

News story: Multi-million fund to boost children's early language skills

New support to help parents improve their children's early language and literacy skills at home before they start school have been announced today (30 April) by Education Secretary Damian Hinds.

Two schemes will build the confidence of parents to support their children in language and reading at an early stage. This has been shown to help close the so-called 'word gap' – the gap in communication skills between disadvantaged children and their peers when they start school.

A new £5million scheme will be run by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) to trial projects to provide practical tools and advice to parents so they can help their children learn new words through simple steps like reading and singing nursery rhymes.

Alongside this, an £8.5million programme has opened for local authorities to fund projects to improve early language and literacy development for disadvantaged children.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

This Government wants every child to have the best start in life which means mastering the basics of speaking, reading and writing at an early age. It is important that parents and families can feel confident about supporting their children so they can start school with the appropriate level of language and social skills.

This new support will help parents with early language learning at home by giving them practical advice on activities like reading and learning the alphabet which are so important in making sure no child is left behind.

Through the hard work of teachers and the government's reforms, academic standards are rising with 1.9 million more children in schools rated good or outstanding than in 2010 and the attainment gap is narrowing in both primary and secondary school. English children are also rising up the international literacy league tables from an early age, helping to make Britain a country fit for the future.

Despite this progress, too many children arrive at school struggling with language and social skills, putting them at a disadvantage when they begin their formal education and making it harder for them to master the fundamentals of reading that other children take for granted.

Over the past 40 years, the amount of time parents spend on development activities, such as playing and reading with their children has risen from 23

minutes per day to 80 minutes, but research shows that three year olds from certain backgrounds are 37 percentage points less likely to be read to every day than their peers.

The EEF will trial projects in the north of England, looking at what works best in improving children's communication skills at home before they begin school, a key part of the government's ambition to give every child the best start in life.

The projects aim to give parents and carers the tools to widen children's language, vocabulary and social skills in the pre-school years to tackle the 'word gap' that exists between disadvantaged children and their better off peers at age five, and there is evidence that shows this has a long term effect on educational outcomes.

First announced in the government's social mobility action plan [Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential](#), published in December, these measures target support in areas that need it the most – ensuring equality of opportunity for children and young people and laying the foundations to give them an excellent education.

Sir Kevan Collins, CEO of the Education Endowment Foundation, said:

Parents care very much about the future of their children, whatever their background or wherever they come from. But it can sometimes be difficult to get them involved in their child's learning and we know little about how to do this well.

By testing different ways of tackling issues like the early years 'word gap', this new fund will give us much needed information about how we can give parents the tools they need to give their child the very best start in life.

In a separate drive to aid social mobility, the government has also committed £8.5million to a new Early Years Social Mobility Peer Review Programme with the Local Government Association, which will see councils working together to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children.

Councillor Roy Perry, Vice Chairman of the Local Government Association's Children and Young People Board, said:

We are very pleased that the Government has announced funding for a new LGA peer review programme of sector-led support which will share and promote good practice and knowledge across councils.

Councils are absolutely determined to make sure that children get the best start in life. This is why we need to close 'the word gap' in the early years, by focussing on key early language and literacy skills, so that all children can begin school ready to thrive.

Press release: PM calls with President Macron and Chancellor Merkel: 29 April 2018

The Prime Minister held separate phone calls with the French President Emmanuel Macron and the German Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday and this morning.

They discussed the importance of the Iran nuclear deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) as the best way of neutralising the threat of a nuclear-armed Iran, agreeing that our priority as an international community remained preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

They agreed that there were important elements that the deal does not cover, but which we need to address – including ballistic missiles, what happens when the deal expires, and Iran’s destabilising regional activity.

Acknowledging the importance of retaining the JCPOA, they committed to continue working closely together and with the US on how to tackle the range of challenges that Iran poses – including those issues that a new deal might cover.

They also noted the vital importance of our steel and aluminium industries and their concern about the impact of US tariffs. The leaders pledged to continue to work closely with the rest of the EU and the US Administration with the aim of a permanent exemption from US tariffs.

Finally, they all agreed on the value of continued engagement in the E3 format (Britain, France and Germany) to advance our shared interests and our security.

Press release: Crackdown on abuse of UK businesses for foreign money laundering

- New evidence shows certain financial instruments are being exploited by foreign money laundering schemes, one of which moved billions of pounds out of Russia
- Proposals will bring greater transparency and more stringent checks for

frontmen going into business in the UK

- Reforms will ensure thousands of legitimate firms can still thrive and contribute £30bn a year of investment to our economy

Measures to crack down on the abuse of a specialised financial arrangement to launder dirty foreign money through the UK will be unveiled tomorrow (30 April), as part of a package of Government reforms.

Scottish Limited Partnerships (SLPs) and Limited Partnerships (LPs) are used by thousands of legitimate British businesses, particularly the private equity and pensions industry, to invest more than £30 billion a year in the UK. SLPs and LPs are business entities created by two or more partners where at least one partner is liable for what they invest.

However, evidence to be published tomorrow shows the growing evidence SLPs have been exploited in complex money laundering schemes, including one which involved using over 100 SLPs to move up to \$80 billion out of Russia. They have also been linked to international criminal networks in Eastern Europe and around the world, and have allegedly been used in arms deals.

Business Minister Andrew Griffiths said:

The UK has taken a leading role in the fight against money laundering and is known internationally as a great place to work, invest and do business.

But Scottish Limited Partnerships are being abused to carry out all manner of crimes abroad – from foreign money laundering to arms dealing.

This simply cannot continue to go unchecked and these reforms will improve their transparency and subject them to more stringent checks to ensure they can continue to be used as a legitimate way for investors and pension funds to invest in the UK.

Figures published for the launch of a government consultation tomorrow, show just five frontmen were responsible for over half of 6,800 SLPs registered between January 2016 and mid-May 2017. By June 2017, 17,000 SLPs, over half of all SLPs, were registered at just 10 addresses.

The consultation seeks views on a number of reforms to ensure SLPs can continue to be used as a legitimate vehicle for investment and enhance our world-leading business environment – a key part of our modern Industrial Strategy.

The proposals would make it clearer who runs limited partnerships to enable British investors to continue to use them legitimately and invest in the UK while cracking down on their use in unlawful activities. These include:

- requiring a real connection to the UK, including ensuring SLPs do

- business or maintain a service address in Scotland;
- registering new SLPs through a company formation agent, meaning frontmen will be subjected to anti-money laundering checks;
- new powers for Companies House to remove limited partnerships from the company register if they are dissolved or are no longer operating.

The reforms being proposed will apply to all limited partnerships in the UK and will also include new annual reporting requirements for limited partnerships in England and Wales and Northern Ireland, which will help Companies House ensure they comply with the law.

Last year, the Government introduced laws requiring SLPs to report their beneficial owner and make their ownership structure more transparent, seeing an 80% reduction in the number registered and tomorrow's reforms seek to raise standards further.

The UK is already taking a leading role on the world stage to improve corporate transparency and was recognised by Transparency International as one of only four G20 countries with the highest rating for cracking down on anonymous company ownership.

The UK has worked to improve transparency and tackle money laundering through:

- introducing draft laws this summer for a world-first public register which will require overseas companies that own or buy property in the UK to provide details of their ultimate owners;
- making the UK's company register public in 2015, making it one of the most open and transparency company registers in the world – viewed two billion times last year – meaning company information is under constant scrutiny;
- introducing a register of People of Significant Control in 2016, which now includes 4.6 million names. The register was expanded in 2017 to include Scottish Limited Partnerships;
- the Criminal Finances Act 2017, which provided additional powers to allow law enforcement agencies to identify and recover corrupt and criminal funds from those seeking to hide, use or move them in the UK;
- introducing unexplained wealth orders which can be used to compel individuals to explain the sources of their wealth – so people who we think have links to organised crime have to prove where their assets come from.

Notes to editors

1. Scottish Limited Partnerships are a business entity provided for in UK law. Limited Partnerships are formed by at least two partners, one of which must be a general partner – who is liable for any debts incurred – and one limited Partner – who has limited liability but cannot play a role in how the partnership is run. Scottish Limited Partnerships differ to Limited Partnerships elsewhere in the UK as they have legal personality, which allows them to enter into contracts, take on debts or own property. In a Limited Partnership in England and Wales or Northern

Ireland, this is done by the partners.

Press release: Parole Board response to Ministry of Justice review

Following the publication of the Ministry of Justice's Review of Law, Policy and Procedure Relating to Parole Decisions, Chief Executive, Martin Jones said:

"The Parole Board welcomes the change to the Parole Board rule to allow for the greater transparency of the parole process, which we have called for previously.

"We will be carefully considering all the implications of the review and will be responding to the consultation about the potential introduction of a reconsideration mechanism while also preserving the independence of the Parole Board.

"We agree that there is scope for further changes to the Rules to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the parole process and we will be working closely with the Ministry of Justice to make appropriate changes."

Notes to Editors:

The Parole Board's response to the review can be [found here](#)

Press release: Justice Secretary announces ambitious first steps in overhaul of Parole Board

Justice Secretary David Gauke ordered a review of Parole Board processes in January, with the purpose of increasing its transparency, restoring public confidence, and improving the treatment of victims. The [findings of the urgent review have been published](#) alongside a comprehensive package of reforms that include:

- Initial legislation to immediately remove the 'blanket ban' on transparency and a change in the rules to allow the Parole Board to explain its decisions to victims, media and the public

- Proposals to, for the first time, allow Parole Board decisions to be challenged through a judge-led process that could in some circumstances be open to the public
- Immediate changes to expand the Victim Contact Scheme to include more people and to improve the way the department communicates with victims

One immediate result of this work is the introduction of transparency to the parole process by amending Rule 25 to remove the blanket ban that prevents the Parole Board from disclosing information about its decision-making.

This change will also require the Parole Board to provide an overview of the arguments it heard in a case, the recommendations of expert witnesses, the offender's progress and risk factors, the evidence provided by the offender and the reasons for the panel's decision.

The removal of the 'blanket ban' and amending Rule 25 is an immediate first step on transparency which ensures compliance with the ruling of the Judicial Review of the Worboys case. But we will not stop there.

The department will carefully assess the impact this has on the Parole Board's operation, on offenders, and on victims, including whether there are legal challenges, with a view to increasing transparency further, for example potentially automatically publishing summaries online.

We will also consider, as set out in the Terms of Reference for the wider Parole Board Review, whether information about panel members and other details should in some situations be made public.

Increasing transparency was always a priority for the review, but the Justice Secretary has also committed to much wider reforms. This includes a proposal for a new mechanism to force the Parole Board to reconsider a decision, ensuring that victims do not have to resort to Judicial Review to make the Parole Board look at a case again.

This change will be subject to a [consultation](#) launched today, but it is envisaged that the reconsideration would be led by a judge and oral hearings would be open to victims, media and the public.

The Parole Board's decision to release John Worboys made clear the urgent need to overhaul the process of providing information to victims.

As a result, numerous changes will be made to the Victim Contact Service (VCS) service, including extending it to victims of more types of offences, for example road traffic offences resulting in serious injury, and to victims in cases where a serious charge lies on file but has not resulted in a conviction.

Immediate improvements will also be made to the VCS, including new training for Victim Liaison Officers, better working with other agencies to ensure services are more joined up and making it easier for victims to opt in to the scheme at a later stage in the offender's sentence.

At the same time, the department will explore the potential for changing the

scheme so that victims are asked at the beginning to opt-out if they don't want to be kept informed, rather than to opt-in if they do.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

Today I am announcing a package of measures to reform the Parole Board and introduce transparency of its decisions. But we are going further and consulting on a new way to challenge Parole Board decisions that would be judge-led and could, in some circumstances, be open to the public. And we're not stopping there.

Today I also produce the terms of reference for our comprehensive review of the entire Parole Board, including whether we should in some circumstances name panel members, whether we should define the panel composition and what kinds of further scrutiny measures should be introduced.

We will also improve the process for victims, who in this case were clearly let down. It is my ambition that the outcome of this process will mean victims have more confidence in the system.

We have moved at pace to address the shortcomings of the Parole system which the Worboys case has brought to light. But we must take a balanced approach. I am determined to lead a thorough reform process, the first action of which we launched today.

Also published today are the [terms of reference](#) for the full review of all 27 Parole Board rules. The terms of reference allow for consideration of whether certain panels should include a judge or psychiatrist, how the Board's decisions should be scrutinised internally before a decision is finalised and how further improvements can be made to transparency. The findings of this work will be published later this year.

The [consultation on a re-consideration mechanism for Parole Board decisions](#) will close in July. The department particularly welcomes submissions from victims and those who have experience of the Parole process.