

## **Press release: Foreign Secretary welcomes news that Chennai Six can leave India**

Following news that the Chennai Six have been granted the necessary permissions to leave India, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

It is wonderful news that the men are returning to the UK.

The Foreign Office has worked unstintingly on this case, lobbying on the men's behalf, visiting them in prison, updating their families, and maintaining close contact with their legal team.

I pay tribute to those who have campaigned for the men, who will be delighted to see them return home after being separated for so long.

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## **Press release: Heathrow coach firm polluted river with toilet waste**

A west London river was contaminated after toilets from luxury coaches were emptied into public drains.

Symphony Chauffeurs Ltd, based near Heathrow Airport, broke environmental law when staff poured waste into sewers, instead of taking the waste to an approved site for disposal.

Officers from the Environment Agency turned detective in 2015, tracing pollution in the River Crane to where Symphony operated, a trading estate minutes from the airport.

A monitoring device, called a sonde, found the river had been polluted, and other sondes identified Symphony as the source, which officers confirmed through a network of drains.

The watercourse was further polluted when chemicals and dirty water entered the drains after staff washed vehicles on Symphony's premises. The firm had been warned by the Environment Agency and the company's landlords doing so was against the lease. Symphony would have stayed within the law by disposing of the chemicals at an approved site, or by cleaning their cars and coaches at an authorised location.

Symphony Chauffeurs Ltd, Eastern Business Park, Ely Road, Hounslow, was fined

£18,000 by Ealing Magistrates' Court, which ordered the firm to pay £12,113.62 in costs, and a victim surcharge of £170. The company was charged with allowing poisonous, noxious or polluting matter into the River Crane, between May 2015 and February 2016, and failing to provide the Environment Agency with documents relating to their activities.

The sole director of the firm, Allen Jeyakumar, of Lee Road, Greenford, was fined £3,134 by the court, for allowing Symphony to commit the offences. Mr Jeyakumar also had to pay a victim surcharge of £142.

Mathew Reed, who led the investigation for the Environment Agency, said:

Incidents like this have the potential to have a serious and long-term impact on the health of the river. Symphony Chauffeurs Ltd was given repeated warnings about its activities.

People might think we will find it too difficult to trace the cause of pollution, but this case proves that some detective work leads to a conviction.

Identifying pollution through a complex network of drains can be difficult, but that doesn't mean it cannot be done. We have the skills and technology to do it.

Both Symphony Chauffeurs Ltd and Allen Jeyakumar pleaded guilty to all charges at an earlier hearing.

For media enquiries, please call 0800 141 2743, or email [southeastpressoffice1@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:southeastpressoffice1@environment-agency.gov.uk).

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## [News story: Social worker accreditation system plans announced](#)

The government has today (5 December) published its [response](#) to a

consultation on the implementation of the National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS) for child and family social workers.

The plans outlined today address feedback from the sector to ensure the new system is implemented effectively through an initial voluntary phased roll-out from 2018

The NAAS will raise the professional status of child and family social workers, providing a clear career path as well as ensuring they have the knowledge and skills they need to practice effectively.

The system forms a key part of the government's reforms to children's social work to ensure every child receives expert support and protection.

Children and Families Minister Robert Goodwill said:

Vulnerable children and families deserve the highest-quality care and support and that's why we are driving forward reforms in children's social work.

The National Assessment and Accreditation System is a key part of this work to strengthen the skills and >professional status of child and family social workers so they can provide this vital support to children who need it.

We welcome the constructive feedback we have received and will work closely with the sector and local councils to support them as they start to introduce the new system in 2018.

Steve Walker, Leeds City Council Director for Children's Services, said:

The National Assessment and Accreditation System has brought a welcome focus on the arrangements that local authorities have in place to set the conditions in which best practice can flourish.

Leeds' involvement in the accreditation system will provide us with an opportunity to review and strengthen our career development opportunities for social workers and enable us to recruit and retain great social workers, which is what children and young people need and deserve.

Carla Pawsey, Leeds City Council Social Work Team Manager, said:

The National Assessment and Accreditation System is an opportunity to professionalise our profession and to be seen as accountable and evidence-based in our practice wisdom.

The initial roll out of the NAAS will consist of Phase One involving five

local authorities and Phase Two, involving up to 20 authorities, and will promote a stronger focus on learning and development within the children's social work sector profession.

Social workers in the authorities involved in Phase One and Two of NAAS will be assessed against specific criteria setting out what constitutes effective social work practice, known as the Knowledge and Skills Statements.

Recruitment also began today for a Chair and CEO of Social Work England, the new regulator for all social workers in England which will be based in Sheffield.

The Department for Education, jointly with the Department of Health, will establish Social Work England to ensure public protection and drive improvements in social work practice, from initial education and training to continued professional development.

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## **Press release: PM meeting with Prime Minister Rajoy: 5 December**

The Prime Minister met with Prime Minister Rajoy of Spain this afternoon. Theresa May began by restating the UK's support for the Spanish Government on the issue of Catalonia – stating the rule of law must be upheld and the Spanish constitution respected.

The Prime Minister gave an update on the Brexit negotiations, confirming that she would be reconvening talks with the European Commission before the end of the week. She said both sides were positive about the progress that could be made ahead of December European Council. Prime Minister Rajoy said he shared the desire to move talks on to the next stage of negotiations as quickly as possible and that Spain would remain a constructive partner.

Prime Minister Rajoy spoke about the deep and strong relationship between Spain and the UK, referring to the significant investment that Spanish companies have made in the UK and the fruitful trading relationship. The Prime Minister welcomed views on how we could continue a good trading relationship between the two countries after Brexit and ensure this was as frictionless as possible.

The two leaders spoke about foreign policy and the threat of Russia, agreeing that it was important to maintain a collective and rigorous approach to sanctions and to counter disinformation.

They also spoke about increasing co-operation to counter the growing threat of terrorism. The Prime Minister outlined that the nature of terrorism was changing and how the internet and social media was providing terrorists with

an extra tool to accelerate and amplify the terror they seek to spread.

Lastly, Prime Minister Rajoy raised the issue of the abhorrent treatment of Libyan people being smuggled into Europe and the ongoing efforts to help repatriate them. The Prime Minister said that this was an important challenge and she wanted to work closely with her European colleagues now and in the future to see what more could be done by, for example, improving conditions in the country of origin.