

Press release: 30 years of the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme

Today, 1st February, marks 30 years since the introduction of the [Unduly Lenient Sentence](#) (ULS) scheme.

The scheme was launched in 1989 following public outcry over a series of controversial sentencing decisions, including the 1986 'Ealing vicarage rape' case where 21 year old Jill Saward was raped by burglars at her father's vicarage.

The first ever ULS hearing took place in July 1989. In this case, a man who committed incest on his daughter had his sentence doubled from 3 to 6 years in prison.

In the 30 years since the scheme began, the scheme has helped hundreds of victims and their families get justice, with 137 criminals having their sentences increased under the ULS scheme in 2017 alone. In addition, rising public awareness of the scheme has meant that the Attorney General's Office has seen an exponential increase in the number of requests received every year, with 943 received in 2017.

Back in 1989, the offences most frequently referred to the Law Officers were robbery, GBH, causing death by reckless driving or careless driving while under the influence, rape, and manslaughter. In 2017, they were rape and serious sexual offences; murder, manslaughter, and causing death by dangerous driving; robbery, burglary, theft and fraud; and serious assault offences.

The scheme has also been expanded over the last 30 years to include all serious sexual offences, threats to kill, child cruelty, people trafficking and modern slavery, and many racially and religiously aggravated offences. The scheme was last extended in December 2017 to cover a range of terror-related offences.

Commenting on the milestone, Solicitor General Robert Buckland QC MP said:

For 30 years, the ULS scheme has offered people the opportunity to request the review of what they see as sentencing errors. This has brought comfort to many victims of crime and their loved ones.

I want to thank everyone involved in the scheme, from those who refer sentences to the Law Officers, to the Court of Appeal who then consider those cases, and everyone at the Attorney General's Office who makes sure that the scheme operates smoothly, especially as we deal with an increasing number of cases.

A recent case presented personally by the Solicitor General was that of Joshua Gardner, the Croydon 'zombie knife' attacker who originally received a

suspended sentence for his extreme act of violence. Earlier this week, the Court of Appeal agreed that Gardner's sentence was too low and increased it to an immediate custodial term of 3 and a half years in a young offenders institute.

The ULS scheme allows victims of crime, prosecutors and members of the public to ask for certain Crown Court sentences to be reviewed by the Law Officers if they think the sentence is far too low. If the Law Officers consider the judge to have made a gross error in sentencing, they will then ask the Court of Appeal to review the sentence.

Only one person needs to ask for a sentence to be reviewed for it to be considered. Further requests do not lend any extra weight as the decision to refer a sentence as too low can only be based on the legal threshold.

Notes

- The ULS scheme came into force on 1st February 1989.
- The ULS scheme was legislated for within the Criminal Justice Act 1988.
- Stephen Shute, Prosecution Appeals Against Sentence: The First Five Years, *The Modern Law Review*, 57, 5 (1994)

[News story: Universities must do more to tackle ethnic disparity](#)

Measures to improve outcomes for ethnic minority students in higher education were announced by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster David Lidington and the Universities Minister Chris Skidmore today (1 February).

The measures are part of a bold cross-government effort to "explain or change" ethnic disparities highlighted by the Prime Minister's Race Disparity Audit website, so people can achieve their true potential, whatever their background and circumstances.

Universities will now be held to account on how they will improve outcomes for underrepresented students, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds, through powers of the Office for Students, who will scrutinise institutions' Access and Participation plans.

All universities will now have to publish data on admissions and attainment, broken down by ethnicity, gender and socio-economic background, to shine a spotlight on those making good progress and those lagging behind.

League table providers are being encouraged to present better information on social mobility and underrepresented groups, while the Office for Students is developing a new website to replace Unistats, which will have a greater focus

on supporting those who are less likely to enter higher education.

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster David Lidington said:

I am determined that nobody experiences a worse outcome solely on the grounds of their ethnicity. Which is why the Government is making a clear and concerted effort, alongside higher education partners, to tackle these injustices.

These ethnic disparities in higher education cannot be tackled overnight, but I look forward to seeing meaningful and sustained progress in the higher education sector in the next few years.

Universities Minister Chris Skidmore said:

Universities need to reflect modern Britain, and ensure that everyone who has the potential, no matter their background or where they are from can thrive at university. I fully expect access and participation plans, which universities will be drawing up this year for implementation in 2020-21, to contain ambitious and significant actions to make sure we are seeing material progress in this space in the next few years.

It is one of my key priorities as the Universities Minister to ensure that I work with universities to highlight examples of best practice in widening not only access, but also we redouble our efforts to tackle student dropout rates. It cannot be right that ethnic minority students are disproportionately dropping out of university and I want to do more to focus on student experience to help ethnic minority students succeed at university.

Chris Millward, Director for Fair Access and Participation, Office for Students, said:

We are placing greater demands on universities to close the attainment gaps between ethnic minority students and others. We are also providing greater support for all universities to improve their practice in this area by funding collaborative projects and sharing effective practice. Our new approach to access and participation requires universities to improve their use of evidence and evaluation to identify the specific challenges faced by their own students, and to make interventions that work.

Where we see lower proportions of ethnic minority students continuing with their studies, achieving the best degree outcomes, or progressing into graduate jobs, we expect universities to have a measurable plan of action to address this. Today, we are publishing new research and guidance to support universities in effectively

targeting their work for students from minority ethnic backgrounds, so they can make the changes that are needed if we are to achieve equality for all.

Professor Edward Byrne AC, President and Principal of King's College London:

Tackling race disparity outcomes is important and we welcome the Minister's visit to King's today. I am proud of the diverse international community we have here at King's, in 2017/18 49% of our undergraduates were from Black, Asian and other ethnic minority backgrounds, and we have the fastest growing population of low-income students in the Russell Group.

Over the past seven years we have significantly reduced the gap between Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students and non-BAME students achieving a first or 2.1, from 11.1% in 2011/12 to 3.8% in 2017/18. It is great for our staff and students to have the opportunity to engage with Government at such a high level in a pro-active and meaningful way as at the roundtable this morning. I look forward to working further with Government, partners and communities to build on the work we're already doing to improve student attainment and staff progression, regardless of an individual's background.

The full list of measures announced today involves action by the Government, the university regulator and sector groups, including:

- Holding universities to account through their Access and Participation plans – scrutinised by the Office for Students who will use their powers to challenge institutions failing to support this.
- Putting pressure on university league tables to include progress in tackling access and attainment disparities – working with a wide range of experts, stakeholders and league table compilers.
- Providing better information for students – the Office for Students will develop a new website to replace the Unistats website and take the needs of disadvantaged students into account.
- Reducing ethnic disparities in research and innovation funding – UK Research and Innovation is commissioning evidence reviews on challenges for equality and diversity and how they can be addressed.
- Reviewing the Race Equality Charter – Advance HE will look at how the sector charter can best support better outcomes for both ethnic minority staff and students.

- Encouraging institutions to address race disparities in their workforce – using tools such as the Race at Work Charter and Race Equality Charter.
- Gathering evidence on what works to improve ethnic minority access and success – through the Evidence and Impact Exchange.

Figures from the [Race Disparity Audit](#) and Office for Students show that while record numbers of ethnic minorities are attending university, only 56% of black students achieved a First or 2:1 compared to 80% of their white peers in 2016/2017, and black students are the most likely to drop out of university. In the workforce, only 2% of academic staff are black. White British low-income males remain the least likely to attend higher education.

The Government is committed to working with higher education providers to do everything we can to ensure that a student's outcomes are determined by their hard work and talent – rather than their ethnic background.

[Press release: Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt visits Romania](#)



Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt will be in Romania today (1 February) for talks with the Romanian President and Prime Minister.

Jeremy Hunt will discuss areas of co-operation, including tackling modern slavery, hybrid threats, as well as Brexit and future relations.

It is the Foreign Secretary's first official visit to Romania, where he will also host a discussion on media freedoms with local journalists.

Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

The UK and Romania are close allies on many issues, and that will continue when we leave the EU.

I'm looking forward to discussing, with President Iohannis and Prime Minister Dăncilă, how we develop our Strategic Partnership to help tackle security and hybrid threats.

While in Bucharest, I will also see an example of excellent UK-Romania economic co-operation with the opening of the London Stock Exchange office, making use of Romania's productive services sector.

Further information

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[Press release: Gove kicks off Year of Green Action](#)

- Year-long drive calls on young people to spearhead environmental action
- Government pledges £10million boost to connect children with nature
- Greener schools and more educational visits will be delivered through the funding

Environment Secretary Michael Gove will today call on people across the country to join together to protect the environment.

Speaking at [ZSL London Zoo](#) this evening, the Environment Secretary will launch the [Year of Green Action](#) – a year-long drive to get more people from all backgrounds involved in projects to improve the natural world.

He will also allocate £10 million to help children from disadvantaged backgrounds better access the natural environment, with grants awarded to projects that will create greener school grounds and increase the number of school visits to local parks, wildlife sites, care farms and National Parks.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove will say:

I am delighted to launch the Year of Green Action. Over the next 12 months we will work with businesses and communities to create ways for people from all backgrounds to connect with nature, protect our environment, and contribute to restoring our natural world.

As the future stewards of our planet, children and young people have a vital role to play in this. The £10million boost outlined today will help ensure there are no barriers for young people to access the benefits of the natural world and importantly enable

them to play their part in environmental protection.

During his speech, the Environment Secretary will call on everyone to play their part and back the Year of Green Action – from businesses to gardeners and government itself.

It will provide a focal point for organisations, individuals, communities and businesses to learn more about their environmental impact and take action to reduce it.

It comes as figures show [one in 10 children do not regularly spend time outdoors](#). The £10 million programme allocated today will help schools and education providers with the highest proportions of disadvantaged pupils to design more outdoor-focused activities, boosting pupils' contact with nature and supporting their health and wellbeing.

The funding will also increase access to care farms, making it possible for 1.3million children and adults facing disadvantage or social exclusion to benefit from activities on a working farm.

A key pillar of the [25 Year Environment Plan](#) is to connect young people with nature and the projects announced today will be delivered by [Natural England](#) with a number of partners from spring 2019, with funding from the Department of Education.

As part of this programme, the National Centre for Social Research will also be carrying out research to understand how activities in nature impact pupils' mental health and engagement with school.

Commenting on the funding, Lord Blencathra, Natural England's Deputy Chair, said:

Connecting children with nature is one of the most important things we can do for them. It can boost their health, wellbeing and learning and give them a life-long love of the natural world that leads them to cherish and protect it forever.

I hope these projects will ensure that every child has the means of discovering the wonders of our wildlife.

The [#iwill4nature](#) initiative, charity [Step Up To Serve's](#) contribution to the Year of Green Action, will also launch today. The government-backed initiative is a nationwide campaign to grow environmental youth social action and support a series of activities for young people to connect with, protect and enhance nature. This includes appointing young ambassadors to drive environmental action in their communities and encourage environmental volunteering such as litter picking, planting pollinator-friendly flowers or fundraising to maintain or enhance green spaces.

20-year-old #iwill Ambassador Nayha Patel said:

Young people, like me, are pivotal in initiating the cycle of change to improve the environment for the future. The Year of Green Action and #iwill4nature together will connect, engage and challenge people, in particular children and young people, throughout the country to ensure we make our natural world a better place. The views and energy of young people will be key to achieving this.

Children and Families Minister Nadhim Zahawi said:

We want every child to have the best possible start in life and grow up healthy and happy. This £10 million investment will ensure even more children can enjoy the many benefits of discovering nature, from improved mental wellbeing to better physical health.

It builds on our recently published 'passport' of enrichment activities, designed to inspire children to explore the outdoors and make the most of the world around them.

Notes:

The children and nature funding was first announced in the 25 Year Environment Plan and has been awarded to the following delivery partners:

- Resilience through Nature, a consortium of [The Wildlife Trusts](#), YoungMinds, [Groundwork](#), the Sensory Trust and Field Studies Council, have been appointed to the Nature Friendly Schools project which will help deliver greener grounds and pupil visits to green spaces for schools with the highest proportion of disadvantaged pupils.
- [Social Farms and Gardens](#), working with Thrive, will deliver the Growing Care Farming project which aims to achieve a transformational change in the scale, scope and uptake of care farming services in England for children and adults with a defined health, education or social need particularly those from disadvantaged areas.
- Community Forests and Woodland Outreach project: to be awarded

[News story: UK signs Eastern and Southern Africa trade continuity agreement](#)

A continuity agreement will see British businesses and consumers benefitting from continued trade with Eastern and Southern Africa after we leave the European Union.

Trade Minister George Hollingbery signed the UK-Eastern and Southern Africa agreement in London today (Thursday 31 January) with a number of representative governments.

The news has been welcomed by businesses including Princes Tuna, who say it will help to support over 4000 jobs and ensure they can keep trading without disruption.

This continuity agreement has been agreed as we prepare to leave the EU on 29 March. It replicates the effects of the existing EU Economic Partnership Agreement with Eastern and Southern Africa.

It will allow continued tariff-free imports from Eastern and Southern Africa, and removes the majority of tariffs on British exports to these countries over the coming years.

The agreement ensures that there will be no disruption to our trading relationship with Eastern and Southern Africa as we leave the EU.

Trading on these preferential terms rather than on World Trade Organization terms will deliver significant savings and help to support British jobs.

This will help to further strengthen the trading relationship between the UK and these countries, which was worth £1.5 billion in 2017.

Based on current trade flows, meat and fish exporters in Eastern and Southern Africa could save £30 million a year in tariff charges that could apply if the agreement wasn't in place, while clothing exporters could save more than £10m and sugar exporters could save around £8m.

Consumers in the UK will continue to benefit from more choice and lower prices for products as clothes and tuna from Mauritius.

These agreements are part of the UK government's commitment to supporting developing countries to reduce poverty through trade. It will help to them to grow their economies, create jobs, increase incomes and reduce reliance on overseas aid in the long-term.

Trade Minister George Hollingbery said:

The continuity agreement, signed today, marks our commitment to help developing countries increase trade and boost economies both across Africa and the UK.

The agreement will allow businesses in Eastern and Southern Africa to continue trading with the UK without any tariffs and lays the foundations for our ambitious trade for development agenda.

Africa's long-term success matters to the UK which is why we are investing in, and partnering with African nations for our mutual benefit.

Abdulla Elahee Doomun, Managing Director, Princes Tuna (Mauritius) Limited said:

Princes Tuna Mauritius warmly welcomes this agreement as the UK is the largest market for the tuna products that we manufacture.

Ensuring there is frictionless trade is critical to our long-term business success and to supporting over 4,000 direct jobs in our two factories as well as many other Mauritian businesses that provide us with goods and services.

HM Trade Commissioner for Africa, Emma Wade-Smith said:

Today's agreement will help to keep trade between the UK and nations in Eastern and Southern Africa well on track, providing continuity for businesses, consumers and exporters as the UK prepares to leave the EU.

This deal forms part of the UK government's wider commitment to supporting developing nations and emerging economies worldwide and across Africa. Providing continuity of the trading arrangements with our trading partners will help sustain jobs and further strengthen trade and investment ties between the UK and nations of Eastern and Southern Africa.

The new UK-ESA agreement replicates the effects of existing trading arrangements as far as possible. It will come into effect as soon as the implementation period ends in January 2021, or on 29 March 2019 if the UK leaves the EU without a deal.