

# Press release: National Audit Office investigation into the Parole Board

The Chair of the Parole Board, Professor Nick Hardwick, has welcomed the publication of the National Audit Office's findings following its investigation into the work of the Parole Board.

He said: "I am pleased the NAO has recognised the huge challenges the Parole Board faced as it dealt with more cases and more oral hearings with fewer Parole Board members. As a result, the backlog of outstanding cases grew, with unacceptable delays for victims and prisoners. Given the scale of the challenge it has taken time to put things right.

I am pleased the NAO recognises the progress we have made. We have a new strategy, have recruited over a 100 new members and our backlogs are down by over a third. There is more to do and the NAO report helpfully highlights a number of areas for us to focus on. I am confident we will continue to make progress whilst making sure that in each of the approximately 7,000 cases we decide every year we protect the public whilst treating prisoners fairly."

Martin Jones, Chief Executive said:

"I welcome this report, as a timely examination of the challenges facing the parole system. In recent years there has been a substantial increase in the number of cases needing to be heard by the Parole Board and this has led to excessive, often unacceptable delays. We are now making steady progress in reducing those delays and are committed to ensuring that we deal with all cases fairly and in a timely fashion, whilst ensuring the protection of the public; but there remains more to do.

The appointment of new members, who are now starting to sit on hearings, will enable us to sustain our good progress in bringing the backlog down. Also, our digital project which aims to have paperless hearings by October, is helping to make the Parole Board run more efficiently. The majority of our members have transitioned from paper to digital working, saving the Board time and money. The backlog at present is 2,030 cases, down over a third from its high point of 3,163 cases in 2015, and we are on track to eradicate the delays by the end of the year."

## **Notes to Editors**

A full copy of the National Audit Office's investigation report (HC 19/2016-17) is available on the NAO website at [www.nao.org.uk](http://www.nao.org.uk)

The Parole Board Strategy 2016-2020 is available on the Parole Board web pages at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/parole-board>

The Parole Board is an independent body that works with its criminal justice partners to protect the public by risk assessing prisoners to decide whether they can safely be released into the community. The Board has responsibility

for considering life sentence prisoners (mandatory life, discretionary life and automatic life sentence prisoners and Her Majesty's Pleasure detainees; and prisoners given indeterminate sentences for public protection); and determinate sentence cases (discretionary conditional release prisoners serving more than 4 years whose offence was committed before 4 April 2005; prisoners given extended sentences for public protection for offences committed on or after 4 April 2005; and prisoners given an Extended Determinate Sentence or Sentence of Particular Concern after 3 December 2012). The Board considers initial release into the community and re-release following a recall to prison.

For further information please call Glenn Gathercole, Business Development Directorate on 0203 334 4392 during office hours, or 07725-927954 out of hours, or e-mail [glenn.gathercole@paroleboard.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:glenn.gathercole@paroleboard.gsi.gov.uk)

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## **Press release: Increase in BME workplace progression could give UK economy a £24bn boost – Baroness McGregor-Smith Review finds**

- GDP could increase by up to 1.3 per cent a year if workers from BME backgrounds progressed at the same rate as their white colleagues
- Businesses with more than 50 employees urged to publish breakdown of workforce by race and pay band
- New Business Diversity and Inclusion Group announced to make sure government and industry work more closely to improve representation, inclusiveness and opportunities in the workplace

The UK economy could benefit from a £24bn-a-year boost if black and minority ethnic (BME) people progressed in work at the same rate as their white counterparts, a government-backed review has found.

The independent Baroness McGregor-Smith Review, which has been published today, found people from BME backgrounds are still being held back in the workplace because of the colour of their skin, costing the UK economy the equivalent of 1.3 per cent in GDP a year.

The review also found employment rates for people from BME backgrounds are 12 per cent lower than their white counterparts at 62.8 per cent, with just six

per cent reaching top level management positions.

People from BME backgrounds are also more likely to work in lower paid and lower skilled jobs despite being more likely to have a degree, the report reveals.

In a series of recommendations, the review calls for large employers should lead the way in tackling barriers to BME progression, calling on companies with more than 50 employees to:

- Publish a breakdown of their workforce by race and pay band
- Draw up five-year aspirational diversity targets
- Nominate a board member to deliver on these targets

**Baroness McGregor-Smith said:**

“The time for talk on race in the workplace is over, it’s time to act. No-one should feel unable to reach the top of any organisation because of their race.

“If businesses and the Government act on my recommendations, it will show everyone from a minority background that Britain’s workplace is for everyone not just the privileged few.

“The consequences of continuing to do nothing will be damaging to the economy and to the aspirations of so many. So from the Cabinet table to the board rooms, there is no more time for excuses – just change.”

The Government has today also announced that a Business Diversity and Inclusion Group will be set up and chaired by Business Minister Margot James. It will bring together business leaders and organisations to coordinate action to remove barriers in the workplace and monitor employers’ progress.

The group will also bring together the leaders of three industry-led diversity reviews:

- Baroness McGregor-Smith
- Sir Philip Hampton and Dame Helen Alexander, who are leading a review aimed at increasing female leadership in FTSE companies
- Sir John Parker, who today concludes a consultation on recommendations to increase BME representation in the boardroom, to participate in the group

This highlights the importance government places on working with business to build an economy that works for everyone.

**Business Minister Margot James said:**

“It is very wrong that so many barriers lie in the way of people from ethnic minority backgrounds. Outdated attitudes or lack of awareness about ethnicity, in the workplace must be challenged.

“As this report shows, the economic benefit of harnessing untapped talent is huge and I urge employers to implement these recommendations to ensure everyone can reach the top of their career – whatever their background.

“I would like to thank Baroness McGregor-Smith for helping to shine a light on this important issue. We need to work together to build an inclusive culture in the workplace.”

The review found large employers like the NHS, KMPG and RBS have benefitted from increased innovation, more effective teamwork and a better understanding of customer demands by harnessing BME talent.

As part of the recommendations, Business in the Community (BITC) has agreed to publish an annual list of Best 100 Employers to celebrate success and highlight best practice.

**Sandra Kerr, Race Equality Director at BITC, said:**

“As this review clearly shows, harnessing the very best of BME talent is the only way forward that makes sense for employers. But this change has to be business led.

“The annual list of ‘Best 100 Employers for Race’ will showcase businesses at their best and spur other employers on to improve diversity and inclusion in the workplace.”

**Notes to editors**

1. 14 per cent of the working age population come from BME background, which is expected to rise to 21 per cent by 2051.
2. The review also found 15.3 per cent of BME workers would like to work more hours compared to 11.5 per cent of white workers.
3. Almost 500 individuals and companies responded to Baroness McGregor-Smith’s call for evidence, including a host of FTSE 100 companies.
4. The Government has invited the following individuals and organisations to be founder members of the Business Diversity and Inclusion Group, which will meet quarterly:
  - Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith
  - Sir Philip Hampton and Dame Helen Alexander
  - Sir John Parker
  - Equalities Minister Caroline Dinenage
  - Confederation of British Industry
  - Institute of Directors
  - BITC
  - Financial Reporting Council
  - Equality and Human Rights Commission
5. Business in the Community offers businesses a number of practical ways

tackle social and environmental issues in the workplace.  
6. Anonymised case studies can be provided on request

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## [Press release: Charity Commission publishes report on Garden Bridge Trust](#)

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has today published [its findings](#) into the [Garden Bridge Trust](#) (registered charity number 1155246).

The regulator's case examined the charity's governance, specifically whether the trustees were meeting their legal duties and whether the charity was complying with charity law. It did not examine matters such as the merits of the project or how it is funded. These issues are outside its regulatory remit. The National Audit Office has published an investigation into the Department for Transport's £30 million grant towards the construction of the project and, separately, Dame Margaret Hodge MP is conducting a review of the project, including its value for money.

The Commission inspected the charity's books and records and met trustees and staff from the charity to examine:

- the awarding of contracts by the charity, including whether conflicts of interest had been declared and properly managed
- the due diligence carried out by the charity and the charity's ability to carry out a project of this size
- the funding, structure and governance of the charity

The Commission found that the trustees were meeting their duties and were acting in compliance with charity law.

The Commission also found that the processes for awarding of contracts appear to have been robust. However, trustees did not fully explore the opportunities to compare the critical paths of other comparable infrastructure projects and thus better enable themselves to assess project risk.

The Commission examined the management of conflict of interests within the charity and found that they were managed in line with the charity's policy. The regulator can also confirm that benefactors were not party to contracts made by the charity.

The trustees of the charity met required standards of financial management and were able to justify the high forward spend made by the charity and

account for the spend to date. The Commission considers that the trustees could make improvements to their annual reporting, to provide greater insight to the progress made and challenges addressed in the last financial year.

Further, the charity holds no reserves but expects to meet any obligations from the use of its restricted funds. Given the reliance on using restricted funds, the regulator would have expected a fuller description of how these funds could be used with greater detail on how the charity would meet its liabilities in the event of closure.

The charity cooperated fully with the Commission throughout its case.

**David Holdsworth, Chief Operating Officer at the Charity Commission said:**

We have been able to offer public assurance that the Garden Bridge Trust is meeting its obligations as a registered charity and that it has the proper financial controls in place. We are aware of the considerable public debate regarding this project. Our role is not to comment on the merits of the project but to assess concerns about its governance and ensure it is compliant with the legal framework for charities.

This case shows that high profile charities can attract considerable public scrutiny, and the public rightly expect charities to be transparent and accountable. Having trustees in place with the right skills and experience is crucial for a charity to operate effectively.

The Commission [publishes reports](#) regarding its compliance cases where it is appropriate and proportionate to publish a report, there is significant public interest in the case and its outcome and/or other charities need to be aware of the issues or lessons in the case.

The full report is available on [GOV.UK](#).

Ends

PR 12/17

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## Notes to editors

1. [The Charity Commission](#) is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our [annual report](#).
  2. Search for charities on our [online register](#).
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## News story: Minister Wharton reinforces UK support for refugees in Uganda

During the week that famine has been declared in some parts of South Sudan, Minister Wharton saw the life-saving impact of UK aid in Uganda when he visited a centre where refugees are registered and longer term refugee settlements near the border with South Sudan. Uganda now hosts over one million refugees, with the vast majority from South Sudan.

With five million people in neighbouring South Sudan facing the threat of going without enough food and almost 2,400 people every day being forced to flee their homes from devastating conflict and cross the border into Uganda, the UK's support is getting urgently needed food, water and medicine to those in desperate need.

Minister Wharton met with women and children at Impevi refugee centre and Rhino settlement area in Northern Uganda, who have been displaced by the horrors of war and sexual violence. He heard about the challenges of getting life-saving humanitarian aid to those who need it.

In 2016, the UK's support to refugees in Uganda has provided:

- food for 650,000 people including 45,000 children
- shelter for 56,250 people
- blankets, water containers and sanitary towels for 64,000 people and
- vaccinated 210,000 children.

International Development Minister James Wharton said:

South Sudan faces an urgent and severe humanitarian crisis with almost half the population in desperate need, which impacts on the whole region. The first famine for six years has now been declared and the threat of starvation and ongoing violence is forcing over one million people to flee their homes and seek refuge in neighbouring countries like Uganda.

“Uganda is now home to more refugees than any other country in Africa, and I was proud to see first hand that lives are being saved every day with the UK's support. Alongside this, Uganda has one of the most progressive refugee policies in the world, where refugees are given land, jobs and integrated into communities, giving people fleeing conflict hope for the future.

“The UK will continue to play a leading role in helping encourage the longer-term stability of both South Sudan, Uganda and the broader region.”

Minister Wharton also met with British businesses in Uganda and the Ugandan Minister for Trade Amelia Kyambadde to discuss further trade and investment opportunities which will boost economic development and help the poorest stand on their own two feet, while also benefiting UK companies.

As set out in [DFID's Economic Development Strategy](#), UK support is helping Uganda and other countries industrialise faster, trade more and create new and productive jobs for its growing young population.

On a trip to a local family planning clinic in Kanyogoga, a settlement in Kampala, the Minister met people who are benefiting from a UK-aid supported programme that is increasing access to quality family planning services in Uganda, where half of the population of is under 15 and women have, on average, six children. Family planning is an integral part of planning for Uganda's future.

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## **News story: Government launches major new drive on internet safety.**

Ministers have begun work on a new Internet Safety Strategy aimed at making Britain the safest country in the world for children and young people to be online.

Culture Secretary Karen Bradley is leading the new cross-Government drive on behalf of the Prime Minister – with a green paper expected in the summer.

A report by leading academic Professor Sonia Livingstone has been commissioned to provide up to date evidence of how young people are using the internet, the dangers they face, and the gaps that exist in keeping them safe.

Ministers will also hold a series of round tables in the coming weeks with social media companies, technology firms, young people, charities and mental health experts to examine online risks and how to tackle them.

The work is expected to centre on four main priorities: how to help young people help themselves; helping parents face up the dangers and discuss them with children; industry's responsibilities to society; and how technology can help provide solutions.

The focus will be on preventing children and young people from harm online and making the internet a safer place.

The round tables are also expected to examine concerns around issues like trolling and other aggressive behaviour including rape threats against women.

They will involve ministers and officials from departments across Government including the Home Office, Department for Education, Department of Health and Ministry of Justice as part of a co-ordinated effort to make the internet safer.

It comes amid growing fears that the threat from online dangers has grown far more quickly than society's response to them, and worries that tech-savvy young people are being exposed to risks that their parents never were and might not know how to confront – like sexting, cyber bullying, and content which promotes self-harm, suicide and eating disorders.

[A recent poll](#) found more parents were concerned about sexting than about their children drinking or smoking. The YouGov survey for the PSHE association showed 78% were either fairly or very concerned about sexting, compared to 69% who concerned about alcohol misuse and 67% who were concerned about smoking.

[A study last year](#) for the NSPCC and Children's Commissioner found 13% of 11 to 16 year-olds reported that they had taken topless pictures of themselves and 3% had taken fully naked pictures of themselves. □ More than one in 10 young people say they have been the victim of cyber bullying, and self-harm among children is on the rise amid evidence of a link between internet use and an increased risk of self harm.

Karen Bradley, Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport, said:

The internet has provided young people with amazing opportunities but has also introduced a host of new dangers which children and parents have never faced before.□

It is increasingly clear that some behaviours which are unacceptable offline are being tolerated or even encouraged online – sometimes with devastating consequences.□□“We are determined to make Britain the safest place in the world to be online, and to help people protect themselves from the risks they might face.□□

To do that we want to understand the full scale of the problem and explore how everyone – including Government, social media companies, technology firms, parents and others – can play their part in tackling it.

This new work builds on a range of Government initiatives around internet safety, including the Home Office's world-leading efforts to combat to combat child sexual exploitation and abuse.

In December, Home Office minister Baroness Shields was appointed the PM's Special Representative on Internet Crime and Harms, with an international focus on internet safety and security working with global technology companies and other governments to protect UK citizens. As part of the move, Department for Culture Media and Sport Minister Tracey Crouch took on responsibility for domestic online safety.□□

It also comes as the Department of Health is developing a green paper on children and young persons' mental health, expected in the Autumn and measures in the Digital Economy Bill currently going through Parliament will introduce age checks for pornographic websites so under-18s cannot view

harmful content – with powers to block sites which refuse to comply.

Sonia Livingstone is a professor of Social Psychology at the London School of Economics. Her empirical work examines the risks and opportunities from digital technologies, including for children and young people. She serves on the Executive Board of the UK's Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) and has advised various Government departments and public bodies