

[Research and analysis: Optimising the accuracy of radar products with dual polarisation](#)

Rainfall forecast data generated at the Met Office is vital for providing weather and flood warnings, and this project has looked at ways of improving the accuracy and reliability of the radar network as well as fully exploiting and bringing into operation the latest technology.

Radar is particularly important in detecting localised rainfall (often not detected or under-sampled by rain gauge networks), especially where it falls on catchments prone to flash flooding. The upgrade to the UK's dual polarisation radar network in 2016 and the updated data analysis methods from this study means that we can make a step change in the accuracy of rainfall estimates, in particular in very intense precipitation, where radar estimates are most valuable.

[Press release: PM call with Prime Minister Turnbull: 16 March 2018](#)

The Prime Minister spoke to the Prime Minister of Australia, Malcolm Turnbull, this morning about the attack on Sergei Skripal and his daughter and the reckless endangerment of the British public through the use of a military grade nerve agent developed by Russia.

Prime Minister Turnbull said he joined the Prime Minister in her condemnation of the appalling act and expressed his complete solidarity with the UK and its response to the attack.

The Prime Minister explained how she had visited the site at Salisbury yesterday and reiterated how the act represented an unlawful use of force by the Russian state against the UK.

On the UK's response, she explained how it will expel 23 Russian diplomats who have been identified as undeclared Russian intelligence officers, develop new legislative powers to harden our defences against such hostile activity and suspend all planned high-level contacts between the UK and the Russian Federation.

She thanked Prime Minister Turnbull for his strong support and they agreed on the importance of the international community coming together to take a stand against this despicable act.

Press release: New action to improve outcomes for children with additional needs

Steps to transform education for children with additional needs and ambitious plans to improve the experiences of children in alternative provision have been announced today by Education Secretary Damian Hinds.

Evidence shows children educated in alternative provision, school settings for children who face challenges in mainstream school, are less likely to achieve good GCSE grades and are less likely to be in education, employment or training post-16. Previous analysis also shows that children excluded from school are more likely to end up in the criminal justice system.

The plans announced today (16 March) aim to tackle those inequalities and ensure Britain is a country that truly works for everyone by looking at the experience and outcomes for children who face the most challenges in mainstream school – including those at greatest risk of exclusion – such as those with special educational needs (SEN), children with autism or children in need of help and protection, including those in care.

They include an externally led review of school exclusions, originally announced by the Prime Minister in response to the [Race Disparity Audit](#), which will look at why some children are more likely to be excluded than others. Plans also include a new £4million fund to develop new ways to help children with additional needs move from alternative provision in to mainstream education or special schools and measures to drive up standards in alternative provision education settings.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

It's a mark of a strong society how we treat children who are most in need of our support. Every child, whatever their background and no matter what challenges they face, should have access to a world-class education that prepares them for life in the modern world.

Thanks to our reforms and the hard work of teachers, standards are rising and we are already encouraging schools to focus on the achievements of all pupils, not just the highest achievers.

Children only get one chance at their education and they deserve the best. But for too many children – and often those who are most vulnerable – there are inconsistencies when it comes to their experiences of school and too many parents are left worried and concerned.

That's not good enough which is why we are going to improve our understanding of these important issues and tackle them head on.

The proposals outlined today include:

- The launch of an externally led review of exclusions, led by former Children's Minister Edward Timpson to look at how the use and levels of exclusions vary from school to school focusing on those children who are more likely to be excluded.
- A 'roadmap' setting out how the government will transform alternative provision to make sure these education settings provide high-quality teaching and an education that meets the individual needs of young people in their care.
- A £4 million Alternative Provision Innovation Fund to test and develop projects that support children back into mainstream or special schools, as well as encouraging parental and carer involvement in the education of their child. The investment will also fund schemes that support young people as they move from alternative provision in to training or further education at post-16, so all young people can succeed in the next stage of their lives.
- A call for evidence on how to improve educational outcomes for Children in Need – children that need additional help or protection, including children in care. The call for evidence will gather best practice from school leaders, social workers and other professionals, fulfilling a manifesto commitment to find out what works in improving the educational outcomes for these children.

New analysis published today reveals how far Children in Need fall behind their peers from the early years, making less progress throughout school. Children in Need are three times more likely to have special educational needs than other children, and this compounds poor educational outcomes.

Today's plans will sharpen the focus on the core essentials of education and improve educational outcomes for these children, widening the options available to them so that they can succeed later in life.

Leader of the external review into exclusions and former Children's Minister, Edward Timpson said:

I'm delighted to have been asked by the Secretary of State to lead this important piece of work. As someone who grew up in a family who fostered, I'm all too familiar with the disproportionately higher levels of exclusion of some children, including those in care.

This review provides a real opportunity to fully understand what drives the different rates of exclusion in our schools system and the impact it has on the outcomes of children involved.

I intend to draw from the best possible expertise, knowledge and evidence of what works in the field to ensure the review can help

address the clear disparities and variability that still exists in the practice, impact and experience around exclusions, starting with an open 'Call for Evidence' I am launching today.

Building on the Race Disparity Audit, the review of exclusions will look to tackle some of the inconsistencies highlighted including exploring why Black Caribbean boys are more than three times as likely to be excluded from school.

Sir Kevan Collins, Chief Executive of the Education Endowment Foundation:

Outcomes for these pupils across education, health and employment are poor. The government's new plans provide a welcome opportunity to refocus our efforts and transform life chances for this important group of learners.

It is good to see a focus on evidence for improving outcomes too. Making the best of what we already know about 'what works' and sharing that knowledge across the system is key to getting it right.

Dame Christine Lenehan, Director for the Council for Disabled Children said:

We welcome these important announcements on behalf of children with special educational needs and their families for too long the education system has disproportionately excluded these children and failed to celebrate their achievements. This affects, not just their childhood but their whole lives.

We will want to work alongside the review and ensure that it makes a real difference.

Press release: Fuelling the momentum for a Mid Wales Growth Deal

The UK Government will push forward the agenda for a growth deal for Mid Wales today when Wales Office Minister Lord Bourne hosts a meeting of project team members in Aberystwyth today (FRIDAY 16 March 2018).

Lord Bourne will meet with business leaders and representatives from the agriculture sector and further education establishments to discuss their vision for a Mid Wales Growth Deal and to underline the UK Government's

support for the area's economy.

During last year's Autumn Budget, the UK Government announced it would welcome proposals for a Mid Wales growth deal. At Friday's meeting, members of the Growing Mid Wales Partnership will set out what work has already been undertaken to progress the deal and how the proposed projects fit together.

UK Government Minister Lord Bourne said:

Giving local areas powers and freedoms to help support economic growth, create jobs and drive investment is a key part of achieving a Britain that works for everybody.

This is Mid Wales' opportunity to benefit from this growing City and Growth Deal movement. I want to see what progress is being made on developing the vision for the region's economic future.

It is for the partners involved to come up with proposals, and to work with the UK and Welsh Governments to achieve the best deal for Mid Wales. I have no doubt about the ambition of leaders in Mid Wales to get this right as we work together to agree a new deal that will drive growth across the region.

The UK Government has already delivered the £1.2 billion Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and last year, the Prime Minister signed the Swansea Bay City Region Deal. It is also working towards delivering a growth deal for North Wales, working with local partners and the Welsh Government to identify the best way to strengthen the region's economy and make the most of its connections to the Northern Powerhouse.

A successful proposal for Mid Wales would see every part of Wales benefitting from a UK Government growth deal.

[Press release: Championing UK Government support for the North Wales economy](#)

A raft of initiatives to boost economic growth in North Wales will be on the agenda today (16 March) as UK Government Minister Stuart Andrew visits the region to champion government support for the area's economy.

Mr Andrew will address business leaders at the CBI North Wales Committee meeting at Ruthin Castle where he will update on progress with the North

Wales Growth Deal and challenge local companies to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the UK Government's Industrial Strategy.

The UK Government has already delivered the £1.2 billion Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and, last year, the Prime Minister signed the Swansea Bay City Region Deal.

It is now turning its attentions to delivering a growth deal for North Wales, working with local partners and the Welsh Government to identify the best way to strengthen the region's economy and make the most of its connections to the Northern Powerhouse.

The Growth Deal sets out a vision for the region with the aims of creating 5,300 jobs and attracting private sector investment to the value of £1bn in the region over the next 15 years.

UK Government Minister Stuart Andrew said:

From the engineering and manufacturing capabilities of businesses large and small to the research expertise of our colleges and universities, North Wales has long been an engine of the UK's economic prosperity.

The UK Government is doing all it can to support the region; whether that's by backing local leaders to create jobs and growth through the North Wales Growth Deal, rolling out superfast broadband to homes and businesses, or creating Industrial Strategy sector deals that capitalise on the area's strengths.

By taking clear and decisive action and giving direct support to companies and regions they can realise their growth potential and compete in the global economy.

The Minister will also use the meeting to update members on the Chancellor's Spring Statement and address the crucial aspect of cross border working and the benefits North Wales can draw from it to bring prosperity to the region.

He added:

The Northern Powerhouse, coupled with a growth deal represents our best chance to bring transformational change to North Wales – and cross border connectivity is crucial to achieving that aim.

The region is perfectly positioned to benefit from a lucrative export base and a reputation for big energy projects – making it a perfect partner for closer collaboration to expand the economy of the North.

The Minister's visit to North Wales will also see him visit two companies

leading the way in groundbreaking design and engineering.

He will visit award winning engineering contractor, Jones Bros Civil Engineering UK in Ruthin. The family owned company was established as a small start-up in the 1950s and now employs almost 350 across the UK. It currently works on contracts in sectors including the construction of highways, flood and marine defence and energy projects around the UK. It has most recently won the contract to build the Brenig wind farm in Denbighshire.

He will then visit a company making a significant contribution to the UK's defence capability in St Asaph. Kent Periscopes is an international supplier of unity vision periscopes, vehicle sights and related equipment for armoured fighting vehicles.