

Press release: New River Wear fish pass is complete

An Environment Agency project to safeguard the flood warning service for Stanhope has also improved fish passage on the River Wear.

News story: New measure to tackle grade inflation at university

Universities will be discouraged from inflating students' results with 'grade inflation' one of the key criteria institutions will be measured against in the government's national rating system, Universities Minister Sam Gyimah announced today (22 October).

The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) rates universities with gold, silver or bronze scores based on a number of criteria including their overall provision, student experience, teaching quality and whether courses are sufficiently stretching enough – the government is also piloting a subject specific version of it.

Announcing a second year of pilots to move subject-level TEF a step closer, Sam Gyimah confirmed today that these will also look at grade inflation, with TEF panellists reviewing evidence to see whether universities are taking a responsible approach to degree grading and not awarding excessive numbers of firsts and 2:1s. It means a university's provider-level rating of gold, silver or bronze will take their approach to tackling grade inflation into account.

Grade inflation will be an important feature of the criteria considered alongside how a university is stretching its students through course design and assessment, and through their ability to develop independence, knowledge and skills that reflect their full potential. It forms a key part of the government's commitment to delivering real choice for prospective students.

This is one of the first measures taken by the government to tackle grade inflation, with the plans confirmed in the government's response to the [subject-level TEF consultation](#).

In the last five years alone, figures from the Higher Education Stats Authority show the proportion of graduates who gained a first class degree has increased from 18% in 2012/13 to 26% in 2016/17, which means over a quarter of graduates are now securing the top grade.

Universities Minister Sam Gyimah said:

When you look at what makes our universities so prestigious, it comes down to the value of our degrees – they open up a huge range of opportunities and the chance to step into a rewarding and highly-skilled career.

The value of those degrees is threatened by grade inflation and that is a problem for students, employers and the universities themselves. These new measures will look at how we can protect our globally recognised higher education system by discouraging universities from undermining the reverence a degree qualification from the UK commands.

The Universities Minister has also outlined in the government's consultation response that a year of pilots will take place this academic year to see how this works in practice, involving 50 higher education institutions.

The government's response additionally confirmed that plans to extend TEF to subject-level have moved a step closer, meaning individual subjects will also be rated with a gold, silver or bronze rating in the coming years.

Subject-level TEF builds on the greater choice being made available to prospective students by letting them look behind provider-level ratings and access information about teaching quality for a specific subject.

The new subject-level framework will take into account student feedback, drop-out rates and graduate outcomes – helping students to make the right decision, which for many is life-changing.

Speech: Approbation of the Lord Mayor Elect ceremony

My Lord Mayor Elect, I am commanded by Her Majesty The Queen to convey Her Majesty's express approval of the choice of the citizens of London in electing you to be Lord Mayor for the coming year.

I am delighted to welcome you, your family and other distinguished guests to formally convey this message.

May I also welcome you, Mr Recorder, and pay tribute to the huge contribution you have made – and continue to make – to our justice system.

My Lord Mayor Elect, you will be the 691st Lord Mayor, coming with an extensive background in finance and banking and having been Alderman for the

City of London ward of Coleman Street since 2013.

It is a ward that, by virtue of Finsbury Circus, not only provides an oasis of calm right in the heart of the City, but historically, has also proved a refuge for Members of Parliament in times of political and constitutional crisis.

Most famously, for five MPs in 1642, Coleman Street served as a sanctuary from Charles I who tried to have them arrested. My Lord Mayor Elect, it's good to know where to head if things get really bad over the next months ahead!

I'd also like to take this opportunity to recognise the outgoing Lord Mayor. Charles, your focus on rebuilding trust has been timely in its need and already tangible in its effect.

Your launch of the 'Business of Trust' programme is an important step, not only in rebuilding trust that has been eroded from past events, but in building new guiding principles that will sustain people's trust in institutions and businesses for our digital and technologically-driven future.

My Lord Mayor Elect, your priority for the year ahead also looks to the future. You have said your focus will be 'Shaping tomorrow's City today'. In so doing, you will promote and champion digital skills, innovation and technology, with a particular focus on young people.

I welcome that important agenda. Ensuring we have a skilled workforce fit for the future is essential not just for the competitiveness of the City, and for the whole of the UK, but in ensuring people are equipped to seize the new opportunities that will be before them.

We both share a passion for the importance of education as a foundation in life and in the belief that every young person, no matter what their circumstances, should be able to develop their potential and have the same opportunities.

You have never forgotten how instrumental the education you received at King Edward's, Witley was in shaping your future. With the school's origins in educating the poor and under-privileged, and its links with the City of London, it clearly also served – and continues to serve – as an inspiration.

In your role as a school governor there and through your support of education charities and initiatives – such as Barclays Life Skills – you have sought to help young people get that good start in life and develop the skills they need to seize opportunities and fulfil their ambitions.

And the fact is, today, many of those opportunities for young people lie in – or will come out of – the technology revolution. It's a revolution that is transforming every aspect of our personal lives, civil society, our courts and justice system, government, workplaces and the wider economy.

Mr Recorder, as you alluded to, we have a choice. We can either let this

revolution sweep over us, or we can prepare for what's on the horizon and equip ourselves with the means to harness its power.

It's an important area of work for the Ministry of Justice in terms of looking at and anticipating the kind of justice system we need for the future and the skills we need from those working in it.

I welcome the focus you will bring to preparing the City for the future during your term in office. And in particular, making sure that we are giving today's young people the skills and support they need to succeed in the world of tomorrow, to ensure that nobody is left behind and that we are all masters of, and not slaves to, this exciting revolution.

My Lord Mayor Elect, as we have heard, you and your family are keen skiers. I want to end with what Olympic skier Lindsey Vonn said when she was asked the other week why she was retiring at the age of 33. She said:

I really would like to be active when I'm older....

....so I have to look to the future and not just be so focused on what's in front of me.

As well as being very telling about the toll skiing can take, it speaks to the foresight that you will bring to your Mayoralty – of shaping tomorrow's City today. You might say, it's about looking ahead to the next summit as well as to the next slalom.

The roots of the City of London run deep with its enduring traditions and institutions. But, as with the City's skyline, it also constantly looks to the future – evolving, innovating and renewing – attracting new ideas and fresh blood to flow through its ancient arteries. That is what keeps the City's heart beating strongly.

My Lord Mayor Elect, I know through your passion for supporting opportunity and focus on nurturing the skills and talent we need for the future, that heart will beat with ever-more relevance and resonance as you shape the City for the world of tomorrow.

[News story: MAIB has a new Chief Inspector](#)



The Department for Transport has announced the appointment of [Captain Andrew Moll](#) as the new Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents, the head of the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB). He has been the interim Chief Inspector since his predecessor, Steve Clinch, retired in June of this year, and he takes up the post with immediate effect.

Andrew joined the MAIB in 2005 as a Principal Inspector, and assumed the post of Deputy Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents in 2010. Prior to this, he spent 27 years as an officer in the Royal Navy, rising to the rank of Captain. He left the Royal Navy in 2005 specifically to join the MAIB.

Following the announcement, Andrew said:

I will build on the MAIB's reputation for excellence in accident investigation, by ensuring that all investigations continue to meet the standards of rigour, objectivity and integrity for which the Branch is widely acclaimed. By working closely with the industry and other stakeholders, while maintaining the essential independence of the Branch, I will ensure that the UK remains at the forefront of marine safety.

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[News story: NHS pledges action to eliminate ethnicity pay gap](#)

A new goal to eliminate the ethnicity pay gap in the NHS has been announced, with black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) representation in senior leadership to match that across the rest of the NHS by 2028.

Recent [NHS ethnicity pay analysis](#) revealed ethnicity pay gaps. The data shows that senior white NHS managers are paid thousands more than managers from

ethnic minority backgrounds, with fewer BAME staff reaching the most senior levels.

Diversity across the NHS is above the national average, with BAME staff making up 17% of the non-medical NHS workforce. However, only 11% of senior managers are BAME. This drops to 6.4% at a very senior level.

In light of the figures, Health Minister Stephen Barclay set a goal for the NHS to ensure BAME representation at very senior management levels will match that across the rest of the NHS workforce within 10 years.

In addition, a number of the Department of Health and Social Care's (DHSC) arm's length bodies, including NHS England, Public Health England and Health Education England, have signed up to the new Race at Work Charter. This will recognise organisations who sign up to the 5 calls to action from the [McGregor-Smith review: one year on](#) to:

- appoint an executive sponsor for race
- capture data and publicise progress
- commit at board level to zero tolerance of harassment and bullying
- make clear that supporting equality in the workplace is the responsibility of all leaders and managers
- take action that supports ethnic minority career progression

In September the NHS became one of the first public sector organisations to publish breakdowns of pay for all staff by ethnic group, with some individual trusts already publishing their own data and taking action.

DHSC is working with NHS Improvement, NHS England and Health Education England to implement the goals for leadership equality.

Health Minister Stephen Barclay said:

The NHS is a leading light of talent for people from all communities and backgrounds, with diversity levels far in excess of the national average. However, it is unacceptable that this is still not reflected at the very top of the organisation – this kind of inequality has no place in a modern employer and I'm determined to tackle it.

That's why I have set an ambitious goal for the NHS to ensure its leadership is as diverse as the rest of the workforce within the next ten years, supporting a culture that allows diversity to thrive at all levels.

Yvonne Coghill, Director of the Workforce Race Equality Standard for NHS England, said:

Having an NHS workforce that is representative of the population improves patients' care, safety and overall satisfaction with the

health service.

The annual Workforce Race Equality Standard is an honest and open analysis which shines a light on where we need to perform better for our staff. Although I'm confident that the NHS in England is moving in the right direction – as shown by the recent increase in senior managers from BAME backgrounds and more NHS trusts having board-level BAME representation – it's equally clear that we have some way still to go.