

News story: Royal Navy ship set for Australia, Defence Secretary reveals

The Defence Secretary had announced that [the ship would sail to the Asia Pacific whilst addressing the crew on-board in Devonport on Friday](#), and has now provided further information of the deployment.

During recent conversations with Australian Defence Minister Marise Payne and Minister for Defence Industry Christopher Pyne the Defence Secretary reaffirmed his commitment to strengthening the Australia-UK defence relationship and exploring opportunities for our Armed Forces to work together.

The visit of HMS Sutherland, a Type 23 anti-submarine warfare frigate, offers further opportunities for the Royal Navy and the Australian Navy to collaborate.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Though we may be currently battling against each other on the cricket field, when it comes to defence, we stand together with Australia as allies not opponents. Our countries have fought alongside one another since the First World War and we continue to stand strong in the face of today's intensifying global threats.

I am pleased to announce that HMS Sutherland will set sail across the world next year and look forward to strengthening our close relationship with Australia.

The Type 23 frigate HMS Sutherland will deploy to Australia in the New Year.

The ship will visit Sydney, Perth and Adelaide and provides an outstanding opportunity for joint exercising. The deployment has the added benefit of showcasing Britain's cutting-edge anti-submarine warfare technology.

Australia and the UK remain extremely close trading partners, exchanging £13.1bn of goods and services in 2016. In that year we also agreed to establish a bilateral Trade Working Group to begin scoping out the parameters for a future Free Trade Agreement. This week International Trade Secretary Liam Fox is in the country to advance the UK/Australia trade relationship, following a visit from Minister for Defence Procurement Harriett Baldwin earlier this month.

In August this year both countries' Foreign and Defence Secretaries strengthened the already close relationship in the [9th annual Australia-UK Ministerial talks \(AUKMIN\)](#), agreeing on further joint work on cyber, Commonwealth and modern slavery. This deployment is a tangible demonstration of that commitment.

Whilst in the country earlier in the month, Defence Minister Harriett Baldwin [announced the intention to look at the feasibility of fitting an Australian radar on future British warships](#). The 'CEAFAR' radar, developed by CEA Technologies, is already in service with the Australian Navy and a capability study to fit the radar to British ships will begin early next year.

Press release: Social mobility in Great Britain: fifth state of the nation report

A stark social mobility postcode lottery exists in Britain today where the chances of someone from a disadvantaged background succeeding in life is bound to where they live, the Social Mobility Commission's '[State of the nation' report](#), published today (Tuesday 28 November) has found.

The report uncovers a striking geographical divide with London and its surrounding areas pulling away from the rest of the country, while many other parts of the country are being left behind economically and hollowed out socially.

It warns that Britain is in the grip of a self-reinforcing spiral of ever-growing division and calls on government to increase its proportion of spending on those parts of the country that most need it. Estimates suggest that the North is £6 billion a year underfunded compared to London.

At the heart of the report is the Social Mobility Index, which ranks all 324 local authorities in England in terms of their social mobility prospects for someone from a disadvantaged background. It uses a range of 16 indicators for every major life stage, from early years through to working lives, to map the nation's social mobility hotspots and coldspots. A similar, but not comparable, approach has been taken for Scotland and Wales.

The report debunks the assumption that a simple north-south divide exists. Instead, it suggests there is a postcode lottery with hotspots and coldspots found in almost every part of the country. London dominates the hotspots, while the East and West Midlands are the worst performing regions. The best performing local authority area is Westminster and the worst performing area is West Somerset.

The index finds that the worst performing areas for social mobility are no longer inner city areas, but remote rural and coastal areas, and former industrial areas, especially in the Midlands. Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds living in these areas face far higher barriers than young people growing up in cities and their surrounding areas – and in their working lives, face lower rates of pay; fewer top jobs; and travelling to work times

of nearly four times more than that of urban residents.

There is also no direct correlation between the affluence of an area and its ability to sustain high levels of social mobility. While richer areas tend to outperform deprived areas in the index, a number of places buck the trend. Some of the most deprived areas in England are hotspots, including most London boroughs – such as Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Newham. Conversely, some affluent areas – such as West Berkshire, Cotswold and Crawley – are amongst the worst for offering good education, employment opportunities and affordable housing to their more disadvantaged residents.

The report highlights that local policies adopted by local authorities and employers can influence outcomes for disadvantaged residents. But it also warns that there is a mind-blowing inconsistency of practice in how to improve social mobility outcomes, with little pooling of experience or evidence-based strategies.

The Rt Hon Alan Milburn, chair of the Social Mobility Commission, said:

The country seems to be in the grip of a self-reinforcing spiral of ever-growing division. That takes a spatial form, not just a social one. There is a stark social mobility lottery in Britain today.

London and its hinterland are increasingly looking like a different country from the rest of Britain. It is moving ahead as are many of our country's great cities. But too many rural and coastal areas and the towns of Britain's old industrial heartlands are being left behind economically and hollowed out socially.

Tinkering around the edges will not do the trick. The analysis in this report substantiates the sense of political alienation and social resentment that so many parts of Britain feel. A new level of effort is needed to tackle the phenomenon of left behind Britain. Overcoming the divisions that exist in Britain requires far more ambition and far bigger scale. A less divided Britain will require a more redistributive approach to spreading education, employment and housing prospects across our country.

Key findings include:

- London accounts for nearly two-thirds of all social mobility hotspots
- The Midlands is the worst region of the country for social mobility for those from disadvantaged backgrounds – half of the local authority areas in the East Midlands and more than a third in the West Midlands are social mobility coldspots
- Some of the worst performing areas such as Weymouth and Portland, and Allerdale, are rural, not urban
- Coastal and older industrial towns – places such as Scarborough, Hastings, Derby and Nottingham – are becoming entrenched social mobility coldspots

- Some of the richest places in England, such as West Berkshire, Cotswold and Crawley, deliver worse outcomes for their disadvantaged children than places that are much poorer such as Sunderland and Tower Hamlets
- Apart from London, English cities are punching below their weight on social mobility outcomes. No other city makes it into the top 20%
- Early years – disadvantaged children are 14 percentage points less likely to be school ready at age 5 in coldspots than in hotspots: in 94 areas, under half of disadvantaged children reach a good level of development at age 5
- Schools – 51% of London children on free school meals achieve A* to C in English and maths GCSE compared to an average of 36% of children on free school meals in all other English regions: in the best place (Westminster), 63% get good English and maths GCSEs whereas in the worst (Isle of Wight), only 27% do
- A critical factor in the performance of top local authorities is the number and quality of teachers available. A secondary teacher in the most deprived area is 70% more likely to leave
- Schools in rural and coastal areas are isolated and lack partnerships with other schools. In Lancashire and West Yorkshire only 19% of all schools are either in a multi-academy trust or an equivalent trust compared to 35% in north east London and the East of England
- Youth – In Kensington and Chelsea, 50% of disadvantaged young people make it to university, whereas in Hastings, Barnsley and Eastbourne, the university participation rate for this group falls to just 10%
- One quarter of young people are NEET (not in education, employment or training) in the worst local authority area a year after GCSEs (South Ribble), compared to 1% in North Hertfordshire
- Working lives – In 71, largely rural areas, more than 30% of people earn below the voluntary living wage: average wages in the worst performing area, West Somerset, are £312 a week, less than half of the best performing areas of London such as Wandsworth, Richmond upon Thames and Westminster
- In Bolsover, just 17% of residents are in jobs that are professional and managerial positions, compared to 51% in Oxford
- City residents face barriers in their working lives with high housing costs and high rates of low paid work compared to commuter belt residents who benefit from higher rates of the top jobs and with more families owning their homes
- In Blaby, Rochford and Harborough, 80% of residents own their homes whereas in Tower Hamlets it is just 18%

Key recommendations:

- Every local authority should develop an integrated strategy for improving disadvantaged children's outcomes and Pupil Premium funds should be invested in evidence-based practice
- Local authorities should support collaboration between isolated schools, subsidise transport for disadvantaged young people in isolated areas and encourage Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) to follow the North East LEP's approach to improving careers support for young people
- Local authorities should all become accredited Living Wage employers and

encourage others in their communities to do likewise

- Central government should launch a fund to enable schools in rural and coastal areas to partner with other schools to boost attainment
- Regional School Commissioners should be given responsibility to work with universities, schools and Teach First to ensure that there is a good supply of teachers in all parts of their regions
- The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy should match the Department for Education's £72 million for the opportunity areas to ensure there is a collaborative effort across local education systems and labour markets
- Central government should rebalance the national transport budget to deliver a more equal share of investment per person and contribute towards a more regionally balanced economy

Notes for editors

1.The Social Mobility Commission is an advisory, non-departmental public body established under the Life Chances Act 2010 as modified by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. It has a duty to assess progress in improving social mobility in the United Kingdom and to promote social mobility in England. It currently consists of four commissioners and is supported by a small secretariat.

2.The commission board currently comprises:

- Alan Milburn (chair)
- Baroness Gillian Shephard (deputy chair)
- Paul Gregg, Professor of Economic and Social Policy, University of Bath
- David Johnston, Chief Executive of the Social Mobility Foundation

3.The functions of the commission include:

- monitoring progress on improving social mobility
- providing published advice to ministers on matters relating to social mobility
- undertaking social mobility advocacy

News story: New rules on blood donation come into force

Changes to the rules on blood donation in England come into force on 28 November. The new rules will allow more people to donate blood, without affecting the safety of the blood supply.

[The changes were announced in July, on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs \(SaBT0\).](#)

Dr Gail Mifflin, Medical and Research Director at NHS Blood and Transplant said:

The SaBT0 review took into account the latest available medical and scientific evidence. This included more information about the risk of acquiring infections that can be passed on in blood, more evidence on how well donors comply with our guidelines and also more evidence that supports the reliability of the blood screening tests we use.

We have one of the safest blood supplies in the world. Anyone may require a blood transfusion in the future and so it's in all our interests to ensure that we work hard to keep blood safe for patients.

Before every donation, all donors must complete a Donor Health Check and have a private health screening where they may be asked confidential questions based on their completed form.

Subject to meeting the other donation rules, the following groups will now be able to donate after 3 months have passed since the last sexual activity:

- men who have had sex with another man
- commercial sex workers
- people who have had sex with a partner at high risk of having a sexually transmitted infection

Previously, commercial sex workers were permanently excluded from blood donation and the other groups had to wait until 12 months had passed before they could donate. The rules are now consistent for all groups that are deferred due to sexual behaviours.

Press release: October 2017 Price Paid Data

This month's Price Paid Data includes details of more than 101,000 sales of land and property in England and Wales that HM Land Registry received for registration in October 2017.

In the dataset, you can find the date of sale for each property, its full address and sale price, its category (residential or commercial) and type (detached, semi-detached, terraced, flat or maisonette and other), whether it is new build or not and whether it is freehold or leasehold.

The number of sales received for registration by property type and month

Property type	October 2017	September 2017	August 2017
Detached	22,849	22,377	22,782
Semi-detached	25,558	24,911	26,056
Terraced	26,394	25,829	26,515
Flat/maisonette	19,048	17,958	17,085
Other	7,159	6,027	6,075
Total	101,008	97,102	98,513

Of the 101,008 sales received for registration in October 2017:

- 74,649 were freehold, a 9% increase on October 2016
- 11,949 were newly built, a 8.5% decrease on October 2016

There is a time difference between the sale of a property and its registration at HM Land Registry.

Of the 101,008 sales received for registration, 27,229 took place in October 2017 of which:

- 479 were of residential properties in England and Wales for £1 million and over
- 253 were of residential properties in Greater London for £1 million and over
- 3 were of residential properties in Greater Manchester for £1 million and over

The most expensive residential sale taking place in October 2017 was of a flat in the City of Westminster, London for £15,750,000. The cheapest residential sale in October 2017 was of a terraced property in Bishop Auckland, County Durham for £18,500.

The most expensive commercial sale taking place in October 2017 was in the City of Westminster, London for £148,922,635. The cheapest commercial sale in October 2017 was in Taunton Deane, Somerset, for £100.

[Access the full dataset](#)

Notes to editors

1. Price Paid Data is published at 11 am on the 20th working day of each month. Due to the public holidays in December, the November dataset will be published on 2 January 2018.
2. [Price Paid Data](#) is property price data for all residential and commercial property sales in England and Wales that are lodged with HM Land Registry for registration in that month, [subject to exclusions](#).
3. The amount of time between the sale of a property and the registration of this information with HM Land Registry varies. It typically ranges between 2 weeks and 2 months. Data for the two most recent months is therefore incomplete and does not give an indication of final monthly volumes. Occasionally the interval between sale and registration is longer than two months. The small number of sales affected cannot be updated for publication until the sales are lodged for registration.
4. Price Paid Data categories are either Category A (Standard entries) which includes single residential properties sold for full market value or Category B (Additional entries) for example sales to a company, buy-to-lets where they can be identified by a mortgage and repossessions.
5. HM Land Registry has been collecting information on Category A sales from January 1995 and on Category B sales from October 2013.
6. Price Paid Data can be downloaded in txt, csv format and in a machine readable format as [linked data](#) and is released under [Open Government Licence \(OGL\)](#). Under the OGL, HM Land Registry permits the use of Price Paid Data for commercial or non-commercial purposes. However, the OGL does not cover the use of [third party rights](#), which HM Land Registry is not authorised to license.
7. The [Price Paid Data report builder](#) allows users to build bespoke reports using the data. Reports can be based on location, estate type, price paid or property type over a defined period of time.
8. HM Land Registry is a government department created in 1862. It operates as an executive agency and a trading fund and its running costs are covered by the fees paid by the users of its services. Its ambition is to become the world's leading land registry for speed, simplicity and an open approach to data.
9. HM Land Registry safeguards land and property ownership worth more than £4 trillion, including about £1 trillion of mortgages. The Land Register contains around 24 million titles, which show evidence of ownership, covering some 84% of the land mass.

10. For further information about HM Land Registry visit www.gov.uk/land-registry.

11. Follow us on
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News story: The Chief Inspector's report on the Home Office's asylum intake and casework has been published

Mr Bolt said:

"The Home Office devotes significant resources to managing asylum claims. Nonetheless, it continues to struggle to keep on top of the volumes of claims it receives. In 2016-17, despite the evident commitment and hard work of those involved, high staff turnover, prolonged staffing gaps and inexperience caused problems that were not easily or quickly fixed.

"As a consequence, the number of claims awaiting an initial decision rose during the year, as did the proportion deemed 'non-straightforward' and therefore set outside the published service standard of 6 months for a decision. The inspection also found issues with decision quality. Given the life-changing nature of asylum decisions, the Home Office's performance needs to improve.

"The Home Office has described the asylum system as "in transition". I am aware of its plans to transform and enable it to cope better with peaks in demand. However, these plans were not sufficiently advanced at the time of this inspection for their effectiveness to be tested.

"My message to the Home Office is that it needs to accelerate its transformation plans and to ensure it has asylum processing and decision making under control as soon as possible. Otherwise, the next peak in asylum intake, or trough in staffing levels, will see it fall further behind.

"This inspection makes 7 recommendations for improvement. The Home Office has accepted 6 in full and 1 in part. I look forward to revisiting this important area of the Home Office's work in due course and checking on the progress made.

"In the meantime, for the sake of clarity, while the Home Office response is

correct in saying that I found no evidence that asylum policy and processes are gender biased, this was because the data was insufficiently detailed to permit meaningful analysis. This is not a positive finding – data collection needs to improve if the Home Office is to persuade stakeholders that their concerns are unfounded.”

The completed report was sent to the Home Secretary on 25 September 2017.

[An Inspection of asylum intake and casework.](#)

[Home Office's response to the Chief Inspector's reports](#)