

# Press release: Girls' education should be a development priority for the Commonwealth

A new report into girls' education in the Commonwealth has highlighted the gap between ambition and reality, calling on leaders from all sectors of society to make this a national development priority and get behind cost-effective investments such as early childhood education.

The Platform for Girls' Education, co-chaired by the Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt, commissioned the report, which assesses the state of girls' education across the 53 Commonwealth countries.

Many Commonwealth countries have made good progress towards achieving gender parity in education, with girls out-performing boys in some countries. However, girls remain particularly disadvantaged in a large number of countries and there is a compelling case for targeted efforts to support them.

The report, published by Cambridge University, suggests that governments across the world need to target more funding to the early years of education, especially for girls in remote rural areas. It also highlights the need for targeted approaches to help girls overcome the many challenges they face as they reach puberty.

The Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

The importance of investing in girls' education cannot be overstated. Educated girls are a powerful force for building more prosperous, fair and resilient societies based on an "invisible chain" of shared values. Our shared vision of 12 years of quality education for all girls can only be achieved through a much greater collective effort to dismantle the barriers, driven by leaders from all sectors of society.

This first report is a significant step to identifying what actions are needed to ensure disadvantaged girls are supported to stay in school.

Professor Pauline Rose, the author of the report and the Director of the Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre at the University of Cambridge said:

The Report presents clear evidence on what works to enhance educational access and learning for marginalised girls. The Platform for Girls' Education presents a key opportunity to promote

political leadership backed up with resources in order to translate this evidence into action at scale.

The Platform for Girls' Education is a group of 12 leaders with a shared commitment to 12 years of quality education for all girls. Its membership includes government and civil society representatives from Canada, Fiji, Ghana, India, Kenya, Pakistan, Rwanda, Trinidad & Tobago and the UK, as well as heads of leading multilateral agencies (UNESCO, UNICEF, Global Partnership for Education).

### **Notes to editors:**

- Please see the [press release](#) with details from the first meeting of the Platform for Girls' Education
- Please see the full [report](#)

### **Further information**

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## **[News story: Government publishes landmark domestic abuse bill](#)**

The landmark draft Domestic Abuse Bill has been published today (Monday 21 January), aimed at supporting victims and their families and pursuing offenders. It comes as it is revealed domestic abuse issues cost the country £66 billion a year.

To help tackle the crime, new legislation will:

- introduce the first ever statutory government definition of domestic abuse to specifically include economic abuse and controlling and manipulative non-physical abuse – this will enable everyone, including victims themselves, to understand what constitutes abuse and will encourage more victims to come forward
- establish a Domestic Abuse Commissioner to drive the response to domestic abuse issues
- introduce new Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders to further protect victims and place restrictions on the actions of offenders
- prohibit the cross-examination of victims by their abusers in the family courts
- provide automatic eligibility for special measures to support more victims to give evidence in the criminal courts

The Home Office has published a [report into the economic and social cost of domestic abuse](#), which reveals the crime cost England and Wales £66 billion in

2016 to 2017.

According to the research, the vast majority of this cost (£47 billion) was a result of the physical and emotional harm of domestic abuse, however it also includes other factors such as cost to health services (£2.3 billion), police (£1.3 billion) and victim services (£724 million).

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Victoria Atkins said:

I have heard absolutely heartbreaking accounts of victims whose lives have been ripped apart because of physical, emotional or economic abuse they have suffered by someone close to them.

The draft Domestic Abuse Bill recognises the complex nature of these horrific crimes and puts the needs of victims and their families at the forefront.

This government is absolutely committed to shining a light on domestic abuse to ensure this hidden crime does not remain in the shadows.

It is estimated that around two million adults experience domestic abuse each year, affecting almost 6% of all adults. Women are twice as likely to be victims than men.

The draft bill will introduce measures:

- to address coercive control and economic abuse, and how domestic abuse affects children
- to transform the response in the justice system

The bill will also ban the distressing practice of domestic abuse victims being cross-examined by perpetrators in the family courts.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Domestic abuse shatters lives and tears families apart. It can happen anywhere, to anyone.

Protecting victims, as well as supporting survivors, is at the heart of our strengthened response to this horrific crime.

Our draft Domestic Abuse Bill and wider package of measures, unveiled today, will bolster the protection for victims and will help expose and bring the vile abusers to justice.

Justice Secretary David Gauke said:

Domestic abuse destroys lives and warrants some of the strongest

measures at our disposal to deter offenders and protect victims.

That is why we are barring abusers from cross-examining their victims in the family courts – a practice which can cause immense distress and amount to a continuation of abuse – and giving courts greater powers, including new protection orders, to tackle this hideous crime.

By pursuing every option available, to better support victims and bring more offenders to justice, we are driving the change necessary to ensure families never have to endure the pain of domestic abuse in silence.

Between the draft bill and its consultation response, the government is making 120 commitments to tackle domestic abuse. Amongst these are a series of non-legislative measures which include:

- £8 million of Home Office funding to support children affected by domestic abuse
- a new crisis support system for those with no recourse to public funds
- additional funding and capacity building for services for disabled, elderly and LGBTB victims
- updated support, training and guidance on economic abuse
- new and additional training for job centre work coaches, police, social workers and probation staff to help them recognise and effectively tackle abuse
- improved support for victims in the family court
- additional £500,000 funding for provisions for male victims

Sandra Horley CBE, Chief Executive of Refuge, said:

Refuge welcomes the draft bill announced by the government today. Refuge staff deal with the human misery of domestic violence every day. The cost to women and children's lives is devastating. But now the immense cost to the taxpayer has been laid bare, too. Domestic violence is truly everybody's business.

This bill represents a once in a generation opportunity to address domestic violence; but in order to do so, we must ensure its aspirations are matched by adequate resource. We will continue to work closely with the government to ensure the final bill meets the needs of the women and children we support.

Suzanne Jacob OBE, Chief Executive of SafeLives, said:

We welcome the government's set of proposals, particularly putting a greater focus on perpetrator accountability, both through the legal system, civil powers, and programmes that seek to change abusive behaviour.

The government estimates today that perpetrators cost the economy £66 billion – more than the cost of alcohol and drug misuse, cigarettes and obesity combined. It affects more than 2 million people every year.

For too long, we've expected victims and children to uproot their lives while the perpetrators remain invisible and unchallenged by the system. The new change in approach reflects what hundreds of survivors told SafeLives they wanted – we're pleased the government is listening.

Katie Ghose, Chief Executive of Women's Aid, said:

Domestic abuse costs lives and it costs money. It is happening at epidemic levels yet it has been largely hidden behind closed doors. Now is the time to bring it out into the spotlight and address the impact of domestic abuse properly once and for all.

The Domestic Abuse Bill has the potential to create a step change in the national response and this must be backed up with sustainable funding for our life-saving network of specialist support services to make a real difference to survivors' lives.

We look forward to working with the government, our member services and survivors themselves to make sure survivors have the resources and support they need, as well as address the root causes of domestic abuse so that every woman and child can live free from fear and abuse.

Dr Nicola Sharp-Jeffs, Director of Surviving Economic Abuse said:

Economic abuse can prevent victims from leaving an abuser and thwart their efforts to rebuild their lives safely – it can even create new risks.

Through committing to ensure that practitioners have access to training and guidance on economic abuse, the government has recognised that physical and economic safety are entwined.

These new measures will help bring economic abuse out of the shadows and will transform responses, ensuring that victim-survivors are able to access the support they so desperately need.

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# [News story: DASA Download: Future Aviation Security Solutions](#)

## **Speedy innovation**

Eighteen months from novel idea to working prototype is quick by any standard. And 'quick' is not often a term applied to government. However, that is exactly what the [Future of Aviation Security Solutions \(FASS\) programme](#) has achieved. FASS is a cross government collaborative programme with investment of more than £3m from the Department for Transport (DfT) and Home Office for finding and funding new, innovative aviation security capabilities. This month marks the completion of 'Phase 2' of the programme, a significant milestone, with eight funded projects showcasing their innovation progress to potential investors, customers and decision makers at a recent event in London.

Working closely with the DfT FASS team, I have had the privilege to drive the programme milestones and support the development of these projects as the Competition Delivery Manager for the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA). Together, we have sought to harness novel aviation security innovation, accelerating defence and security solutions to keep UK airports one step ahead of potential threats.

## **Developing innovation for airport efficiencies**

The FASS programme aims to improve aviation security and, at the same time, decrease passenger and staff inconvenience. For example, one of our funded projects, Sequestim has developed a super-sensitive, walk-through scanner allowing passengers to keep their outer clothes on whilst continuing to move through the scanner. A recent live trial at Cardiff Airport demonstrated the ability of the scanner to substantially increase passenger throughput, which has obvious advantages for passengers in the reduced queuing times at airport security checks.

Another project, Scanna has developed a sensor pad that can detect explosives hidden in shoes, this could mean that, in the near future, passengers won't need to remove their shoes whilst queuing at security. And it's not just shiny new technologies we are interested in, we've funded the University of Cambridge to look at behavioural change in security staff and educating them to spot non threats and threats using smarter scanning techniques to speed up the process.

Scanna's foot scanner being demonstrated at recent showcase event

I am excited by working at such pace and being creative to find solutions that support the FASS team goals. The Aviation sector is vital for UK industry and tourism and contributes significantly to the economy. With passenger numbers increasing every year, it is more important than ever to

employ the latest innovations to improve efficiencies. The bespoke service we offer the FASS team ensures that the ideas that we find and fund, offers world-leading innovations in Aviation Security.

## **Collaboration**

The Showcase event provided the environment for collaboration between innovators, industry, academia and government. Rich discussions took place in the presentations, workshops and during the networking opportunities. The smaller companies benefitting particularly from business development advice, whilst creative solutions were being deliberated by innovative minds from across all sectors. Collaboration and communication is key for the next stage of success and whilst innovation can present risk, it can also bring tremendous rewards. And the reward of 'passenger safety' couldn't be higher.

## **About Tracey**

Tracey worked for 9 years in the manufacturing industry, before moving to the Education sector where she spent 16 years in a variety of schools, roles and responsibilities, including Head of Science and Assistant Head Teacher. She joined DASA as Delivery Manager in August 2018.

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## **[Your chance to question Ministry of Defence medals and records experts at Family History Shows 2020](#)**

The MOD Medals and Records Offices, part of DBS, are to attend the following family history shows during 2020

The Family History Show South West, UWE Bristol, 8 Feb

Family Tree Live, Alexandra Palace, London, 17-18 Apr

The Family History Show York, York Racecourse, 20 Jun

The Genealogy Show, NEC Birmingham, 26 – 27 Jun

The Family History Show London, Kempton Park, 26 Sept

The show will be attended by family historians, societies and genealogical organisations. The MOD stand, will be staffed by a DBS team, with colleagues from the Air Historical Branch and Restore plc.

They will offer:

## **Live post 1921 service record search facility**

The MOD continues to hold all service records where the individual had a discharge date of post 1921, these total around 10 million records, with about 500,000 having seen service in World War 1. An assisted search facility will be offered that will in many cases enable confirmation of whether the MOD holds a record for an individual. This information can then be used to apply for the record at the event, or by using the forms on Gov.uk. To assist the search, some or all the following information is required: surname, initials, date of birth and service number.

## **Requesting a Service Record**

The MOD are planning to offer an online service where requests for the military service record of deceased service personnel can be placed. An online payment of £30 will be taken when the order is placed. The MOD will need sight of the individual's death certificate if the date of birth is not over 116 years ago ie 1904 or before. For those killed in action, reference to the CWGC database will be accepted as proof of death. So remember to bring your relatives name, date of birth and death certificate! Records will be posted to the requester after the event.

## **World War 2 RAF casualty packs search facility**

RAF casualty packs from World War 2 are being transferred from the MOD to The National Archives. Using the MOD's archive and cataloguing database, an assisted search facility will enable identification of the pack that may relate to an individual. This information can then be used to either access the pack at The National Archives, or, for those yet to be transferred, apply for details from the pack using the forms on Gov.uk. To assist the search, the following information is required: the name of the individual(s), date of incident and type of aircraft.

## **Interpretation of service records**

If you already have a service record but are unsure what it says or how to interpret it, then DBS experts will be on hand to assist you.

## **Veterans Badge**

If you have previously served in the armed forces and don't yet have a veterans badge, then you can apply for and, after the required validation has been carried out, be issued with a veterans badge.

The DBS team look forward to seeing you.

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# Press release: Protect your pension pots from investment scams and negligent trustees

Since 2015, the Insolvency Service has applied to the courts to wind-up 24 companies that have carried out a form of pension misuse.

The pension misuse varies from convincing people to access their pensions and invest in unregulated schemes to pension trustees not carrying out their duties properly.

The Insolvency Service has estimated that there have been close to 3,750 victims connected to the 24 companies closed down, including both individuals and businesses, having made £202 million worth of contributions.

Consumer Minister Kelly Tolhurst MP said:

Our consumer protection regime is one of the strongest in the world and we are committed to making sure people know their rights. If you are approached to make an investment from your pension, always do your homework and seek independent advice, if necessary, to help you make an informed decision.

Government continues to work closely with the Insolvency Service who are working to clamp down on rogue companies targeting vulnerable people. If you think you might have been a victim, I'd urge you to report it to [Action Fraud UK](#) at the earliest opportunity or visit the [ScamSmart](#) website for further help.

Victims of pension scams last year lost an average of £91,000 each to fraudsters\* and as identified during FCA and TPR's [ScamSmart](#) campaign, common tactics used include cold-calls, offers of free pension reviews and promises of high rates of return.

The government recently announced a [ban prohibiting cold-calling](#) in relation to pensions and following the wind-ups of the 24 companies investigated by the Insolvency Service, 8 directors have received a total of 57 years' worth of directorship disqualifications.

And there are further ongoing investigations to ensure rogue directors are prevented from managing companies.

In one case, four directors of companies involved in the misuse of £57million worth of pension funds were banned for a total of 34 years.

Introducer firms would cold-call people, inviting them to transfer their pension pots into occupational pension schemes. However, the introducers misled clients about their expertise and offered guaranteed returns which they couldn't deliver. Members' funds were then largely invested in unregulated investments in storage units which did not yield the level of returns promised to members\*\*.

And following another investigation, Fast Pensions Ltd and five other connected firms were wound-up by the courts in May 2018.

Between 2012 and 2013, 520 people were encouraged to transfer their pension savings from existing providers into one of 15 schemes, with Fast Pensions acting as the sponsoring employer. A total of at least £21 million was invested and people were persuaded to transfer their savings through various methods, including cold calls questioning the performance of their pension funds or offering free pension reviews.

Advice provided was inadequate and advisors also failed to disclose information around returns and the high risk and illiquid nature of the investments made by the schemes, as well as the benefits members would be entitled to\*\*\*.

To help prevent you from becoming a target for pension abuse, the Insolvency Service recommends:

- Be wary of calls out of the blue. Get the company's name and establish their credentials using the [FCA's Financial Services Register](#)
- Seek [financial guidance or advice](#) before changing your pension arrangements or making investments
- Don't be rushed or pressured into making any decision about your pension and be wary of promised returns that sound too good to be true

For further information about scams you can visit the [ScamSmart](#) website and if you suspect a scam, you can report it to [Action Fraud UK](#).

Further examples of companies being shut down can be found on the [Protect your pension microsite](#).

\*£91,000 average lost to scammers sourced from [ScamSmart campaign material](#)

\*\* Case study connected to the [disqualifications of Karl Dunlop, Stuart Grehan, Ian Dunsford and Stephen Talbot](#)

\*\*\* Case study connected to the [wind-ups of six pension and finance companies in the high court](#)

Statistics date from 2015 onwards, with figures based on information gathered during investigations by the Insolvency Service.

The Insolvency Service is a member of Project Bloom, a cross-industry initiative created in 2012 and brings together government departments, agencies, regulators, law enforcement bodies and representatives of the pension industry to tackle pension scams.

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on: