

# Statement to Parliament: Oral

## Statement: Northern Ireland Finances

With permission Mr Speaker I would like to make a statement about Northern Ireland finances.

Last week I laid a written statement in which I explained that the pressures on public services meant that it was imperative for the Government to take steps to provide clarity to enable planning in Northern Ireland for 2018/19.

With great reluctance and in spite of my strong preference for a new Executive to set a budget, I set out in this statement the resource and capital allocations which I considered to be the most balanced and appropriate settlement for Northern Ireland departments.

I did this following intensive engagement with Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) and consultation with all of the main Northern Ireland parties.

Mr Speaker, in the continued absence of an Executive, I have an obligation to take these and any other measures that are necessary to keep Northern Ireland functioning. But I will only take such measures where they are essential and limited in nature, and are part of a clear and consistent approach by the Government.

This approach is based on a number of principles...

First, we remain steadfast in our commitment to the Belfast Agreement. All that we do will be with the purpose of protecting and fulfilling the Agreement.

But, second, we will take those decisions which are necessary to provide good governance and political stability for Northern Ireland – consistent always with restoring the Executive and local decision-making at the earliest possible opportunity.

Third, we will continue to implement our obligations under the Agreement and its successors where possible – always working for the good of the community as a whole.

Finally, we will continue to work with all the Northern Ireland parties – and with the Irish Government as appropriate – to remove the barriers to restoring the Executive and a fully functioning Assembly.

The principles at the core of the Agreement, and the political institutions that it establishes, continue to have our full and unreserved support.

That means that ...

We will uphold the principle of consent, consistent with this Government's support for Northern Ireland's place within the Union and with maintaining the constitutional integrity of the United Kingdom.

We believe in devolution, and the imperative for local decision making, by local politicians.

We support power-sharing on a cross-community basis, based on mutual respect and recognition.

We will continue to support and facilitate North/South co-operation – including as we leave the EU, while always preserving the economic integrity of the United Kingdom.

We will continue to work closely with the Irish Government in full accordance with the three stranded approach.

And we will continue to act fairly and govern in the interests of all parts of the community in Northern Ireland;

Mr Speaker, the necessary steps which I have taken and will continue to take are consistent with all of these commitments.

In addition to the steps I set out last week, there are several associated measures required to further secure public finances which I will be taking forward . . .

As well as cutting costs, securing efficiencies and beginning to take the steps to transform public services, it is right to look at how income can be increased to protect the public services on which the people of Northern Ireland depend. So, I will introduce legislation to set a regional rate – which will increase domestic rates by 3% above inflation. This will make an important contribution to sustainable finances in the long-run – with the additional funding addressing urgent pressures in health and education.

I also intend to act to extend the cost-capping of the current renewable heat incentive scheme in Northern Ireland, which the Assembly had put in place over a year ago.

It would not be acceptable to put finances at risk by simply allowing that cap to lapse. I therefore propose to extend it for a further year from 1 April – the minimal possible step to protect the public purse.

And I will also confirm the final spending totals for the Northern Ireland departments for the 2017-18 financial year in legislation to set Supplementary Estimates.

I also believe that the time is right to address the ongoing public concern about MLA pay in the absence of a functioning Assembly. I thank Trevor Reaney who was instructed by my predecessor to produce an independent view and recommended a 27.5% reduction to MLA pay. I will seek to introduce legislation to take a power to vary MLA pay. Further to that, I am minded to reduce pay in line with the Reaney Review recommendation, but I would welcome full and final representations from the NI parties before I make a final decision.

These measures – which I take reluctantly, but which are necessary

in the absence of a functioning Executive and Assembly – will deliver the stability and the decisions to enable forward planning for the financial year ahead. But I am clear that they cannot provide the local input and fundamental decisions which are needed to secure a more sustainable future for Northern Ireland.

My powers as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland are limited. The scope of this House to pass legislation on the devolved issues which matter for Northern Ireland is limited. This rightly reflects the devolution settlement which is in place and to which this Government is committed. But it does mean that, in the continuing absence of an Executive, there are fundamental decisions in Northern Ireland which cannot be taken, scrutinised and implemented as they should be.

This has been the situation for 14 months already and, in the continued absence of an Executive, it would be irresponsible for us not to consider how we might provide for different arrangements until such time as the devolved institutions are back up and running. Alongside this I also continue to keep under review my statutory obligation to call an Assembly Election.

I would welcome the views and proposals of the Northern Ireland parties and others on how such arrangements – providing for local decision-making and scrutiny, on a cross-community basis – might be achieved in the continued absence of an Executive. And how any such arrangements might work alongside the other institutions of the Agreement.

Let me be clear that this in no way affects my commitment to the Belfast Agreement nor my commitment to continue to work to remove the barriers to the restoration of devolution.

As the 20th anniversary of the Belfast Agreement approaches, I am clearer than ever that Northern Ireland needs strong political leadership from a locally elected and accountable devolved Government. That remains my firm goal.

I commend this statement to the House.

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## Statement to Parliament: PM Commons statement on Salisbury incident: 12 March 2018

With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to update the House on the incident in Salisbury – and the steps we are taking to investigate what happened and to respond to this reckless and despicable act.

Last week my Rt Hon Friends, the Foreign and Home Secretaries, set out the details of events as they unfolded on Sunday the 4th of March.

I am sure the whole House will want to once again pay tribute to the bravery and professionalism of our emergency services and armed forces in responding to this incident, as well as the doctors and nurses who are now treating those affected.

Our thoughts, in particular, are with Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey who remains in a serious but stable condition. In responding to this incident, he exemplified the duty and courage that define our emergency services; and in which our whole nation takes the greatest pride.

Mr Speaker, I want to pay tribute to the fortitude and calmness with which people in Salisbury have responded to these events and to thank all those who have come forward to assist the police with their investigation.

This incident has, of course, caused considerable concern across the community. Following the discovery of traces of nerve agent in Zizzi's restaurant and The Mill pub, the Chief Medical Officer issued further precautionary advice. But as Public Health England have made clear, the risk to public health is low.

Mr Speaker, I share the impatience of this House and the country at large to bring those responsible to justice – and to take the full range of appropriate responses against those who would act against our country in this way.

But as a nation that believes in justice and the rule of law, it is essential that we proceed in the right way – led not by speculation but by the evidence.

That is why we have given the police the space and time to carry out their investigation properly.

Hundreds of officers have been working around the clock – together with experts from our armed forces – to sift and assess all the available evidence; to identify crime scenes and decontamination sites and to follow

every possible lead to find those responsible.

That investigation continues and we must allow the police to continue with their work.

Mr Speaker, this morning I chaired a meeting of the National Security Council in which we considered the information so far available. As is normal, the Council was updated on the assessment and intelligence picture, as well as the state of the investigation.

It is now clear that Mr Skripal and his daughter were poisoned with a military-grade nerve agent of a type developed by Russia.

This is part of a group of nerve agents known as 'Novichok'.

Based on the positive identification of this chemical agent by world-leading experts at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory at Porton Down; our knowledge that Russia has previously produced this agent and would still be capable of doing so; Russia's record of conducting state-sponsored assassinations; and our assessment that Russia views some defectors as legitimate targets for assassinations; the Government has concluded that it is highly likely that Russia was responsible for the act against Sergei and Yulia Skripal.

Mr Speaker, there are therefore only two plausible explanations for what happened in Salisbury on the 4th of March.

Either this was a direct act by the Russian State against our country.

Or the Russian government lost control of this potentially catastrophically damaging nerve agent and allowed it to get into the hands of others.

This afternoon my Rt Hon Friend the Foreign Secretary has summoned the Russian Ambassador to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and asked him to explain which of these two possibilities it is – and therefore to account for how this Russian-produced nerve agent could have been deployed in Salisbury against Mr Skripal and his daughter.

My Rt Hon Friend has stated to the Ambassador that the Russian Federation must immediately provide full and complete disclosure of the Novichok programme to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

And he has requested the Russian Government's response by the end of tomorrow.

Mr Speaker, this action has happened against a backdrop of a well-established pattern of Russian State aggression.

Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea was the first time since the Second World War that one sovereign nation has forcibly taken territory from another in Europe.

Russia has fomented conflict in the Donbas, repeatedly violated the national

airspace of several European countries, and mounted a sustained campaign of cyber espionage and disruption. This has included meddling in elections, and hacking the Danish Ministry of Defence and the Bundestag, among many others.

During his recent State of the Union address, President Putin showed video graphics of missile launches, flight trajectories and explosions, including the modelling of attacks on the United States with a series of warheads impacting in Florida.

While the extra-judicial killing of terrorists and dissidents outside Russia were given legal sanction by the Russian Parliament in 2006.

And of course Russia used radiological substances in its barbaric assault on Mr Litvinenko. We saw promises to assist the investigation then, but they resulted in denial and obfuscation – and the stifling of due process and the rule of law. Mr Speaker, following Mr Litvinenko's death we expelled Russian diplomats, suspended security co-operation, broke off bilateral plans on visas, froze the assets of the suspects and put them on international extradition lists. And these measures remain in place.

Furthermore our commitment to collective defence and security through NATO remains as strong as ever in the face of Russian behaviour.

Indeed our armed forces have a leading role in NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence with British troops leading a multinational battlegroup in Estonia.

We have led the way in securing tough sanctions against the Russian economy.

And we have at all stages worked closely with our allies and we will continue to do so.

We must now stand ready to take much more extensive measures.

Mr Speaker, on Wednesday we will consider in detail the response from the Russian State.

Should there be no credible response, we will conclude that this action amounts to an unlawful use of force by the Russian State against the United Kingdom.

And I will come back to this House and set out the full range of measures that we will take in response.

Mr Speaker, this attempted murder using a weapons-grade nerve agent in a British town was not just a crime against the Skripals.

It was an indiscriminate and reckless act against the United Kingdom, putting the lives of innocent civilians at risk.

And we will not tolerate such a brazen attempt to murder innocent civilians on our soil.

I commend this Statement to the House.

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## **Press release: FCO Minister Field statement on UN Fact Finding Mission on Burma**

This report by the UN Fact Finding Mission on human rights has reaffirmed the appalling human rights violations that so many in Burma have suffered and confirms that the Burmese military are primarily to blame for the widespread and systematic violence against the Rohingya.

These findings show the vital importance of an open and transparent investigation into these appalling events and I urge the Burmese authorities to reverse their decision not to cooperate with the Fact Finding Mission, and allow them immediate access so they can continue their work.

I call on the Burmese authorities to establish a credible and independent investigation into these horrifying accusations, and a judicial process to hold to account those responsible for abuses.

The UK is fully committed to help bring an end to this humanitarian crisis and I plan to update Parliament on the Government's approach at the earliest opportunity allowed.

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## **News story: PM meeting with Prime Minister Muscat of Malta: 12 March 2018**

This afternoon the Prime Minister held a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Muscat of Malta ahead of the Commonwealth Day Service at Westminster Abbey. The Prime Minister thanked Prime Minister Muscat for the progress made on the reform agenda during Malta's Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth. Both leaders looked forward to the upcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April.

The leaders also discussed the ongoing Brexit negotiations, with Prime Minister Muscat welcoming the further detail provided in the Prime Minister's recent Mansion House speech. The Prime Minister reiterated that the UK is ambitious about the future relationship with the EU including on services. She also noted the importance of the UK and the EU reaching agreement on the

terms of the implementation period at the March European Council.

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## [Speech: Amanda Spielman's speech at the ASCL annual conference 2018](#)

Can I start by saying how pleased I am to be here today. Those of you who were at last year's conference may remember that it was [my first big speech as Chief Inspector](#). I used that speech to lay out some of my priorities for Ofsted and what I hoped to achieve. So it's great to be back here today to present my own self-evaluation for year one. I got some feedback from some of you last night, and look forward to getting more today.

What a year it has been. I'm a strong believer that chief inspectors and politics don't mix, so I won't dwell on some of the more high profile events of the past year. But even in our own world of education we've seen some major changes, including the arrival of both Geoff and Damian.

I must admit there was some trepidation in Ofsted Towers at Geoff's election. I think it's fair to say the platform he ran on wasn't entirely 'Ofsted friendly'. But since taking up office, we've found him to be – yes, tough and determined – but also constructive and pragmatic. Working together, we've already been able to find solutions to some thorny issues and I think there's much more we can do in future.

### **Returning to the substance**

Last year I made clear my desire for all of us to shift our focus back to the 'substance of education'. The question I asked was: how do we make sure our efforts are directed at giving young people a knowledge-rich education that sets them up to succeed, as opposed to hunting for performance table prizes and stickers. It's a theme I continued throughout the year, developed through a big research programme looking at the curriculum in schools and in colleges.

I have been genuinely thrilled with the debate and discussion that have followed. Although I know not everyone has agreed with all of our conclusions, many have and there is an almost universal agreement that the essential diagnosis is right. For too long, the curriculum – the thing that should lie at the heart of educational thinking – has come second to the pressures of accountability and performance tables.

Ofsted has of course played its part here: we haven't put enough emphasis on curriculum in the framework and, as a result, may have contributed to a vicious cycle, whereby schools have done the same.

I am pleased that ASCL recognises many of these issues. I have enjoyed

sitting on your commission on ethical leadership, which I know has reported at this conference. Its emphasis on making sure school leaders make the right decisions, for the right reasons, is entirely correct.

Here, I have to put in my usual disclaimer, lest there be any mischief from our friends in the education press. I am not opposed to accountability: indeed it would be a rather odd position for the head of an inspectorate to take. I think that Progress 8, new SATs, GCSEs and A-Levels are broadly good things. But I do maintain that success in these measures should flow from a rich curriculum, rather than tests of all kinds and performance tables dictating the curriculum itself.

## **Spending time on the right things**

So today I want to continue that theme of the substance of education, but from a different perspective. Following on from Geoff, I want to look at how Ofsted can play its part in reducing workload, so that you're able to focus on the things that matter to you and to your pupils.

Because, at the end of the day, it really doesn't matter what an inspectorate thinks if we can't attract good people into teaching. The record number of good and outstanding schools won't be sustained if the people, who make them run so well, are burning out, and leaving the profession.

When I see NQTs brimming with passion to change young lives for the better, I think it's an utter travesty that so many end up losing their early enthusiasm because of the pressures of the job. Especially when so many of those pressures are entirely unnecessary.

Because that's what endless data cuts, triple marking, 10 page lesson plans, and, worst of all, mocksteds are: a distraction from the core purpose of education. And a costly distraction at that. Many will say that these have been driven by Ofsted and the wider accountability framework, not by school and college leaders themselves, and I'll come to that in a minute. But, as Geoff has said so clearly, ethical leadership is what should drive your actions.

That said, clearly Ofsted isn't blameless and we must go on doing all we can to support removing unnecessary workload for teachers and school leaders. So I want to talk about some of the steps that we have been taking to cut out the guff and direct the focus back to what matters.

I want this to be a frank discussion. Because, we know there is no silver bullet. As I see it, there are 5 major drivers of workload:

1. Government policies and requirements, which schools and teachers must follow.
2. Accountability through performance tables and inspection.
3. The consequences of accountability – what governing bodies, LAs, MATs or RSCs do as a result of an Ofsted judgement or a set of results.
4. The fear of litigation if schools do not take a belt and braces approach, particularly on things like health and safety.

5. And finally, how policies and accountability measures are translated by school leaders into day-to-day management tools such as policies for planning, assessment and marking.

Set out like that, it should be clear that it's only in my power to change one of these things directly – and only half of one at that! But nevertheless I want to turn to what we can do to ensure that inspection does not generate unnecessary workload.

To start with, we have been clear about what we actually look at on inspection and, more importantly, what we don't. I've said it before and I'll say it again, we do not want to see a performance on inspection. We do not want anything special to be created. We do not want you to produce "Ofsted-ready files". And, above all, we do not want you to employ consultants to perform mocksteds.

What we want to see on inspection is an accurate reflection of what happens in your school. Yes, we want to see how you approach assessment. We want to see good teaching. We absolutely want to be sure that your leadership is effective. But we want to see all of that just as you approach it day-to-day, not as a special presentation for Ofsted.

Some of you will say I'm naïve; others might use more choice words, if I were to suggest that we can make inspection a low stress event just like any other day. Fair enough.

After all, if you were to say to your pupils: "Oh, don't worry about that GCSE or that A-Level; it's just a reflection of what you've learnt", you'd get a similar response.

Inspections will always to some degree induce anxiety, which might lead to stress: that's human nature. You want to give the best account of your work. But most inspections are for just a day, so that stress shouldn't build up for weeks and months before. If your school is working well week in, week out, you will get a good Ofsted judgement regardless of how much preparation you put into it.

I really hope that you do listen when we try to bust [specific myths about inspection](#). I am sure many of you already follow the one-man, Twitter myth-busting machine that is [Sean Harford](#), and if you don't then you probably should.

I won't repeat all of those individual myths here today, except to say that, when you see a myth being busted, please make sure your staff know it as well. Few things are more depressing to me than reading the results of our latest teacher survey and finding that most teachers still think we have a preferred style of teaching. Significant minorities think we still grade individual lessons or want to see lesson plans. In truth, we cannot reach every teacher directly, but through you, we can.

At the same time, if there are new myths emerging, let us know and we will be more than happy to take steps to bust them. Even though I am sure Sean's wife

would appreciate it if he spent slightly fewer evenings playing triple-marking whack-a-mole.

So that's the myths, what about the reality?

Well, we are also trying to make sure that the process of inspection is as painless as possible. Since January, we have been running a new model for short inspections of good schools. The early feedback from those inspections is very positive, and I want to thank Steve Rollett here for his work in helping us get this model right.

Underpinning our new approach is our belief that it is better to catch an institution before it falls, than to give it an immediate requires improvement judgement. The new model gives those with a few areas of weakness time to improve, before we return for a full inspection. In the meantime, there should be no confusion: your 'good' judgement remains, and you avoid the consequences that can flow from an RI [requires improvement] grade.

There will be times when we find more severe weaknesses or where our risk assessment model indicates that a school could be experiencing a major decline. In those situations, it is right that a full inspection happens immediately. But, for schools with just a handful of areas to improve, we think the right approach is to give them the time to do so.

In a similar vein, we have removed the 3 strikes rule. There was a presumption that a school should be graded inadequate, if after two RI outcomes a third inspection did not show that it had improved to good. Instead, we are letting our inspectors use their discretion to judge a school as it stands, regardless of its inspection history.

Other steps we have taken include a new approach to safeguarding. In training our inspectors this year, we have moved away from a compliance approach. I'm thinking here, for example, of stories of fences being too low. Instead, we want our inspectors to look at whether a good safeguarding culture runs throughout the school. Fewer tick boxes; more focus on how schools identify risks of serious harm, and help young people to be safe.

We've also stopped reporting on performance management arrangements. Inspectors are not requesting anonymised lists of teachers who did or didn't achieve an increment on the pay scale.

And that leads me on to one of my biggest bugbears in the world of education; the misuse of data. Anyone who has ever worked with me will know that I'm not averse to a bit of analysis. Evidence-based approaches to education are the right approaches. I don't believe that an HMI can walk into a school, take a quick sniff and come to an instant judgement.

But that doesn't mean that our inspectors should need, or want, to see endless pages of data, cut to the nth degree on 10 different pupil characteristics. The other day I was horrified to see an example from a school of a pie-chart of pupil performance data based on the results of 3 pupils. Torturing data is not just pointless. There is work in creating those

analyses. There is work in discussing them and all too often many of the differences they may seem to show are probably just statistical noise. And there is work in designing and delivering interventions to address those apparent differences, and some of those aren't really justified. And I know that some of it happens because we have tended to over-analyse data too.

So we have been working on this one too. Our intention is always to use data as the starting point, not as the end point, for inspection. We have redesigned inspection data reports to reduce the likelihood of over-interpretation. We have trained our inspectors to know what inferences they can and cannot draw from the data. And since September, we have operated a new analyst helpdesk to support inspectors.

There are also more direct measures looking at workload. In September, [we added a new question to our staff questionnaire](#). It asks whether 'Leaders and managers take workload into account when developing and implementing new policies and procedures, so as to avoid placing unnecessary burdens on staff'. Quite a mouthful.

But, I can now share the first results from that question. Only 8% of staff disagreed or disagreed strongly, which I am sure will come as some encouragement to you. In fact 77% agreed or agreed strongly that leaders do take workload into account.

Of course, there is an inevitable bias to the positive in this question. Few people want to jeopardise their school's inspection. So we are looking at how we can best use this question. On inspection itself, we are not using the responses to downgrade leadership and management. We are using them as part of the discussion with leaders about the way they run their schools.

I am loath to go any further, just at the moment, to commit Ofsted to directly judging leaders' approach to workload. I am sure there is room for us to look at more under the leadership and management judgement. But adding something to the Ofsted framework never has a subtle impact. Unless we think through our approach carefully, perverse incentives will follow. And the very last thing I want is for Ofsted to become a wedge between staff and management. So I am not ruling out taking a closer look at workload on inspection, but I want to do this gradually, and in discussion with the sector.

That takes me to the final area where I see scope for us to tackle workload. That is through the new education inspection framework that my team is developing for 2019.

A top priority for me is to make sure that the framework explores the things that either give a good judgement of educational effectiveness or are vital to young people's development. The alternative is a giant basket full of things that dilute the validity of our judgement and create lots of extra work for you.

To give you a flavour, here are just some of the things that have been suggested for inclusion in the Ofsted framework in the past year:

- volunteering
- gang education
- school meal quality
- swimming capability
- home cooking skills
- first aid
- school to school collaboration
- knife awareness
- resilience
- democratic engagement

And there are many more. Don't get me wrong, I think all of these are valuable suggestions. But every time we add something to our framework, we dilute the focus on the substance of education and we create more work for schools. So I intend to make sure that the new framework is as sharply focused as possible on the things that matter most.

The framework development is supported by our research programme, which currently includes:

- the curriculum survey, which is helping us to define what a good curriculum looks like, in terms of intent, and implementation and impact
- international research on lesson observation, and what can and cannot be gleaned from it
- a review of book scrutiny practice and, again, what it can and what it cannot tell inspectors about standards in a school
- broader work on the validity and reliability of our inspections and the link with educational effectiveness
- and finally, in response to feedback from teachers – a research programme on workload and well-being, focused on schools that manage this well.

I hope you can see from the steps we are taking, that I do not believe excessive workload is inevitable! I know that you, and all the dedicated professionals who work for you, will always want to go above and beyond for young people. But what we can do is to make sure that you're going above and beyond for the right reasons.

And that does mean you as school and college leaders playing your part – and Geoff has talked eloquently about that today. You have to take tough decisions in your institutions all the time. Some of those decisions create work, that's inevitable. But when you do take them, please be clear why you are taking them, and accept where the responsibility is yours. In the long run, to do anything else only undermines confidence and morale.

Thank you for listening today, and for the opportunity to share a platform with Geoff and Damian. I am really confident that by working together we can make a real difference and make sure that teaching is the attractive, challenging and rewarding profession it deserves to be.

Thank you.