the interview, Alex discussed stage four of the roadmap, the uplift to Universal

Credit and issues surrounding the deficit and the importance of ensuring that the UK is able over time to live within its means.

You can watch the interview in full by clicking the image above. Alex's interview begins at 1.24.31.

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## ALEX'S MINISTERIAL ROUND-UP

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### **ALEX ANNOUNCES GROUND-BREAKING PRISON LEAVER ACCOMMODATION PLEDGE**

Alex visited North Herefordshire Probation centre to see for himself groundbreaking new prison leaver accommodation, provided by the Ministry of Justice.

As part of a £20 million commitment, the pilot project launching in five of the twelve National Probation Service regions, will guaranteed prison leavers with twelve weeks

accommodation to help turn their backs on crime.

It will support around 3,000 offenders in its first year, and while there offenders will get help to find a permanent home. Getting prison leavers into stable accommodation also provides the platform they need to find work and access treatment for addictions and mental health problems. Tackling all three together in this way could prevent thousands of people becoming victims each year.

Alex said: *"Probation officers are unsung crime fighters, sending offenders back to prison if they breach their licence conditions, and helping others turn their lives around so that they don't commit more crime."*

*"By tackling homelessness, we we want to cut crime, reduce drug and alcohol misuse and make our streets safer."*



#### **ALEX HOLDS TALKS WITH ALBANIAN JUSTICE MINISTER**

Alex met with the Albanian Justice Minister to discuss prisons and how the UK can

further support the Albanian justice system.

The meeting followed the signing of a new Prisoner Transfer Agreement (PTA) between the UK and Albania.

This will ensure that serious offenders can serve part of their sentence in Albanian jails rather than UK jails and is a significant contribution to the Government's priority of reducing foreign national offenders in UK prisons

Alex said: *"It was a pleasure to discuss with Gjonaj Etilda the shared challenges our countries face, including the threat of organised crime.*

*"We look forward to continuing the constructive dialogue with our Albanian Justice counterparts."*



### **ALEX CALLS ON POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONERS TO IDENTIFY LOCAL PRIORITIES FOR COMMUNITY PAYBACK**

Alex addressed a meeting of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners about plans for revamping community payback.

He explained to the PCCs that unpaid work is being overhauled to ensure that it is visible, credible, local and paying back to the communities that have been most directly affected by the relevant crime.

Unpaid work is the main form of punishment handed down by courts as part of community sentences.

Alex said: *"It's essential that the public can see with their own eyes that such punishments genuinely pay back to the community that has been affected.*

*"A lack of visibility damages public confidence in the justice system. It can contribute to the assumption that an offender who receives a community sentence has somehow "got away with it", and that justice hasn't truly been served. Only then will community sentences be seen as a credible response."*



### **ALEX ANNOUNCES PLANS TO MODERNISE "POWER OF ATTORNEY" SYSTEM**

Alex has announced plans to strengthen and modernise the power of attorney system to improve the process of managing a loved one's affairs.

The number of registered lasting powers of attorney (LPA) has increased drastically in recent years to more than five million, but the process of making one retains many paper-based features that are over 30 years old.

Alex has launched a 12-week consultation that will examine the entire process of creating and registering an LPA – with a view to boosting the Office of the Public Guardian's (OPG) powers to prevent fraud and abuse while introducing a mainly digital service.

It will examine how technology can be used to reform the witnessing process, thereby improving access and speeding up the service.

Alex said: *"More people are taking steps to plan for the future by applying for lasting powers of attorney, and we want to make sure that it is as safe and simple as possible to do so*

*"These changes will make the service quicker to use, easy to access and even more*

secure from fraud."

The consultation runs for the next 12 weeks until 13 October. To view the proposals and respond to the consultation please click [HERE](#).

Prisoners who maintain family ties are nearly 40% less likely to reoffend.



#### **ALEX ANNOUNCES MORE FUNDING FOR PRISONERS TO MAINTAIN FAMILY TIES**

Alex has announced additional funding to help prisoners and their children to maintain family ties.

The announcement comes after research found that offenders who maintain family ties are nearly 40% less likely to reoffend.

Alex said: *"We know that keeping in touch with those closest to us can play a huge role in our wellbeing, and that prisoners who maintain those ties are much less likely to reoffend.*

*"Evidence shows that offenders who maintain family ties are nearly 40% less likely to reoffend, demonstrating the role families can play in keeping the wider community safe.*

*"That's why I was pleased to announce that more than £120,000 has been awarded to the charity Nepacs, who do fantastic work in helping children who want to sustain a relationship with a parent in prison, to stay in touch and helping cut reoffending from prisoners."*



### **ALEX PROVIDES UPDATE ON THE REVIEW OF THE LAW ON THE RECORDING OF BREASTFEEDING IN PUBLIC WITHOUT CONSENT**

In response to a question in Parliament, Alex provided an update on the review of the law on the recording of **breastfeeding in public without consent**.

Following a rise in the number of incidents in which women have been recorded breastfeeding in public without their consent, **Alex instructed the Law Commission to review the law in this area to ensure that victims are properly protected.**

The Law Commission's review has looked at the question of non-consensual photography in public places, including whether recording and sharing images of breastfeeding should be captured as “intimate” imagery for the purposes of any reformed criminal law.

Alex said: *“Concerns remain about the changes in technology, including the misuse of photography, social media, imagery, and the opportunities to abuse and upset others that such developments can bring.*

*“I therefore instructed the Law Commission to conduct a wide-ranging review, which has taken evidence from victims and considered the law in other jurisdictions.*

*“The Law Commission have concluded their call for evidence and will be publishing their proposals in the New Year.”*



**[Click the image above to watch Alex's address] [ALEX DELIVERS KEYNOTE ADDRESS TO THE 'MODERNISING CRIMINAL JUSTICE' CONFERENCE](#)**

Alex delivered the keynote address to this year's Modernising Criminal Justice Conference.

Noting the contribution made by staff in the Prisons and Probation Service to save lives in prisons, Alex said: "*There are literally thousands of men and women alive today, that would likely not have been, without a robust, decisive, and, dare I say it, courageous response from HMPPS staff.*"

*"We've seen dramatic innovations during COVID. We will retain and expand the use of digital technology for remote hearings, education, digital healthcare and family and social contact."*

You can watch Alex's address in full by clicking the image above.





### **ALEX UPDATES MPs ON DRUG RECOVERY PRISON PILOT AT HMP HOLME HOUSE**

The Drug Recovery Prison (DRP) at HMP Holme House aims to create a whole prison approach to tackling the supply of drugs into prison, together with creating an environment where prisoners are given support to lead a drug-free life while in custody and also following their release into the community.

The DRP pilot began in April 2017 and ended in March 2020. The DRP was mentioned in part one of Dame Carol Black's Review of Drugs as an example of good practice.

When asked for an update on the pilot, Alex said: *"The MoJ is working closely with key departments across government to tackle the misuse of drugs."*

*"The pilot scheme, which has received c.£55m in funding, will be subject to three evaluations. A process evaluation is currently being finalised and will be published in Autumn 2021."*

*"Following this, economic and impact evaluations of pilot will be conducted and will be published in 2023/24 (the lag in the impact and economic evaluations is due to the delay in the 1-year reoffending statistics becoming available)."*

*"Findings from the evaluations of the pilot will help to inform future health and justice interventions across the prison estate."*



[Click the image above to watch Alex give evidence to the Justice Select Committee]

### **ALEX GIVES EVIDENCE TO THE JUSTICE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE FUTURE OF RAINSBROOK SECURE TRAINING CENTRE**

Alex gave evidence to the Justice Select Committee on the future of Rainsbrook Secure Training Centre after serious safety concerns were raised.

The MoJ had to find alternative accommodation for 33 children after the private contractor MTC failed to deliver vital changes after serious safety concerns were raised.

During the session, Alex updated the Justice Select Committee on the options being considered.

Alex said: *"We are not hanging around here - we've got to get this sorted out. We need to get ourselves into a position where this can be properly concluded and we would like to conclude it in a way that does not disadvantage the taxpayer."*

*"Bringing Rainsbrook back under public control is definitely one of the options that is very much in our thinking at the moment. Clearly we are not going back to a situation as before."*

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**CHELTENHAM UPDATES:**



### **ALEX WELCOMES CHANGES TO SCHOOL BUBBLES**

Prior to the issue hitting the headlines, Alex escalated his concerns to senior ministerial colleagues about the number of Cheltenham children being forced into quarantine.

Following discussions with both the Department for Education and the Department for Health and Social Care, Alex was pleased that the Education Secretary announced plans to remove the system of school bubbles in England on 19 July.

As a result, school children who test positive will need to self-isolate with close contacts being advised to take a PCR test.

Alex said: *“Children are resilient, but it is essential that further disruption to their education is kept to an absolute minimum.*

*“That’s why I am pleased that my concerns about the system of schools bubbles have been listened to.*

*“I sincerely hope that these changes will result in far less disruption to education going forward.*

*“My thanks, as ever, go to our wonderful teachers and support staff for all that they are doing to teach and inspire our young people at this very difficult time.”*



### **ALEX TAKES PART IN CHARITY SPINATHON FOR MAGGIE'S**

Alex again took part in the Spinathon event organised by Mark Beaney for Maggie's.

Alex joined Mark for one of the final legs of his challenge as Mark cycled the length of the Tour de France – 2,100 miles – in 21 days.

As it stands, Mark and his fellow spinners have raised a fantastic £9,063 for Maggie's in Cheltenham.

Alex said: *"Maggie's is an amazing local charity which supports people and families who have been affected by cancer."*

*"Thank you to Mark and the other volunteers for once again rising to the challenge to raise much needed funds for a charity that means so much to so many of us here in Cheltenham."*

The JustGiving page is still open for donations and can be accessed by clicking [HERE](#).



[Alex was interviewed in front of the new almshouses by BBC Points West]

### **ALEX ATTENDS THE OPENING OF FOUR NEW ALMSHOUSES IN CHELTENHAM**

Alex attended the opening of four new almshouses that have been funded and built by Cheltenham Almshouses & Aid Trust.

The aim of the Cheltenham Almshouses & Aid Trust is to provide affordable accommodation to older members of the local community on low incomes.

Cheltenham Almshouses & Aid self-funded and built the four new almshouses which consist of four individual one-bedroom properties, finished to high modern standards with open-plan kitchens and underfloor heating.

All have ground-level entry with two designed for wheelchair access and equipped with reinforced ceilings which can accommodate a hoist. State-of-the-art PV panels have been installed to minimise any environmental impact.

Alex said: *“The work of Cheltenham Almshouses & Aid Trust is hugely appreciated, and is in the finest traditions of the Almshouses movement.*

*“The charity may be small in size, but it has made and continues to make a significant contribution towards addressing need in our town. I am very grateful, as indeed is the town.”*



### **ALEX ATTENDS COFFEE MORNING FUNDRAISER AT THE CORNERSTONE CENTRE**

Alex was pleased to attend the Blooming Whaddon fundraising coffee morning at the Cornerstone Centre.

Along with different church and community groups, the Cornerstone Centre hosts a coffee shop and charity shop that raises funds for local community needs and projects.

Alex enjoyed chatting with volunteers and local residents over homemade cakes and scones in the sun as the centre held a coffee morning to help raise funds for its many community projects.

Alex said: *“The Cornerstone is at the heart of the thriving and close-knit Whaddon community, and has been serving local people in and around Oakley for nearly twenty years.*

*It offers a wide variety of activities, the opportunity to learn new skills, meet friends and even have your laundry washed!”*

To find out more about the Cornerstone Centre, please click [HERE](#).



### **ALEX WELCOMES £20M GREEN TRANSFORMATION FOR ARLE COURT**

Alex has welcomed Gloucestershire County Council’s plans to transform Arle Court Park and Ride into a transport hub with a £20m upgrade focussed on sustainable and active travel.

The proposals include:

- 100 electric vehicle charging spaces, with the capability to increase the number of spaces in the future
- Green measures including solar panels to provide power for the site
- Approximately doubling the site’s parking capacity
- More space and parking for buses to help increase services in future including long distance coaches and electric buses

- A passenger waiting room to add convenience and comfort to people's journeys
- Better access to Cheltenham particularly for those walking, cycling and on E-scooters
- Secure cycle storage

Currently, the plans are in the early stages with a planning application likely to be submitted to Cheltenham Borough Council in late 2021.

Alex said: *"We all know just how important it is to provide more practical and attractive travel options to help people to reduce their carbon footprint and contribute to improving our air quality."*

*"Therefore I welcome that Gloucestershire County Council is spending £20m as part of the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund to upgrade our transport infrastructure in a way that builds in sustainability and helps us to reduce Cheltenham's carbon footprint."*

**£150 MILLION**

**COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP FUND ESTABLISHED**

Handing control back to **local communities**

POST OFFICE

MANIFESTO DELIVERED PROMISE

Conservatives

### **ALEX WELCOMES THE LAUNCH OF THE COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP FUND**

Alex has welcomed the Government's launch of the £150 million Community Ownership Fund.

The fund will enable voluntary and community organisations in Cheltenham and across the UK to bid for up to £250,000 matched-funding to help them buy or take over local community assets at risk of closure to run as community-owned businesses.

To be eligible for funding, applicants must demonstrate that the community asset they want to save fulfils the following criteria:

- There is a risk of loss without community intervention



- The asset contributes to the social wellbeing or cultural, recreational or sporting interest of the community
- The asset will be used and accessed by the community
- The asset can be sustainable in community ownership in the long-term.

The online portal for applications will open on 30 July 2021 with the first bidding round closing for applications on 13 August 2021. There will be a minimum of eight bidding rounds over the next four years.

Alex said *"As we shift from response to recovery it is important that we don't revert to the status quo. We must harness that spirit of resilience, selflessness and neighbourliness to build back better."*

*"Our efforts to build back better must include reasserting local pride alongside national belonging."*

*"That's why I'm delighted that the new £150 million Community Ownership Fund will help us to manage our most treasured community assets here in Cheltenham."*

For full guidance on how to apply please click [HERE](#).

For a full application template please click [HERE](#).



# Skills Accelerator

## **ALEX PLEASED AS CHELTENHAM IS INCLUDED IN THE SKILLS ACCELERATOR TRAILBLAZER PILOT**

Alex was delighted that Cheltenham has been included in the West-of-England Skills Accelerator Trailblazer and Pilot.

The new employer-led plans will help to ensure that technical education and training is better aligned to the skills needs of local labour markets.

This will enable learners to develop the skills that enable them to get a well-paid and secure job, no matter where they live, and in the sectors that are critical to our future economic success.

Alex said: *“When I met with the Prime Minister recently, I made clear that when it comes to “levelling up”, Cheltenham must not miss out.*

*“I was therefore very pleased that Cheltenham has been included in the West-of-England Skills Accelerator Trailblazer and Pilot.*

*“This new system will be driven by employers, colleges and other providers working together to identify the skills needs of the area, and to begin the process of transforming the delivery of technical education so that it both meets and drives demand for skills.*

*“It is hoped that this will help to transform the way our skills system works and play a key role in building back better.”*

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## ADDITIONAL UPDATES

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### ALSO SINCE THE LAST UPDATE, ALEX HAS:

#### **As Prisons Minister:**

- Attended a **roundtable** to discuss **youth Covid recovery**
- Met with **representatives** to discuss the work of **The Clink** charity
- Hosted a **roundtable** on **Child Trust Funds** following changes that have been made. More information [HERE](#).
- Hosted a **roundtable** on the **probation workforce**
- Held a number of **bilateral meetings**

#### **As Cheltenham's MP:**

- Met virtually with **REACH** to discuss **A&E at CGH**
- Held a virtual **constituency surgery** with local constituents
- Met **Universities Minister** Gillian Keegan MP

- Was the **guest speaker** at Cheltenham Business Luncheon Club's July meet
- Met with a young constituent to discuss the **impact of the pandemic on children's mental health**
- Cycled to Up Hatherley shops to **assess the conditions of the pavements** following concerns raised by a constituent
- Held talks with officials in DCMS about support for Cheltenham's **Cyber Park**

**Received Briefings from:**

- NHS Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group about the **vaccine rollout** and health in Cheltenham
- **Health Minister** Jo Churchill MP on stage four of the roadmap
- **Vaccines Minister** Nadhim Zahawi
- **Transport Minister** Rachel Maclean MP on the transport decarbonization plan

**WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS:**

Since the last update, Alex has answered **66** Written Parliamentary Questions. Some of the topics raised included mental health services in prisons, divorce and the treatment of transgender people in youth custody.

See below some examples:

**Q. To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what steps he is taking to limit access for prisoners to razor blades.**

Alex responded:

*"Violence against our hard-working prison officers is unacceptable and will never be tolerated.*

*"A taskforce with a remit to undertake a review of the management of razors and ceramics across HMPPS has now restarted following a pause due to the impact of COVID-19.*

*"Prior to the pandemic we saw a continued decrease in assaults in prisons, and in the 12 months to December 2020, assaults were down 34%.*

*"We work closely with the police and Crown Prosecution Service to bring the perpetrators to justice. We are committed to making prisons a safe place to work and providing prison officers with the right support, training and tools such as PAVA pepper spray and body-worn cameras to empower them to do their jobs safely.*

*"We are also spending £100 million to bolster prison security, clamping down on the weapons, drugs and mobile phones that fuel violence and crime behind bars."*

**Q. To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what plans he has to reduce the number of separation and divorce proceedings that end up in the family court system; and what steps he is taking to increase the use of mediation services.**

Alex responded:

*"Divorce and dissolution are a fundamental change of legal status that may have implications for people's rights and responsibilities, for matters such as property and inheritance, and for the families involved. Since the [Matrimonial Causes Act 1857](#), divorce has always been a court process and only the court can legally end a marriage.*

*"However, divorcing couples can use family mediation to reach agreement about the arrangements for any children and for dividing their financial assets, rather than asking the court to decide these matters.*

*"This government is committed to supporting more families to resolve issues such as these through mediation, where appropriate. On 26 March 2021, a £1m Family Mediation Voucher Scheme was launched by the MoJ, to encourage and better support families to use mediation and resolve disputes outside of court.*

*"The Family Mediation Voucher Scheme is currently available in private law children cases where there are no safeguarding concerns and the case is deemed suitable for mediation. The scheme will offer over 2,000 families a financial contribution of up to £500 towards their mediation costs, giving these families the opportunity to resolve their disputes with the assistance of a trained mediator. Mediation Vouchers are offered, at the Mediation Information Assessment Meeting (MIAM) to ensure families are provided with information regarding the support they can get, before they decide to pursue their matters in the family court.*

*"We are closely monitoring the uptake and impact of the scheme and are actively considering what more could be done to encourage parties to consider mediation as an alternative to court, including better signposting of mediation as part of the implementation of the [Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020](#).*

*"This government will continue to look at how the benefits of mediation can be better communicated, in order to encourage wider use of mediation where cases are suitable to do so."*

See them all in full [HERE](#).

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**IN THE MEDIA**

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### **SINCE THE LAST UPDATE:**

Alex has:

- (i) been interviewed on **Politics Live** about stage four of the roadmap, the uplift to Universal Credit and the need for the UK to live within its means
- (ii) been interviewed on **BBC Points West** about the new almshouses in Cheltenham
- (iii) written four articles for the **Cheltenham Post**
- (iiii) written three articles for the **Gloucestershire Echo**, in which he:

1. Called for kindness and respect as restrictions were eased. [READ HERE.](#)
2. Called for a robust and uncompromising response to racist tweets directed at England players. [READ HERE.](#)
3. Called for urgent action as UK receives first ever extreme heat warning. [READ HERE.](#)

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### **COMMUNITY NOTICEBOARD**



### **HOT WEATHER UPDATE FROM SEVERN TRENT**

Severn Trent write:

"With more people at home and the hot weather we're currently experiencing, demand

for water has increased sharply. Severn Trent have seen a huge spike in usage with customers using up to 40 percent more water each day.

Severn Trent are asking everyone to play their part by reducing the amount of water they use for the next few days and have published the following advice:

- If you do use a paddling pool, try to cover it so you can use it again the next day, and when finished, re-use the water in your garden
- Don't worry about watering the lawn, they're great survivors and it'll bounce back when it rains
- Have a quick shower rather than a bath to cool down
- Avoid washing the car if you can. If you need to, use a bucket and sponge rather than a hose
- Look for leaking toilets and dripping taps and get them fixed
- Simply hang up the hose, jetwasher or sprinkler for the rest of the week as these high-volume devices can use up lots of water in a short space of time
- Turn off taps when not in use

Free water saving devices are available [HERE](#).



**GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL LAUNCH £2 MILLION 'BUILD BACK BETTER' FUND**

Gloucestershire County Council has signed off on plans for a £2 million Build Back Better Fund to help communities recover and rebuild from the impact of Covid-19.

The fund is set to be allocated evenly across the county's 53 divisions to allow each county councillor to support bids in their area and ensure the benefits of the investment are shared right across Gloucestershire. Each councillor will be allocated a total of £40,000 in grants to support their local area.

Recognising the diverse nature and needs of Gloucestershire's communities and neighbourhoods, criteria for bids is likely to consist of key themes including 'community health and wellbeing', 'digital inclusion', 'nature and/or the environment', 'healthy lifestyles' and 'safer neighbourhoods'.



**Cheltenham Charity 'IT Schools Africa' Announces Plans to Support More Communities in Gloucestershire**

Since 2004, IT Schools Africa are proud to have achieved:

- 5,300,000 children in Africa given access to digital education
- 100,000 computers and laptops collected in the UK
- 17,000 learners in the UK given digital skills support
- 830 teachers trained in Africa
- 33 e-Learning labs installed in schools and community centres

IT Schools Africa now looks forward to supporting more communities in Gloucestershire in the coming months as it launched DigiBus.

Digibus Gloucestershire will provide support and connect digitally excluded communities in Gloucestershire who have been made more vulnerable since the Covid-19 pandemic began.

Digibus is a mobile digital lab in an accessible converted double-decker bus, fitted with computers, laptops, tablets, a 3-D printer, robotics and coding and a virtual reality system.

Digibus will make a difference to the lives of those most vulnerable in Gloucestershire; enabling users to better access relevant information and services, improve their digital skills, connect with friends and family, reduce social isolation and improve livelihoods.

If you'd like to get involved or stay updated about Digibus, including timetabling and events you can sign up to the newsletter [here](#).



**CHELTENHAM CHARITY RECEIVES FUNDING BOOST FROM THE NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND**



A Cheltenham charity has received a funding boost from the National Lottery Community Fund.

Since January, The National Lottery Community Fund has awarded £541,242 to community projects in Cheltenham.

This includes awarding £500,000 to Caring for Communities and People which works to prevent homelessness, strengthen families and promote independence.

Caring for Communities and People will use the funding to provide support for families with children from birth up to the age of 19 in each of the six districts across the County of Gloucestershire.

Information about how to apply for funding can be found at The National Lottery Community Fund's website. Please click [HERE](#).



### **HOLLIE GUARD APP DOWNLOADED 50,000 TIMES**

Hollie Guard is a free mobile app that provides support for victims and gives them greater confidence when in situations of high or potential risk.

The app raises an alert with a simple shake.

The Hollie Guard service was recently expanded to provide the option of real-time assistance via a police-approved, 24/7 alert monitoring centre.

Anyone can get their free personal guardian by downloading the Hollie Guard app from their respective app store.

For more information on Hollie Guard or to read about the work of the Hollie Gazzard Trust click [HERE](#).



**JUNCTION 12 ART GROUP EXHIBITING IN THE GARDEN GALLERY MONTPELLIER**

Junction 12 is a collective of Gloucestershire artists who are passionate and enthusiastic about professional and affordable art.

They will be showcasing some of their artwork in July 2021 in Cheltenham.

Gardens Gallery, Montpellier, Cheltenham 28th July – August 2 from 1000-1700 daily,  
3<sup>rd</sup> August 1000-1400

To learn more about the group, please visit their website [HERE](#).



## **NATIONAL GRID - VOICES FOR A GREEN FUTURE**

National Grid have launched a competition for schools: Voices for a Green Future.

The competition is an opportunity for pupils from across the United Kingdom to have their voices heard by world leaders at COP26 in Glasgow, later this year.

Pupils have until Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> August to answer the following question: “If you were in charge of the country, what would you do to help look after the planet?” via a 200-word submission. Ten entrants will then be shortlisted and filmed presenting their 200-word submission. The videos will be shared with an esteemed judging panel, including Countryfile TV presenter Helen Skelton. Four pupils – two primary school and two secondary school winners – will be announced to the public on 20<sup>th</sup> October and have their speeches delivered digitally at COP26. They will also win £150 worth of National Book Tokens and STEM-related science toys, as well as a £5,000 grant for their school, to use towards STEM or climate change related educational resources, equipment or experiences. The six runners-up will also receive a £50 National Book Token for taking part.

Alex said: *“This is a great opportunity for the young people living in Cheltenham to take their ideas to the world’s leaders at COP26. Not only will the winners be given the platform to digitally share their vision for a greener future, but they will win grants for their school, helping get additional resources and learning opportunities for all their fellow classmates.”*

Should you wish to find out more about the competition, please visit:

[www.nationalgrid.com/voicesforagreenfuture](http://www.nationalgrid.com/voicesforagreenfuture)

## **USEFUL LOCAL CONTACTS**

### **Gloucestershire County Council**

[www.gloucestershire.gov.uk](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk)

01452 425000

### **Cheltenham Borough Council**

[www.cheltenham.gov.uk](http://www.cheltenham.gov.uk)

01242 262626

### **Age UK Gloucestershire**

[www.ageuk.org.uk/gloucestershire](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/gloucestershire)

01452 422660

### **Gloucestershire Abuse Support**

01452 726570

### **Citizens Advice Gloucestershire**

01452 527202

### **GRASAC (Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre)**

[www.glosrasac.org](http://www.glosrasac.org)

01452 305421



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