

[News story: Avian influenza \(bird flu\): Latest situation](#)

New housing measures will come into force in England, Scotland and Wales on 14 December.

[Priti Patel publishes paper on group-based child sexual exploitation](#)

The Home Secretary has today published a paper on the characteristics of group-based child sexual exploitation offending making clear that more will be done by government, law enforcement and partners to better safeguard children and tackle perpetrators.

The findings provide safeguarding partners with an overview of the current evidence in relation to group-based offending.

The paper sets out the limited available evidence on the characteristics of offenders including how they operate, ethnicity, age, offender networks, as well as the context in which these crimes are often committed, along with implications for frontline responses and for policy development.

An External Reference Group, consisting of independent experts on child sexual exploitation, reviewed and informed this work. Members included Labour MP for Rotherham Sarah Champion, Conservative MP for Wakefield Imran Ahmad Khan, survivor and campaigner Sammy Woodhouse, and Simon Bailey, National Police Chiefs Council lead on child protection.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

Victims and survivors of group-based child sexual exploitation have told me how they were let down by the state in the name of political correctness. What happened to these children remains one of the biggest stains on our country's conscience.

This paper demonstrates how difficult it has been to draw conclusions about the characteristics of offenders. That is why the government's forthcoming Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy will commit to improving our understanding of child sexual abuse – including around ethnicity.

This will enable us to better understand any community and cultural

factors relevant to tackling offending – helping us to safeguard children from abuse, deliver justice for victims and survivors, and restore the public’s confidence in the criminal justice system’s ability to confront this issue.

Sammy Woodhouse said:

It was extremely important for me to be a part of the External Reference Group as I was subjected to exploitation and abuse as a child and failed by authorities. Unfortunately this is something that is still happening today and will continue to happen in the future.

As a country we still do not understand abuse and exploitation, and the government is not doing enough to prevent and tackle it, so I welcome the publication of this paper. I want perpetrators to be held to account for their criminal activity regardless of race or religion because unfortunately they haven’t, and it still remains a subject that we cannot openly discuss. No one should be exempt.

Simon Bailey, National Police Chiefs Council lead on child protection, said:

Since 2014 the police service’s response to group-based child sexual exploitation has significantly improved and I remain committed to continue this work, to strengthen it, to build on the investments and to improve it further. All victims of child sexual exploitation have a right to expect the best possible response from the police service.

The research commissioned by the Home Secretary into group based child sexual exploitation has highlighted just how complex and challenging this particular form of child sexual abuse is and acknowledges there are significant gaps in our knowledge and understanding.

As a member of the External Reference Group I welcome the commitment to improve data collection and the proposal to commission further research on behaviour including pathways of offenders, the effectiveness of disruption and preventative measures. I look forward to the next steps in relation to this crucial area of work.

The paper summarises studies which suggest individuals committing group-based child sexual exploitation are predominantly, but not exclusively, male and often under the age of 30.

Some studies have indicated an over-representation of Asian and Black offenders. However, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the ethnicity

of offenders as existing research is limited and data collection is poor.

The lack of robust data on ethnicity and other factors is disappointing, however community and cultural factors are clearly relevant to understanding and tackling offending, and an approach to deterring, disrupting, and preventing offending tailored to the communities in which it occurs is needed.

Therefore, a commitment to improve the collection and analysis of data on child sexual abuse, including in relation to characteristics of offenders such as ethnicity and other factors, will be included in the forthcoming Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy to ensure the factors and context of offending are understood and confronted.

Studies indicate that motivations differ between offenders, but that a sexual interest in children is not always the predominant motive. Financial gain and a desire for sexual gratification are common motives, and misogyny and disregard for women and girls may further enable the abuse.

Offenders can come from a range of social backgrounds – some have been stable middle-class professionals, some of whom were married, whilst others have had more chaotic lifestyles.

Materials used in the paper included published academic research, official statistics and published work by organisations working in the child sexual exploitation area, as well as a series of interviews with police officers and safeguarding officers involved in investigating this type of offending.

Insight gained from this paper will be used to improve guidance to local agencies in identifying and disrupting this form of offending, and work with police to tackle organised exploitation by using improved analysis and sharing of data.

The government will soon publish the Tackling Child Sexual Abuse Strategy, which will outline a whole system response to tackling all forms of child sexual abuse, including group-based offending.

This paper will play an important role in the Strategy and its implementation, informing current and future work the government will undertake to tackle, prevent and disrupt this crime.

The full paper is available on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk).

[Guidance: Pet travel: approved air,](#)

sea and rail carriers and routes

Check the transport companies and routes you can use to bring your pet cat, dog or ferret to England, Scotland or Wales.

Secondary schools and colleges to get weekly coronavirus testing

Every secondary school and college in England, as well as special schools and alternative provision, will have access to rapid coronavirus testing from January to help keep staff and students as safe as possible and in education, the government has announced today (15 December).

Building on the success of testing pilots in schools and colleges over the past few months, from January all staff in secondary schools and colleges will be eligible for weekly rapid tests as part of an initial rollout.

Students will be eligible for daily testing for seven days if they are identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive. Under current guidelines, up to a whole school bubble has to self-isolate if one student or staff member tests positive. From January, those in the same bubble not need to self-isolate if they agree to be tested once a day. This will improve attendance and ensure young people can benefit from face-to-face teaching as much as possible.

Staff will also be eligible for daily testing if they are identified as a close contact. Roughly one in three people have the virus without symptoms so could be spreading the disease unknowingly. Asymptomatic testing helps to identify positive cases more quickly, and break chains of transmission.

Primary schools will then be supported to roll out testing as quickly as possible over the spring term.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

This huge expansion of rapid testing for those working in education is a milestone moment in our work to keep schools and colleges open for all.

I know it has taken a phenomenal effort from everyone to ensure approximately 99% of schools have been open each week since the start of term.

Testing on this scale brings real benefits to education, it means

more children, teachers and staff can stay in their classes in schools and colleges without the need to self-isolate.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

It is so important we drive down transmission rates among school age children, so we are rolling out rapid testing in all schools as quickly as possible, and asking everyone offered a test to come forward for a test.

About one in three people who have coronavirus have no symptoms and will be spreading it without realising it, rapid regular testing offers a reliable and effective way to keep schools open and children learning.

It will also help us to identify asymptomatic cases that we otherwise wouldn't know about, and protect the wider community beyond the school gates.

Consent will be given in all cases by the staff member, student, or parent as appropriate.

Close contacts of positive cases who do not want to participate in daily testing will still be able to self-isolate as is currently the case.

[Guidance](#), training materials and webinars will shortly be made available to secondary schools and colleges so they can start to use the new testing capacity as soon as possible.

The pilots that have taken place in schools and colleges over the autumn term have shown the positive impact regular testing can have in finding asymptomatic cases before they spread and reducing the need to self-isolate amongst staff and students.

The pilots have shown how testing is an additional reassurance and protective measure, on top of the wide range of effective measures schools and colleges already have in place, including increased hygiene, ventilation, and wearing of face coverings in communal areas where appropriate.

Test kits will begin arriving at secondary schools and colleges for the first phase of rollout to staff from the first week of January.

Dr Susan Hopkins, Senior Medical Adviser to Public Health England and NHS Test and Trace:

Lateral flow devices are a vital additional tool in helping us detect COVID-19 cases that we wouldn't otherwise know about, meaning that we can break chains of transmission and save lives.

In schools these tests can help make students and staff safer by

helping us quickly identify many people who are unknowingly carrying high levels of the virus, preventing them from passing it on to others.

Hamid Patel, CEO of Star Academies, a trust with schools participating in the autumn testing trials, said:

Testing was arranged to be as unintrusive as possible, and the benefits have been tremendous.

Attendance has improved as fewer close contacts have been required to self-isolate. Parents who may have been wavering have gained confidence to send their children to school, and staff have been reassured by the availability of testing.

Testing has allowed us to refocus on teaching and learning. I am heartened that the scheme is to be rolled out nationally: it is a game-changer for the sector.

Gerard Garvey, Principal of Newcastle Sixth Form College, a college participating in the autumn testing trials, said:

Testing at Newcastle Sixth Form College has given all of our students and staff the reassurance that the college is a safe environment for them to work and study.

The testing process is smooth and has minimal impact on teaching and learning.

The daily testing of close contacts has enabled students who would normally have had to self-isolate to continue to attend and enjoy the benefits of face-to-face teaching.

There is no expectation that school and college staff will need to work on this over the Christmas break. Existing staff meetings or inset days can be used for training as appropriate for each individual setting.

Schools and colleges will be provided with the necessary equipment and materials to deliver the testing and will be reimbursed for reasonable administrative costs such as staff time.

We continue to work with local authorities to trial approaches to regular testing in early years settings, and expect provision to increase throughout the spring.

Alister Jack responds to December 2020 Labour Market Statistics

Press release

Scottish Secretary responds to December 2020 Labour Market Statistics for Scotland



Responding to today's [15 December 2020] Labour Market Statistics, Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

Despite the slight decrease in today's figures, these reflect a period when restrictions were eased. We are now facing new restrictions across the UK.

The UK Government continues to respond, taking unprecedented action to support jobs with the extension of the furlough and self-employed schemes, providing loans to Scottish businesses and supporting our hospitality and tourism sectors.

For those looking for work, we are investing billions as part of our Plan for Jobs including recruitment of Work Coaches, expansion of sector training schemes and £2 billion Kickstart scheme for young people.

In the Spending Review last month, the Chancellor set out how we will work to ensure our economy recovers. That includes support for growth deals in Scotland and investment in our defence and R&D sectors, money to help communities prepare for a new Shared Prosperity Fund, and an increase in the national living wage.

Hope is on the horizon, with the UK Government procuring vaccines on behalf of the whole of the UK. Never has the strength of the union and UK Treasury been more important.

Background

- Many of our communities are living under changing tier restrictions. The UK Government furlough scheme, paying 80 per cent of wages, will run UK-wide until the end of March. The self-employed support scheme has also been extended to the end of March and will increase from 55% to 80% of average profits – up to £7,500. At their peak in the summer our furlough and self-employed support schemes were supporting more than 930,000 jobs in Scotland and will continue to provide a vital safety net for businesses and their employees over the winter.
- More than 76,000 businesses in Scotland have benefitted from UK Government loan schemes, worth more than £2.9 billion. Scotland's hospitality and tourism businesses are benefitting from a VAT cut which will run till March 2021.
- The Scottish Government has been allocated an additional £9.5 billion from the UK Government since March 2020 for COVID-19 response. This is on top of the block grant and in addition to direct UK Government support to people and businesses in Scotland.
- The UK Government is investing billions to help people back into work, including through our £2 billion Kickstart scheme to get young people into jobs, expansion of our sector-based work academy programme and recruitment of thousands of Work Coaches in Jobcentres helping unemployed people of all ages back into work.
- The UK Government has provided extra funding for welfare system to help those unable to access other forms of support. These temporary welfare measures include a £20 per week increase for everyone on Universal Credit. The Scottish Government also holds significant devolved welfare powers.
- The UK Government is providing the bulk of covid testing in Scotland including lateral flow tests used in community and student testing. The UK was the first country in the world to approve Pfizer/BioNtech vaccine with 40 million doses secured by the UK Government for distribution across all parts of the UK.

Analysis

Scotland's key indicators are improving, with unemployment falling (-15,000) at 4.2% (down 0.6%) for Aug – Oct 20 compared to the three months before May – Jul 20. This is the strongest result of any region of the UK with Scotland's unemployment rate of 4.2% now below that of the UK overall at 4.9%.

We have seen from last month's furlough figures that over 183,000 employments are paused and around 142,000 self-employed people in Scotland received UK Government support.

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