

# THE TIMES



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## What (not) to wear Summer style dilemmas

INSIDE  
TIMES2

### Do you have a marriage spreadsheet?

Carol Midgley

## Jobs are there if the unemployed want them, ministers insist

Chris Smyth Whitehall Editor  
Jack Barnett Economics Correspondent

Unemployed people have "ample opportunity" to find a job, senior ministers have insisted as they shrugged off

secretary, argue that the economy is doing "far better than many would have you believe" as they tell people who are out of work that there is no good reason to languish on benefits.

In an article for The Times, Hunt and Stride acknowledge "bumps, twists and turns" in the economic recovery, but say that a "resilient" Britain is doing better than many other western

countries as they seek to dispel economic gloom.

As the Tories and Labour battle to frame perceptions of the economy before the general election, Hunt and Stride say that they will not be "passive" in dealing with inactivity and long-term sickness as they try to draw contrasts with Sir Keir Starmer.

The pair also double down on plans

to scrap national insurance, promising to keep cutting the tax "until it's gone" to encourage hard work.

Official figures showed yesterday that wages rose by more than expected and outpaced inflation in the first three months of the year, but unemployment increased.

Predicting that inflation will fall to "around 2 per cent" this month, Hunt

offers his most upbeat assessment of stabilising prices as he and Rishi Sunak prepare to fight an election campaign by arguing that people are better off because of their government's tough decisions.

They say that Britain is a nation where "we stand up and confront the issues of our time head on" as they aim **Continued on page 2**

PDF by:

<https://www.pro-memoria.info>

# Don't teach pupils about gender ID, schools told

### Guidance also rules out sex education before 13

Steven Swinford Political Editor  
Aubrey Allegretti Chief Political Correspondent

Schools must not teach children that they can change their gender identity and should avoid "explicit" conversations about sex until they reach the age of 13, the government is to say.

Ministers will warn schools tomorrow that gender identity is a highly contested area and that teaching children about it could have damaging implications.

Staff will be explicitly told to avoid proactively teaching children about gender identity. If asked, they should teach "biological" facts about sex.

The guidance will also impose age limits on sex education for the first time, to address concerns that children are being exposed to sensitive material before they are ready.

It will state that children should not be given any form of sex education in primary school until Year 5, when aged nine and over.

Information should be limited at that stage to the basic facts of conception and birth, with what they need to know to stay safe, including "appropriate boundaries" and how to report concerns. Explicit discussions of sexual acts should not take place until Year 9, when children are aged 13 and over. This includes conversations about contraception, sexually transmitted infections and abortion.

Domestic violence, coercive control

and sexual violence should also not be discussed until children are 13. Detailed conversations about pornography and how it can lead to children having a "distorted" view of themselves should be delayed until Year 9.

Children in Year 7 — those aged 11 who are starting secondary school — will be taught that sending naked or images of someone under the age of 18 is a potential criminal offence.

The guidance will state that they can be taught about sexual harassment, revenge porn, grooming, stalking and forced marriage from the same age. Parents will retain the right to withdraw pupils from sex education unless there are "exceptional" circumstances.

The move represents the first overhaul of relationships, sex education and health guidance in nearly five years, including an explicit ban on teaching children about gender identity.

Rishi Sunak has become concerned that gender identity is being "embedded" within schools as an uncontested fact.

A report by the think tank Policy Exchange found last year that schools were routinely allowing children to switch their gender in the classroom without parental consent.

Separate guidance published at the end of last year said that schools should not allow children to socially transition — use a different name, pronoun or uniform of the opposite sex — without **Continued on page 2**



HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES III BY JONATHAN YEO 2023

Taking wing King Charles unveiled his first official portrait as monarch yesterday at Buckingham Palace. The artist, Jonathan Yeo, said the butterfly at the King's shoulder symbolised nature and highlighted his environmental campaigns. Page 7

## Inside trading: criminal buys Dubai flats from jail cell

Times investigation

Emma Yeomans  
George Greenwood  
Investigations Reporter

A money launderer was secretly able to buy two luxury apartments in Dubai despite being locked in a prison cell in the north of England, a Times investigation has found.

He is one of more than 100 British criminals, bankrupts and tax cheats found to have invested more than £200 million in the Gulf state. In some cases the British authorities appear to have failed to find these properties when trying to track down criminals' assets.

Those who have invested in Dubai property in recent years include a fraudster from Essex who conned elderly victims out of their savings in a cold-calling scam and criminals linked to a gang who stole £12 million from the NHS and other public bodies.

The Irish crime boss Daniel Kinahan was also found to have bought a property in Dubai, and his wife, Caoimhe Robinson, has profited by buying, letting and selling properties. Robinson is not subject to any arrest warrant or sanctions.

Emily Thornberry, the shadow attorney-general, said there must be "an urgent review of the loopholes in the system", adding: "The idea that a convicted criminal can do these kinds of property deals from jail makes a farce of the asset recovery regime."

One convicted money launderer was able to buy £1.1 million of property while held at HMP Wealstun, West Yorkshire. The findings come from a leak of data from Dubai, including property ownership, transaction and rental records.

Fifty-seven criminals, either convicted British citizens or foreign citizens convicted in Britain, and 105 British or British-linked bankrupts, disqualified directors, tax cheats and people under investigation were identified as having bought property in the UAE. The data does not contain details about the source of money used to buy property. **Leak reveals crooks' market, pages 12-13**

News

# Today's highlights

**7.10am** Chris Philp, the crime and policing minister  
**7.45am** Nick Thomas-Symonds, the shadow minister without portfolio  
**12pm** PMOs Unpacked with Patrick Maguire and Lara Spirit from The Times  
**3.40pm** The actress Elizabeth Hurley, right, discusses being directed by her son in the film *Strictly Confidential*  
**6.45pm** Anthony Scaramucci, former White House communications director



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## TODAY'S EDITION

### NEWS



**DEAF EARS**  
 Half of Britons wouldn't notice loss of opera houses  
 PAGE 16

### SPORT



**BACK OFF**  
 Players face yellow cards for moaning to the referee  
 PAGE 55

### TIMES2



**HONEY TRAP**  
 The dark art of deception on OnlyFans  
 PAGES 2-3

**413** days since Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich was detained in Russia  
 #FreeEvan



LETTERS 22 LEADING ARTICLES 23 WORLD 24  
 BUSINESS 29 MARKETS 38 REGISTER 43  
 SPORT 50 CROSSWORD 60 TV & RADIO TIMES 2



## Dubai Unlocked: the secret convict investors

An investigation by The Times has revealed that more than £200 million worth of property in Dubai has been bought by criminals convicted in British courts and people who have failed to pay debts in the UK.

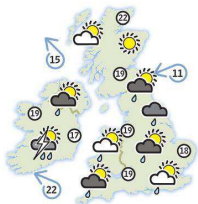
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### THE WEATHER



Dry and sunny in northern Britain, cloudy with rain and showers elsewhere. Full forecast, page 49

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# Taxpayers are kept on hold by HMRC helplines for 800 years

Oliver Wright Policy Editor

Taxpayers spent a total of almost 800 years last year waiting on the phone to speak to HM Revenue & Customs amid a “declining spiral” of customer service, according to the government’s spending watchdog.

In a damning report it said that HMRC failed to answer up to 45 per cent of calls to its tax helpline. People who did manage to speak to an advisor waited 23 minutes on average, up from five minutes in 2019.

The National Audit Office (NAO) said that, across the country, this represented a total of 798 years spent waiting on the phone, up from 365 years three years before. It accused the organisation of restricting the supply of telephone services to “manage its workload”, and criticised the strategy of cutting costs by forcing taxpayers to use its digital services, which did not provide a “like-for-like replacement”.

It said it had tested HMRC’s new

digital assistant tool and found it could resolve barely half of the queries it sampled. It also criticised the agency for cutting its frontline customer service workforce by more than 9 per cent in the past four years without properly assessing whether its digital services were meeting customer needs.

The report coincides with growing public anger about HMRC’s service. Last year, 91,000 people lodged complaints, up almost 40 per cent in 2020.

HMRC shut down four helplines altogether for three months in an effort to redeploy staff and save money. It announced plans this year to make the cuts permanent but the move was vetoed by the chancellor Jeremy Hunt.

A Treasury source said that staff cuts could not be at the “detriment of the general public and the vulnerable who need access to the helplines to support them with tax matters”.

Before the NAO report, the Treasury announced that it was giving HMRC an additional £51 million so its staff could

answer more calls. Gareth Davies, head of the NAO, said HMRC’s telephone and correspondence services had been below its target service levels for too long.

“While many of its digital services work well, they have not made enough of a difference to customers, some of whom have been caught in a declining spiral of service pressures and cuts,” he said. “HMRC must allow more time for these services to bed in and understand the difference they make before adjusting staffing levels.”

The report also questioned staff productivity, pointing to figures showing sickness levels had increased to 11 days a year, on average.

An HMRC spokesman said: “While customer service standards on our phone lines are still not where we want them to be, we’re making strong progress in our efforts to improve our customer service, and additional funding has been confirmed by the government this week.”

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 Gender identity advice for schools

informing parents. They said that schools should take a “very cautious approach”.

That guidance stated: “Gender identity is a contested belief. It is a sense a person may have of their own gender, whether male, female or another category such as non-binary. This may or may not be the same as their biological sex. Many people do not

consider that they or others have a gender identity at all.”

It said that the increase in children questioning their gender had been “linked to gender identity ideology”, adding: “This is a contested belief. Many people believe this concept is one that reinforces stereotypes and social norms relating to sex.”

The age limits in the new schools guidance have been drawn up to ensure that children are not exposed to information about sex when they are not

ready for it. Primary schools will be expected to focus on the importance of families, friendships and ensuring that relationships are “respectful”, including avoiding damaging stereotypes, the potential risks of online relationships and social media. This includes the fact that the minimum age for most social media websites is 13 and warnings against sharing images. Children will not be taught about pornography, but will be told how to ensure they are safe. Sunak snub for rainbow lanyard, page 7

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1 Ministers warn the unemployed

to rally voters around contentious welfare reforms designed to get people to work. Acknowledging the “challenge” of long-term sickness, which has risen by almost 800,000 since Covid to a record 2.8 million, Hunt and Stride promise “the most radical welfare reforms in a generation”.

More people with disabilities will have to look for work, people with many mental health conditions face losing cash benefits and sick notes are being overhauled. Occupational health services and life coaches for those with long-term illness are being expanded.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures showed yesterday that vacancies have been falling steadily from 1.3 million in 2022 but remain higher than 2019 and twice the 2010 level. Unemployment has been rising this year to 1.5 million, a rate of 4.3 per cent, and remains above 2019 levels but lower than a decade ago.

Liz McKeown, director of statistics at the ONS, said there were “tentative signs that the jobs market was cooling”, with numbers in work dipping slightly.

Hunt and Stride insisted “our economic record is strong and our labour market resilient” and pointed to problems with the labour force survey. Sunak has sought to use welfare reforms to create a dividing line with Starmer, who has avoided backing changes condemned by disability groups and argued Labour would focus on improving access to treatment.

Labour have seized on Hunt’s ambition to eliminate national insurance, suggesting it would create a £46 billion black hole requiring spending cuts. Hunt dismissed this, saying further tax cuts would be fully funded.

Huw Pill, chief economist at the Bank of England, said 6 per cent wage growth showed there was “still some way to go” to hit the 2 per cent inflation target. Dubs over early rate cut, page 32

# When the go Britons show their resilience

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## Jeremy Hunt and Mel Stride Comment

Times have undeniably been tough over the last few years. The legacy of Covid, and the global instability caused by wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, continue to reverberate through economies around the world, including impacting us here at home.

But we are a resilient country and a resilient people. We don’t duck a challenge. Nor are we passive when things get tough. Instead, we stand up and confront the issues of our time head on. The number of people out of work due to long-term sickness is one such challenge. That’s why the prime minister outlined his plan to put work at the heart of welfare.

We’ve been clear that unemployment benefits should only be there as a safety net, not a lifestyle choice. With around 900,000 vacancies in the economy there are ample opportunities for people to get on and get ahead in the world of work. While acknowledging the difficulties we have faced and continue to tackle, the economic picture is far better than many would have you believe. For the last 10 months wages have increased faster than inflation, which is down from 11 per cent to just 3.2 per cent, and is on track to fall to around 2 per cent this month. Since January the UK’s economy

has grown at the fastest rate in two years — faster than any other G7 country and faster than the US.

The International Monetary Fund predicts the UK will grow faster over the next six years than any European G7 country or Japan. The headline figures published by the Office for National Statistics yesterday will attract attention, but our economic record is strong and labour market resilient. It expressed caution about data being produced by its surveys over a number of months, so don’t be alarmist.

There are nearly 4 million more people in work than in 2010. Our unemployment rate is below many international peers. And despite concerns over the number of people classed as economically inactive, our inactivity rate is lower than in 2010 and better than some other economic heavyweights. But we know the job is not done, which is why we’re ushering in the most radical welfare reforms in a generation.

Our £2.5 billion Back to Work Plan, joined-up work and health support through WorkWell, and reforms to incapacity benefits and fit notes, will see thousands more people supported into work. Over the long term we will keep cutting National Insurance until it’s gone.

The road to recovery is never smooth — there are bumps, twists and turns. But by standing up to the issues of our day, we will grow the economy and raise living standards for hard-working Britons.

Jeremy Hunt is chancellor of the exchequer. Mel Stride is work and pensions secretary